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**THE APPLICATION OF A SYSTEMIC WORLD VIEW  
WITHIN COACHING AS STRATEGY FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

by

**MARIA ELIZABETH COETZEE**

**THESIS**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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at the

**UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG**



**Study supervisor: Prof Theo H Veldsman**

**Co-supervisor :Prof Aletta Odendaal**

**June 2019**

## **STATEMENT**

I certify that the dissertation submitted by me for the degree Doctor of Philosophy (Leadership in Performance and Change) at the University of Johannesburg is my independent work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another faculty or university.

**MARIA ELIZABETH COETZEE**

**June 2019**



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## **DEDICATION**

To my family, Jasper, Nardus, Marli and Sumé for the unconditional support, and willingness to sacrifice many hours of family time to allow me to complete my study.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE APPLICATION OF A SYSTEMIC WORLD VIEW WITHIN COACHING AS STRATEGY FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

by

**Maria Elizabeth Coetzee**

**SUPERVISOR:** Professor Theo H Veldsman  
**CO-SUPERVISOR:** Professor Aletta Odendaal

**DEPARTMENT:** Department of Industrial Psychology and People  
Management

College of Management and Economics  
University of Johannesburg

**DEGREE:** D. Phil

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The world is becoming more complex, interdependent, diverse, interconnected and ever-changing. Leaders therefore are facing different challenges and new demands in this vastly different context characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity - a VUCA world. Leaders play a significant role in the performance and success of their organisations. They are required to lead their organisations to perform and succeed sustainably under the new world conditions. They have to think differently, and manifest different patterns of behaviour.

Consequently, an alternative framework and strategy are necessary to develop and equip leaders if organisations are to be successful under these conditions. To shift capabilities from linear thinking and acting to that of dynamic, interconnected, and holistic patterns, the paradigm of learning for leaders must also be different. Leaders have to critically consider the world view they adopt to make sense of and act upon this world. This world view has to take account of complexity, interdependency, interconnectedness, diversity, holistic patterns, and unpredictability.

Coaching as an important strategy for leadership development needs to be congruent in terms of its epistemology with the VUCA world, as well as the challenges, demands and requirements it imposes on leaders. I posited in my study that the epistemologies of the majority of the current coaching approaches described in the literature are mismatched to the needs in practice, and, hence, are unfit to enable the proper development of leaders who are able to succeed in a VUCA world. The majority of the coaching approaches offer linear insights and solutions to complex, interdependent leadership challenges and demands.

The purpose of my study was to propose an alternative strategy to coaching in practice. Such a coaching strategy will be based on a systemic world view that will enable leaders to develop different capabilities for the new world. The *research question* of my study explored the following: *What is the relative value-add of a systemic world view, compared to other world views, as strategy for leadership development currently informing coaching in practice?*

My *research objectives* were:

- To identify the underlying world views informing some of the current and dominant coaching approaches in the literature;
- To explore the possible application of alternative strategies to coaching, based on a systemic world view;

- To understand how coaches and coachees construct and interpret their world views in practice;
- To explore the preferences for different coaching strategies as applied in practice currently and in the future, based on different world views; and;
- To propose an alternative strategy to coaching for practice and theory based on a systemic world view to be considered in the new world of work characterised by complexity, interconnectedness, and an ever-changing context.

The framework used for my study was based on a model of the Coaching Landscape, made up of different building blocks. I evaluated the current coaching approaches described in the literature and in practice in terms of their underlying world views, i.e. Newtonian, general systems theory (GST), and systemic.

In reviewing the literature, it seems that the majority of coaches are mostly trained in a specific coaching model, which is often First or Second-generation coaching. Coaching approaches from a Third-generation perspective seem to be described less broadly in the literature. As researcher, I noticed, by unpacking the coaching approaches in an integrative manner that there is a conceptual convergence between the different approaches. The question is: What is the relevance of the current approaches as described in my study in terms of their underlying world views to coaching in the current VUCA world of unpredictability and complexity? How integrative is the coaching strategy we offer leaders to thrive in this world? My empirical findings explored the application of the different coaching approaches in practice. My findings uncovered the emerging practice of a systemic strategy to coaching, more aligned to the newly emerging world faced by leaders. This is in contrast to the dominant coaching approaches in the literature as described in my study.

My proposed strategy for coaching highlights key principles. The leader is embedded in a context made up of multiple stakeholders and forms part of an interconnected whole, where shared patterns and realities are co-created. The coach works within a holistic view where coaching objectives are seen as interactive and connected, and explore to see how the complete pattern fits. Difference and change lie in information and interconnected relationships where change, meaning and new realities emerge from the shared, participative coaching dialogue between the coach and the leader. The outcome of the coaching conversation and final destination of the journey of the leader cannot be predicted and will evolve over time. The coaching role is multi-faceted in nature, and is shared by the coach, the leader, and the different stakeholders, with the opportunity to collectively explore organisational challenges through shared leadership. The coach is not an objective observer, but a fellow traveller on the journey of the leader. Leaders (*coachees*) are complex adaptive systems, and decide holistically with autonomy how to respond to the coaching questions and meaning that emerge from the conversation.

I believe that my study has made the following major contributions:

- *Theoretically*, it provided a systemic coaching strategy using the Coaching Landscape as framework that provides an original contribution towards theory building. My study highlighted the gap in the current coaching literature and practice. The practice of coaching is ahead of theory with a bigger demand for alternative strategies for leadership development, based on a systemic world view which is more aligned to the features of a VUCA world.
- *Methodologically*, and to the best of my knowledge, a first in coaching research, I employed a card-sorting method to identify and contrast the different world views that inform the various coaching approaches.
- *Practically*, I have shown that some of the popular coaching approaches in the literature are not fully aligned with the current needs of leaders in practice with respect to coaching. My proposed systemic strategy maps



out a different approach to coaching that provides an opportunity for coaches and leaders to explore the complex world around them in an interconnected and holistic way.

The sample of my study was small (six coaches and 14 coachees), and appropriate for a qualitative study, but would have been more representative if the sample were larger and representative of different industries. This is, however, somewhat countered by the fact that the selected organisation was a good example of the new world of work and rich data were collected.

Given the need in practice to look at coaching afresh, taking into account a changing world, I believe that my study made an important contribution to the field of leadership coaching by providing an alternative coaching strategy based on a systemic worldview. Such a coaching strategy will enhance the capability of leaders to lead masterfully in the new VUCA world they face.



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# CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I provide an orientation to my study. Firstly, I describe the background to the problem, exploring the different challenges leaders are faced with today. Secondly, I formulate the problem statement that will inform my study, and explain the necessity for my study. Next, I define the key relevant concepts, such as leadership, that will inform my study. Thereafter, I provide a high-level overview of the current literature on my study topic, in order to show the need for the study. Next, I give a high-level overview of the research design I will adopt for my study, and indicate the value my study will add to the field of leadership. I end the chapter with an overview of the chapters making up my thesis.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Today, leaders in organisations are faced with different challenges (Clarke, 2013; Ganz, 2010; Groot Hof, 2007; Higgs, 2003; Kanter 2010; Petrie, 2013; Rhinesmith, 2010; Veldsman, 2016; Wilyerd & Meister, 2010):

- **rising customer expectations** and the ability to respond effectively to **customer needs**;
- having to manage **relentless change** with a high level of resilience and agility in a world of chaos, but also implementing change strategies to build a sustainable change capability;
- **working across boundaries with a global mindset** and being effective in a competitive global market. Boundaries restricting movement of information, people, stakeholders, product/ services and resources across the world are disappearing rapidly or does not exist anymore;
- **the changes in societal values with shifting workforce demographics** and the need to engage employees in a different way to ensure commitment. Shifting the focus from power and control to **authentic relationship formation**;

- **social technologies** that require leaders to be technologically confident and learn constantly, which accelerate as we move into the future defined by generations who access information very differently than any prior generations;
- **disruptive technological innovation**, fuelled by the Fourth Industrial Revolution;
- **changes in the investor focus**, where the success of a CEO or leader is not indicated by the earnings of an organisation, but by the quality and depth of his/her leadership;
- **a world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) where everything is connected** and we cannot predict what the next big change will be, and leader's thinking needs to be equal or superior to the complexity of the environment;
- **continuous innovation, creativity and experimentation** require new thinking and disruptive innovation.

Key to organisational success is the ability of leaders to lead successfully and think differently in the above context, which is typified by chaos, complexity, paradoxes, uncertainty, diversity, and different challenges (Higgs, 2003; Kanter, 2010). The new role of leaders requires a multifold focus, one that explores more options and possibilities holistically. To be effective, it is important for the leader to manage stakeholder expectations; be an agent of change; and create conditions that enable others to achieve a shared purpose in the face of uncertainty (Sieff, 2006; Ganz, 2010). In a complex and complicated world with rapidly changing circumstances, and the emergence of new and unpredictable challenges leaders who required to effect a profitable turnaround, need to have outstanding personal qualities and leadership skills (Cavanagh & Lane, 2012; Idowu, 2009).

It is a generally accepted fact that organisational excellence is impacted significantly by leadership excellence (Noria & Khurana, 2010), as enabled by,

inter alia, the effective development of leaders. Authors such as Collins (2001), Covey (2004), Schuitema (2004), and Senge (2002, 2006) all focus on the leaders as key drivers of the sustainable success of organisations. Through their intentions, styles, habits, paradigms, characteristics, and beliefs, leaders are an important source of leverage towards organisational success.

The current turmoil in organisations and their settings demand that leaders lead differently. They need to broaden and reframe their perspectives. They also need to understand the implications of their actions in terms of chaos and complexity (Galbraith, 2004). According to Jackson (2003), Obolensky (2010), Petrie (2013), and Wheatley (2010), it is important for leaders to change their way of thinking from mechanistic to appreciating, and to embrace relationships (i.e. connections), dynamism, and unpredictability.

Given the changing world and leadership demands and requirements, the development of leaders, or more specific coaching, should offer alternative ways to understand the whole context, as well as the challenges that are facing leaders today. One should steer away from a linear thought pattern informed by reductionism. The aim is to understand, explore, and develop systemically and organically the patterns that create meaning in the lives of leaders.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION AND STUDY OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of my study was to propose an alternative strategy to coaching in practice. Such a coaching strategy will be based on a systemic world view that will enable leaders to develop different capabilities for the new world. Additionally, the aim was to establish the relative value-add of a systemic world view for coaching in practice in the VUCA world leaders are facing, compared to coaching based on other world views currently informing the practice of coaching.

In order to explore an alternative strategy for coaching based on a specific epistemology or world view I formulated the following research question for my

study: *What is the relative value-add of a systemic world view, compared to other world views, as strategy for leadership development currently informing coaching in practice?*

Epistemology is a derivative of the Greek word *episteme*, which means 'knowledge'. Henning (2004, p. 15) defined epistemology as the "philosophy of knowledge or how we come to know." Therefore, epistemology refers to the perceptions and mental models we use to make sense of the world around us, and what we use to interpret meaning. It is how we know, think, and decide. How we interpret meaning and make sense out the knowing, thinking, and deciding relates to our world view. For the purpose of my study, I will use the term *world view* rather than *epistemology*. World view as describe by Veldsman (2016) can also refers to as the leadership's set of glasses in understanding and creating meaning about reality.

My study will thus focus on the different alternatives a systemic world view to coaching would offer leaders in practice. The emphasis on a holistic and non-linear approach in coaching may enable leaders to co-create true meaning in a complex, interconnected world of radical, fundamental change.

More particularly, the *research objectives* of my study are:

- To identify the underlying world views informing some of the current and dominant coaching approaches in the literature;
- To explore the possible application of alternative strategies to coaching, based on a systemic world view;
- To understand how coaches and coachees construct and interpret their world views in practice;
- To explore the preferences for different coaching strategies as applied in practice currently and in the future, based on different world views; and;
- To propose an alternative strategy to coaching for practice and theory based on a systemic world view to be considered in the new world of work

characterised by complexity, interconnectedness, and an ever-changing context.

#### **1.4 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

My study will be informed by a number of key concepts: leadership, whether leaders are born or made, and leadership development models. These key concepts are next discussed briefly.

##### **1.4.1 Leadership**

The volume of available descriptions and definitions of leadership is overwhelming. In the first instance, leadership can be described as a process of influencing people in order to achieve objectives (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; McShane & Von Glinow, 2000; Robbins, 1998; Veldsman, 2016). Comparable to this description, Kotter (1996) stated that leadership defines the vision, together with associated future goals, empowering people to believe in the vision, enabling learning by people and through interaction encouraging individuals to act on the vision and creating a sense of purpose and direction (Johnson, 2002; Goldsmith, Greenberg, Robertson & Hu-chan, 2003; Lorsch, 2010; McCauley, 2010).

Another aspect of leadership is how the role of a leader shapes the culture and change within an organisation through actions, attention, and decision-making (Schein, 1985; 2010). Leadership does not happen in isolation, and should therefore be seen in a holistic manner. Leadership can be defined as a living system, where the focus is on the interconnectedness of the roles and the ability to deal with complexity, complementary wholes, and paradoxes. The process of leadership is dynamic and organic (Manning & Curtis, 2005; Smith 1997; Veldsman, 2002). Each system has 'local rules' that govern interactions amongst individuals. According to Hazy, Goldstein and Lichtenstein (2007), leadership is the ability to change the local rules of the interaction of individuals, which has the potential to change the overall dynamics of the system, and therefore opens up

new possibilities for the system (organisation). Effective leadership occurs when change is holistic, interconnected, and increases the fitness (sustainability) of the organisation in its context.

As mentioned in Section 1.2, the context of leaders has changed, and is characterised by uncertainty and turbulence. This new context also asks for different leadership characteristics, with mental agility to identify and exploit emergent opportunities in the ever-changing context, where the influence can no longer be top-down with a command-and-control leadership style. The focus should be on adaptive change and learning that result from a collective action response from different people who are interdependently interacting with diverse knowledge (Schreiber & Carley, 2007).

Additionally, leadership effectiveness is shaped by the context. According to Clarke (2013, p.137), leadership shifted away from a traditional individualistic focus to a more collective, social concept. Leadership is the property of relationships. He describes leadership as "... an emergent possibility within the social system.... The increasing complexity facing organisations requires us to consider leadership as embedded not merely in the sets of interpersonal relationships, but more widely as constituting an array of interacting organizational processes that facilitate intelligent innovative organizational adaptation."

In my study, leadership is seen as a dynamic, systemic, and holistic influencing process that cultivates a willingness in people to jointly achieve something worthwhile, whilst being engaged in a responsive dialogue. Leaders are also seen as adaptive, complex systems. A leader's adaptability enables him/her to have emergent strategies to cope with changing circumstances (Obelensky, 2010).

#### **1.4.2 Leadership development to enhance capability and new thinking**

For many years, the debate has been whether leaders are born or whether leadership qualities can be taught. However, the belief has been growing steadily that leaders can enhance their skills and qualities through development. Bass (1991) stated that, contrary to conventional wisdom, leadership is a widespread phenomenon, and can be learned in management training.

Most leaders, however, start focusing on their own leadership excellence, and development only after their first appointment as manager or leader. Many people are promoted to leadership roles based on their technical skills or personal knowledge, and development of key leadership competencies only starts then (Thompson, Purdy, & Summers, 2008).

Nohria and Khurana (2010) postulated that leaders are developed. Although each leader may start with different levels of inherent leadership capabilities, the life experience they gain plays a significant role in development and application of leadership. The authors also emphasised the role organisations can play in the development of leaders through coaching interventions.

A question posed in one of the most extensive studies done on leadership by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was: “Where do leaders learn to lead?” According to Manning and Curtis (2005), who reported on this study, the greatest sources of learning to lead are, *firstly*, experience; *secondly*, examples or role models; and, *thirdly*, individual development (i.e. books and workshops). Very often, leaders are appointed, thrown in the deep end, and expected to swim, with very little help to enhance or develop their leadership competencies. The merit of and necessity for leadership development is very clear (Adair, 2005). Leaders should be exposed to development to enhance their own growth. One should rather ask when and at what level in the organisation this development should commence.



According to Adair (2005, pp. 64-65), the second-most common error in growing leadership is to provide only senior management with the necessary training, mentorship, and coaching. “The secret of business success is excellence of leadership at all levels”.

Charan, Drotter, and Noel (2011) proposed a model for leadership development to ensure that the succession of leadership or, as they refer to it, the ‘leadership pipeline,’ is in place for an organisation. Their model is made up of six leadership passages that relate to the three levels proposed by Adair. According to them, it is essential for leaders to master the different skills, time applications, and work values applicable to each passage. Only once a leader fully understands the demands of each passage, will he/she be in a position to move on to the next leadership level. Going through the passages successfully helps the leader to build strength, and enables him/her to take on more complexity and scope.

Charan et al. (2011) described the six passages as follows: *Passage One: From managing self to managing others; Passage Two: From managing others to managing managers; Passage Three: From managing managers to functional manager; Passage Four: From functional manager to business manager; Passage Five: From business manager to group manager; Passage Six: From group manager to enterprise manager.*

Figure 1.1 depicts the Leadership Pipeline Model

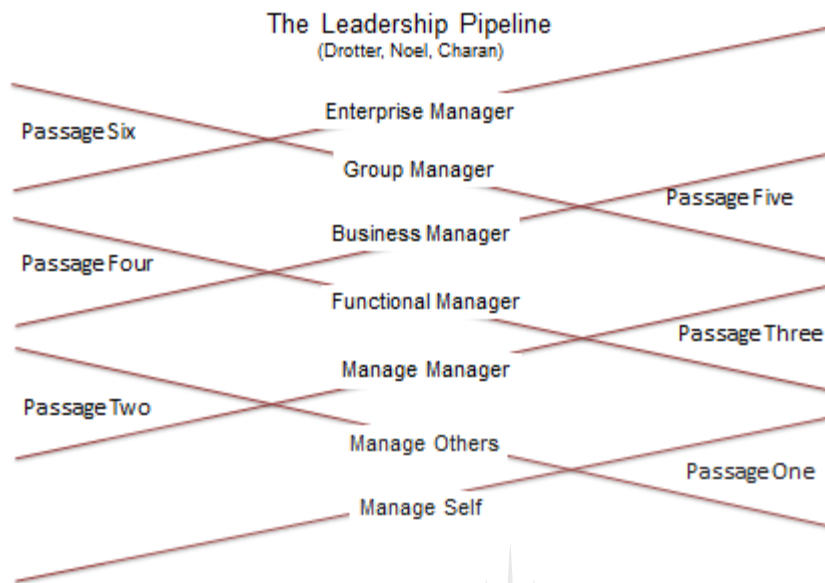


Figure 1.1. The Leadership Pipeline Model. Adapted from *The leadership pipeline. How to build the leadership powered company* (pp. 307-308), by R. Charan, S. Drotter and J. Noel, 2011, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The message of the above model is that leadership at every organisational level is a requisite for organisational success. An organisation should focus on the appropriate leadership development at each level and for each passage, to ensure a sustainable leadership pipeline. If leading from a wrong perspective in a specific passage, leaders will clog the pipeline, and hamper growth within the organisation.

As mentioned in Section 1.2 organisations are operating in a context of increasing uncertainty and complexity. Not only do we need to enable leaders to develop different characteristics or thinking perspectives to achieve success, but we need to think differently about leadership development. Traditional leadership development programs focus mainly on *horizontal development* - adding skill, knowledge and competence, which is important but not sufficient in a VUCA world. In order for leaders to succeed in a complex world the focus should be

more on vertical development which refers to advancement in a leader's thinking capability. The outcome of *vertical development* is the ability to think in a more complex, systemic, strategic and interdependent way. The focus here is on relationships, patterns, connections, shared vision and collaboration, change and ambiguity, different possibilities and options; and new ways of thinking and doing (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Petrie, 2013).

Leadership coaching has developed over time and can be employed as a strategy for vertical leadership development. The underlying world view or perspective of the coaching strategy will inform if the development is vertical or horizontal. Given the complexity as illustrated by the different levels of work for leaders, as described by Jacques (1989, 2004), it will be important to consider moving from horizontal to a more vertical leadership development intervention. This will enable leaders to co-construct meaning, think and act differently to ensure that their doing and decision-making is equal or superior to the complexity of the environment.

#### **1.4.2.1 Leadership development modes**

Leadership development can take place through different modes, such as classroom training, group facilitation, or individual facilitation (Du Toit, 2004). According to Higgs (2003), traditional training interventions are not necessarily applicable to developing effective leaders for the new demands in organisations. Leaders need to be exposed to a longer-term development process. Leadership development has seen a definite shift in approach, from traditional, corporate-based training to experiential, action learning models that are process - rather than content-orientated, and focus on continual learning and organisational adaption. Most leaders and executives are exposed to some form of coaching to enhance their personal and professional effectiveness and unlock their potential. In the past decade leadership coaching has developed significantly and the most widely used intervention for leadership development (Odendaal, 2016).

Coaching is one of the longer-term development options, and has become a buzzword in business circles in recent times (Walker-Fraser, 2011). Coaching has also become one of the top five strategies for leadership development over the last decade (Carey, Philippon, & Cummings, 2011). According to Cavanagh and Palmer (2009), coaching is also ideally placed to assist leaders in developing new and alternative ways to respond to the challenges of the present and the future.

Different views of coaching include the following:

- Coaching is a process that facilitates learning, competence, commitment, confidence, and action for the future (Grant, 2007; Hudson, 1999; Verrier, 2004; Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000).
- Coaching is a direct process, where the role of the coach is that of an adviser, steward, or guide (Verrier, 2004; Goldsmith et al., 2000).
- Coaching is an engagement between two individuals (coach and coachee) for the purpose of aiding the realisation of the coachee's personal goals and enhancing performance outcomes (Elliott, 2011).
- Coaching is an interactive and development process where the person is enabled to find new solutions and opportunities. This is not achieved by telling leaders what to do, but rather by listening and asking questions to enable them to examine their intentions and discover for themselves what is right to do (Flaherty, 1999, 2010; Stober & Grant, 2006; Clutterbuck, & Megginson, 2005; Whitmore, 2005).
- Coaching is a professional relationship with someone (coach) who uses psychological skills to help develop leaders on any level of the organisation, the team and broader organisation with leadership effectiveness as the key outcome. (Peltier, 2010; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014; McKenna & Davis, 2009; Odendaal, 2016).
- Coaching is a holistic process where the focus is on the whole person, and considers the leader within his/her broader context. (McDermott & Jago, 2005).

For the purpose of my study, coaching will be seen as a holistic, interactive process between an internally or externally based coach and leader to, firstly, understand the current realities and intentions faced by the leader, and, secondly, explore and co-create alternative options for the leader to enhance his/her personal and leadership excellence and impact on the organisation in a complex world of change.

In the literature on coaching psychology, the distinction between clinical work and coaching work is clear. According to Grant (2011, p. 88), the emphasis of the IGCP's 2002 definition of coaching is that the focus is on non-clinical populations and "... enhancement of life experience, work performance and wellbeing for individuals, groups and organisations who *do not have clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress.*" Coaching literature also states that coaching does not intend to take care of psychological problems (Whitmore, 2005; Williams & Thomas, 2004). The focus in my study will be on the healthy leader who wants to enhance his/her excellence through coaching.

## **1.5 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

Against the backdrop of the above discussion, my study finds its justification in three reasons:

- the changing world makes different leadership demands and requirements compared to the past, which require looking differently at leadership, demanding a revision of the ways of developing leaders;
- dominant coaching approaches are not always informed by world views congruent with the world view demanded by the qualities and features described of the changing world and the revised way of looking at leadership; and
- horizontal leadership development, where the focus is on skill and knowledge, is not sufficient to equip leaders for a VUCA world. Leaders

- need to think and act differently. An emphasis rather on vertical leadership development; and
- coaching as strategy for vertical leadership development where the focus is on meaning making in a collaborative practice can provide new alternatives if based on a systemic world view.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, leaders are bombarded with change, inside and outside of their organisations. In order to thrive in this ever-changing era, they need to transform and constantly reinvent themselves for long-term sustainability. The demands on and expectations of leaders are constantly increasing, to the point that the expectations probably exceed the capabilities of the person. The successful leader needs to consider the people and relationships around him/her, and not try to be the sole hero. Leadership is not about a linear checklist, but consists of interconnected facets. Keene (2000, p. 15) described a successful leader as "... someone who conducts the orchestra in a way that harmonises the brilliance of each instrument to produce an inspirational symphony in which the whole is bigger than the sum of the parts."

Current organisational paradigms are mostly about scientific management, with the need for control and prediction. Leaders hold on to the belief of linear causality, and try to manage the organisation like a machine. To understand the whole is to analyse the individual parts.

In order to lead in the complex world of today, the leader's capabilities need to change. To shift his/her capabilities from linear thoughts and thinking to interconnected patterns of the whole, the paradigm for learning should also be different. In this shift, coaching is recognised as an important medium for leadership change and development. Looking at the different approaches to coaching, the question remains the same. Do the current world views that inform coaching only focus on scientific management without recognising the interconnected whole? How is coaching applied in the real world? How do

leaders experience the coaching process? Are the current coaching strategies sufficient to assist leaders to think differently? What alternatives do we have for coaching as a medium for vertical leadership development?

My study will be informed by the following questions: How meaningful and relevant are the current coaching approaches in terms of their world view? Do they offer holistic and vertical developmental viewpoints for leaders to explore? Do they allow leaders to find patterns in their world of change and complexity? Do they explore how leaders behave autonomously and focus on self-renewal in order to deal with challenges? Do they focus on the interconnected impact of the context, the organisation, and the environment?

Given the above, it is clear that leaders are faced with different challenges and new demands in a complex environment. They try to find order in a chaotic world, using existing or old ways to tackle new challenges. For organisations to succeed in these turbulent times, an alternative framework is necessary to develop and equip leaders differently. Leaders play a significant role in the excellence of an organisation. Therefore, most organisations are investing time and money to develop and grow their leaders. One of the recognised mediums for leadership development is coaching. Many organisations are willing to invest in a personal coach for key executives. They acknowledge that regular coaching sessions can transform a leader's work and relationships.

The aim in this study is to view organisational excellence and personal leadership excellence as two parts of a complementary whole. Leaders need to understand that, in facilitating external challenges, they have to reflect on internal growth and excellence. According to Schuitema (2004), will it be very difficult for a leader to change a team or organisation without examining himself fundamentally. A coach can be a mirror for leaders, helping them to explore the blind spots, to find alternatives for old, irrelevant paradigms, and to see the world differently.

A plethora of literature exists on leadership and coaching, both locally and abroad. Many different coaching approaches are propagated: from a psychodynamic view, to that based on behavioural aspects and cognitive thinking, as well as coaching focused on the authentic self and mastering interpersonal relationships. Recent coaching approaches focus on finding solutions from a holistic and systems perspective, positive being and creating meaning in conversation (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014; Peltier 2010; Odendaal, 2016). Some of these different approaches will be discussed and evaluated in the literature study.

Some of the current approaches to coaching use similar principles to those used in systemic thinking. There is emphasis on wholeness and interconnectedness, but the framework seems to be mostly linear thinking, with a predictable process and outcome. Although some of the approaches focus on the creation of a new redefined reality in a collaborative manner by the coach and the coachee, it seems to be still defined from an objective view. Current approaches also place considerable value on the significance of the coaching relationship. However, in systemic thinking, the role of the coach (=observer) is redefined in the interaction between the client and coach, where they are co-constructing a shared reality. The interconnectedness of this relationship, as referred to in second-order cybernetics, challenged the concept of objectivity in the process of coaching.

Although several authors (Barner & Higgins, 2007; Cavanagh & Lane, 2012; McDermott & Jago, 2005; O'Neil, 2000; and Stelter, 2014) referred to the significance of systemic thinking in coaching, there is little, literature available in which coaching is described from an integrative and 'complete' systemic approach. Considering the literature it seems that the majority of coaches are mostly trained in a specific coaching model (Kauffman & Hodgetts, 2016). The majority of these models fit into a solution focussed or goal orientation mode. Current approaches offer limited options to complex challenges. The current world of work is one of uncertainty, continuous change, and an extended web of



relationships. In order to handle these challenges differently, a leader should also be exposed to alternative ways of development and thinking, and alternative models with which to understand the world.

From the above, it is quite clear that there is a need for research to explore a coaching approach from a systemic perspective as an alternative strategy for leadership development. Coaching from a systemic perspective requires the coach to recognise and appreciate the complex organisational dynamics in which the healthy, competent leader operates. Therefore, I believe systemic thinking as world view for leadership coaching is capable of providing leaders with an alternative and meaningful way of thinking, believing, and acting within the complex and chaotic world in which they operate daily. In the present study, I wish to explore the contribution a systemic world view could make to the coaching process from a practice perspective. Exploring a strategy for practical application in the coaching field, one that focuses on the different levels of leadership in an organisation which may offer alternative ways of understanding the complex world in which we live.

Considering the different levels of leadership also relates to the different levels of work, as referred to by Elliot Jaques's Stratified Systems Theory (1989). Work is structured in levels of increasing complexity. The different levels of complexity have an impact on the leaders and their development. The higher the level of leadership, the higher the level of complexity, which poses new conceptual challenges for decision-making. The higher-level leader deals with a broader scope, and needs to be able to identify the interconnected relationships and patterns across different functions of the organisation (Jaques, 1989; 2004).

The question is therefore whether all leaders are exposed to and challenged by change and complexity, or only leaders on the higher organisational levels. Is there a difference between the different levels of work in how the specific leader

experiences change and complexity? Will the need for development and coaching approaches be different for each level of work?

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design refers to the way in which we research problems and seek answers. Mouton (2001, p. 55) defined it as "... a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research." The focus of a research design is on the end product and what kind of study needs to be planned and conducted to achieve the required results. In light of the aim and objectives of the envisaged study, it should be clear that a design is needed that would enable a focus on a systemic approach, which necessitates moving away from the traditional, positivistic research process.

To meet the above objectives, a qualitative research process will be employed in my study. Creswell (2007) referred to a qualitative approach as one where the inquirer makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (multiple meanings of individual experiences, socially constructed, with the intent to develop a theory or pattern), or advocacy or participatory perspectives, or both.

The present study will be inductive in nature, in order to gain an understanding of meaning, and to describe patterns in the data as they evolve. Within the inductive approach, there is a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process, and is also less concerned with the need to generalise (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). The application of some of the data collection methods may also be more deductive in nature, with the focus shifting to a more abductive approach when integrating inductive and deductive reasoning.

My study will be conducted in the following phases:

- Phase 1: A literature review of the different dominant coaching approaches aligned to a specific framework applicable to my study, to uncover the world views informing these approaches.
- Phase 2: The development/ exploring of an alternative strategy to coaching that is based on a systemic world view comparable to the emerging world discussed above.
- Phase 3: To explore empirically the preferences and realities of coaches and coaches in the field as basis to refine the proposed alternative strategy for leadership coaching based on a systemic world view.

The study will be undertaken within the financial industry of South Africa. The population will comprise leaders on different levels within the organisation. A second population group that includes external and internal coaches involved in leadership coaching will also form part of the study.

## 1.7 VALUE-ADD OF THE RESEARCH

The intended study will add the following value:

- At a **theoretical level**, my study will contribute to the field of coaching, as well as to systems thinking, by providing an alternative strategy to coaching, based on a systemic world view; one that is more aligned to the features of the current world faced by leaders. Also, I will provide a coaching strategy using the defined coaching building blocks as framework, which does not currently exist in the theory.
- Regarding **methodologically**, my study will be aimed at making a contribution by adapting the application of a methodology to identify and contrast the different world views informing the various coaching approaches through a card-sorting methodology.
- On a **practical level**, my study will offer an alternative strategy to leadership coaching, based on a systemic world view, for practitioners and coaches, and in this way provide key principles for leadership development in a world of chaos and complexity. The strategy will provide

practitioners with an integrated, holistic, multi-dimensional process aligned to a coaching building blocks framework to explore the challenges faced by leaders in a VUCA world.

## **1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The structure of my dissertation will be as follows:

In Chapter 2, the focus will be on a literature review of coaching as a study domain. I will unpack the important building blocks of coaching, with an emphasis on the different approaches to coaching using two integrated frameworks in terms of these building blocks.

In Chapter 3, I will uncover the world views informing various coaching approaches, and then propose an alternative strategy to coaching, based on a systemic world view.

Chapter 4 will deal with the research design adopted for my study, and the key considerations applied within the research methodology. I will discuss, in detail, my scientific beliefs, the reasons for selecting qualitative research, the research design, research site, and selecting of data, data collection, and interpretation, as well as assessing the quality of the data.

In Chapter 5, the focus will shift towards the empirical study, and my findings will be reported in answer to the empirical questions formulated in Chapter 4, and the postulates of the study, as informed by the empirical data, will be discussed.

Chapter 6 will deal with discussion and interpretation of the empirical testing of my research questions and postulates, in order to finalise my proposed alternative coaching strategy based on a systemic world view.

Chapter 7 will provide a synopsis of the study. I will focus on the key contributions and implications, critical assessment of the study, reflect on my experience during the study, and, finally, outline areas for consideration for future research and practical application.

## 1.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I gave an overview of my intended study, in order to set the scene. The following areas were covered:

- the background to my study;
- the research question and study objectives;
- the motivation for my study;
- the key concepts that informed my study;
- the research design was outlined;
- the intended value-add of my study was covered; and;
- an overview of the dissertation was also provided.

The literature review to follow in Chapter 2 covers the coaching landscape and its building blocks, the predominant approaches to coaching, and the world views informing the different coaching approaches. I will describe the different approaches to coaching in terms of the coaching building blocks, and evaluate them in terms of the coaching landscape.

## **CHAPTER 2: AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENTLY AVAILABLE, PREDOMINANT APPROACHES TO COACHING**

*“We do not receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves ...”*

(Marcel Proust)

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The changing role of leaders in today’s world requires a new way of thinking and doing. It is therefore important to put development-appropriate options in place for leaders at all the different organisational levels. Coaching as a form of individual development has become an accepted and popular method to enhance the potential and excellence of leaders. Different approaches to coaching are available, each with specific principles and components, and informed by different world views.

This chapter will form the basis of the subsequent literature chapter, as well as the exploration of a systemic strategy to coaching. The purpose of the chapter is to explore different approaches to coaching, with reference to the building blocks (or components) making up coaching. Firstly, I will discuss a coaching landscape with the relevant building blocks, which will serve as a framework to organise and present the different coaching approaches, and also forms the basis of my proposed coaching approach. Next, I will apply two frameworks to identify and discuss the currently predominant approaches to coaching. Lastly, I will provide a summarised view on the comparison of the current predominant coaching approaches.

### **2.2. THE COACHING LANDSCAPE WITH ITS BUILDING BLOCKS**

It is important to describe the key building blocks of coaching, in order to have a generic conceptual framework for discussing the different coaching approaches. In my study, I regard coaching as a holistic process. It is therefore proposed that we need to look at a ‘map’ of coaching, in order to understand the coaching

territory. Veldsman (personal communication, 2007) depicted mentoring in terms of a mentoring landscape, made up of different building blocks. A similar landscape for coaching is proposed, enabling a holistic view of coaching. The mentoring landscape proposed by Veldsman was therefore adapted to fit the coaching landscape with its commensurate building blocks, as shown in Figure 2.1.

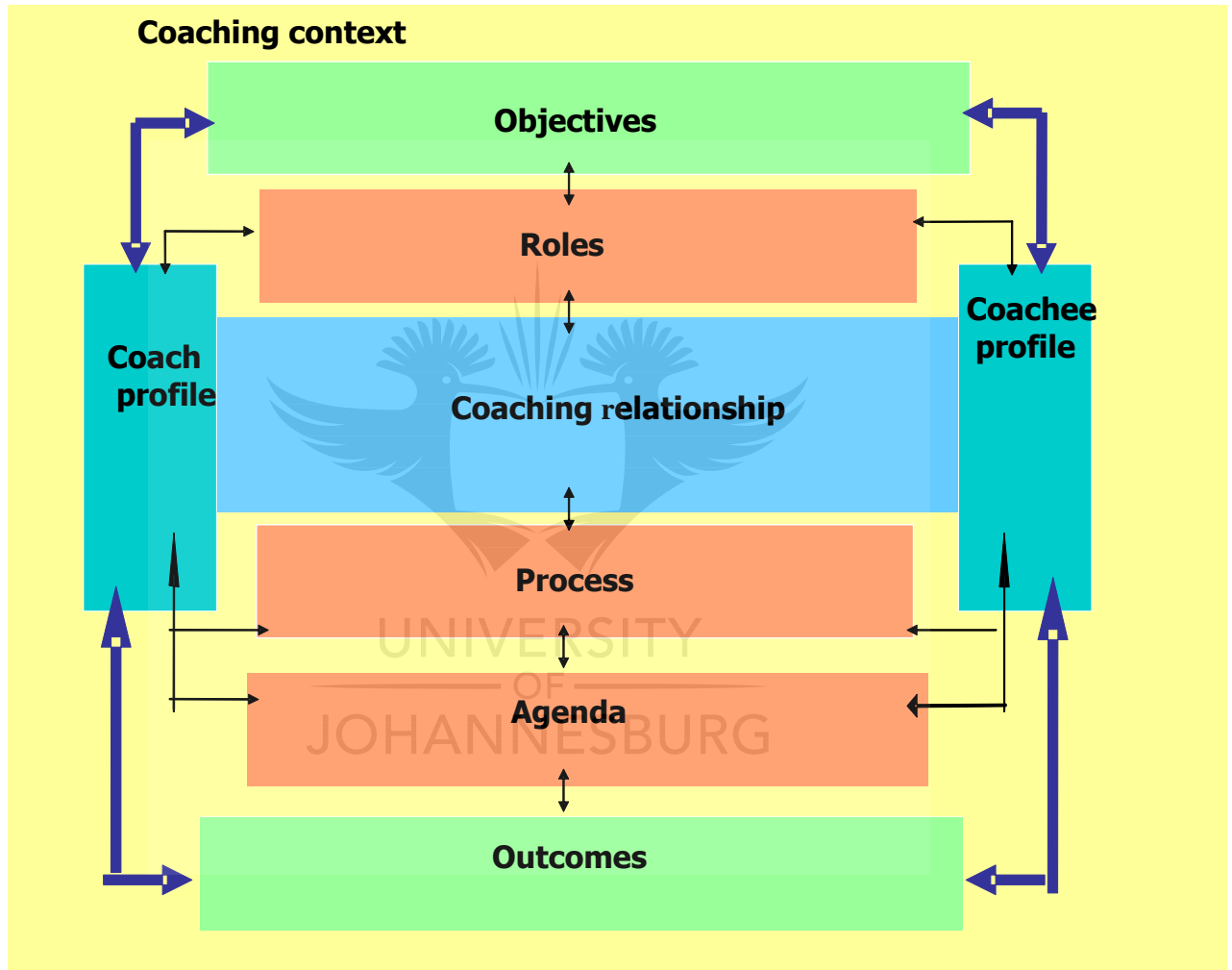


Figure 2.1. The coaching Landscape with its respective building blocks. Adapted from Personal communication with T.H. Veldsman, 2007.

In exploring the literature on coaching, certain themes became apparent. These themes emerged as building blocks making up the landscape of coaching, portraying the important components of most approaches in the current coaching

literature. When exploring these building blocks, it is important not to view them as individual components, but rather to consider how they form an interdependent, organic totality. The coaching building blocks given in Figure 2.1 will be described briefly before discussing the currently available and dominant coaching approaches in coaching.

### **2.2.1 Coaching context**

This building block refers to the setting within which coaching takes place. The question to be posed here is: How broad is the focus of coaching? Does the coach work only with the individual in isolation, or does coaching include the broader setting in which the coachee is embedded? What elements form part of this coaching setting? For example, does it include other people, the team, or different facets of life? Does the context include the broader organisational environment (Cox, 2012), such as culture, structure, and organisational processes? The context may also include the wider social, political, and economic factors that may impact the coaching (Cox et al., 2014).

### **2.2.2 Coaching objectives**

According to Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005), the contribution of coaching is significant in achieving organisational goals, as well as in enhancing leadership potential. Coaching is about the stimulation of rigorous thinking by asking challenging questions. With respect to this building block, it is important to look at the aim(s) of coaching. Why is there a coaching engagement? Is the aim of coaching a fixed and structured view, or does it allow flexibility to emerge in the conversation?

### **2.2.3 Coaching roles**

The role of the coach in relation to the coachee, and vice versa, needs to be contracted. The respective roles of the coach and coachee refer to the contribution, accountability, and responsibility each will take in the coaching



process (Cox et al., 2014). Are the coach and coachee active and direct, or more subtle and exploring?

#### **2.2.4 The coaching relationship**

With respect to this building block, the focus is on the nature of the relationship, with its cornerstones. Is the relationship equal, or is the coach seen as the guru? How important is the relationship per se in the coaching process? How will the relationship be established and sustained? According to Cox et al. (2014), the quality of the relationship develops through elements such as the focus on equality of power, collaborative learning, communication, and the use of various techniques and tools in a specific manner to enhance development.

#### **2.2.5 The coaching process**

The coaching process is the sequence of developmental events over time. It describes the unfolding interaction between the coach and the leader over time. Does this only refer to specific stages in coaching? Are these stages seen as linear steps, or, are they linked in a circular and holistic fashion? The coaching process can be structured by using tools and techniques in goal setting and goal pursuit (David, Clutterbuck, & Megginson, 2013). Alternatively, the coach can see goals as evolving and emergent (Stelter, 2014). The focus here is more on the coaching conversation and less on the mechanics of goal setting (Cox et al., 2014).

#### **2.2.6 The coaching agenda**

The coaching agenda entails posing the correct questions at the right time, in the right sequence. The agenda is described throughout the literature as key in the coaching process as an enabler in creating the opportunity for thinking. According to Whitmore (2005, p. 52), “Coaching questions compel attention for an answer, focus attention for precision and create a feedback loop.” The key elements of the coaching agenda within different coaching approaches are explored below. Who determines the agenda — the coach or the coachee, or is

it a joint action? Is the agenda influenced by the organisational context? According to Kauffman and Hodgetts (2016), agility in one's approach to coaching is important. Understanding the culture and context of the leader as coachee, and asking appropriate, additional questions to explore the broader territory, will enable the coach to apply an appropriate approach that is fit for purpose.

### **2.2.7 Coach profile**

This building block pertains to the coach. Relevant issues to explore here are: What does the coach apply of him/herself in the coaching process? Will the coach use his/her whole self holistically, or only deploy certain parts of the self? Is there any reference to specific qualities a coach should have in using the approach? Coaches are trained in specific models, theories, or approaches. Given the different approaches, experience in certain techniques, skills, or knowledge may be important in the coaching process (O'Neil 2000).

### **2.2.8 Coachee profile**

This building block deals with the coachee, and what will be explored in the coaching relationship with respect to the coachee (Peltier, 2010). Are only the unconscious processes and/or the conscious way he/she thinks explored? How comprehensive is the focus with respect to the coachee? Will the coach consider the whole person within his/her context, including important relationships and all life dimensions, or only certain facets of the coachee? Does this approach place any emphasis on specific qualities of the coachee? How comfortable and open is the coachee to considering the whole context and to include alternative stakeholders in the coaching process? The disposition of the coachee towards inclusion of the whole context will be explored.

### **2.2.9 Coaching outcomes**

The focus of this building block is on what one aspires to achieve through coaching. What is the change, if any, that needs to occur? Is the aim to have a

better way of thinking? Should the behaviour of the leader be different? Does the lifestyle or purpose need to change: What needs to be the impact on the organisation? What must be different after coaching? Another important question is: How predictable and measurable is the outcome?

Using the coaching landscape with its building blocks as a guiding and organising framework, some of the predominant approaches to coaching will next be discussed. In the first instance, I will briefly discuss the broad theoretical perspectives that have influenced certain coaching approaches. Thereafter, I will use the respective frameworks of Barner and Higgins (2007) and that of Stelter (2014), called *Three Generations*, to compare and discuss currently available, pre-dominant approaches to coaching.

### **2.3 THE CHOICE OF FRAMEWORKS TO IDENTIFY AND DISCUSS THE CURRENTLY, PREDOMINANT APPROACHES TO COACHING**

Within the literature, there are different perspectives and descriptions on coaching theories, methodologies, models, and frameworks. I will refer to a few examples based on the literature aligned to my study, as well as the surveys conducted on the use of specific coaching approaches in South Africa. For example, in one of the studies, 27 different approaches were identified that are used by coaches in South Africa. It was found that the top cluster was a goal-focused facilitative approach within a cognitive-behavioural or solution-focused framework (Odendaal, Le Roux, & Steenkamp, 2011). Other coaching approaches applied in South Africa are: the integrative, the systemic, and the neuro-linguistic programme (NLP). To date, very little research has been done on NLP. At present, there is a movement to evaluate this approach in a more robust way, with many questions regarding the application thereof in coaching. However, currently, NLP coaching is used in many different coaching contexts, which reflects some flexibility of the approach. NLP was widely used in the organisation where the present study was done, and was therefore included in my selection of approaches.

The following theoretical perspectives have influenced the development of certain coaching methodologies and approaches: the psychodynamic, the phenomenological, the developmental, the cognitive-behavioural coaching, and positive psychology perspectives (Brunning, 2006; Cox et al., 2014; Creane, 2002; Kauffmann & Hodgetts, 2016; Peltier, 2010). Cox et al. (2014) listed the following theoretical approaches to coaching: psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused, person-centred, gestalt, existential, ontological, narrative, cognitive-developmental, transpersonal, positive psychology, transactional analysis, and NLP coaching.

According to Cox et al. (2014), some of the more recent and popular approaches include:

- the **solution-focused approach**, where the emphasis is more holistic or systemic, where the coach is not the expert, but meaning evolves through conversation, with no focus on cause and effect (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014; Stelter, 2014);
- **ontological coaching**, which focuses on the coachee's way of being in three interrelated spheres of human existence, namely language, emotions, and physiology (body posture), where the coach acts as a catalyst of change (Sieler, 2010);
- **narrative coaching**, which sees the client as a narrator, and the coach helps him/her to identify new connections between their stories, and to explore different perspectives on their stories (Drake, 2010; Stelter, 2014);
- the **transpersonal approach**, which focuses on the value of the interconnectedness of all elements in the human system and between systems; the aim is to improve awareness of the transpersonal life dimension, and to facilitate the experience of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of joy and completeness (Whitmore & Einzig, 2010); and
- **positive psychology**, where the focus is on opportunities and strengths, moving away from old models where the focus is on problems and weaknesses (Biswas-Diener, 2010).

When exploring the different coaching approaches and perspectives (hereafter referred to as *approaches*), I found it difficult to decide on the appropriate framework to use in my study. Selecting a framework was important to create direction and focus in my literature review, and to provide a map for my study in order to give a rationale for the development of research questions. The framework will also enable me to draw correlations and define relationships between different coaching approaches and models (Imenda, 2014). There are many different views, classifications, and frameworks that can be meaningful. However, it was important to select a framework that would support the study postulations and research questions.

In order to create structure and meaning for my review of different coaching approaches, I applied the following two frameworks in my study. The first framework drew on those of Kauffman and Hodgets (2016) and Barner and Higgins (2007). According to these authors, the effectiveness of coaching can be enhanced if the coach is familiar with multiple psychological models and able to apply them appropriate to the client's needs and context, referred to as 'model agility.' Although coaches tend to be eclectic in their approach to coaching, there are typical theories that guide their thinking and actions. Most coaches, however, have been trained to use a dominant approach, model, or framework.

Barner and Higgins (2007) refer to the following four theory models that inform coaching practice:

- The **clinical model** enables the leader to change personality and self-perception, and change comes from the inside.
- The **behavioural model** helps the leader to change a problematic area in behaviour, and the focus is on changing thoughts and behaviour, with a specific target and outcome in mind.
- The **systems model** enables the leader to align his/her personal goals with those of the organisation, and the focus is on changing the interaction between the leader and the organisational context.

- The **constructionist model** helps the client to re-author his or her story in alignment with his or her role in the organisation. The focus is on defining new realities and changing the prevailing narrative.

The four theory models cover a broad spectrum. They are still described in recent literature as the prevailing coaching models in the field (Cox et al., 2014; Odendaal, 2016).

The second framework that fit well with my study is based on the notion of different generations of coaching, as described in the more recent work of Stelter (2014; 2016). The framework enables us to clarify how coaching can be characterised based on the evolution of the application of coaching over time. The framework includes the following three generations of coaching:

- **First-generation coaching** — coaching from a problem- and goal perspective. In this case, the purpose of coaching is to assist the coachee to deal with problems and challenges, in order to achieve specific goals and develop action strategies aligned to that goal. This includes sports-, performance-, and skills coaching using different models to structure the conversation such as the GROW model and goal-setting theory (Passmore, 2008; Whitmore, 2005), NLP coaching (O'Connor & Lages, 2004), psychodynamic coaching (Kets de Vries, 2006; Lee, 2010), and cognitive-behavioural coaching (Neenan & Palmer, 2012).
- **Second-generation coaching** — *coaching from a solution or future-oriented perspective*. The main purpose of these coaching approaches is to create positive future scenarios and possibilities. There is a strong focus on the strengths of the coachee, and to build on that for future success. Second-generation includes approaches such as solution-focused coaching (Cavanah & Grant, 2014), coaching from a general systems theory perspective (O'Neil, 2000; Kahn, 2011), appreciative inquiry, and positive psychology or strengths-based coaching (Biswas-Diener, 2010).

- ***Third-generation coaching*** — *coaching in a reflective space*. Third-generation coaching includes narrative collaborative coaching (Drake, 2010; Nielsen, 2010). It is characterised by a clear symmetry between coach and coachee. The coach is neutral and not an expert as in first-generation coaching. The relationship is symmetrical, and the coachee is an expert of his own life. The coaching conversation can be described as co-creative and collaborative, where knowledge, learning, and change emerge between the coach and coachee in a reflective dialogue process.

Considering the literature, it seems that the majority of coaches are mostly trained in a specific coaching model (Grant, 2005, 2012; Kauffman & Hodgetts, 2016), which is often First or Second-generation coaching. Coaching approaches from a Third-generation perspective seems to be not yet as broadly described in the literature as First- and Second-generation approaches.

In the past two years, there seems to have been more development in and focus on coaching from a Third-generation perspective. The demand on leaders to be able to thrive in a complex, ever-changing world is increasing. Leaders need to be stretched to think and act differently. For leaders to successfully move through the pipeline of development they need to be exposed to a deeper form of development. This implies that the way we look at leadership development also needs to change.

In Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2, I referred to vertical leadership development, where the focus is to change the way the leader conceptualises meaning of his or her world and to process information differently (Petrie, 2013). As the leader moves through the various vertical stages, his or her focus and perspective change. This aligns well with the levels of work theory (Jacques, 1989, 2004) described in Chapter 1, where the thinking of a leader should be sufficient for the level of complexity of the role. Coaching as strategy for leadership development should provide a leader with the possibility to co-construct new meaning and explore

alternative options to deal with complexities of the context. The perspective of Stelter plays a fundamental role in defining and supporting my study, where the focus is on exploring an alternative coaching strategy for coaching in a complex, ever-changing world (Stelter, 2009, 2014, 2016).

## **2.4. EXAMPLES OF THE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE, PREDOMINANT APPROACHES TO COACHING**

In this section, I discuss examples of some of the current and predominant coaching approaches in terms of the theory models of Barner and Higgins (2007) and the three generations of coaching (Stelter, 2014, 2016). The coaching landscape with its building blocks (see Figure 2.1) is used as the structure for the overview. The coaching approaches chosen represent (i) some of the most dominant ones covered in the literature and based on Stelter's framework and (ii) those commonly applied by South African coaches (Odendaal, Le Roux, & Steenkamp, 2011). The following coaching approaches will be discussed: psychodynamic coaching, behavioural coaching, cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC), NLP coaching, solution-focused coaching, systems psychodynamic coaching, and narrative collaborative coaching.

For the purpose of my research, the aim of the discussion is not to critically assess and compare the effectiveness of the different approaches. The aim is, rather, to provide an overview of the approaches at the right depth to uncover their underlying world views. These views will be discussed in Chapter 3.

### **2.4.1 Coaching context**

In coaching from a clinical perspective, such as in a *psychodynamic approach*, little attention is paid to the 'outer' context within which the leader is embedded and operates. The focus is more on the person and his/her inner world (Barner & Higgins, 2007). In some instances, the coach will try to help the leader understand other people in his/her organisation better, or include opinions and



information of other significant people, but the starting point is still the coachee's internal defence mechanisms (Kets de Vries, 2006; Lee, 2010).

*Systems psychodynamic coaching* is also seen as a clinical approach. However, the problem is placed in a systemic context. This context may include the family or work group. The emotional weighting of the system is considered, as well as exploring the unspoken, the repressed, and the denied (Bunning, 2006). The focus is not solely on the person, as it is in psychotherapy (McKenna & Davis, 2009) or on the organisation, but rather on the leader in a role within the person–role–organisation interaction (Cilliers, 2005; Campbell & Huffington 2008). This means that the effect of the organisation on the role is also studied. Leaders are asked to describe their normative role — the objective job description and contents, measured according to performance management, their existential role — how they believe they are performing, and their phenomenal role — how they believe they are performing as experienced by colleagues around them (Bunning, 2006; Obholzer & Roberts, 2019). Considering the application of context as building block, systems psychodynamic coaching aligns more closely to the systems model, but is, however, still grounded in the work of Freud (Lee, 2010).

Coaching from a *behavioural perspective* and *CBC* consider the context, with the focus on the leader's beliefs and understanding of his or her current thoughts and behaviours in a given situation (Good, Yeganeh, & Yeganeh, 2010; Neenan & Palmer, 2012; Neenan, 2018). Cognitive distortions or thinking errors (Neenan & Palmer, 2012) can therefore impact optimal performance of the leader. The focus on context is specific, where the leader is seen as a whole system that is affected by systems around him/her. The interaction of the leader with the people around him/her is explored in relation to any other variables at play. However, these processes, are results-driven and based on a scientific, planned, and direct problem-solving approach (Passmore, 2008; Peterson, 2006; Skiffington & Zeus, 2006). Although some consideration is given to the broader

context, it is limited to a specific situation, with the aim of changing recurring ineffective behaviour. The approach does not focus on patterns or loops within the context (Barner & Higgins, 2007).

Considering the framework of Stelter (2014, 2016), the *clinical model*, with regard to context, mainly focuses on coaching from a problem- and goal perspective, and therefore is aligned to **First-generation coaching**. An example is psychodynamic coaching. Although complexity can exist at an individual level (Kuhn, 2012), the primary focus in psychodynamic coaching is linear exploration to solve a specific problem. *Behavioural coaching*, and for example the GROW model, and *CBC* are examples of behavioural models (Barner & Higgins, 2007) that align well to the principles of **First-generation coaching**, where a specific goal needs to be achieved.

Within the systems model, the context is important, and is now explored in coaching. With *NLP coaching*, for example, there is some reference to the broader context when gathering information on the leader. The broader context of the leader is explored, covering his/her social, career, health, relationships, and spiritual and personal aspects. The aim is to understand the whole person. NLP coaching is referred to by Stelter (2014) as first-generation coaching. Although I agree that NLP may still focus on specific goal achievement, there are also some principles aligned to general systems theory in the application of the process. Using the framework of Barner and Higgins (2007), and with reference to the context building block, I view NLP as part of the systems model in its application.

In *solution-focused coaching*, the theoretical underpinning is based on the systems model, where the whole system is acknowledged, with the emphasis on action lying in each interaction. Organisations are interactional systems, and people are people through other people (Jackson & McKergow, 2007). In coaching, the assumption is that relationships that have meaning and a

connection to the desired end state need to be included in the coaching conversation. The leader is described in relation to the significant people in his context. Leaders act in contexts created by their interactions and those of others (Jackson & McKergow, 2011). The context of the leader forms an integral part of the coaching conversation, and specific situations inform the discussion. The coaching conversation is based on a clear link between the coachee and his/her context. *Solution-focused coaching* can be viewed as **Second-generation coaching**, according to Stelter (2014).

*Systems psychodynamic coaching* can also be described as **Second-generation coaching**, which has a solution- or future-oriented perspective. *Systems psychodynamic coaching* aligns to the clinical model discussed above, where the key framework is still Freudian thinking (Lee, 2010). However, there are some principles that correspond well with the systems model. These include the understanding of the structural aspects of the organisational system, such as design, division of labour, levels of authority, reporting relationships, and the nature of work or tasks (Brunning, 2006).

The *narrative collaborative approach* to coaching, viewed as Third-generation coaching by Stelter (2014), aligns well to the constructionist model highlighted in the framework of Barner and Higgins (2007). The context of the leader forms an integral part of the coaching conversation, and specific situations inform the discussion. The leader becomes aware of how certain actions impact his identity. These actions represent life values and convictions, and form part of the reconstructing of a new or redefined life story (Stelter, 2009).

#### **2.4.2 Coaching objectives**

The key departure point for the clinical model, such as used in *psychodynamic coaching*, is that the presenting problem may be merely a symptom of the real problem. The behaviour of the person will be the result of the interplay of conflicting internal forces. The unconscious past of a leader may contribute to

his poor leadership style. According to Kilburg (2004), it is important to assist the leader in making the unconscious conscious, in order to improve the way he/she leads. The aim of *psychodynamic coaching* is to facilitate the development of wisdom in the leader by increasing self-awareness. The leader should be able to make decisions in line with espoused values and the interests of the organisation (Creane, 2002).

In *systems psychodynamic coaching*, the aim is to experientially investigate the following behavioural constructs that manifest in the leader's work life (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Diamond, 2013; Roberts & Brunning, 2018):

- anxiety — fear for the future;
- task — basic competence for the work and adherence to the primary task;
- role — the boundaries surrounding work and position;
- authority — the formal and official right to perform the task;
- boundaries — such as task, time, and territory; and
- identity — the nature of the leader's role behaviour in relation to the brand, climate, and culture of the organisation.

The understanding of the impact of the above aspects on their role as leader will determine how they manage the conscious and unconscious impact of the organisation on their performance and role. These descriptions fit well with **First-generation coaching** as defined by Stelter, where the aim is to define the problem and to find a specific goal to achieve. Once again, the aim of systems psychodynamic coaching is not only clinical, but includes elements of a systemic model. However, it is still first-generation coaching, and is problem or goal-focused.

The aim of *behavioural coaching* is to change behaviour in a scientific and measurable way, and to ensure that these changes are lasting (Grant, 2012; Peterson, 2006; Skiffington & Zeus, 2006,). The aim of the *CBC coaching* process is to increase the client's awareness of his/her inner narrator and the

resulting negative behaviours, and to experiment with more flexible thoughts and behaviours in order to develop additional skills to sustain appropriate cognitive behavioural change. Although there is focus on self-awareness, the overall aim is to change behaviour and facilitate the achievement of realistic goals, and to equip the leader with more effective thinking and behavioural skills (Good, Yeganeh, & Yeganeh, 2010; Williams, Palmer & Edgerton, 2014). The *behavioural model* (Barner & Higgins, 2007) described in the abovementioned examples has the same objective as **First-generation coaching** (Stelter, 2014, 2016), where the purpose of coaching is to assist the coachee to deal with problems and challenges, in order to achieve specific goals and develop action strategies aligned to that goal.

Coaching from a *systems model* perspective enables the leader to become increasingly aware of his/her patterns of perception and interpretation, in order to create the possibility of choosing patterns that are more effective (Hayes, 2006). According to Grimley (2010), the aim of NLP coaching is to maximize the leaders' resourcefulness, and to increase the choices they have in a given context by creating their own reality and, thus, their own possibilities and limitations. Stelter (2014) views this as **First-generation coaching**; however, principles from the systems model are applied.

The aim of *solution-focused coaching*, for example, is mainly to i) change how the leader views the problem and ii) change his or her way of doing or how the leader approaches the solution (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014). The aim of solution-focused coaching aligns well with the systems model and **Second-generation coaching** (Barner & Higgins, 2007; Stelter, 2014, 2016).

In a constructionist model, like that of *narrative collaborative coaching*, also described by Stelter (2014) as Third-generation coaching, the main focus is on a collaborative approach and co-creative dialogues, with the emphasis on providing possibilities for meaning-making, talking about values that shape society and life,

and providing a space for unfolding narratives. Telling and listening to stories enable the leader to perceive and interpret his or her life as meaningful (Drake, 2010; Stelter, 2014).

### **2.4.3 Coaching roles**

The role of the coach in a clinical model using *psychodynamic coaching*, as an example, is one of an expert providing knowledge, skills, and technical assistance, as well as the solution, to enhance the leader's personal and professional growth (Kets de Vries, 2006; Lawrence, 2006). The coach is also responsible for ensuring the full commitment and participation of the leader throughout the process (Kilburg, 2004).

The role of the coach in *systems psychodynamic coaching* is to take a reflective stance from a meta-position, be alert to the leader's behaviour, and to interpret the manifestation of basic assumptions and behavioural concepts, without judgement, memory, or desire (Campbell & Huffington, 2008). Leaders are encouraged to be curious, to associate freely, to explore a variety of related feelings, patterns, defences, and representations (including the transferences between coach and leader), and to move between different levels of abstraction in thought (Jaques, 1990; Kegan, 1994). Thus, such leaders can access their own unexplored conscious and unconscious role experiences, attitudes, beliefs, fantasies, wishes, conflicts, social defences, preferences, competition, rivalry, jealousy, envy, hostility, aggression, as well as patterns of relationships and collaboration.

The coaching role in *psychodynamic and systems psychodynamic coaching* is not that of a therapist as defined by the clinical model. The coach must have the skill, knowledge, and ability to concentrate on and understand the unconscious life of the leader, as well as that of the organisation (Cilliers, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2006). He/she must also be able to facilitate the unconscious storytelling process. In order for coaching to be successful, the leader as coachee must have the capacity to reflect on the inner world with insight and a willingness to

change. The focus is on assisting the leader to deal with his problems and challenges and to develop action plans to achieve his or her goals (Kilburg, 2004; Lawrence, 2006). The coaching is approached from a problem- or goal perspective, and is therefore aligned to **First generation coaching** (Stelter, 2014).

The role of the coach in *behavioural coaching* is very specific and direct: to model the desired behaviour, using diagnosis and hypotheses to get to the root cause of the problem, give instructions, ensure rehearsal and practise (Peltier, 2010; Peterson, 2006; Skiffington & Zeus, 2006), and to keep the leader focused and on track. In *CBC*, the role of the coach is active and direct, and the leader is encouraged to put the necessary changes in place as soon as possible, to ensure goal achievement. The use of exposure or behavioural experimentation, coupled with cognitive interventions, is characteristic of the *CBC* approach (Williams, Palmer & Edgerton, 2014).

In *NLP coaching*, the coach focuses on the goals the leader wants to achieve, the values that are important to him/her to live, and, finally, to challenge the leader's limiting beliefs by giving tasks from which to provide feedback. The role of the coach is described as very active and direct — that of a magician. The coach assists the leader on his/her journey through life by showing him/her the road, pointing out to the leader certain choices to help him or her take a new road, and helping him/her to persevere in this change, in a supportive manner (Grimley, 2010).

*Solution-focused coaching* entails working and talking together, and the coach and coachee co-constructing conversations and stories that will help shape the future (Jackson & McKergow, 2007, 2011). The roles of the coach and coachee are therefore seen as co-constructors of a new and desired future solution. Self-directed learning is an important part of a solution-focused approach. Self-regulation is described as a simple interactive cycle of setting a goal, developing

an action plan, acting, monitoring, evaluating, and doing more of what works. The role of the coach is to facilitate the leader's journey through this cycle while ensuring the leader stays focused on the goal (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014). Furthermore, the role of the coach is to enhance the coachee's awareness of his or her own capacity to find solutions to future challenges (Stelter, 2014).

Given the above view on the direct role of the coach and the clear goals to be achieved, *behavioural coaching* and *NLP coaching* align more with **First-generation coaching**. *Solution-focused coaching*, on the other hand, allows more for the creation of positive future scenarios and possibilities, and, hence, is more aligned to **Second-generation coaching**.

In *narrative collaborative coaching*, the coach and coachee are dialogue partners, have a relationship, and reflect as human beings on the important aspects of life, such as values, work life, career, family, and the search for new perspectives on existence (Drake, 2010). The role of the coach aligns to a constructionist model and **Third-generation coaching**.

#### **2.4.4 The coaching relationship**

The coaching relationship is one of the critical success factors for effective leadership coaching outcomes in all the coaching approaches. An ineffective coaching relationship is often the reason for termination of the coaching engagement (Cox et al., 2014; Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010; Odendaal, 2016; Peltier, 2010). The importance of the coaching relationship is viewed similarly in all the coaching approaches, with some nuance differences.

The precondition for successful *psychodynamic and systems psychodynamic coaching* is a relationship where there is trust and respect between the coach and the leader (Kets de Vries, 2006). The contracting process sets the tone for the relationship going forward. Lee (2010, p. 25) refers to the importance of the relationship as "creating a holding environment" where the leader feels safe to



share his/her deepest anxieties. The next step is to agree on purpose and boundaries.

*Behavioural coaching* is an interpersonal exchange between the coach and the leader that demands congruence in a context of trust, respect, and empathy. The relationship is based on credibility, capability, empathy, trust, and curiosity in the goals of the leader. It is, however, also important for the coach to be able to focus clearly on the set goals, and to ensure accountability and responsibility in the coaching process (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006).

In *CBC coaching*, empathy is important in the relationship, but not as central as in the person-centred approaches. The relationship, rather, forms the ground to challenge the leader in a direct way. It is described as a collaborative relationship, where the coach and leader form an alliance to focus on problem-solving in a structured and systematic way (Dryden, 2017).

Establishing a high-quality and trusting relationship is important in *NLP*. Rapport in *NLP* is defined as respect, recognition, and reassurance (Hayes, 2006). The rapport is often characterised by the use of mirroring. The coach will, for example, adapt his/her language, voice, or body language to fit with that of the coachee (Grimley, 2010; Hayes, 2006; O' Connor & Lages, 1994, 2004).

In *solution-focused coaching*, the relationship between the leader and the coach is a partnership in constructing solutions to enable the leader to move forward. Although a partnership, the coach remains the expert who moves the coachee from a deliberative mind-set to an implementation mind-set (Stelter, 2014).

The coaching relationship in a constructionist model, such as used in *narrative collaborative coaching*, is an equal relationship characterised by various degrees of symmetry over time. Coach and coachee co-create a new, emerging reality (Drake, 2010; Stelter, 2014). A coaching relationship based on trust is an important component in all the coaching models, strategies, and different

generations of coaching. The emphasis is still mainly on the coach being the expert in a very direct relationship or a partnership alliance. The coaching relationship in narrative collaborative coaching from a **Third-generation perspective** and based on the *constructionist model* has a different focus. The relationship between the coach and the coachee is that of equals co-creating new realities for the future. If one considers the view of Cox et al. (2014), where the equality of power and collaborative learning enable development, the question remains: Do the majority of the coaching strategies offer sufficient scope in the way the coaching relationship is defined to contribute to vertical leadership development?

#### **2.4.5 The coaching process**

**First-generation coaching** and the *clinical model* the *behavioural model* place high emphasis on a coaching process with well-defined steps or phases. Lee (2010) refers to a broad process for *psychodynamic coaching*, which includes contracting to agree the scope, boundaries, and purpose of the work; assessment, to gather useful information; development of the coachee by translating new learning into new behaviours; and, lastly, review. Within this broad coaching frame, the focus is on key aspects such as creating a safe environment, defence mechanisms, and transference and counter-transference.

One of the principles of *psychodynamic coaching* is the use of object relations theory and conflict theory. The role of the coach, for example, is to observe how a leader handles negative events, and in what way is he/she idealises the self and others (Lee, 2014). Another aspect is conflict theory, where the leader's unconscious feelings, thoughts, motives, and experiences that developed over years have a significant impact on his or her behaviour and how he or she interacts with others. These internal feelings and thoughts can be in conflict with one another, and can produce strong emotional reactions. In order to cope with this discomfort, people create a set of behaviours to keep the internal thoughts and feelings out of the conscious. Here, the role of the coach is to help the

leader explore his/her story and become aware of the unconscious patterns (Kilburg, 2004; Lee, 2014). Psychodynamic coaches make use of the parallel process, where the belief is that, what you as a coach experience from the leader will likely also be experienced by other people (in the workplace or at home) who interact with him or her. This awareness assists the coach to deal with the problem in a meaningful way. This refers to the concept of counter-transference, where the coach is provided with an embodied knowledge of the coachee's unexpressed feelings (Lee, 2014).

In the *systems-psychodynamic approach* to coaching, an important part of the process is the key concepts from psychoanalytic theory, such as the unconscious mental life of the leader, unconscious anxieties and defences, containment, and transference and counter-transference (Peltier, 2010; Lee, 2014). The shift in the process is to include the concepts from systems theory, where it is important for the coach to explore the connection between the leader and the system or organisation to which he/she belongs (Roberts & Brunning, 2018). In the coaching process, the primary task of the leader is explored within the organisation, using the general systems theory process of input–throughput–output, as well as acknowledging the task and role of the leader in relation to the culture of the organisation. Another concept from general systems theory is to understand the boundaries of the leader as a system in relation to the organisational system (Roberts & Brunning, 2018).

The coaching process enables the leader to explore the role he or she needs to take up in the organisational system, thereby creating more self-awareness. The connecting of different dimensions such as skills, competencies, abilities, aspirations, unconscious beliefs, and defences, as well as the current work-environment, to do a role analysis aligned to the organisational expectation, forms part of the process. The internal processes of psychodynamic thinking and systems principles are combined to explore a more effective role for the leader,

coupled with a richer understanding of the deep complexities of groups and organisations (Diamond, 2013).

Given the above descriptions of coaching processes, there is a slightly difference in focus between psychodynamic coaching and systems psychodynamic coaching in relation to Stelter's generation framework. *Psychodynamic coaching* clearly aligns to the principles of **First-generation coaching**. *Systems psychodynamic coaching*, on the other hand, applies some of the principles of general systems theory, and therefore aligns more to **Second-generation coaching** and the systemic model. The *systems psychodynamic approach* is still grounded in the work of Freud. In order to improve personal and organisational performance, one needs to, not only consider setting clear goals, but also explore the hidden personal and organisational factors that sabotage development (Bunning, 2006).

The *behavioural coaching* process includes a process of intentional behaviour change, and includes different stages and steps in the coaching process, in order to enable sustainable change. Depending the specific process in use, these could include education, data collection planning, behavioural change — practising new behaviours, and measurement and evaluation aligned to ROI and sustainable maintenance (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006). The GROW model for example, which is viewed as **First-generation coaching** and is widely used in coaching, provides an additional step-by-step process for behavioural coaching (Whitmore, 2010; Passmore, 2018). The basic principles of the *behavioural perspective* are: reinforcement, social learning, and setting measurable, achievable goals. In the process of coaching, the focus is on setting clear goals, where progress can be measured continuously and adjusted to ensure the desired outcome will be achieved (Grant, 2012; Passmore, 2008, 2018; Peltier, 2001, 2010; Good, Yeganeh, & Yeganeh, 2010).

*CBC* includes a problem-solving and solution-focused model, and consists for example of seven different steps (Williams, Palmer & Edgerton, 2014) that are similar to the steps mentioned above: clear identification of the problem, setting SMART goals, and ensuring that the best solution is implemented and evaluated for a sustainable outcome. The strategies aligned to goal setting is more complex than only setting SMART goals but rather the application of an in-depth understanding and use of thinking errors and how that impact feelings and ultimate behaviour, for example performance enhancing versus performance inhibiting thoughts (Grant, 2012).

The processes of *behavioural coaching* and *CBC* support the principles of **First-generation coaching**, as the process is aimed at the specific achievement of goals and strategies aligned to that goal.

In *NLP coaching*, the coach approach applies single-loop and double-loop coaching. Double-loop coaching is needed when the leader's beliefs are part of the problem and need to be dealt with in the coaching process. According to O'Connor and Lages (1994, 2004), a leader realising that he/she has limiting beliefs will be enough for him/her to change it. This relates well to systemic thinking, where the belief is that people will only change if they change their perception about the world around them. In the initial coaching process, NLP consists of eight stages (O'Connor & Lages, 1994, 2004). The process to change limiting beliefs includes rehearsing new mental goals and sustaining new beliefs (similar to *CBC*), and emphasises the need to work at the level of patterns and processes (Grimley, 2010; Hayes, 2006).

The aim of the coaching process in *solution-focused coaching* is to assist the leader, through a strength-based intervention, to not spend time on the examination of problems or their psychological profile, but to feel enabled to experience him- or herself as healthy and capable. The coach acts as a facilitator in the self-guided learning process of the coachee, focusing on

conditions that will strengthen the beliefs of the coachee that he or she will be able to find a solution to the challenge at hand (Stelter, 2014). Jackson and McKergow (2007) referred to OSKAR as an example of a framework that is used for solution-focused coaching, which includes specific phases, from identifying the goal to be achieved, to affirming the process, and taking a specific action, and reviewing the outcome. Another example is the PRACTICE framework which includes problem identification, develop realistic goals, search alternative solutions, consideration of consequences, target most feasible solution, implementation of chosen solution and evaluation (Palmer, 2008).

Looking at the coaching processes, both the *NLP* and *solution-focused* approaches align well to the principles of the systems model (Barner & Higgins, 2007), as well as **Second-generation coaching** as described by Stelter (2014).

Within *narrative coaching*, an example of **Third-generation coaching** or a constructionist model, the coach and coachee engage in dialogue as medium for the coaching approach, in a reflective manner, on key aspects such as values, meaning-making, motivation or passion, and important matters in life. The process is directed by ontological and existential questions, where the coach and leader become philosophers on the 'big questions' in life in relation to career, work, or family life (Stelter, 2014). Providing meaning to their experiences, actions, and interactions, talking about values, and providing a space for unfolding narratives are key aspects of successful coaching sessions, and inform the process.

The coaching process includes two dimensions of meaning-making, and frames the understanding of complexity throughout the coaching process (Drake, 2010). Firstly, meaning is created through current experiences and knowledge the leader acquires in the various life contexts. Secondly, meaning is created between the coach and the leader, and is viewed as learning through social and collaborative practice. Through meaning-making the coach assists the leader to

explore and understand his or her current subjective reality of the culture and the context in which her or she live. The coach applies basic principles that enables sensory-aesthetic experience for the leader, such as to be present in the moment or here-and-now; epoché — a change of awareness and judgment of the here-and-now of the situation; mindfulness; descriptive inquiry, horizontalization — to keep the leader on a descriptive, explorative, and experiential level; and an intentional perspective to have an embodied relationship with his or her world (Stelter, 2014).

Meaning is created in a co-creative and collaborative approach between the coach and coachee. Through a narrative perspective, the coach assists the leader to re-discover and remember previous events that will have an impact on the future. The process offers the leader a chance to alter the story and tie events together in new ways. Metaphors and verbal images serve as the medium to re-create new and alternative stories (Stelter, 2014).

According to Stelter (2014), the coaching process or narrative coaching conversation is outlined in an ideal-typical format, which includes two parts and five stages. The purpose is to understand the story of the leader and to identify internalised problems that have an impact of the leader's self-concept and identity. The next step is to develop or map a sense of meaning and purpose, to enable his or her preferred self-identity and to explore an alternative story that enables new opportunities. The final part of the coaching process is to ensure motivation for change and to agree on an action plan to convert dreams and hopes into reality.

The coaching process in **Third-generation coaching** and a constructionist model defines less rigid steps and allows for co-creation of the future. The process is, however, still well defined in achieving agreed outcomes.

#### 2.4.6 The coaching agenda

Storytelling is one of the key techniques used in *psychodynamic coaching* to explore the unconscious, and to increase awareness (Kilburg, 2004). Exploring the 'unconscious story' forms the basis of the coaching agenda.

The emphasis in *systems psychodynamic coaching* is still on the inner world and the effect of the leader's character on family, friends, and work (Bunning, 2006). The agenda is determined by the focus on the connection between the person, role, and organisation (Roberts & Bunning, 2018). Exploring the organisational context of the leader forms part of the process but the unconscious story remains the key focus of the agenda. With this focus, the coaching framework, according to Stelter (2014), therefore remains **First-generation** coaching.

Questions that will enable behavioural change, in the form of single-loop, double-loop, and triple-loop questions (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006) direct the agenda for *behavioural coaching*. In *CBC coaching*, the coach plays an integral role in setting an agenda jointly with the leader for each coaching session to review homework from the previous session and to agree the main item for discussion. The agenda is structured using a consistent framework (Dryden, 2017).

The agenda of coaching within a **clinical and behavioural** model is specific to the objective that needs to be achieved, for example, changing the inner world or a defined behaviour. The agenda is structured and planned. This aligns also well with **First-generation coaching**.

In the initial stage of *NLP coaching*, questions are used to obtain information that is used in the remainder of the process to explore beliefs, values, and thinking, in order to challenge the leader to action and give him/her more choice. Powerful questions lead to action and help the leader to focus on goals, not problems. By using different questions, the coach challenges the leader to change his/her



language that is reflecting limited thinking and to determine the agenda (O'Connor & Lages, 2004).

The *solution-focused approach* sees the leader as fundamentally capable of solving his or her own problem as an expert of his or her life. The leader is resourceful and whole, and will provide the agenda for discussion. Problems are not an indication of dysfunction, but rather an opportunity to apply different perspectives and find appropriate solutions (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014).

On the other hand, *NLP and CBC coaching* — although viewed as **First- and Second-generation** coaching respectively by Stelter (2014) — is more aligned to a systems model as described by Barner and Higgins (2007). Once again, how the agenda is applied may have a different impact on the framework or world view informing the coaching approach.

In *narrative collaborative coaching*, the leader determines the agenda by sharing a story of life and work. The coach and leader then co-create the agenda. The coach acts as enabler to re-author the story and create new and alternative stories (Stelter, 2014). The agenda in **Third-generation coaching** and a constructionist model is co-created to re-author new possibilities. It is, however, important to note that storytelling can be defined as direct and based on the unconscious mind. It is co-created in a systemic way.

#### **2.4.7 Coach profile**

The role of the coach in the clinical and behavioural models, as well as **First-generation coaching**, is direct and that of an expert. For both *psychodynamic and systems psychodynamic coaching*, the coach must be trained and skilled in working from a psychodynamic perspective. He/she has to have the knowledge, skill, and ability to concentrate on the unconscious life of the individual and the organisation. The coaching must be built on a solid base of psychological understanding and practice (Kets de Vries, 2006). The preference is the internal

world and psychodynamic realm of the leader. Every interpretation, working hypothesis, and focus is aimed at helping the leader with his or her unconscious storytelling.

In *behavioural coaching*, the approach of the coach is informed by behavioural science and knowledge, and the application thereof is critical. The coach also needs to adopt a holistic approach to learning and change, and apply established, scientific laws of learning (Peterson, 2006). The coach acts as a role model to the leader, and continuously mirrors to the leader the correct behaviour (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006).

The coach in *CBC coaching* does not seek to give the answers, but, through a collaborative process, guides discovery of solutions by the leader. The coach must be skilled in Socratic questioning, where the series of questions promotes insight and better, more rational decision-making (Neenan & Palmer, 2012). Since CBC is focused on specific techniques to shift behaviour, the coach needs to be skilled in a number of areas to assist the leader to achieve the development-based objectives (Dryden, 2017).

In some of the systems model coaching, for example, *NLP*, the role is also direct, as in **First-generation coaching, as well as** the clinical and behavioural models. However, in *solution-focused coaching*, defined as **Second-generation coaching**, the role of the coach is to guide the leader to find possible solutions. In both NLP and solution-focused coaching, the coach is seen as an expert. The coach must also be comfortable with his or her personal mental style, and be able to easily spot thinking patterns. In *solution-focused coaching*, the coach must be able to meet the leader where he is and then gradually enable a shift towards a solution-focused mind-set (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014). Also, it is important that the coach trust the process and allow the leader to explore his or her thinking in his or her own time. The coach should, over time, take on the non-expert position and be able to deal with the uncertainty and ambiguity of the

coaching process, allowing the leader to find his or her own solution. Stelter (2014) refers to the coach as an expert in asking the appropriate questions.

It is only in the constructionist model and third-generation coaching that the coach is a partner in the conversation to shift perspectives. For example, in *narrative collaborative coaching*, the coach acts as a conversational partner for the leader, and is open-minded, flexible, and willing to change. Generous listening is essential, and the coach uses questions that invite the leader to move forward and embrace a shift in perspective (Stelter, 2014).

#### **2.4.8 Coachee profile**

In *psychodynamic coaching*, the focus is on the internal world of the leader — the unconscious forces, defence mechanisms, and hidden dynamics that influence behaviour. The belief is that the unconscious past contributes to poor leadership, and needs to be addressed in coaching (Kilburg, 2004). According to Kets de Vries (2006), there are certain psychological factors that need to be present for the coaching to succeed. The leader must have a capacity for self-reflection, the ability to explore the underlying motives and emotions, and also a willingness to open up and talk honestly about these. The leader must also have insight into his/her problems, and be open to change. This aligns well with the clinical model and **First-generation coaching**, where the key focus is the individual leader and his or her internal world.

In *systems psychodynamic coaching*, the coachee must be willing to explore deeply the unconscious anxieties that impact his or her role and identity in relation to the organisational culture, in a face-to-face conversation (Roberts & Brunning, 2018). The focus is still on the internal world of the leader, but with an extension to the broader organisation. The role of the leader in relation to the organisation is considered part of the coachee's profile. The coaching model is more aligned to systemic and **Second-generation coaching**.

Real motivation and change are situated in the leader's intrinsic motivation, and form part of the *behavioural coaching* focus. The leader must be committed to the goal and has to believe in his/her ability to achieve it (Passmore, 2008). The coachee in *CBC* is an active collaborator, and needs to become increasingly skilful in managing the interaction between his or her actions, cognitions, and emotions (Neenan & Palmer, 2014). The profile of the coachee is collaborative, and, with inclusion of the broader context, the focus is still problem- and goal-oriented, as with **First-generation coaching**.

In *NLP coaching*, the thinking patterns of the leader are explored in order to change limiting beliefs, which approach is anchored in cognitive-behavioural coaching. There is also a strong focus on the senses of the individual, and on assisting him/her to become more aware of what is happening around him/her. Language, and mind-, and thinking patterns are a key focus in this approach (O'Connor & Lages, 1994, 2004; Peltier, 2001, 2010). *NLP coaching* may also address all relevant aspects in order to focus on the person as a whole. For example, in life coaching the process deals with all dimensions of life: personal, professional, health, and relationships (O'Connor & Lages, 1994, 2004). The application of the coachee profile as described in the literature seems to be closer to the **systems model** and **Second-generation coaching**.

The *solution-focused* mind-set is a challenge for many leaders, as most of us have had a long education based on deterministic principles and scientific methods. These leaders may have a need to spend more time on unpacking the problem in detail. It is, however, important that the leader is able to shift to a solution mind-set in order to achieve the coaching outcomes (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014). The profile of the coachee in solution-focused coaching aligns well with **Second-generation coaching**.

In *narrative collaborative coaching*, the coachee is the co-creator of his or her new life story and perspective. The coachee should be open-minded in co-

creating, with the coach, through metaphors and figure of speech, a new story for his or her experiences and perspectives (Stelter, 2014). The coachee is curious and seeks dialogue in a reflective space, focussing on meaning and values (Stelter, 2016).

#### **2.4.9 Outcomes**

The outcome of *psychodynamic coaching* is a leader who is more self-aware and free to choose actions that will increase his/her performance, as well as that of the organisation. The leader becomes free when he/she is aware of the impact of the unconscious conflicts, defences, regression, and any other hidden dynamics on his/her behaviour (Creane, 2002).

In *systems psychodynamic coaching*, the outcome is having assisted the leader to gain insight into his/her inner world and to see the connections with the external world. The key focus remains the character of the person and building emotional self-awareness. The systems aspect of the model is the understanding of relationships and how groups of people interact (Bunning, 2006).

Through the use of validated behavioural change techniques, the outcome of *behavioural coaching* is enhancement of the leader's learning, performance, and development in a scientifically measurable and sustained way (Grant, 2012; Peterson, 2006; Skiffington & Zeus, 2006). *CBC coaching* focuses on improving the self-awareness and enhancing the skills of the leader to solve problems, and supporting the leader in altering his or her limiting beliefs that inhibit performance, provoke stress, and hamper achievement of goals (O'Broin & Palmer, 2009). CBC is considered to be most valuable when working with confidence issues or stress (Neenan, 2010). With a specific agenda focused on the goal and a direct coaching strategy, the coach and coachee will ensure outcomes are achieved as specified upfront. As with **First-generation coaching**, the problem is defined and dealt with in a goal-oriented manner.

The aim in *NLP coaching* is to help the leader change his/her limiting beliefs and to live a positive, successful life. All outcomes have to be formulated in positive terms (Grimley, 2010). Change therefore means altering the thought process or the way the leader thinks. McDermott and Shircore (1998) referred to the key concepts of success in NLP coaching as: (1) an outcome orientation; (2) improved rapport with others; (3) increased sensory acuity; (4) enhanced flexibility; (5) the ability to reframe ideas; and (6) increased congruence.

*Solution-focused coaching* does not focus on resolving past injuries, uncover or reduce defence mechanisms, rebuild schemas, or effect character change. It strives to uncover, with the leader, his or her own resourcefulness, and assist him or her in achieving personal goals. Outcomes of solution-focused coaching, according to (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014) include the following:

- to recognise and utilise existing resources to construct solutions;
- to assist the leader in attaining their preferred future;
- to amplify what is working and to stop what is not working; and
- to change how the leader view problems, and acting to find solutions for the future.

Outcomes of coaching are viewed as an emergent property of the system, not the sole responsibility of a single party, and are co-created by the coach and the leader. The outcomes of solution-focused coaching aligns well with the purpose in **Second-generation coaching**, where the aim is to initiate a process of change by seeing the world from a different perspective (Stelter, 2016).

In the *narrative collaborative approach*, the focus is on strengths and opportunities. Solutions are co-created by appreciating the positive aspects in the current context, reflecting on values, aspirations, hopes, and dreams, and by re-authoring the current story and crafting alternative stories. The narrative collaborative coaching approach is based on the following dimensions essential of **Third-generation coaching** as identified by Stelter (2014):

- There is less focus on quick fixing and more on reflecting. In-depth meaning-making dialogue between the coach and coachee forms the basis for change and action.
- Coaching is a reflective process and focuses on an existential-experiential and relational perspective.
- The coaching conversation is based on a clear link between the coachee and his/her context. The coaching conversation facilitates a new narrative in relation to the challenges of the coachee.

Coaching outcomes in a clinical and behavioural model align well with **First-generation coaching**, where the desired end state is clearly defined and predicted. In a systems model and **Second-generation coaching**, the outcome is more open-ended, and it evolves during the process. Coaching outcomes from a **Third-generation perspective** or constructionist model are more about co-creating a new meaning or re-authoring a narrative.

## **2.5. A COMPARISON OF CURRENTLY AVAILABLE, PREDOMINANT APPROACHES TO COACHING: A SUMMARY**

Table 2.1 below provides a summary of the key principles and assumptions of the above coaching approaches aligned to the two frameworks applied in the chapter, namely that of the theory models of Barner and Higgins (2007) and the three generations of coaching (Stelter, 2014, 2016).

Table 2.1

*The coaching approaches with key differentiating principles*

Coaching approach	Principles and assumptions	Barner & Higgins (2007)	Stelter (2014)
<b>Psychodynamic coaching</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> focus on individual leader, inner world/ unconscious and defence mechanisms</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> the influence of the unconscious</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> expert</p> <p><i>Relationship:</i> trust is important but the coach is a direct role player</p> <p><i>Process:</i> well defined coaching steps and defined process</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> the inner world and unconscious “story” of the leader</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> direct and well trained in psychological processes/unconscious</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> self-reflection and explore the unconscious mind</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> more self-aware by understanding impact of the unconscious conflicts, regression, and hidden dynamics</p>	All building blocks aligned to clinical model	1 <sup>st</sup> generation with focus on a problem or goal that needs to change
<b>Systems Psychodynamic coaching</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> problem is placed in a systemic context – the leader’s role in relation to the organisation</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> to work with the conscious and unconscious impact of the organisation on the leader’s role and performance</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> expert but include transference and take a reflective stance from a meta position</p> <p>Coach is direct with well-defined steps and process.</p> <p><i>Process:</i> based on principles of general systems theory to explore the role of the leader in the organisation focusing on deep anxiety and unconscious dynamics</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> skilled on unconscious dynamics and group process/ Tavistock exploring roles and group- or organisational dynamics</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> willing to explore deep anxieties dynamics about their role in the organisation</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> insight in the inner world</p>	Most building blocks aligned to clinical with elements of systems or GST, for example the context, relationship, the process	1 <sup>st</sup> generation with some alignment to 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation for example coaching context, process of coaching and the focus on the organisational system



Table 2.1 (continued)

Coaching approach	Principles and assumptions	Barner & Higgins (2007)	Stelter (2014)
<b>Behavioural and CBC</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> thoughts and behaviour in a given situation. Leader seen as whole system but approach is planned, specific, with focus on recurring ineffective behaviour.</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> change behaviour in a scientific and measurable way.</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> specific and direct.</p> <p><i>Coaching relationship:</i> coach is setting the tone and ensure accountability but in a collaborative way.</p> <p><i>Process:</i> defined with steps and stages to change behaviour in a measurable scientific way</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> set jointly by coach and leader but driven by the specific outcome and structured with a consistent framework</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> skilled in behavioural techniques and role model correct behaviour</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> motivated to change through deliberate practice</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> enhanced learning/skill to solve problems and shift behaviour</p>	Behavioural model: Focus is on behaviour and the aim is to change ineffective behaviour	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation: Putting actions plans in place to achieve a specific goal
<b>NLP</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> Intent is to understand the whole person within his context</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> increase the leader's resourcefulness and awareness of reality and change perception to open possibilities for a new reality</p> <p><i>Coaching relationship:</i> coach act in close alignment with the coachee</p> <p><i>Process:</i> specific steps are applied in a defined process working with patterns of thinking and beliefs</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> exploring beliefs, values and thinking with an expectation to directly challenge the leader to action</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> skilled in spotting and changing thinking patterns</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> willing to change beliefs and exploring new thinking patterns impacting all life dimensions</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> changing limiting beliefs</p>	Focus is on general systems theory with direct focus of the coach. Mixture of models but more systems model	According to Stelter 1 <sup>st</sup> generation, but exploring of patterns and creating new realities is more aligned to 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation

Table 2.1 (continued)

Coaching approach	Principles and assumptions	Barner & Higgins (2007)	Stelter (2014)
<b>Solution-focused</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> acknowledge the wholes system and describe the leader in relation to significant people in his context (interactional system)</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> change how the leader view the problem and to find an appropriate solution</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> coach and leader are co-constructing conversations and stories to shape the future</p> <p><i>Coaching relationship:</i> partnership in constructing solutions</p> <p><i>Process:</i> defined to shift the focus from problems to solutions through strength based interventions</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> leader is resourceful and provide the agenda but the coach will ensure it focus on the solution</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> trust the resourcefulness of the leader and find together solutions</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> able to shift from a problem-focused mind-set to a solution-focused mind-set</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> uncover own resourcefulness and achieving personal goals</p>	Systems model	2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation coaching
<b>Narrative collaborative</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> full context of the leader forms an integrated part of the coaching conversation</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> co-create dialogue with the possibility for meaning making</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> equal</p> <p><i>Coaching relationship:</i> equal, dialogue partners</p> <p><i>Process:</i> defined to ensure meaning making, altering the story and to tie events together in new and alternative ways</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> leader determines the agenda and they co-create together.</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> comfortable to be a flexible conversational partner</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> open to co-create through metaphors an alternative life story</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> focus on strengths and opportunities and co-creating a new story</p>	Constructionist – co-creating a new story	3 <sup>rd</sup> generation coaching

## **2.6. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I focused on the building blocks that define the coaching landscape relevant to this study. Different approaches to coaching, based on two theoretical frameworks, were described in terms of these building blocks, and applied in terms of the coaching landscape. The two theoretical frameworks created structure and meaning for my review of the predominant coaching approaches.

Considering the literature, it seems that the majority of coaches are mostly trained in a specific coaching model, which is often First or Second-generation coaching. Coaching approaches from a Third-generation perspective seem to be described less broadly in the literature. As researcher, I noticed, by unpacking the coaching approaches in an integrative manner that there is a conceptual convergence between the different approaches.

Coaching as a strategy for leadership development should provide a leader with the possibility to co-construct new meaning and explore alternative options to deal with the complexities of his or her context. The perspective of Stelter in Third-generation coaching plays a fundamental role in defining and supporting my study, where the focus is on exploring an alternative coaching strategy for coaching in a complex and ever-changing world.

In the next chapter, I provide a discussion and evaluation of the world view of each approach, aligned to the two frameworks and in relation to three significant world views in the development of social science. I also discuss and evaluate two systemic therapeutic approaches relevant to this study. Lastly, I propose an alternative strategy to leadership coaching, based on a systemic world view and aligned to Third-generation coaching.

## CHAPTER 3: UNCOVERING AND EXPLORING THE WORLD VIEWS INFORMING DIFFERENT COACHING APPROACHES

*“We live in a time of chaos, as rich in the potential for disaster as for new possibilities ... our worldview — that must change.”*

(Margaret Wheatley)

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I discussed the different approaches to coaching with reference to the building blocks important to coaching. I applied the following two frameworks in reviewing these:

1. the theory models of Barner and Higgens (2007), which include the clinical model, behavioural model, systems model, and the social constructionist model; and
2. the generation categorisation of Stelter (2014), which classifies coaching approaches as first-generation, second-generation, or third-generation coaching.

In Chapter 2, examples of different coaching approaches were discussed and compared, applying the above frameworks. The question is: What is the relevance of the current approaches discussed in the previous chapter in terms of their underlying world views to coaching in the current VUCA world of unpredictability and complexity? How integrative is the coaching strategy we offer leaders to thrive in this world? Does the coaching strategy offer the leader possibilities for vertical development and shift his or her thinking, doing, and meaning-making capabilities in the right way for a new world?

This chapter will form the basis for the determination of the need in practice for an alternative strategy to coaching that is systemic and integrative, more suited to the VUCA world. Firstly, I discuss and evaluate the respective world views of the coaching approaches discussed in Chapter 2, relative to three significant world views in the development of social science. Next, I discuss and evaluate

two systemic therapeutic approaches relevant to this study. Lastly, drawing on the current coaching literature, reviewed in Chapter 2, and practice needs, I formulate a suggested leadership coaching strategy based on a systemic world view, suitable for vertical leadership development.

### **3.2. DIFFERENT WORLD VIEWS**

The way I see the world may be different from how you look at it. The way each of us perceives the world around us is determined by our own mental model (or world view) (Senge, 2002; Veldsman, 2016). As we grow up, we all form our own ideas about what we see and think. However, these are influenced by certain mental models or perspectives to which we are exposed. In social science, there are also certain paradigms, schemata, and theories that shape the way we think. In the balance of the discussion below, the term *world view* will be used.

I will focus on three dominant world views that have influenced the thinking in social science over its history, i.e. Newtonian, general systems theory (GST), and complexity and chaos (also called *second-order systemic thinking*). There are different views of and nuances in each of these world views (cf. Midgley, 2003). For the purpose of my study, I identify and elucidate the most prominent features informing the generic understanding of the world view concerned.

The three world views will be elucidated in terms of the following four themes: (i) the nature of the reality to be known; (ii) the aims and outcomes of the knowing process; (iii) the process of knowing and the features of a sound knowing process; and (iv) the role of the knower relative to the reality to be known. Tables 3.1 to 3.4 provide comparisons of the three world views' prominent features in terms of the above four themes, which are, in turn, applied to coaching.

Table 3.1 provides the nature of the reality to be known and application to coaching.

Table 3.1

*Nature of the Reality to be Known: World Views with their Application in Coaching*

<b>Nature of the reality to be known: World views</b>		
<b>Newtonian world view</b>	<b>General systems theory (GST)</b>	<b>Systemic thinking (Second order cybernetics)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality is objective, and hence observer-independent</li> <li>• Reality is fixed, stable and static</li> <li>• Reality is made up of fixed, interchangeable and stand-alone objects.</li> <li>• Objects have to be understood by reducing them to their smallest parts</li> <li>• Objects are the sum-total of their constituent parts</li> <li>• Objects interact like separate cogs in a machine through linear cause-effect relationships</li> <li>• Causal relationships are governed by given, immutable laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality consists of various systems, hierarchically arranged from more to less complex: micro, meso, macro</li> <li>• A system is an organised whole composed of interacting parts centred around an identity within boundaries</li> <li>• Living systems are open and maintains itself through continuous inputs from their environment and converting them – the throughput - into outputs</li> <li>• Outputs are linked to inputs via feedback loops aimed at preserving homeostasis (= equilibrium) in the system</li> <li>• The system goal is to reach and maintain homeostasis — balance and avoid negative entropy — the rundown of the system by ensuring a constant feedback (= information)</li> <li>• The same final state in a system can be reached from various starting conditions and through different processes (= of equi-finality)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality is an interconnected whole of reciprocally influencing, interacting, self-organising variables.</li> <li>• Everything exists in relationship with something else: ‘patterns that connect.’</li> <li>• Things are not polar opposites or ‘either/or,’ but, instead, are in complementary relationships of ‘both/and.’</li> <li>• The relationships between variables are characterised by the ongoing resolution of dynamic, opposing tensions that through emergent, self-organising (or adapting), form a dynamic, unique pattern of interacting (or relating) within the whole, i.e. being autopoietic.</li> <li>• A pattern manifests either a virtuous or vicious cycle of interaction</li> <li>• A pattern is governed by a limited number of underlying, organising rules</li> <li>• Reality as interconnected whole moves through successive states of chaos — the breakdown of an existing pattern, and order — the emergence of a new pattern</li> </ul>

Table 3.1 (continued)

<b>Nature of the reality to be known: Application to coaching</b>		
<p>The leader has the ability to solve organisational problems mechanistically, and control the outcome in a linear, rational manner. The coach focuses solely only on the leader within this mechanistic world and sees the leader in isolation from the bigger context.</p> <p>The emphasis is on the leader as a single entity consisting of 'parts to be fixed', and on how to re-engineer what he/she is doing, in order to equip the leader to achieve a more predictable, effective outcome. A single, best coaching solution exists.</p>	<p>The leader does not lead or act in isolation but forms part of a bigger team, organisation, or system, and is interacting with the systems around him/her.</p> <p>To better understand the leader, one needs to look at him/her within the context. To deal only with his/her behaviour or thought processes or internal belief systems will be insufficient. The interaction with the context provides information through feedback loops that will help the coach in the coaching process.</p> <p>Based on equifinality as principle, the coach can work with any specific theme or pattern that may have a circular effect through the feedback loops on the bigger system and have the same impact</p>	<p>Leaders and organisations are seen as examples of adaptive systems. The focus is on relationships that are an essential part of the leader and his/her context we want to understand.</p> <p>Leaders have to adapt and grow continuously, and apply new ways of doing. The aim will be for leadership to be less about control, and more about adaptation, and more relation-centric and multi-directional.</p> <p>Coach and coachee form a systemic whole in which emerging, self-designing relationship patterns stands central and co-evolve over time. Coach, coachee, and relevant stakeholders play an integral role in the co-creation of alternative patterns.</p>

Table 3.1 (continued)

References		
Obolensky, 2010; O’Murchu, 2004; Veldsman, 2016; Wheatley, 2006, 2010.	Dell, 1985; Fourie, 1991; Miller, 2003; von Bertalanffy, 1968, 2003; Veldsman, 2016.	Duffy, 2000; Fairholm, 2004; Greybe, 2004; Güastello & Liebovitch, 2009; Jennings & Dooley, 2007; Keeney, 1983; Kuhn, 2012; Maturana, 1975; Midgley, 2003; Myburgh, 2003; Obolensky, 2010; Plowman & Duchon, 2007; Simon, 1985; Snowden, 2008, 2009; Stacey, 2007; Stevenson 2012; Streufert & Satish, 1997; Van Tonder, 2004; Veldsman, 2016; Wheatley, 2010.

As can be noted from Table 3.1, the major differences between the three world views are that they range as follows:

- from deconstructing objects into their smallest stand-alone parts, which interrelate through linear causality ruled by immutable laws; to
- systems composed of inputs, throughput, outputs and feedback loops, governed by homeostasis and equifinality; to, finally,
- emerging sets of integrated dynamic wholes forming self-designing patterns infused by either virtuous or vicious cycles of interaction.

The implications for coaching from:

- from focus on the leader as single entity re-engineering a predictable outcome; to
- understanding the leader within his context through feedback loops and circularity; to, finally,
- coach and leader as a systemic whole in which emerging, self-designing relationship patterns stands central and co-evolve over time.

Table 3.2 lists the aims and outcomes of the knowing process and application to coaching.



Table 3.2

*Aims and Outcomes of the Knowing Process — Genuine Knowledge about the Reality to be Known: World Views with their Application in Coaching*

<b>Aims and outcomes of the knowing process: World views</b>		
<b>Newtonian world view</b>	<b>General systems theory (GST)</b>	<b>Systemic thinking (Second-order cybernetics)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven one-on-one, predictable and linear relationships between single, stand-alone, observable variables: regulated by sequential cause and effect</li> <li>• For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction</li> <li>• Knowledge about the atomistic, linear reality in the form of empirical facts and laws that need to be quantifiable and measurable, providing predictions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovery through observation of systems dynamics manifested as circular causality</li> <li>• To understand systems as bounded, goal-seeking, self-regulating, re-cursive, and equilibrium-seeking entities with a given environment and attaining a state of stability, consistency and harmony</li> <li>• True knowledge gives a quantitative description of systems in the form of empirical facts and laws about systems dynamics, allowing one to make predictions about such dynamics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand the multiple interconnectedness between entities expressed in relationships and manifested in patterns with their underlying rules</li> <li>• Absolute prediction and uniformity are not possible</li> <li>• To find 'both/and' solutions through the dynamic fusion of opposing tensions amongst variables by bringing about virtuous cycles or eliminating vicious cycles through changing the underlying rules</li> </ul>

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Table 3.2 (continued)

<b>Aims and outcomes of the knowing process: application to coaching</b>		
<p>Identify stand-alone cause and effect of not being a good leader, and trying to, in a rational, objective way, guide the leader to effect change or fix the identified problem linearly by changing a negative or destructive cause.</p> <p>The need to be addressed and the expected outcome must be quantifiable and quantified. The use of an assessment to determine the gap in the desired behaviour of the leader, and to measure and predict the outcome in relation to this initial assessment.</p>	<p>Role of a leader in an organisation is to manage his/her and the organisation's boundaries, and ensure that the respective system with its subsystems adapt to change, in order to sustain or retain equilibrium.</p> <p>Good leaders ensure that an organisation adapts to the changing context through a process of feedback to achieve a stable equilibrium. To assist the leader as an open system embedded in the organisation as larger system to adapt to change in order to conserve equilibrium or attain homeostasis.</p> <p>The leader has to gain insight into his/her inputs, how these are converted into outputs, and the impact of these outputs on his/her context and subsequent changes inputs through feedback, if necessary to achieve homeostasis .</p>	<p>To observe and consider the leader as part of a holistic pattern of interaction with its underlying rules in his/ her context, and what role he/ she plays within the pattern. Insight must be gained into the circular interconnectivity between him/her and everyone within the context, including the coach.</p> <p>To try and open new ways or options to the leader to consider the interconnected whole helping him/her to uncover patterns, and to identify where to intervene in a pattern with its associated rules in order to change it.</p>
<b>References</b>		
<p>DeWitt McGarry, 2002; Obolensky, 2010; O'Murchu, 2004.</p>	<p>Stacey, 2007; von Bertalanffy, 1968, 2003; Veldsman, 2016.</p>	<p>Bateson,1979, 2003; Hamdani, Jetha, &amp; Norman, 2011; Myburgh, 2003; Obolensky, 2010; Stacey,1992; Wheatley, 2006.</p>

As can be noted from Table 3.2, major difference between the world views range:

- from quantifiable, observable linear causality expressed in verified empirical facts and laws; to
- feedback loops and circular causality; to
- multiple interconnectedness and patterns; everything exists in complementary relationships of 'both/and.'

The implications for coaching range:

- from fixing the identified problem in a linear way; to
- assisting the leader as an open system to adapt to change in order to conserve equilibrium or attain homeostasis; to, finally,
- considering the interconnected whole; uncovering patterns, and to identify where to intervene in a pattern with its associated rules, in order to change it.

Table 3.3 shows the coaching process and agenda and the application to coaching.




Table 3.3

*The Process of Knowing and its Features — the Coaching Process with its Agenda: World Views with the application in Coaching*

<b>The process of knowing and its features: World views</b>		
<b>Newtonian world view</b>	<b>General systems theory (GST)</b>	<b>Systemic thinking (Second-order cybernetics)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensory based, observations of objective reality</li> <li>• Understand a phenomenon by breaking it up into the smallest possible pieces where whole is equal to the sum total of its parts</li> <li>• Study the stand-alone, individual parts and their causal interdependencies of cause-effect</li> <li>• Plan and predict and is key in order to ensure logical steps to reach an end goal</li> <li>• 'Either/or' solutions and one best solution only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of intact system that is more than the sum of its constituent parts and must be described in terms of its constituent elements in reciprocal interaction</li> <li>• Understanding how systems evolve through feedback and homeostasis producing</li> <li>• Overall systemic interactions through a process of recursion.</li> <li>• Detecting positive feedback that reinforces the original state, and leads to growth. Or, negative feedback that tends to result in equilibrium and stagnation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delineate whole with constituent variables</li> <li>• Respond to disorder or non-equilibrium with renewed life creating a higher and new form of order or pattern.</li> <li>• In the context of chaos and complexity, where there is no equilibrium, the leader evolves and grows continuously</li> <li>• Reconfiguration of self to a higher level of complexity and a new pattern of functioning as a response in order to be better able to deal with the change in its context</li> <li>• Considering multiple possible configurations — the manifesting pattern is only one of many patterns</li> </ul>

Table 3.3 (continued)

<b>The process of knowing and its features — the coaching process with its agenda: Application in coaching</b>		
<p>To solve a problem, one would try to find the most recent analytical tool, or applying recent learning to try and understand the cause of a difficult situation. It could be productivity, low morale, turnover of staff, or re-engineering. An emotional maturity assessment will determine why he/she cannot lead people effectively.</p> <p>The assessment may show a low score for self-regard or self-belief. The coach concentrates on the essentials of self-regard exclusively, and tries to understand what causes the low score, in order to fix it.</p> <p>Specific goals will be set to analyse the cause of a problem and then applying logical steps to achieve the goal.</p> <p>Agenda points are dealt with in step-by-step way.</p>	 <p>Feedback loops forms integral part of the coaching process. The leader's internal beliefs, will not be the only aspect that will influence the way he/she leads, but also feedback (i.e. a series of actions) from the team and context around them</p> <p>Important to understand all the circular feedback loops that influence the way he/she is leading.</p> <p>Agenda points are dealt with by exploring circular effects.</p>	<p>The application of paradoxes or wholeness enables leaders to re-examine their own mental models, and to find alternative ways of doing. Exploring complementary aspects or paradoxes in order to enable the leader to find ways of thriving in the current VUCA world. It is a process of seeking, finding, and sustaining dynamic fusion between opposites.</p> <p>Aims to help the leader to function on the border between chaos and sameness or, what complexity theory refers to as the <i>edge of chaos</i>. Here, both stability and instability (i.e. chaos) are important.</p> <p>The role of the coach can be to increase the level of instability or challenge that which is comfortable, in order to move the leader out of his/her stable mind-set, and to create new ways of thinking and doing.</p> <p>The flow of the coaching agenda refers to a recursive process of deepening meaning through conversation</p>
<b>References</b>		
<p>De Lange, 1990; Heylighen, 2006; Obolensky, 2010; Wheatley, 2006.</p>	<p>Greybe, 2004; Stacey, 2007; von Bertalanffy, 2003.</p>	<p>Cavanagh, 2006; Güastello &amp; Liebovitch, 2009; Obolensky, 2010; O'Connor &amp; McDermott, 1997; Keene, 2000; Stacey, 1992, 2007; Wheatley, 1994, 2006, 2010.</p>

As can be noted from Table 3.3, major differences between the world views range:

- from one best, stand-alone solution to change and a single, linear causal relationship; to
- a system that evolves through feedback and homeostasis; to, finally,
- chaos and complexity with no equilibrium, which enables growth; multiple possible configurations.

The implications for coaching range from:

- setting specific goals; following logical steps to achieve the goal; dealing with agenda point in step-by-step way; to
- understanding and exploring circular feedback loops that influence leadership; to, finally,
- a recursive process of deepening meaning through conversation; enabling the leader to find ways of thriving in the current VUCA world.

Table 3.4 indicates the position and role of the knower relative to the reality to be known and the application to coaching.



Table 3.4

*The Position and Role of the Knower Relative to the Reality to be Known — the Coach and Coachee: World Views and Application in Coaching*

<b>The position and role of the knower relative to the reality to be known: World views</b>		
<b>Newtonian world view</b>	<b>General systems theory (GST)</b>	<b>Systemic thinking (Second-order cybernetics)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality is fixed and a given within a set of predetermined laws where the knower applies these laws in a direct way within an innate laws environment of linear cause and effect</li> <li>• Knower is a passive, re-active, objective observer who merely like a passive digital camera records truthfully the sensory images he/ she receives. He/ she decides on what pictures to take with what focus, and in the ways in which to organise the photos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality and one-best-way determined by the context, variables concerned, and feedback received</li> <li>• As pro-active knower uses her/his thinking to construct and use her/ his digital camera to take pictures of systems, and then apply her/his thinking to analyse the photos taken with the ideas she/ he has in his/ her mind about possible system dynamics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality and context is constantly changing and evolutionary — an incessant interplay between experience and cognitive construction, producing different and multiple ideas and representations of reality</li> <li>• The knower actively engages with demarcated wholes in order to understand manifested patterns in the form of relationships, rules and patterns, and then responds to the uncovered patterns of which she/ he forms part by either adapting or changing a pattern by changing its underlying rules.</li> </ul>

Table 3.4 (continued)

<b>The position and role of the knower relative to the reality to be known – the coach and coachee: application to coaching</b>		
<p>The coach is an objective, analytical observer who has a blueprint definition of what the components of good leadership are, and has to repair or replace the 'faulty parts' of the coachee in order for the coachee to function more efficiently.</p> <p>The coachee plays a more passive, reactive role in the 'fixing' process. A one-size-fits-all plan exists for effecting the change.</p>	<p>The coach and coachee are two independent and separate systems. Although connected through circular loops both are objective and detached in the way they perceive the world.</p> <p>The coach considers different and holistic options concentrating on the circular feedback loops. The coach is able to assist the leader with the best and appropriate solution to understand the circular loops and restore balance in life.</p>	<p>Leaders construct their own versions of reality, and do not hold an objective reality of the world. The coach and the coachee will co-construct a shared meaning related to what has been observed.</p> <p>The coach cannot be described as the expert or a change agent; neither objective. The coach is co-constructing a reality with the leader, to find alternative ways of perceiving and changing the circular, holistic, and dynamic world, expressed as a self-organising pattern in which he or she lives.</p>
<b>References</b>		
<p>Obolensky, 2010; O'Murchu, 2004; Wheatley, 2006.</p>	<p>Stacey, 2007; von Bertalanffy, 2003.</p>	<p>Airasian &amp; Walsh, 1997; De Lange, 1990; Dell, 1985; Ford &amp; Urban, 1998; Fourie, 1991; Maturana, 2003; Von Foerster, 1984, 2003; Von Glasersfeld, 2003; Stacey, 2007; Wheatley, 2010.</p>



As can be noted from Table 3.4, major difference between the world views range:

- from objective, passive, reactive observer recording and fixing things according to one best way; to
- a best way determined by the context; objective observer is part of two independent systems; to, finally,
- reality is co-created and outcome is emerging, self-designing into patterns in which participants are embedded.

The implications for coaching range:

- from the coach as objective, analytical observer and the leader as more passive reactive; to
- coach and leader as two independent and separate systems, connected through circular loops, but both objective and detached in the way they perceive the world; to, finally,
- coach and leader are co-constructing a new reality (meaning) finding alternative ways of perceiving and changing the circular, holistic, and dynamic world.

### **3.3. THE WORLD VIEWS INFORMING CURRENT COACHING APPROACHES**

In the previous chapter, I applied two frameworks to discuss examples of different coaching approaches — psychodynamic, behavioural, CBC, NLP, solution-focused, systems-psychodynamic, and narrative collaborative coaching — using the coaching landscape with its building blocks as framework for the discussion. Each of these approaches has specific theoretical assumptions, underpinned by different world views. These coaching approaches are compared in depth table format, given in Table A.1 Appendix A, in relation to the world views, i.e. Newtonian, GST, and systemic thinking, and applied to coaching in general.

Considering the application of the frameworks and evaluation in Table A.1 the world views of the different theoretical approaches to coaching are predominantly built on Newtonian principles. Psychodynamic coaching, although recently adapted to align with the complexity of today's world, is still essentially Newtonian. Behavioural coaching collects data systemically and holistically, utilising some GST principles, but is still based on the same world view. CBC is an integrated approach, but the role of the coach is direct with the aim to solve problems in a structured and systematic way, aligned to Newtonian principles. NLP works with the whole, and applies some GST and first-order systemic thinking principles, but still emphasises the objective reality.

Although Solution-focused coaching considers the whole, and works with all life dimensions of the leader in co-constructing solutions, the underlying principles and beliefs are mostly GST with some systemic principles. Systems psychodynamic coaching includes the broader context and explores relationship connections, but the emphasis is still on cause and effect, with a predetermined outcome. The world view is still Newtonian with some elements of GST or open systems.

The only approach that seems to correlate well with a systemic world view is the third-generation approach: Narrative collaborative coaching. There is less focus on goals and quick fixes, and more focus on reflection, in-depth meaning-making dialogue and the relationship between the coach and coachee. The coaching conversation is based on a clear link between the coachee and his/her context, and facilitates a new narrative in relation to the challenges experienced. However, the process seems direct, with the aim to achieve specific outcomes. Although the coach and coachee co-create realities for future narratives, there is not a clear indication of the autonomy of the leader and the unpredictable outcome or the process, or of the impossibility of objectivity of the observer (coach), which also links well with GST principles.

The abovementioned approaches will be discussed and evaluated again when I report the empirical findings of my study, to enable a more comprehensive and integrated view.

In the next section, I briefly explore two systemic approaches to therapy. There is a distinct difference between coaching and therapy. The key focus of therapy is on long-term and deeper treatment. It may even involve medication in addition to psychotherapy (Hart, Blattner, & Leipsich, 2007). Therapy is therefore seen as treatment to heal deeper psychological problems. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.4 the distinction between clinical work and coaching work is clear. Coaching literature states that coaching does not intend to take care of psychological problems (Whitmore, 2005; Williams & Thomas, 2004). However, some of the principles of these two approaches may be useful in exploring a systemic approach to coaching.

#### **3.4. A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO THERAPY**

Therapy models have always been based mainly on the principles of cause and effect within a Newtonian world view, mostly using the medical model as frame of reference. Systems thinking, and specifically second-order systems thinking and constructivism, however, have had some impact on therapy models.

The two systemic applications in therapy that are relevant to my study are:

- Lynn Hoffman's constructivist position for therapy; and
- hypothesising, circularity, and neutrality, as done by The Milan Team.

In Chapter 2 I referred to a constructionist model to coaching. In this section I will discuss a constructivist position of Lynn Hoffman. It will be important to clarify the difference. **Constructivism** is a theory of knowledge (epistemology) that argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. We are perceivers and interpreters who construct our own reality grounded in perception of physical and social

experiences, which can only be comprehended by the mind. We all conceive of the external reality somewhat differently, based on our unique set of experiences with the world and our beliefs about them (Watzlawick, 1984; Von Foerster, 1984). Piaget's theory of constructivism in short argues that people produce knowledge and form meaning based upon their experiences (Piaget, 2013).

**Constructionism** views the world as being internally created through constructs, or internal models. Everything we understood is constructed. Papert and Harel (1991) refer to it as 'learning by making'.

### 3.4.1 A constructivist position for therapy

Lynn Hoffman started doing family therapy in 1963 (Hoffman, 2003). This was a shift from working with an individual in isolation to understanding the context of the family system. For 20 years, she worked with families, and tried to understand and explore the inter-factional patterns and relationships significant to families and family therapy.

During the late 1980s, she experienced another radical shift. She moved away from the 'observed system' reality — the belief that we can know the objective truth of others, to an 'observing system' — where we can only know our own construction of others and the world. In adopting this belief of the observing system, she also moved away from trying to define objective, treatable structures in families (Hoffman, 2003).

She described the following implications and application of this belief as follows:

- One should consider moving away from setting up a **diagnostic category** as an independent reality, as this is a way to create pathology. In objective pathology, the role of the therapist is to fix or correct. With this approach, the therapist is then a repairman, and needs something to repair. When likening this to coaching, it means that the coach will be

seen as the expert who needs to use his/her knowledge and skills to change or 'fix' the leader.

A different perspective, as described by her, is, for example, where the reflective team in family therapy will make the family part of their discussion and thinking. They are then allowed to listen to the deliberations of the 'experts,' and may also have the last word in the conversation. The therapist does not stay at a distance, but needs to offer more self-disclosure. In applying this to coaching, the coach cannot be the guru or expert, but is merely a co-creator in the conversation. The change is not pre-determined or planned, but evolves in the moment of the unfolding conversation. This relates well to team coaching, where the team co-create together in conversation alternative options and realities.

- The principle of **homeostasis** complicates the process even more. The explanations of family theories based on homeostasis offer linear causalities, rather than the non-linear dynamics of complex systems (Dell, 1980). Many family therapy models seem to expect of the therapist to control the process and the outcome. The danger here is finding simple solutions for complex dilemmas. This may lead to trying to conserve the balance, and not being open to the rapid change to which leaders are exposed.
- A **defined problem** cannot exist independently of our ideas about it. Reality is therefore constructed between the parties or systems involved. The family therapist would not be able to claim an objective view of the family or the problem, or claim to know how to solve it appropriately. A problem does exist, but only in the realm of meanings (Hoffman, 2003). The therapist and the family will give meaning to what they perceive the problem to be. In the coaching process, the coach and leader will co-create or co-construct the reality or issue on which they wish to focus. Interventions and tasks, therefore, cannot be given to coachees with the aim to change them. These are only options or ideas to consider.

- Too much **purpose and control** in therapy may hamper the process. The therapist should be less conscious of forcing or strategizing deliberate change. The so called 'resistance' most models refer to is only an indication of how the system may react in that given moment. The term *resistance* is used by therapists when they do not get the desired results. This relates to the concept of autonomy, where the system will react towards what is appropriate at that moment. The leader will also respond autonomously to the ideas of the coach.
- There is a shift in focus, from **behaviour to ideas**. Exploring options and meanings for people is important. In coaching, the aim is not to explore or change behaviour or the intrapsychic system. The focus is on interactional systems (interdependence or interconnectedness). In both family therapy and coaching, the interest is not only in personal ideas, but also in collective ideas. The system observed is more than the collection of people, but also more than the collection of ideas.
- The **therapist sides** with everyone, and considers all beliefs and behaviours, even those that are negative. This opens up the possibility to co-create a shared reality. The coach therefore will have to consider all possibilities and ideas that may evolve in the coaching conversation.

These views of Hoffman (2003) paint a different picture of clinical work, where the word *therapy* almost no longer belongs. The approach avoids trying to fix something that does not work. It is non-judgemental, lateral rather than hierarchical, and focuses on many possibilities, rather than just one. There is no assumption of objectivity or a given reality.

The approach of Hoffman is relevant to a systemic coaching approach. The coach cannot be the expert, only a co-creator of alternative options. In coaching, one needs to move away from homeostasis and stability, and be open to change, chaos, and complexity, moving from 'either/or' to 'both/and.' Reality is not fixed in systemic coaching, but meaning is co-created in the coaching context. The

focus is not only on behaviour, but also on ideas and the co-evolution of collective, rather than individual, ideas. The reflective team as described by Hoffman (2003) and principles of this approach aligned well to the concept of team coaching.

### **3.4.2 Milanian family therapy**

In family therapy, the well-known Milan Team based their model on the work of Bateson (Selvini, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 2003). They use a circular method of assessing families (hypothesising), a circular way of doing therapy (neutrality), and a circular approach to interviewing (circular questioning). In their commitment to a systemic framework, they are careful not to establish a linear causality for a problem when they are working with a family (Midgley 2003). These principles are used to develop a meta-view of the system (Dixon, 2007).

The above three principles, as described by The Milan Team (Selvini et al., 2003, pp. 152-161), entail the following process:

- ❖ **Hypothesizing.** Before starting a session, the therapist will have certain information on the family. Based on this information, he/she will form a hypothesis about the family as a starting point for something he/she wishes to explore. The hypothesis must be systemic, and must include all components of the family. The hypothesis is never true or false, but rather more useful or less useful. This process guides the therapist in tracking relationship patterns. Feedback in the therapy process guides the therapist to either stay with the initial hypothesis, or form a new one based on the information gathered during the exploration.
- ❖ **Circularity.** The Milan Team define circularity as follows (Selvini et al., 2003, p. 157): “By circularity we mean the capacity of the therapist to conduct his investigation on the basis of feedback from the family in response to the information he solicits about relationships and, therefore, about difference and change.” The aim of this process is to explore the complexity in family systems. Each member of the family will be asked to

- explain the relationships of two other members of the family. Inviting a member to meta-communicate about the relationship of two others, in their presence, provides both the family and the therapist with new and different information. Questions are stated in a circular way, are thought-provoking, and allow the family to perceive things and events differently.
- ❖ **Neutrality.** Neutrality refers to a specific behaviour of the therapist during the session. The therapist will not side with anybody, but will be close to everyone. When the therapist asks one member to comment on a specific relationship, he/she, at that time, appears to be allied to that person. However, this alliance shifts the moment he/she asks another member, and yet another, to do the same. The therapist is open and non-judgemental. The role of the therapist is mainly to gather information, understand, and provide feedback, rather than being the change agent or making moral judgments of any kind.

The Milanian approach provides a useful way of exploring relationships and patterns in families, without trying to find pathology or a linear cause of family problems. It is only when this way of 'interviewing' is applied that it is possible for the therapist to suggest interventions based on the systemic information acquired. This method is useful in coaching, to ensure that ideas or assumptions about leaders and their challenges are not limited to linear thoughts. Possibilities can be explored circularly, and may include many options, not only one.

### **3.4.3 Evaluation of systemic therapy**

Considering the elements of a systemic world view, the above approaches to systemic therapy can be summarised in Table 3.5 as follows:



Table 3.5

*Evaluation of Systemic Therapy in Relation to a Systemic World View*

Systemic worldview	Constructivist position	Milan Team
<p><b>Nature of the reality to be known:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Reality is an interconnected whole of reciprocally influencing, interacting, self-organising variables. Relationships are central in understanding reality.</li> <li>❖ Everything exists in relationship with something else: 'patterns that connect.'</li> <li>❖ Things are not polar opposites or 'either/or,' but, instead, are in complementary relationships of 'both/and.'</li> <li>❖ The relationships between variables are characterised by the ongoing resolution of dynamic, opposing tensions that, through emergence and self-organising (or adapting), form a dynamic, unique pattern of interacting (or relating) within the whole, i.e. being autopoietic.</li> <li>❖ A pattern manifests as either a virtuous or vicious cycle of interaction.</li> <li>❖ A pattern is governed by a limited number of underlying organising rules.</li> <li>❖ Reality as an interconnected whole moves through successive states of chaos — the breakdown of an existing pattern — and order — the emergence of a new pattern.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the family as a whole system</li> <li>• Focusing on interactional system</li> <li>• System is autonomous and acts accordingly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the family as a whole system</li> <li>• Circular method of assessing and observing families that emphasises the interconnectedness of relationships</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims and outcomes of the knowing process:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ To understand the multiple interconnectedness between entities expressed in relationships and manifested in patterns with their underlying rules</li> <li>❖ Absolute prediction and uniformity are not possible</li> <li>❖ To find 'both/and' solutions through the dynamic fusion of opposing tensions amongst variables by bringing about virtuous cycles or eliminating vicious cycles by changing the underlying rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with interaction patterns and relationships within family systems</li> <li>• The focus is on many possibilities, and shifts from behaviour to ideas, exploring options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With circularity, the aim is to explore the complexity in family systems</li> <li>• Circularity is also a way of exploring the multiple relationship patterns within the family and creating new patterns</li> </ul>

Table 3.5 (continued)

Systemic worldview	Constructivist position	Milan Team
<p><b>The process of knowing and its features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Delineate whole with constituents variables</li> <li>❖ Respond to disorder or non-equilibrium with renewed life, creating a higher and new form of order or pattern</li> <li>❖ In the context of chaos and complexity, where there is no equilibrium, the leader evolves and grows continuously</li> <li>❖ Reconfiguration of self to a higher level of complexity, and a new pattern of functioning as a response, in order to be better able to deal with the change in its context</li> <li>❖ Considering multiple possible configurations — the manifesting pattern is only one of many patterns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families are complex and dynamic systems — chaos is growth</li> <li>• Intervention by the family therapist is only one idea of many — not a fixed answer for change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using hypotheses is to explore possible options, and not about being true or false. It is not about predictability, but, rather, the aim is to assist the therapist in tracking relationship patterns</li> </ul>
<p><b>Position and role of the knower:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Reality and context are constantly changing and evolutionary — an incessant interplay between experience and cognitive construction, producing different and multiple ideas and representations of reality</li> <li>❖ The knower actively engages with demarcated wholes in order to understand manifested patterns in the form of relationships, rules, and patterns, and then acts in accordance with the uncovered patterns of which she/he forms part</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A defined problem cannot exist independently of our ideas; reality is co-constructed between the parties involved</li> <li>• The family therapist is unable to claim an objective view</li> <li>• The autonomy of the family members determines their reaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The therapist is neutral, open, and non-judgemental, moving away from objectivity to a constructivist position</li> </ul>

The systemic therapy approaches, as assessed in Table 3.6, justify their classification as a systemic world view of therapy. Both approaches work with the whole system, and integrate the broader context. The focus is on interconnectedness and exploring patterns. The aim is to consider alternative options or ideas, and to create new patterns. In the constructivist position, reality is co-constructed by the partners involved, with no objectivity. The Milan Team, although they did not describe a constructivist view, started a new way of exploring family systems in a circular and recursive way.

Given the critical evaluation of the different world views and various coaching approaches, the key question is now: Can we still look at coaching in a linear way? Applying linear coaching answers to a complex, dynamic VUCA world will just be more of the same, with no progress. The world we are living in is one of interconnected networks, where slight changes in one part of the system create important impacts far from where these changes were offered. Linear solutions or old views will not enable leaders to thrive in the real world.

Leaders need a new way of perceiving, a different way of dealing with interconnected wholes and the different stakeholders that shape their lives, a new way of understanding how to re-create patterns of being and doing, and a new way of configuring their lives in an interconnected fashion (Harrington et al., 1999; Obolensky, 2010). The new world view is described as follows: "... we move from the primacy of pieces to the primacy of the whole, from absolute truths to coherent interpretations, from self to community, from problem solving to creating." (Chawla & Renesch, 1995, p. 17).

Given the current state of the coaching approaches reviewed relative to the world faced by leaders in practice, I believe it is important to start exploring the possibilities of an alternative strategy to coaching, where the view is a systemic perspective that views the interconnected world in a constructivist way, as well as applying some principles of Third-generation coaching, enabling the exploration of new realities. The difference in exploring an alternative strategy will be the application of the coaching building blocks as a framework for discussion.

### **3.5. A PROPOSED SYSTEMIC STRATEGY TO LEADERSHIP COACHING**

Coaching from a traditional or linear perspective provides limited options to the leader who operates in the current world of chaos and complexity. It is believed that coaching from a systemic perspective, applying an integrative framework of the coaching building blocks, will provide more alternatives for leaders in a VUCA world to understand and change their own patterns of self-renewal.

By using the building blocks of the coaching landscape explicated in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.1); I will now proceed to propose an integrative coaching strategy based on a systemic world view. When the terms *system* or *systemic* are used in what follows, it is used in the framework of a complexity or chaos world view.

The aim of this section is to build on coaching approaches in the current literature that are informed by systemic world view (see Chapter 2) by:

- firstly, integrating them into a single systemic coaching strategy; and
- secondly, congruently enriching, expanding, and deepening the literature-based, integrated systemic strategy with the distilled features of a chaos- or complexity world view, as explicated in Tables 3.1 to 3.4 (this chapter) and a systemic approach to therapy (see Section 3.4 of this chapter),

in order to arrive at an integrative coaching strategy based on a systemic world view, the value of which for practice is assessed in the report on my field study.

#### **3.5.1. Coaching context**

According to Kahn (2011), the context is the current systemic reality, which may include the organisational context, both external and internal (e.g., organisational structure, organisational culture, and relationships), as well as perceived realities. The multiple stakeholders in the context of the leader form part of an action community, and may include the team (team members, the leader's superior, and sub-ordinates), other departments, vendors, customers, the external context or global economy, and his/ her family (Cox et al., 2014).

Leaders are connected to other people and the context in a circular and holistic way. His/her behaviour will be affected by the context and the web of interrelationships in

and around the organisation, and vice versa. Leadership is defined by the relationships that are formed in its context. Therefore, the leader cannot hope to influence any situation without respect for the complex network of people who contribute to the organisation. This relates well to the systemic therapy models described.

To understand the leader and the way he/she interacts, the coach needs to include significant role players in the coaching process, or observe the leader within the work context or in a meeting. The different stakeholders within the context of the leader have multiple and different views of reality, which have to be harmonised. The coaching context offers the opportunity to the leader to connect these multiple views in a meaningful way.

The observing system or bigger context is more than just people. It includes not only a collection of people and physical objects, but also a collection of meanings or ideas. This relates well to a constructivist position of systemic therapy as referred to by Hofman (2003). The context is therefore not only physical, but also:

- constitutional, e.g., the assumptions of multiple stakeholders, their meanings or ideas, and the paradigms or mental models that inform their ideas and behaviour;
- normative, e.g., the beliefs, values, and norms they may have;
- experiential, which will include their perceptions, feelings, and attitudes; and
- historical — where the setting came from, where it is now, and where it is going. Another context, therefore, is the time line or patterns. The focus is not only on the here and now, but also on what has happened in the past that lead to the present, or what could happen in the future. A context consisting of an interconnected whole of past–present–future is important in the coaching.

This all happens in what Varela (2003, p. 169) called “a conversational domain.” The observing system is a community of people or stakeholders, not a single person. Perceptions are formed through the linguistic and cultural filters through which we learn. In the conversations, meaning and perceptions are formed. The coach and the leader need to decide how they are going to include the voices of stakeholders or

significant others in this coaching context. Will such inclusion entail observing the leader in his work context? Will it be conversations with significant others? How do we ensure that the conversational domain becomes the 'real' map of the territory? From a systemic perspective, this can only be a perceived reality based on a representative view of the territory.

Systemic coaching must therefore bring the whole setting, i.e. the system with all its multiple dimensions and all the stakeholders described above, into 'a room' in real time. In order to coach the leader, one needs to be able to observe the whole — one needs to see a representative film, not only individual snap shots. In this conversation, understanding of reality will be co-created. However, the picture will constantly evolve and have multiple meanings. There may also be many 'films.' The coach will work with a co-creation of the integrated perceptions of different stakeholders at a given moment and time.

### **3.5.2 Coaching objectives**

The coaching journey is about searching and understanding patterns (Cavanagh, 2006; Stelter, 2016). A pattern is a connection between variables in the way we think and behave. It is a cycle or set of acts and behaviours or a specific behaviour that occurs more than once. The aim of systemic coaching is to help the leader discover, explore, reflect on, and learn about the existing pattern in which he/she is embedded at present, as well as many potential patterns in the complex world in which he or she is embedded. The objective is to help the leader explore how everything fits together, to see alternative options (= patterns), and to construct the appropriate pattern.

The patterns we observe are influenced by our own theories, models, assumptions, and beliefs. In the coaching conversation, the aim is to explore and understand these past–present–future patterns over and through time. It is also about finding or constructing new ways of thinking, understanding, and doing (alternative, changing patterns), in order to thrive in a different, changing world, currently depicted as the VUCA world.

Single-loop or first-order learning entails changing behaviour without changing assumptions or mental models, or performing an action and learning from the outcome and merely applying a different action or solution, without changing beliefs (Stacey, 1992). This form of learning is inadequate and too mechanistic for the VUCA world. The aim needs to be to change perceptions, ways of thinking, paradigms, and mental models, i.e. double-loop learning (Smith & Hitt, 2005; Senior, 1997; Stacey, 2000, 2007; Stelter, 2016). This relates well to the description of vertical leadership development, which enables leaders to co-construct meaning, and to think and act differently, to ensure that their doing and decision-making are equal or superior to the complexity of the context (Hernez-Broom & Hughes, 2004; Petrie, 2013).

Another form of learning that is part of the systemic coaching conversation is deuterio-learning. The emphasis here is more on the descriptions of Bateson, and not only Argyris and Schön. Visser (2007, pp. 659-660) distinguished between the definition of deuterio-learning of Argyris and Schön: “process of collaborative inquiry and reflection,” and that of Bateson: “behavioural adaptation to patterns of conditioning in relationships in organisational contexts.” In the coaching conversation, there are moments of reflection. Patterns of behaviour evolve in the relationship. This relationship originates from the messages that are exchanged in the conversation. The objective of coaching here aligns to third-generation coaching, where the focus is on dialogue about specific thoughts and events by reflecting on meaning-making and specific values (Stelter, 2016).

Obolensky (2010), Senge (1999), Stacey (2007), and Wheatley (2010) postulated the fundamental belief that the global context is a non-linear, complex system, where the rules for leaders and organisations change rapidly. It is near impossible to understand a complex system through linear thinking. Leadership coaching from a systemic perspective allows the leader to start seeing the world systemically, and increases the leader’s capacity for surviving in a complex, ever-changing world. The focus is on the growth of the leader, to develop more effective structures and processes (or patterns) in response to the ever-changing context and life challenges (Cavanagh, 2006).

In order to understand the whole, the objective in systemic coaching is also for the leader to be more aware of a holistic being across different dimensions or modes of:

- being and becoming, i.e. physical, physiological, psycho-social, spiritual, religious;
- across all life spheres, for example work, social, recreation; and
- in all of his/her relations, i.e. self, interpersonal, organisational, or with any other system.

The coach becomes part of this holistic system. The coach plays an integral role in helping the leader to see the connections in an organic, circular way. The coach forms part of the perturbations the leader is exposed to in the process of reorganising him-/herself to adapt to change. The form of perturbation may have an influence on how the leader perceives the world in the future. A coaching conversation focusing on interconnected patterns may change a linear way of seeing or doing, and provide different alternatives to the leader to thrive in a non-linear, emerging world.

The set of objectives in coaching from a systemic view is not dealt with in silos. Objectives are interactive and connected, and are explored to see how a complete pattern with its underlying rules fits. In the coaching conversation, for example, the discussion about achievement in the leader's professional career will also be explored in relation to life balance and the importance of team and personal, away-from-the organisation relationships. The leader's life is seen as an integrated whole. Everything is whole and connected, and should be dealt with as such.

### **3.5.3 Coaching roles**

When exploring the roles in systemic coaching, the question is: How does the coach or coachee contribute to, interrelate, and behave in the coaching session? In systemic thinking, there is no such thing as objectivity. The coach cannot be seen as an objective expert who needs to 'fix' the leader. The coach is not a repairman, and should not control the process or outcome.



The leader is seen as part of a bigger, complex systemic pattern. The coach needs to see and understand the system from the leader's perspective. The role of the coach is to help the leader to become sensitive and responsive to the many forms of feedback produced by the bigger system and relationships. This may include 360° feedback or feed-forward loops. For example, making a specific decision will have an impact on the people, team, and organisation (i.e. different systems). The leader needs to be willing to explore the possible circular patterns this decision may create.

Cavanagh (2006), Obolensky (2010), and Wheatley (2010) describe leaders as complex, adaptive systems that can continuously adapt in order to move forward. Anything that impacts the leader as embedded in a pattern provides an opportunity for the systemic pattern to self-organise into a new form of order.

It is the role of the coach to help leaders construct creative order out of chaos, and to help them see their experience in a new way in 'both/and' way instead of an 'either/or' way. The turbulent context of the leader can be seen as an opportunity to find new order or meanings. The roles of the coach and coachee are on an equal basis, and may sometimes alternate. Stelter (2014, 2016) refers to the roles and relationship as symmetrical. The different stakeholders who are part of the context also play a specific role, which will be defined.

Similar to roles in a team as described by Belbin (2013), I suggest the following roles for the coach:

- ❖ story facilitator;
- ❖ resource finder and explorer;
- ❖ questioner to create meaning;
- ❖ question creator;
- ❖ supportive mirror;
- ❖ catalyst to enable difference; and
- ❖ feedback explorer and implementer.

Suggested roles for the coachee (i.e. the leader) could be:

- ❖ storyteller;
- ❖ pattern creator and maintainer; and

- ❖ resource mobiliser.

I also propose shared roles between the leader, coach, and stakeholders. These are:

- ❖ co-learners; and
- ❖ co-explorers of patterns.

The abovementioned roles and systemic coaching principles relates well to the concept of team coaching. In a vertical leadership development approach, leaders in organisations can apply these principles in creating a shared leadership community. A radical shift in organisations cannot be achieved by individualistic leadership but rather a collective identity for leadership. This will be an opportunity for leaders (and followers or teams) to collectively create new ways of thinking and acting in a VUCA world. It is a move away from singularised to shared responsibility; from one-on-one relationships to multiple, reciprocal relationships in order to achieve a shared meaning or outcome (Preiser, Biggs, De Vos & Folke, 2018; Veldsman, 2016).

#### **3.5.4 Coaching relationship**

With the coach being neither objective nor the expert, his/her relationship with the leader is one of co-creating a conversation, meaning, and reality. In systemic thinking, reality is co-constructed by the leader and the coach. Through this construction, a new reality may emerge for the leader and, by implication, the coach, where different possibilities can be explored.

The leader and the coach can be described as non-linear, interactive wholes with high levels of interconnectedness and a circular impact on the broader context. Coaching is an engagement of relatedness that is embedded in the bigger context. The relational dynamics of all stakeholders, i.e. the leader, the organisation, and the coach, will have an impact on the systemic coaching (Kahn, 2011). The process of co-creating new meaning through the coaching conversation opens up an opportunity for change, not only for the leader, but also for the coach (Stelter, 2016). The relationship is participative in co-constructing a new way of thinking and doing.

The relationship is therefore not an 'either/or' relationship, where the coach is either the knowledgeable expert or a facilitator of the leader's agenda. The relationship is a 'both/and' relationship. Sometimes, the coach will be the expert, and share knowledge and give advice. Sometimes, the coach will just be curious in his/her questions, or be understanding in his/her listening. The coach's telling must be appropriate, and the questions genuinely curious (Cavanagh, 2006).

The coach and the leader are equal partners in the relationship; both are adults, and either can take the initiative. The relationship is informed by values such as interconnectivity, equality, respect, empathy, attentive listening, clear confidentiality boundaries, and immense understanding. Also critical to the relationship are trust and the ability to give and receive feedback.

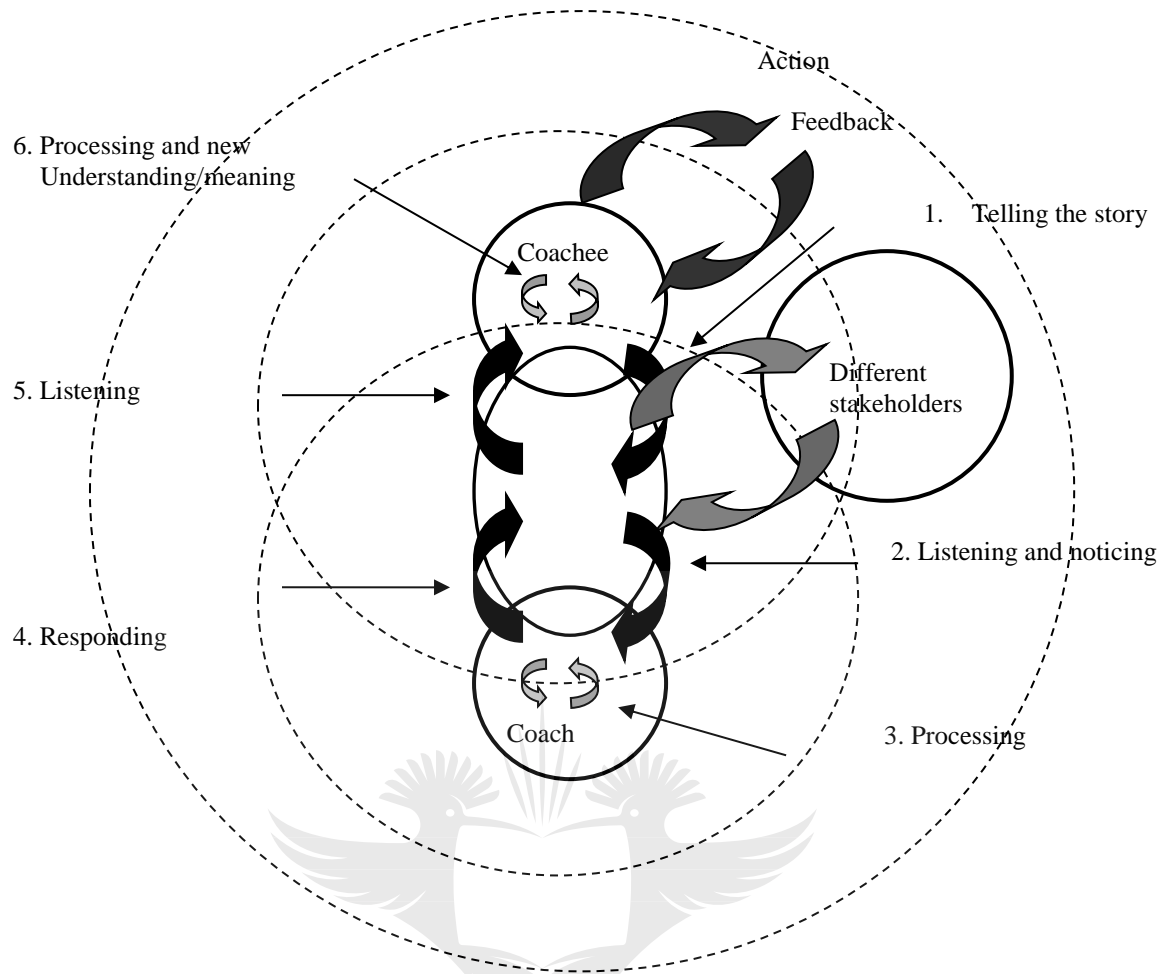
### **3.5.5 Coaching process**

In a time of change and chaos, it is important that leaders shape their organisations, not through rules and rigid structures, but rather through concepts and meaning (Obolensky, 2010). This relates to the concepts of unpredictability and multiple interconnectedness within systemic thinking, where the emergent, self-designing, autonomy of the system determines the change.

Anderson and Goolishian (2003) refer to human systems as 'language determined systems,' where meaning evolves through interpersonal constructs. This is also applicable to the coaching process, where the coach and the leader are part of a system where meaning can evolve through interpersonal constructs (Stelter, 2014, 2016). Thus, the only way to create a different reality or explore meaning is through participation in conversations.

According to Bateson (1979), information is exchanged during the coaching conversation. This information is what brings insight for the leader. Information must therefore be different enough to trigger change. All systemic coaching conversations need to have elements of stability and change in order to allow new patterns to emerge. In the coaching conversation, there is a move away from behaviour to ideas, options, and meanings (Stelter, 2016).

The coaching process according to a systemic world view is a participative conversation or dialogue in the form of storytelling about the past, present, and future of the coachee as an undivided whole. This conversation includes his/her total being in all life dimensions and relationships, in order to create a pattern of shared life, and give meaning in terms of being and becoming what the person wishes to be. Cavanagh (2006, pp. 338-340), also describes the coaching engagement as a complex adaptive system where the conversation is co-created. He referred to this conversation as an opportunity for change, and named it “The Three Reflective Spaces.” The *first space* is the **internal conversation** within the client or leader, and also where the conversation starts. The *second space* is the **conversation between the coach and the leader**. The *third space* is the one **within the coach**. I want to position it differently: systemic coaching must include, as mentioned before, other stakeholders in the context of the coachee. Bringing the voice of significant stakeholders into the coaching conversation changes the picture from only three reflective spaces, as proposed by Cavanagh (2006), to more complex, interactive circles, as illustrated in Figure 3.1



*Figure 3.1.* The coaching process with interactive circles/systems. Adapted from *Coaching from a systematic perspective: A complex adaptive conversation* (pp 313-354), by M. Cavanagh, 2006, John Wiley & Sons Inc.

It is in these circles where meaning and understanding emerge for the individual. The external conversation starts when the leader begins to tell his/her story. This story is a reflection of his/her internal conversations, as well as conversations with others, and includes experiences, mental models, personality, goals, values, emotions, ideas, and dreams. It is a reflection of the whole person in relation to his/her context.

The voices of the different stakeholders add an additional circle to the process. In the process of storytelling, it becomes more than the story of an individual leader; it becomes a reflection of a holistic pattern that includes relationships, ideas, and perceptions of others. The stakeholders become part of co-creating the story with the coach and the coachee. The stakeholders also assist in perceiving the different

relationships in understanding the whole. Information therefore flows from the broader context or stakeholder circle, and becomes part of the coaching conversation. This also illustrates the connectedness of the different systems (circles) and the variety of possibilities that will evolve in the coaching process.

The coaching conversation is a form of Socratic dialogue, where the aim is to encourage the coachee to reflect and think independently. The coach will ask the appropriate questions to direct and steer conversation, which are aimed at self-discovery by the coachee, leading to self-initiated action. The coachee is a responsible adult taking charge of his/her own destiny, and has the inner resources to find the solution. The essence of the dialogue lies in the interaction of human minds.

This relates well to what Bateson (1972) referred to as 'the ecology of ideas or the mind.' New and alternative ideas are built on existing ones. Between the coach and the coachee, this develops as a co-evolution of ideas. The Milan method can also be described as a Socratic dialogue (Lantz, 1994). Through the use of circular questioning, the coachee is challenged to think and reflect differently. Questions in the coaching process will therefore be stated in a circular way, must be thought-provoking, and allow the leader to perceive differently and to find alternative or new meanings. Circular questions allow the coach and coachee to explore different perceptions of reality, as well the realities of others in the coachee's context (Stelter, 2014).

This possible change relates well to the description of Bateson (1979) and Keeney (1983) when they refer to 'difference' as the key aspect of change. As mentioned before, difference is information that includes both stability and change; it is not more of the same or too different, but is appropriate for the moment. Difference also lies in the information and the relationship. Change will emerge in the shared dialogue between the coach and the leader. The relationship provides the space for the co-constructing of new meanings. This relationship is also part of a bigger context, and will be influenced by sources of information in the broader context or the different stakeholders.

### **3.5.6 The coaching agenda**

If one relates to the metaphor of Stacey (2007) and Cavanagh (2006), that coaching is a conversation that co-creates opportunity for exploration, discovery, reflection, growth, and change, the type and form of questions set the tone for either linear or circular conversations. The quality of the conversation will also determine the impact of the coaching (Cheliotas, 2010). Given the systemic context and the emergent properties of the complex, adaptive systems, questions should be circular and interconnected, and include others, the context, and relationship patterns (also referred to before as part of the conversational domain).

The method of circular questioning as described by the Milan Team (Selvini, et al., 2003) in family therapy will be useful in the coaching process. Questions must provide the opportunity to explore the complexity in the leader's system. The starting point of the coaching agenda is the story of the leader as an initial hypothesis. With the coach and the leader as equal partners, the agenda will also be co-created, and not be decided by only one partner.

Relating this to the revised four reflective spaces discussed above, the coach will, after listening to the leader's story, form a hypothesis, as described by the Milan Team. This hypothesis will be systemic, and will include all components of the system (context, as well as relationship patterns of the leader with regard to self, others, and the world). Hypothesising takes place in the coach's world or in an internal conversation. In order to explore this hypothesis, the coach will use circular questioning as method in the overt coaching conversation with the leader.

If different or appropriate enough, the questions may provoke new thoughts in the leader (his/her internal conversation), and may influence change going forward. This will help the coachee to view challenges in life with a different attitude. The coaching agenda will thus be initiated by the leader's expectation, and, with the use of the Milan method, and explored in the conversational domain.

The agenda will reflect the total life of the leader. Agenda points or discussions are not dealt with in a linear, step-by-step way, but in a circular process of deepening understanding or meaning. The same aspects may be discussed more than once,

but explored from different and/or deepened perspectives. The conversation or agenda flow can be described as a recursive pattern, where the level of understanding becomes increasingly deeper.

### **3.5.7 Coach profile**

In the systemic approach, the coach is not an objective expert, but is present as a fellow traveller on a life journey, and is the co-creator of a new or reframed reality. The coach must be comfortable with not providing the answers to the questions of the coachee, but rather to help him/her to ask the appropriate questions. Systemic coaching is more about the journey than the destination.

The coach travels with the coachee on this journey, but does not have a stake in the destination or solution. The destination is the responsibility of the coachee. The coach therefore needs to believe that the leader is capable and has the inner resources to achieve the goal (his/her potential).

The coach appreciates wholeness in his/her personal life, has a circular perspective, and is comfortable with chaos and complexity in order to grow and evolve. This will also mean that the coach is comfortable with ambiguity. The coach enters the coaching conversation as a whole, living being, bringing the self to the coaching conversation, and will include his/her values, emotions, judgment, thoughts, and assumptions (O'Neil, 2000). The coach must therefore be able to see many variables at the same time, and how they interact.

In order to understand significant patterns, it is important to observe the leader within his/her context. The coach therefore needs to understand group dynamics, and have the ability to identify old or past patterns. O'Neil (2000, p. 137) refers to a "bifocal view," where the coach needs to be capable of observing and exploring (diagnosing) at the same time. In order for the coach to include the whole setting of the leader, he/she has to be comfortable with the bigger context and the stakeholders within this setting. The coach needs to be an active listener, in order to understand the story of the coachee, and to help him/her explore the patterns.



The coach as a fellow traveller is therefore not objective, but will also be impacted by the coaching journey. As the leader and his/her team undergo changes, so will the coach. The coach will also learn about him or herself in each interaction, and will need to be aware of his/her own role and inner thoughts during the journey (Kemp, 2008). All these inner thoughts will influence the reaction of the coach and, at the end of the experience, that of the leader. The coach needs to be comfortable in dealing with his inner thoughts and feelings, which all form part of the reflective spaces within the coaching process.

### **3.5.8 Coachee profile**

In order for the leader to grow, the focus has to be on the whole person and meaningful patterns in all the interactive systems and the broader context. The coachee must therefore be comfortable to include other stakeholders or spheres of the coachee's life in the coaching process. He/she needs to understand that one's life is one piece, and that one needs to look at life holistically.

The coachee must also be comfortable that the coach will enable the storytelling process in the coaching journey, but not provide the answers, solutions, or destination of the journey. The coachee must be willing to explore the unknown territory, be open-minded, and not be afraid to experiment with different and new possibilities and to discover new patterns.

### **3.5.9 Coaching outcomes**

It is very difficult to predict the outcome of the coaching process or the behaviour of the leader, because of emergent properties. The leader is a complex, autonomous system. However, coaching from a systemic world view should provide the leader with alternative and holistic options — a reframed or re-created pattern. It is about co-constructing something new with the leader, which may evolve through growth and change. The coaching outcome does not consider 'either/or' solutions, but helps the leader to look at the complementary whole — a *both/and* consideration. The aim is not to try and determine a linear cause and effect, but to see the patterns that connect.

The expected generic outcomes of systemic coaching can be described as follows:

- In **understanding wholeness and connectedness**, the leader may better understand his/her role in relation to the team. He/she will be able to connect with the team in a different way.
- The leader will be able to **explore and identify patterns** in his/her world more holistically, and not perceive the world in a linear way.
- Not only will he/she be able to explore patterns, but will also **understand how the patterns are created**, or what the dynamics are of putting patterns together. This will enable the leader to re-create patterns that work, and to re-configure his/her life in an interconnected fashion.
- Systemic coaching will assist the leader to explore the **different dimensions of his/her life in an interconnected way**, and to try and find meaning in what he/she is doing.
- Through exploring connections and relationships, the leader defines more **meaningful relationships** with self, others, and the world.
- Systemic coaching enables the leader to form **new connections with people, concepts, assumptions, and ideas**.

A summary of the key principles of my proposed systemic coaching strategy is given in Table 3.6, based on the above discussion with its associated references.

Table 3.6

*A Summary of the Key Principles of my Systemic Strategy to Coaching*

<b>Coaching landscape building block</b>	<b>Key principles</b>
<b>Coaching context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The focus is on the whole person by addressing all aspects of life and how these dynamically fit together.</li> <li>➤ The context is made up of multiple stakeholders with multiple and different views of reality, as decided by the coach and coachee.</li> <li>➤ The context includes a collection of meanings and ideas, and is physical, constitutional, normative, experiential, and historical.</li> <li>➤ Coaching happens in a conversational domain, where meaning and perceptions are formed.</li> </ul>
<b>Coaching objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To help the leader to discover, explore, reflect on, and learn about the past–present–future pattern, as well as many possible patterns in the complex world around him or her.</li> <li>➤ To find or construct new ways of thinking, understanding, and doing, in order to thrive in the complex world, with <i>both/and</i> thinking.</li> <li>➤ To become aware of his or her holistic being across all life dimensions.</li> <li>➤ Objectives are interactive and connected.</li> </ul>
<b>Roles of the coach and coachee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Equal roles in constructing a new reality in turbulent times.</li> <li>➤ Different role players: coach, coachee, and stakeholders.</li> <li>➤ Roles of the coach: story facilitator, resource finder and explorer, questioner to create meaning, question creator, supportive mirror, catalyst, and feedback explorer and implementer.</li> <li>➤ Roles of the coachee: storyteller, pattern creator and maintainer, and resource mobiliser.</li> <li>➤ Shared roles for coach, leader, and stakeholders: co-learners, co-explorers, co-constructors, and co-creators.</li> </ul>

Table 3.6 (continued)

Coaching landscape building block	Key principles
Coaching relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The relationship with the leader is participative and collaborative, one of co-creating a conversation, meaning, or reality.</li> <li>➤ High levels of interconnectedness, with a circular impact on the broader system.</li> <li>➤ <i>Both-and</i> relationship that include different stakeholders.</li> <li>➤ The relationship is informed by values such as interconnectivity, equality, empathy, attentive listening, clear confidentiality boundaries, and immense understanding.</li> </ul>
Coaching process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Multiple interconnectedness, where the autonomy of the system will determine what the change will be.</li> <li>➤ Systems are constructed by responsive and complex conversations a Socratic dialogue, where a co-evolution of ideas develops.</li> <li>➤ The coaching process is a participative conversation or dialogue in the form of storytelling about the past, present, and future.</li> <li>➤ Coaching engagement is a complex adaptive system, where the conversation is co-created in multiple reflective spaces.</li> <li>➤ The coaching relationship, which is also part of the bigger context, will be influenced by sources of information from the broader context.</li> <li>➤ The inclusion of different stakeholder voices into the coaching conversation changes the reflective spaces between the coach and coachee to complex, interactive circles in the coaching conversation, illustrating the interconnectedness of all systems.</li> </ul>
Coaching agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Questions are circular and interconnected, and include others, the context, and relationship patterns.</li> <li>➤ Circular questioning provides the opportunity to explore the complexity and allows for new meaning-making.</li> <li>➤ The agenda will be co-created by the coach and the coachee and the flow can be described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.</li> </ul>

Table 3.6 (Continued)

Coaching landscape building block	Key principles
Profile of the coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The coach is not objective and does not provide the answers, but is a fellow traveller on a life journey and a co-creator of a new or reframed reality where the coachee determines the destination.</li> <li>➤ The coach appreciates wholeness, has a circular perspective, and is comfortable with chaos and complexity.</li> <li>➤ The coach needs to have a 'bifocal view' and be comfortable to include the bigger context and stakeholders into the coaching.</li> </ul>
Profile of the coachee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The coachee needs to be comfortable to include other stakeholders or spheres of his or her life in the coaching process.</li> <li>➤ The coachee must be comfortable that the coach will not provide objective answers or solutions.</li> <li>➤ The coachee must be comfortable with ambiguity and be willing to explore unknown territory.</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Systemic coaching should provide the leader with alternative and holistic options with which to reconfigure his or her life in an interconnected fashion.</li> <li>➤ Systemic coaching will enable the leader to explore his or her different life dimensions (internal and external) in a more interconnected manner.</li> <li>➤ Coaching outcomes are not predictable, but are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation.</li> </ul>

### 3.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explored three world views that are important in the field of leadership coaching, i.e. Newtonian, GST, and systemic thinking. The world views that inform the different approaches to coaching were then evaluated in terms of their key features. Only one of the existing approaches, narrative collaborative coaching, is based on some features of a systemic world view. Although some of them emphasise holistic thinking, the focus is still mechanistic and linear, with certain elements of GST.

I also found it useful to explore the field of therapy, with specific reference to a systemic world view. With systemic thinking as world view, the way of doing therapy is radically different from Newtonian thinking or the medical model as we know it. The approach is more open, with options and alternatives, creating meaning out of insecurity.

This chapter forms the basis for the determination of the need in practice for an alternative strategy to coaching that is systemic and integrative, more suited to the VUCA world. It is clear that the current linear approaches to coaching are unable to deal with all these challenges. I lastly explored an alternative approach to coaching that may challenge the leader to think differently, to observe and see alternatives, to have stability and to change, to function within both order and chaos, to not exclude but to include, and to not employ 'either/or' considerations, but rather 'both/and.' This is only the start of a possible way of perceiving differently, and will be co-constructed going forward in the research process.

In the words of Chuang Tzu, in Wheatley (2006, p. 74):

“She who wants to have right without wrong,  
Order without disorder,  
Does not understand the principles  
Of heaven and earth

She does not know how  
Things hang together.”

In the chapter that follows, I will deal with the key considerations related to the research design adopted to empirically address the research question on the relative value-add of a systemic world view, compared to other world views, as strategy for leadership development currently informing coaching in practice?



## CHAPTER 4: MY RESEARCH DESIGN

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two chapters, different approaches to coaching were explored, together with their underlying world views, using the building blocks of the coaching landscape. Although in some cases holistic and systemic in nature, the world view of most of the existing coaching approaches is still predominantly mechanistic and linear. My contention is that most approaches are misaligned to the complex and uncertain world to which leaders are exposed to in practice and with which they have to deal, typified by the term 'VUCA world'.

My study focuses on establishing the relative value add of a systemic world view for coaching – compared to coaching based on other world views - currently informing coaching in practice. The emphasis on a holistic and non-linear approach in coaching would enable leaders to co-create true meaning in a complex, interconnected world of radical, fundamental change. The aim is to propose a coaching strategy in practice, using a systemic world view as the basis for coaching in this different world. Essentially, this proposed alternative strategy, developed from the literature, centres around holism, embeddedness and circularity instead of reductionism, context-removed, and linearity, and on constructivist instead of positivistic thinking (see Chapter 3).

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the qualitative research design that acted as roadmap with which to empirically assess the relative value add of a systemic strategy to coaching, proposed in Chapter 3 – in practice. The chapter will proceed as follows: Firstly, I will discuss my research approach and my reasons for choosing a specific design, as guided by my world view. Next, I will briefly define the problem statement and research objectives that directed my study. Thereafter, the research process I followed is described, as well as the different data collection methodologies I used. Next, I delineate the population of my



study, the sampling approach used, and my sample. Thereafter, the data analysis followed will be discussed. Finally, I reflect on how I protected the integrity of my research design, and dealt with the key ethical considerations of my study.

## **4.2. MY RESEARCH APPROACH**

Research can be conducted within different paradigms. The approach can be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approach. A qualitative paradigm, based on anti-positivism (or phenomenology) is interpretive by nature, enabling a holistic understanding of the research problem. The anti-positivist approach supports a qualitative research methodology, where data is collected through inductive reasoning by moving from the unique to the general (Creswell, 2003).

In contrast, a quantitative research paradigm is based on a positivistic approach, where the focus is on investigating a research problem analytically by dealing with the elements of the whole, testing hypotheses, and making predictions. Data collection and conclusions are based on deductive reasoning, where the study moves from the general to the specific. Arguments must be true and valid, and the findings reliable (Cooper & Schindler, 2001; De Vos et al., 2002). For the purpose of this study, a qualitative approach was followed, in which the emphasis was on individual experiences of coaching as a unique, co-constructed coach-coachee relationship, studied by myself as researcher immersed in the coaching experiences of my subjects.

Qualitative research methods also produce different lenses that make phenomena understandable (Alasuutari, 2010.) They provide meaning and context regarding how the world operates (Creswell, 2007). The literature study (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) therefore played a significant part in the overall research process by providing context for coaching from a systemic view.

It was, however, important to first explore the underlying philosophy and beliefs that defined the departure point of my adopted research approach.

#### **4.2.1 My departure point**

It can be argued that, within a systemic thinking world view, it is very difficult, perhaps even impossible, to adopt a positivist research design in which reality is seen as objective, independent from the researcher, and operating according to linear causality, and the researcher is a passive recorder of data. The researcher needs to make an epistemological shift in line with the new physics and worldview, namely a systemic or constructivist world view. This world view formed the basis for the research design adopted for this study.

According to Schwandt (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) we are constructivists if we believe that our mind is active in constructing knowledge. Knowing is therefore not passive, but active. Impressions in our mind evolve to create meaning in forming abstracts or concepts. Research, therefore, should also be seen as a meaning-making process within a defined context.

Qualitative research has developed over the past 100 years, and has, in the process, undergone many changes. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) referred to the development of qualitative research in terms of seven 'moments.' The moments are: Moment 1: The traditional period (1900 – 1950); Moment 2: The modernist phase (1950 – 1970); Moment 3: The blurred genres (1970 – 1986); Moment 4: Crisis of representation (1986 – 1990); Moment 5: The triple crisis (1990 – 1995); Moment 6: The sixth or post-experimental (1995 – 2000) and lastly Moment 7: The seventh, future moment (2000 – now)

In my study, the focus was on the moment of blurred genres (Moment 3), which is a movement away from untainted positivist thinking to a more constructivist way of thinking. This moment was a period when qualitative researchers had a full complement of paradigms, methods, and strategies to employ in their

research. This ranged from symbolic interactionism to constructivism, naturalistic inquiry, positivism, post positivism, phenomenology, critical theory, structuralism, and various racial/ethnic paradigms. It was the end of the old age of social science, and a new age of blurred, interpretive genres. The researcher's presence in the interpretive script was becoming more visible. Diverse ways of collecting and analysing data were applied, and the focus was on the blurred boundaries between social sciences and humanities, which played an integral role in this phase. The belief in this phase was that qualitative studies were only the researcher's interpretations of the subject's experiences. Knowledge and truth were thus constructed.

In this study, my beliefs as researcher were central to the interpretation of meaning as provided by participants. As is appropriate in moment 3, I made use of diverse strategies to collect, analyse, and interpret information, to allow the research process to unfold, and to contribute to the evolving of rich and meaningful data. As within the blurred genre, there was also room to incorporate some positivistic thinking within the different data collection strategies. The card-sort method applied in my study is a good example of an attempt to interpret linear information in a systemic way. Although qualitative in nature and exploring themes in the research process, was the focus also on specific data using percentages to arrive at key assumptions.

All qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), can be described as interpretive, and is guided by the beliefs of the researcher. Each interpretive concept places a demand on the researcher, and will further impact on the questions the researcher asks. The aspects of qualitative research, as describe by Patton (2002) and Schurink (2005) respectively, applicable to my study are:

- it allows an understanding of a phenomenon within its own context, namely an idiographic stance;
- it discovers meaning and reality subjectively;

- it is concerned with the depth of information required to make sense of an individual's actions and experiences in the form of words;
- it obtains an insider's perspective and definition of the situation in a holistic and rich manner;
- it allows for more flexibility and evolution as the study progresses;
- data are analysed by extracting themes and permutations (percentages in the analysis process were also used to arrive at certain themes) ; and
- it aims to understand and appreciate the phenomena in how they present themselves to the researcher.

Qualitative research is inductive, includes the whole and sees people as part of their context, considers all perspectives as worthy of study, and emphasises the meaningfulness of the research (Creswell, 2007; Taylor and Bogdan, 1998 and Schurink, 2005).

My study was about exploring different themes and patterns, and ensuring that the individual is understood within his/her context, while exploring different perceptions.

In conclusion, a qualitative research approach was chosen for my study, based on the following reasons:

- **The need to study how people construct and interpret their world**  
My focus was to understand and describe how different coaches and coaches currently experience coaching as well as their future expectations of coaching. Which world view underpins their current coaching approach, and what will their future choice be? How does each world view inform their coaching experience? I also explored the themes that emerged from the views of different coaches and coachees.
- **The need to understand the person's world systemically — being part of a bigger whole and being embedded in a context**

Researchers make use of various strategies of inquiry in the qualitative approach, such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. As mentioned, the strategy applicable to the present study was phenomenological. Creswell (2003, p. 15) described the process as one where the researcher “identifies the ‘essence’ of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study.” I attempted to understand the coachee in his/her context within the coaching process, with the aim to understand and making sense of his/her views in a holistic, systemic way. The coach and coachee were considered as whole persons, with coaching focused on the whole, and not only certain, isolated parts. I also kept in mind that the coachee was embedded in a context where there were multiple stakeholders. The context was complex as a result of a merger between two large organisations in the financial industry of South Africa.

- **The need to frame questions and make sense out of complex qualitative data**

In order to analyse complex data, it is important to frame questions systemically. A systemic world view is also becoming more central in our understanding of the complexity of the world and in seeing a phenomenon as part of a bigger whole (Patton, 2002). I applied a systemic world view in my study, and questions were framed to explore the connections between different aspects.

- **The flexibility to acknowledge that the phenomenon/participants are studied an interactive role play in defining constructs and perceptions**

The participants became part of co-constructing the research themes and meanings. The research approach therefore involved studying a small number of subjects in order to uncover patterns of relationships, interactions, and meaning. This research approach also allowed for flexibility in approaching participants and the meaning provided by them. My study included a small number of participants (six coaches and 14

coachees). Their views informed the constructs and perceptions studied, allowing flexibility regarding what may emerge out of the data.

- **The need to study holistic patterns and circular processes within coaching**

In the present study, the focus was on the collection of holistic patterns and themes that emerged from the data. My study was also concerned with the process of circularity, and not the traditional, positivist view of cause and effect, or linear thinking. Percentages were used to identify certain themes of preference for the coach and coachee data.

Any approaches to systemic thinking should lead to and depend on a qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). The adopted world view informing my study was based on a systemic world view. In order to support the position taken, it was critical to apply a research approach that supported a systemic view that would enable me to explore themes in a holistic manner.

In summary, my research approach was qualitative, with the following key foci: a constructivist approach where meaning evolved through themes and patterns that emerged from the data, and pursuing diverse research strategies that considered the context, and are circular and interconnected, phenomenological, flexible, and interpretive. The methodology was inductive with flexibility to be deductive as well, for example the card sort method, but also developed into an approach which was abductive where learning takes place in the interplay between search and discovery (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). During my research process a few surprising facts were found and could be explored to find explanations. Following an abductive approach allowed me to move back and forth between inductive and open-ended research settings to more hypothetical and deductive attempts to verify my postulates. My study therefore allowed for abductive reasoning where I could combine an inductive and deductive approach.

### **4.3. MY POSTULATES, AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

My problem statement and research objectives were defined in Chapter 1, section 1.3. I have already addressed Objective 1 and 2 in Chapters 2 and 3. Through my field study, I addressed Objectives 3, 4, and 5.

In this section, I will formulate the postulates and empirical questions that informed my field work.

#### **4.3.1 Study postulates**

In this study, I focused on postulates rather than hypotheses. Although they have similar functions, postulates are used when something is assumed to be evident without empirical proof. Hypotheses are usually based on existing theory, and are formulated to prove quantitatively theory or parts thereof.

A postulate is therefore a tentative statement containing initial descriptions of the relationship between variables, which still has to be tested empirically. Postulates thus precede hypotheses in research (Neuman, 2003). Using postulates also resonates well with systemic thinking, where there is little empirical evidence for truth, but assumptions are made about patterns that may emerge.

The following postulates informed my study:

- Postulate 1: The current coaching approaches, given their world views as offered in the literature, may not fully meet the emerging, contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice
- Postulate 2: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view adds more value in practice because it better meets the emerging, contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice

- Postulate 3: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view enables the leader to deal more appropriately with change and complexity in the new world of work.
- Postulate 4: Based on expected, emerging contextual demands and requirements unfolding, a systemic coaching approach is the preferred choice for future coaching.

#### 4.3.2 Empirical research questions

My research question as stipulated in Chapter one is: *What is the relative value-add of a systemic world view, compared to other world views, as strategy for leadership development currently informing coaching in practice?*

For the purposes of the present study, based on my problem statement, research objectives and postulates, the following empirical research questions were posed to address the above:

- **Empirical Research Question 1:** What are the preferred, current choices of coaching approaches by coaches and coaches in practice?
- **Empirical Research Question 2:** Based on these preferences, what would the coaching landscape look like in terms of a dominant, preferred choice(s) for future coaching?
- **Empirical Research Question 3:** In the light of the above, can I accept or not, my stated postulates for the given sample of the study?

#### 4.4 MY RESEARCH PROCESS

A literature review was conducted on coaching approaches, structured in terms of the coaching landscape. The dominant world views informing these approaches were discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. An alternative strategy to leadership coaching, one based on a systemic world view, was proposed and developed in Chapter 3. Again, the coaching landscape with its respective building blocks acted as a framework for the description of a systemic approach



to coaching. Chapters 2 and 3 therefore served as the basis for crafting my research process and choosing my data-gathering methodology.

The research process as an element of the research design deals with the individual steps to be executed and specific tasks at hand in conducting the field research (Mouton, 2001). Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the seven phases of my research process. In this section, I will only describe a high-level layout of the process that was followed. I will cover the detail of each step in Section 4.5 to 4.7 of this chapter.

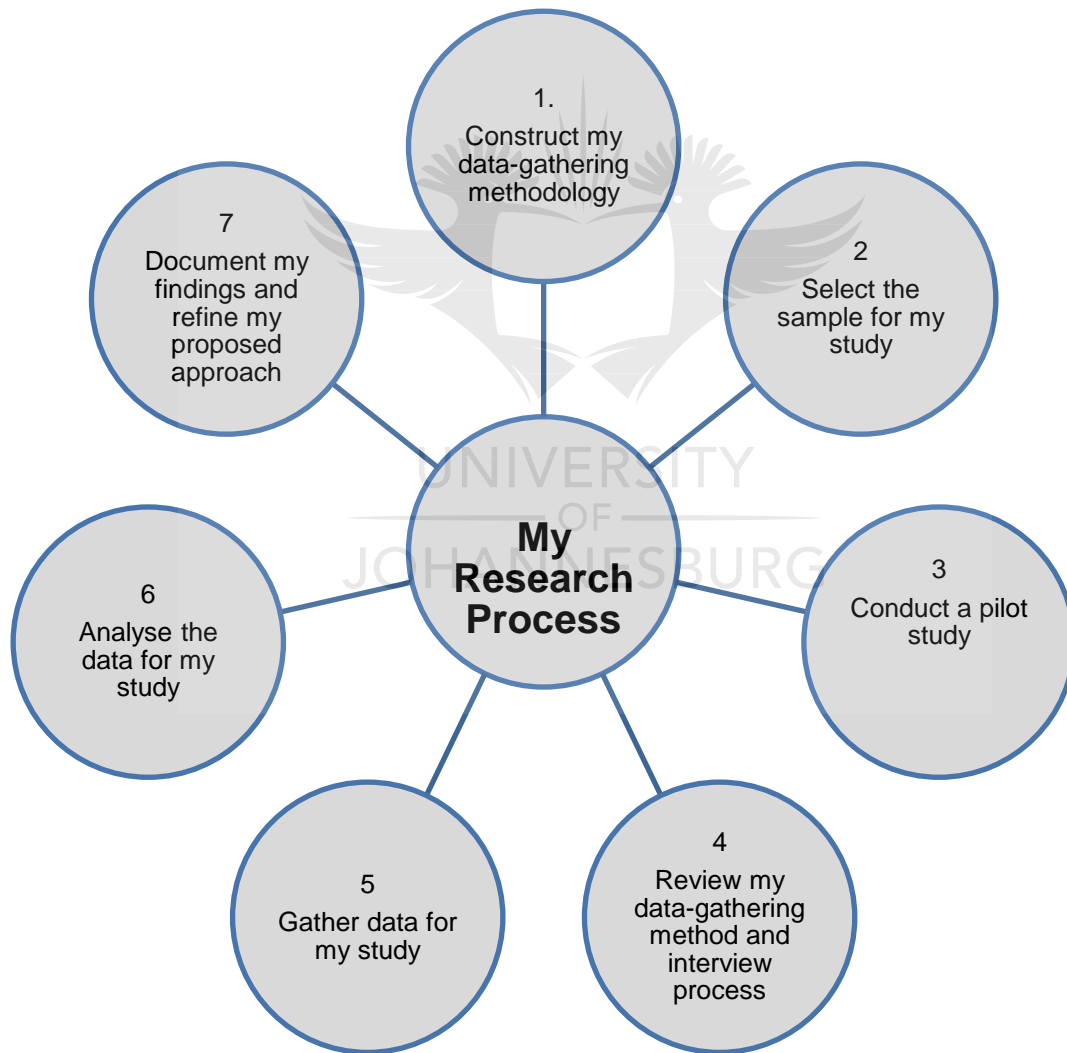


Figure 4.1. The seven phases of my research process.

### **Phase 1: Constructing my data-gathering methodology**

I gathered my data using different methodologies. Central to each methodology were critical statements, using the coaching building blocks as a framework. I formulated the statements in order to reflect the difference between a Newtonian, a GST, and the proposed systemic approach to coaching.

The first methodology for gathering my data was a card-sort method. The second methodology was to conduct semi-structured with the respondents. I once again used the building blocks to explore the experiences of the coaches and coachees as extracted by the card-sort method. The aim of the interview following the card-sort method was to ensure a deeper understanding of the views of the coaches and coachees regarding their preferred coaching approach.

### **Phase 2: Selecting the sample for my study**

The population for the study comprised leaders (coachees) who had been exposed to a coaching process, and coaches who were experienced in the coaching field. Coaches and leaders selected for the pilot study were from different industries and organisations. I used purposive sampling to ensure that the coaches and coachees met the defined requirements of the study.

### **Phase 3: Conducting a pilot study**

A pilot study was conducted with (1) a group of four coaches, to assess the clarity of statements on the different cards, and (2) a group of four leaders, to validate the card-sort process. The validation of the card-sort process also included semi-structured interviews with the leaders to explore their experience of coaching.

### **Phase 4: Reviewing my data-gathering methods and interview process**

The feedback from the pilot study was used to make the necessary and relevant changes to the data-collection methodology. It was an important checkpoint to ensure that the statements on the cards would be clearly understood. There also had to be a significant distinction between the worldviews as clarified in the statements on the cards. It was also an opportunity for me to explore the quality

of the data extracted from the interviews, and to ensure that my data-gathering process was clear to my respondents.

### **Phase 5: Data gathering**

Subsequent to the pilot study, I applied the validated card-sort method and interview process to a bigger sample. This final phase of the field study included selecting the appropriate coaches and coachees for my study, applying the card-sort method, and conducting and recording semi-structured with each respondent, while I took field notes. The coaches and coachees selected for my study were in a coaching relationship, and all the coachees (i.e., leaders) were employed by the same organisation.

### **Phase 6: Data analysis**

My data analysis was done in the following way:

- Evaluation and analysis of the cards selected by participants as reflecting the current approach to coaching;
- Evaluation and analysis of the cards selected for the future/ideal approach to coaching;
- Analysis of the correspondence between the card chosen as indicating the current vs. the future approaches to coaching;
- Analysis and interpretation of the chosen coaching building blocks, as reflected by the statements on the cards;
- Comparison of the card-sort-method data with the interview data in relation to the coaching building blocks, using two experts to assist with this comparison process;
- Transcription of the interviews, and an electronic analysis using the ATLAS program;
- Evaluation, review, and interpretation of the results in order to construct relevant themes and patterns.

### **Phase 7: Documenting of findings and refining my proposed systemic approach to coaching**

I used my findings from my field study to validate and refine my proposed systemic approach. I used my three empirical questions (provided in Section

4.3.3) as a framework for the discussion and interpretation of my results. The postulates provided in Section 4.3.2 will also be discussed, to confirm or reject the assumptions made about patterns that emerged out of the data.

## **4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The challenge in data gathering is to gather data that is reliable and valid (Mouton, 1998). In qualitative research based on a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context, the researcher does not try to manipulate the process, but makes use of unobtrusive data-gathering techniques like interviews and observation. Objectivity in the sense of an uninvolved, passive researcher was not the goal in the present study, due to the use of a multi-method approach of interviews and a card-sort method. It was, however, important to create a safe environment where coaches and coachees could openly share their views and exercise their choices of the different card statements, without interference or leading questions.

In studies such as mine, the researcher becomes the 'research instrument,' and plays an integral role in the evolving of themes and patterns (Maree, 2007). The present research was not only a descriptive process, but also an interpretive process. My role as researcher in this study was to arrive at an interpretation of the meaning that coaches and coachees (leaders) ascribe to their experience of coaching (Creswell, 2003), as mapped in terms of the coaching landscape.

I made use of a multi-method approach to broaden my insights and understanding. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 722) referred to this process as 'triangulation': The process of triangulation offers an opportunity for deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The use of more than one method of data collection enhances the study, and provides different angles to the study (Neuman, 2003).

In my study, I made use of different data-gathering techniques, to contribute to the richness of the data, and applied the principle of triangulation. I made use of (1) a card-sort method and (2) one-on-one, semi-structured as primary data-collection methodologies, and (3) observation as a secondary methodology. Each will be discussed in turn.

#### **4.5.1 The card-sort method**

The first methodology I used to start exploring possible coaching approach themes was a card-sort method. In this instance, respondents had the opportunity to select specific cards with descriptive statements that best describe their coaching experience, both in the present and regarding their preference for the future. The process followed was not a conventional quantitative method as with a questionnaire where the respondent select one possible answer. The respondents had multiple options, and could exercise free choice with respect to the options. They could even select more than one option. The aim of using the card-sort method was to provide another lense through which the respondents could view their experience of coaching and craft their ideal approach for the future.

Firstly, I shared with the respondents (coaches and coachees) the coaching landscape with its respective building blocks, as discussed in Section 2.2 in Chapter 2. Secondly, I provided them with a set of cards, each with a theme related to the respective coaching building blocks. The set of cards represented the coaching building blocks for the three significant world views, i.e. Newtonian, GST, and systemic thinking, which I discussed in Chapter 3. Table 4.1 gives the statements related to the three world views, which were reflected on the cards, one statement to a card. The three different world views in relation to the cards were never revealed to the respondents, in order to enable them to choose freely the card(s) of their preference.

Respondents were asked to:

- Step 1: Select the cards that best described their current coaching approach (for coaches) and coaching experience (for coachees); and,
- Step 2: Respondents (both coachees and coaches) were asked to select, from the same cards, the statements that best described their ideal future coaching approach.

In the card-sort method, the different cards were coded according to the specific world view, as well as the building block applicable. As mentioned above, this coding was not revealed to the respondents, but was only used by me for ease of reference in identifying themes and patterns. After each interview, I immediately recorded the respondents' selection of cards on a Word template, to ensure accurate recording of the data. In this recording process, I could already identify certain trends in the data, which will be discussed in Section 5.4.2.1. Analysis of the card-sort-method data will be discussed in detail in Section 4.7.



Table 4.1

*Card Statements Based on the Coaching Building Blocks and Three World Views.*

<b>World view</b>		
<b>Newtonian</b>	<b>GST</b>	<b>Systemic</b>
<b>Coaching Context</b>		
To analyse my situation, we only focus on the different elements making up my inner life	The focus is on how persons and events in my context affect me and how I respond to them, and they to me	The focus is on understanding me as a whole person by addressing all aspects of my life and how they dynamically fit together
<b>Coaching Objective</b>		
The aim is to increase my awareness of my inner dynamics, and to fix the hidden cause of my problem	The aim is to adapt to change, in order to attain balance/order in my life	The aim is to explore the immersed patterns making up the complex world in which I am living, and to find alternative patterns of acting
We try to establish what causes distress in my leadership role in order to change it	Coaching helps me to be more alert to the effect I am having on external and internal systems	Coaching enables me to be more aware of how aspects in my life are interconnected and hang together
<b>Role of the coach</b>		
My coach guides me in an objective way to achieve a specific outcome	My coach helps me in an objective way to find a solution through the feedback I received	My coach explores with me the potential patterns and relationships which will enable me to grow
My coach acts as a mirror for what is correct	My coach acts as a mirror to provide a possible option for growth	My coach acts as a mirror to explore a set of coherent options for personal growth
<b>Coaching relationship</b>		
My coach and I are the <u>only</u> key role players in the coaching process	My coach and I are the <u>key</u> role players in the coaching process	My coach, other significant role players, and I form part of the co-creation of new patterns of acting for me

**Table 4.1: (Continued)**

<b>World view</b>		
<b>Newtonian</b>	<b>GST</b>	<b>Systemic</b>
<b>Coaching process</b>		
The coaching process is only about analysing different individual aspects, to understand what causes the problem	In the coaching process, we work through feedback (series of actions) from my immediate context	In coaching, change and insight/understanding are progressively created through the conversations we have
In the coaching process, we set goals with specific action plans that need to be achieved	The coaching process is an opportunity for me to explore the series of actions (feedback loops)	The coaching process is a participative, explorative conversation about my life story
We make use of planning and logical steps to ensure we achieve the goal	The coaching process helps me to reach my goals by exploring circular causal chains	The coaching process is a participative, explorative conversation about my life story
Questions asked during coaching are intended to link cause and effect, in order to understand what causes the problem	Questions asked by my coach are aimed at understanding the inner stability/balance I want to achieve	The questions asked by my coach focus on how things, people, and relationships in my life hang together
The coaching process helps me to change my behaviour, because I better understand how my inner dynamics affect my behaviour	The coaching process helps me to move closer to finding balance and harmony in my life	The coaching process helps me with new patterns of acting and connecting that are more fulfilling
Agenda points are dealt with in a step-by-step order, to achieve the agreed outcome	Agenda points are dealt with by exploring the circular effects they may have	The flow of the coaching agenda can be described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation



**Table 4.1: (Continued)**

<b>World view</b>		
<b>Newtonian</b>	<b>GST</b>	<b>Systemic</b>
<b>Profile of the coach</b>		
My coach plays an expert and objective role in finding the best solution for me	My coach is objective in helping me to explore the series of actions (feedback loops) in my environment	My coach undertakes the journey with me, but leaves the destination/solution to me
My coach is the expert role model of the desired behaviour	My coach applies his/her expert skill to help me find the appropriate solution that will restore balance in my life	My coach uses his/her holistic view of my life to co-create with me a new pattern of acting
My coach is comfortable to work with me individually only, and does not include other people in the coaching process	My coach acknowledges the broader context of my life, but works with me individually	My coach is comfortable to include the significant other people in my life into the coaching process
<b>Profile of the coachee</b>		
I am comfortable that the coaching sessions will focus only on me as an individual	The coach and I are two independent entities/systems	I am comfortable to make other stakeholders in my life part of the coaching process
<b>Coaching outcomes</b>		
After coaching, I am better able to build internal capacity to face the problems of the world	After coaching, I am able to maintain a better life balance and attain fulfilment through my life journey	After coaching, I am able to explore and create new life patterns conducive to the life I want to live
Coaching only helps me to better understand my <u>inner world</u>	Coaching helps me to understand the circular loops between me and the people and events in my life	Coaching helps me to explore my different life dimensions (internal and external) in a more interconnected way
Specific coaching outcomes are planned and predicted	Working with one aspect of my life <u>will</u> have an effect on other aspects in my life	Coaching outcomes are not predictable, but are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation

#### **4.5.2 One-on-one, semi-structured**

The nature of interviews has changed from a conventional, positivistic view to one where neutrality is believed to be impossible. The researcher as the primary research instrument enters into the interview process carrying his/her own motives, desires, biases, and feelings. Hence, he/she cannot be neutral. The interview process is no longer neutral, but rather an active interaction process between two or more people, where results evolve and are co-created contextually. Also, the new way of interviewing places more emphasis on empathy in the process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Holstein and Gubrium, in Silverman (2004), described the interview process as an active, “meaning making conversation.” All participants in an interview form part of this meaning-making process. To learn more about people, we need to treat them as people, and not as faceless individuals who only provide us with data to satisfy our research ends in our endeavour to obtain research results.

Interviewing in qualitative research ranges from the traditional positivist approach to a negotiated/meaning-making process. In my study, a combination of both was utilised. Individual, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the coaches and the leaders, who were situated at different levels in the organisation. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to explore meaning, whilst the focus of the card-sort method was more on answers or choices, and, although a positivistic approach, allowed for co-creation of meaning.

The interview process consisted of two phases. Phase 1 was a semi-structured process, allowing the leader to share his/her story about coaching. The advantage of a semi-structured process with a schedule is that it enables systematic collection of data, and ensures that important data are not forgotten (Schurink, 2005).

I asked the leader/coachee to describe his/her experience of coaching with the help of the following questions and prompts:

- ***Keeping the coaching building blocks in mind, please describe to me your coaching experience.*** As the leader described the experience, I asked appropriate questions to explore the application of the coaching building blocks in their coaching experience. These questions differed for each respondent.

The interview process for the coaches was similar. Firstly, I asked the coach to describe the coaching approach he/she applied in the coaching process, with appropriate questions related to the different building blocks. I also explored how the coaching approach of the coach had changed or evolved over time.

- Phase 2 of the interview process focused on the ideal future approach to coaching. The question to all respondents was similar: ***If you have the option to choose the ideal approach to coaching in the future, what would that be?*** For the coachees, the focus was on what they would choose as ideal, and, for the coach, the focus was on what they would change in their approach. The coaches were also asked: ***How have you changed your coaching approach over time?***

Challenges in interviews, according to Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (2006), are related to the willingness of respondents to co-operate, due to a lack of time or other priorities, and to what extent the questions or statements are clear to the respondent. Finding appropriate time in the diary of the leader can also be a challenge. I interviewed the leaders in their natural setting and context, and the phenomenon was therefore explored within a specific context (Holiday, 2002; Neuman, 2003). This created further challenges, such as trying to keep interruptions to a minimum.

To record the data, I took notes during the interview, and also made use of tape recordings, which were transcribed at a later stage. Observation during the interview formed part of the field notes, and were incorporated into the findings. I also reflected on each interview, and included both the verbatim discussions (first-order constructs) and my interpretation of what had occurred during the interview (second-order interpretation).

#### **4.5.3 Observation**

Although this study relied heavily on interviewing, including my observations as a data-collection method provided a more holistic picture. What I observed formed part of my thoughts and reflection after completion of each interview, in the process of analysing the data. Also, including observations as a method emphasises the importance of the context and the interaction between those involved in the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

I made field notes on the behaviour and activities of the leaders (coachees) and coaches at the respective research sites. As mentioned above, field notes included my interpretation of what happened, as well as descriptive notes of events/activities, reflective notes (my feelings, thoughts, ideas, and hunches), and demographic notes (when and where events took place).

#### **4.6. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

The decision about who to include in the research should be guided by the population, the sample, as well as its representatives (Kerlinger, 1986). According to Maree (2007, p. 79), sampling is: "... the process used to select a portion of the population for the study." Typically, qualitative research sampling is small and situated within the context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In such research, the emphasis is on rich data from a specific, defined, and select population, rather than on large numbers of participants.

There are no rules for sample size in qualitative research. The size is determined by what the researcher wants to know, the purpose of the study, and what seems to be useful (Patton, 2002). A typical sample size varies from five to 25 individuals, and the focus is on lengthy interviews, carefully selected participants, and rich data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

My study was undertaken within the financial industry in South Africa. The population of the study comprised leaders at different levels within an organisation, who had been exposed to coaching as part of their development process. A second population group consisting of the internal/external coaches of the leaders were also included in the study. The coaches and coachees selected for my study were in a coaching relationship, and all the coachees were employed by the same organisation. The context of the coachees was complex and ever-changing. The organisation was in the middle of a merger, which poses significant challenges and ongoing change for the leaders. Coaching was one of the mediums applied to equip leaders appropriately, sufficiently, and effectively in these changing times.

In my study, the sample comprised six coaches and 14 leaders (i.e. coachees). The leaders were representative of three different levels within the organisation. Purposive variation sampling allowed for evaluation of different patterns that emerged during the study.

The different organisational levels of the leaders, as referred to by Adair (2005) and Charan et al. (2011) and described in Chapter 1, Section 1.3.1, were appropriate for my study, and represented the following levels in the organisation:

- **executive level** — managing a business unit and reporting to the CEO
- **senior or middle management at operational level** — managers who manage other managers, two levels below the CEO; and
- **first-line management at team level.**

Purposive sampling enabled me to use my own judgement in selecting cases that would be most appropriate to the research questions. The variation of cases allowed different themes to emerge, and enabled me to identify uniqueness in the study (Patton, 2002; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). Criterion sampling was also applicable in the present study, as all the cases had to meet specific criteria for purposes of quality assurance (Creswell, 2003).

The criteria for the selection of my sample were:

- a leadership role on one of the three organisational levels defined above;
- having been exposed to coaching by an external or internal coach in the last 12 to 18 months; and
- having been coached for more than three months.

#### **4.7. TREATMENT OF THE DATA**

Qualitative data are more interpretative in nature, and are interpreted to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon; this is done by analysing their perceptions, thoughts, and constructions (Maree, 2007).

Since my study commenced from an inductive position, I sought to develop a data-analytic approach that evolved through the literature study, the card-sort process, interviews, as well as observations of leaders and coaches. My approach was also particularly sensitive to process and context, and attempted to obtain a holistic understanding to match the key concepts of systemic thinking (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). Data analysis means a search for patterns and recurrent behaviours and objects in the data (Neuman, 2003). It involves organising, synthesising, and searching for themes and patterns, to discover what is important and relevant in validating, in this case, a systemic strategy to coaching. It is not a linear process with a number of successive steps, but an on-going, circular, and interlinked process of collection, processing, analysis, and reporting (Maree, 2007; 2016).

The three phases in the data-collection process are: **noticing**, **collecting**, and **reflecting** (thinking about), which means one reflects on data that were collected, and, if one notices gaps that require more data, one collects it. Seidel referred to this as building a 'jigsaw puzzle.' Bogdan and Biklen, (2007, p. 6) explained it as follows: "You are not putting together a puzzle whose pictures you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts." When noticing meaningful or interesting parts, I assigned codes to the data, to cluster them into certain themes or patterns, in order to understand what is emerging.

Creswell (2003) referred to a 'data analysis spiral,' where the researcher engages in a process where he/she uses analytical circles or loops, and not a linear process. The different loops within the process that were applied in my study were:

- **Step 1: Data managing**

I created files, and organised the data into specific themes. Each interview was transcribed and analysed separately. Each card-sort analysis was organised and saved in specific files for each respondent, in a specific table format. Transcribed interviews were manually analysed in relation to the card-sort information for each respondent. Transcribed interviews were also analysed, using the ATLAS software program.

- **Step 2: Continuous reading and organising**

The data of each interview process were first handled separately, to identify key words and phrases that held meaning for the participant. I went through field notes, transcripts, and card-sort information, and reflected on the whole of the process, making notes of the holistic themes as described by the participants. It was important for me to be fully familiarised with my data. This included reading and re-reading my data, as this phase provided the bedrock for the rest of my analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then started forming initial codes related to the different building blocks, with supportive evidence, as analysed through ATLAS.

This relates to the process of data reduction and display that Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to, and the initial coding phase of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

As mentioned before, the data were analysed manually, as well using ATLAS, to ensure richness and interconnectedness of the data. After assigning specific codes via ATLAS, I created specific families within the data, to assist me in identifying themes. Data summaries were made of all data available before looking at key themes across the different interviews and card-sort choices. Percentages were used to indicate key preferences to answer some of the research questions. I used the reduced set of data as a basis for thinking about the meaning thereof.

- **Step 3: Describing, classifying, and interpreting**

I described the essence of the phenomenon, as well as my personal experience, without trying to influence the data with my own views. Thereafter, I developed significant statements, and classified these into specific themes or units of meaning. Cross-case data analysis was applied. Specific patterns, themes, and sub-themes were explored in each case (card-sort method and interviews) in relation to other cases. Triangulation of the results of the different data-collection methods would contribute to verification, richness, and interconnectedness of the research findings. I therefore made use of two independent experts comparing cards statements and interview data.

- **Step 4: Presenting the data**

The data will be presented to the reader, in order to answer the research questions in a meaningful and holistic way. Thematic constructs as well as percentages will be used to arrive at the different conclusions. The data will also be reviewed against the different postulates set out in Section 4.3.2.



All data are social constructs that evolve between the researcher and the participant. It was, however, important to be aware of my own constructs before entering the research context, and to constantly reflect on my own presuppositions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The specific data analysis applied for each of the data-collection methods during my study are summarised in Table 4.2.



Table 4.2

*The Data Analysis Process for the Different Data Collection Methods*

Data collection method	Analysis process
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcribed and manually analysed, using the building blocks as reference</li> <li>• Transcribed and electronically analysed with ATLAS, using building blocks as initial coding</li> </ul>
Card-sort method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manually analysed in tables according to worldview and current vs. future approach. All different permutations were identified, listed, and analysed</li> </ul>
Involving experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Included two experts/OD consultants or coaches to assist with data analysis of integration across methods</li> </ul>
Integration across methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data available for card sorting were compared with transcribed interview data to ensure correspondence and integration</li> <li>• All data analysed by myself, ATLAS, and two experts were compared and integrated for thematic analysis</li> </ul>

#### **4.8. THE PROTECTION OF THE INTEGRITY OF MY RESEARCH DESIGN: STRIVING FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS AND AUTHENTICITY**

In my study, the research approach was framed by constructivism instead of positivism. In this constructivist or interpretive position, validity criteria are considered to contribute to the trustworthiness (or credibility), dependability, and authenticity of the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The integrity of the design is therefore not described in terms of the internal and external validity, but rather in relation to the authenticity of the research insights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria with which to judge the soundness of qualitative research, which can be compared to the traditional criteria for quantitative research. Table 4.3 gives this comparison. Descriptions of the qualitative criteria are given in the discussion below.

Table 4.3

*A Comparison between the Criteria of Soundness for Quantitative and Qualitative Research*

<b>Traditional criteria: Quantitative research</b>	<b>Alternative criteria: Qualitative research</b>
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Marshall and Rossman (2011) confirmed that validity and reliability can be accomplished through the criteria provided in the table above, and these were therefore applied to my study as discussed below.

#### 4.8.1 Credibility

*Validity* means being truthful (Neuman, 2003). *Credibility* refers to results that are credible, believable, and trustworthy; was the phenomena described in a true and credible way? Neuman (2003, p. 185) used the term *authenticity*, and defined it as “giving a fair, honest, and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day.” This relates to what Nieuwenhuis in Maree (2007) referred to as ‘trustworthiness.’

It was critical that I constantly kept credibility in mind when analysing my data; my data had to be truthful, i.e. free from false or distorted descriptions. Truthful data reflect the true meaning and world of the participants. The credibility of qualitative research, according to Patton (2002), depends on three important criteria:

- (i) a rigorous method and quality data;
- (ii) credibility of the researcher; and
- (iii) a philosophical belief in the value of the research.

To ensure I that met these criteria for trustworthiness in the study, the following aspects were considered when doing the field work. This ties in well with the validation strategies referred to by Creswell (2007):

- **Utilising multiple sources or triangulation.** I relied on individual interviews, using unstructured questions, but also a semi-structured card-sort process and observation. The participants were leaders at different levels in the organisation, and analyses by expert coaches provided more complex and rich information.
- **Avoiding generalisation.** The aim of this qualitative study was not to generalise across the population, but rather to understand and explore uniqueness, and to co-create an alternative way of coaching and developing leaders (Merriam, 1988).
- **Documenting and keeping notes of research decisions taken.** This helped me to focus on the appropriate themes and patterns, and to control

my own bias. In this regard, Babbie and Mouton (2001) referred to the utilisation of extensive field notes. I kept two set of notes: (i) one set describing the context or environment, as well as observations, and (ii) notes on theoretical ideas and assumptions. These notes acted as a roadmap for the study, and aided the search for themes and patterns that emerged.

- **Applying different ways of organising data.** This enabled me to search for alternative explanations, and not focus on my own perceptions.
- **Making use of rich and detailed descriptions.** These enable the reader to transfer the information to other settings, and to discover personal meaning.
- **Eliciting feedback from others.** I made use of peer group discussion for feedback on my findings and the alternative approach to coaching.

#### 4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the research results can be generalised or transferred to another context. Transferability is enhanced if the researcher ensures that the research context, as well as the assumptions, is thoroughly described. The reader who wants to transfer the findings to a different context will have to judge how sensible such a transfer would be.

My results cannot be generalised to the broader population. My findings can be used to refine an alternative approach to coaching, based on a systemic world view, which can contribute to the enhanced development of leaders and coaches in a world characterised by change, complexity, and interconnectedness. Evaluating the stated postulates of my study will also provide valuable information that will contribute to the field of coaching, and can be considered by the next researcher to apply in a different context.

### **4.8.3 Dependability**

Bachiochi and Wiener (2002, p. 177) stated that “reliability allows the inference from a particular study to be accepted as more than just opinions or observations of a single researcher.” Therefore, the researcher needs to employ different methods of assessing reliability. Neuman (2003) described reliability as dependability or consistency.

Dependability refers to the researcher having accounted for every change in the context. All changes should be described, as well as the possible effects thereof on the process and findings of the study.

The findings of my study are not only my opinions and observations. Using a multi-method approach and including two experts in the data analysis process assisted me in providing research findings that are consistent and confirmed by different viewpoints. I also relied on the opinions of experts in the field throughout the different phases of my study, to contribute to the quality of my study. I, furthermore, consistently indicated during the study and in presenting the findings regarding my decisions taken, to ensure authenticity.

### **4.8.4 Confirmability**

Qualitative research assumes that each researcher brings a unique viewpoint to a study. In a constructionist, systemic world view, there is no detached objectivity. The observer (researcher) forms part of the observed system, the phenomenon being studied.

It was, however, important that I document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Before starting with coding and thematic analysis, I read and re-read all data, to ensure that I am familiar with all my research data. It was also useful for me to have another researcher play the role of 'devil's advocate' in respect of the results, and this process was also documented. This relates to the method of peer debriefing in qualitative

research. The method of data collection and analysis was also carefully considered, to prevent bias and distortion.

As mentioned before, I made use of the views of two other expert coaches for cross-integration in the data analyses, which was critical for confirmability. My viewpoints and thought constructs were clearly described when interpreting the data, as this would have an impact on the final results, given the context of the my world view.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) reasoned that trustworthiness of research reporting relates to validity and reliability. The following were important to question in reporting my research:

- Truth value — confidence in and the truth of my findings;
- Applicability — the extent to which my findings will be applicable to other contexts or subjects;
- Consistency — whether the findings can be repeated with the same subjects in the same context; and
- Neutrality — whether the findings are a result of the subjects' contributions, and not the biases, motivations, and interests of the researcher only.

I will address the above questions again when reporting on my research findings in Chapter 5.

#### **4.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research is a form of human conduct. Thus, it is important to conform to the accepted norms and values of the scientific community. Ethics in research can be described in the following three ways:

1. Ethics is a set of principles that guide the behaviour of the researcher to determine what is wrong and what is right in the research process (Bless et al., 2006; Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2011).
2. Ethics entails the establishment and maintenance of respectful relationships with individuals, groups, and communities, to ensure that one does not create harmful conditions for respondents in the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Schurink, 2005).
3. Ethics can be seen as the responsibility of the researcher, and starts with the researcher conducting the study. “Ethical research depends on the integrity of the individual researcher and his or her values” (Neuman, 2003, p.118; Schurink, 2005).

Ethical considerations play a role in the following stages of research: selection of participants, dealing with the respondents (for example, interviewing), and releasing the results obtained (Huysamen, 2001).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) referred to four guidelines for ethics in qualitative, inductive studies namely:

1. **Informed consent.** In believing in the autonomy of people, it is important that all respondents are informed openly about the nature and consequences of the study. Also, they must agree voluntarily to participate (De Vos et al., 2002).
2. **Deception.** Not only in the final report, but also in the process of research, it is important to not hide the true nature of the study from the participants. I was transparent in my intent with the study, and did not keep information from the respondents in order to get them to participate.
3. **Privacy and confidentiality.** Confidentiality must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure. This is applicable to the identity of the research participants, as well as the research locations. Throughout the process, the participants should not be exposed to any



physical or psychological harm or discomfort (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Bless et al., 2006).

4. **Accuracy and honesty.** Honesty, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), refers to the reporting of findings without misrepresenting data or misleading others regarding the nature of the research findings. The information or themes, although co-created, must be a reflection of what was explored in the interview process. Ensuring that data are accurate is critical when working with field notes and during data collection.

According to Neuman (2003), there must be a balance between the two values of the pursuit of scientific knowledge and the rights of those being studied, to ensure ethical standards. This implies that advancing, in this case, the standard of coaching or leadership, needs to be weighed up against potential loss of privacy and personal choice. Further, this means that data should not be extended in a way that is unreasonable, in order to support a desirable outcome (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2002). Representing other people's lives and beliefs while upholding ethical considerations begins with the researcher's personal moral code, which is the best defence against unethical research behaviour.

Based on the above, the ethical obligations for my study included:

- full familiarisation with and accountability for ethical principles throughout the study;
- personally recording and analysing the data, to ensure confidentiality (the two experts who assisted will also remain anonymous);
- voluntary participation by the leaders and coaches, and permission to utilise the findings in the research report;
- participants being fully informed about the objectives of my study, and feedback on the findings provided; and
- ensuring the anonymity of the participants.

I am also fully aware of ethical publishing practices, and ensured that the study findings were reported accordingly.

#### **4.10. CONCLUSION**

In the first instance, the aim of this chapter was to give an outline of the scientific beliefs and research paradigm that informed my study. The second purpose of the chapter was to describe my research approach and the motivation supporting the chosen approach. Furthermore, the research process and the research methodology were described according to the seven phases I followed. The research participants and sampling were described, and the treatment of research data was discussed. Lastly, the way in which I protected the integrity of my design and applied ethical principles throughout my study were discussed.

The following decisions were taken:

- I chose to adopt a qualitative research approach. I utilised diverse research strategies that consider the context, and are circular and interconnected, phenomenological, flexible, and interpretive.
- My research questions and postulates were formulated.
- The format of the cards that include all three world views was decided on, as well as the statements defining each building block.
- The criteria were set to identify the respondents for the pilot study, as well as the coaches and coachees who would form part of the research study.
- The different methods for data collection and processes to analyse the data to ensure the authenticity of my study, were decided on.

In Chapter 5, report the empirical results, with the aim to answer the problem statement provided in Chapter 1, and repeated in Section 4.3 of this chapter. In the next chapter, I endeavour to provide answers to the empirical questions stated in this chapter. The acceptability of Postulates 1 to 4 will also be reported on in the light of my findings.

## CHAPTER 5: EMPIRICAL RESULTS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my study was to propose an alternative strategy to coaching in practice. Such a coaching strategy will be based on a systemic world view that will enable leaders to develop different capabilities for the new world. Additionally, the aim was to establish the relative value-add of a systemic world view for coaching in practice in the VUCA world leaders are facing, compared to coaching based on other world views currently informing the practice of coaching. In Chapters 2 and 3, I explored different theoretical approaches to coaching, together with their underlying world views. Although in some cases holistic, the approach of most of the existing coaching models is predominantly still Newtonian, i.e. mechanistic and linear.

A proposed alternative coaching approach was developed in Section 3.5, Chapter 3, based on an in-depth literature study. This approach centres on circularity instead of linearity, and on constructivistic rather than positivistic thinking that I contend resonates better with the VUCA world faced by leadership.

In the previous chapter, the research design followed in conducting the field study was presented. A qualitative research design was adopted, because I wished to apply a constructivistic approach, where meaning would evolve through themes and patterns that emerge from the data. I endeavoured to pursue diverse research strategies that consider the context, are circular and interconnected, and which are phenomenological, flexible, and interpretive. The multiple-methods applied in my study to collect data influenced the way in which my empirical findings are reported. Themes and patterns are highlighted, as well as specific preferences indicated by the respondents.

In this chapter, the empirical findings of my field study are reported in order to provide answers to the empirical questions formulated in Chapter 4, as well as to accept or reject the postulates of the study, based on my reported findings.

As posed in Chapter 4, the empirical questions to be answered are as follows:

- **Empirical Research Question 1:** What are the preferred, current choices of coaching approaches by coaches and coaches in practice?
- **Empirical Research Question 2:** Based on these preferences, what would the coaching landscape look like in terms of a dominant, preferred choice(s) for future coaching?
- **Empirical Research Question 3:** In the light of the above, can I accept or not, my stated postulates for the given sample of the study?

Prior to reporting on the above questions, I will first discuss the changes I affected in my research design elucidated in Chapter 4, after conducting a pilot study.

## 5.2 OUTCOME AND CHANGES AFTER MY PILOT STUDY

A pilot group consisting of five coaches and three coachees was selected to validate the card-sort method. The aim was to check the clarity of the statements on the cards, and to have a semi-structured interview with the respondents, to refine the interview process and method.

The sample for the pilot study consisted of coaches and coachees from different organisations and industries. Significant changes were made to the process after the pilot study, which are discussed below.

Initially, the statements on the cards focused only on (i) two world views: the Newtonian and the systemic and (ii) the respective coaching building blocks. This was adapted after the pilot study.

The following critical findings during the pilot study proved to be meaningful information, which was taken into account for the field study:

- Focusing on only the two world views mentioned above created confusion for respondents, and themes were not very clear. The decision was made to use well-defined statement on the cards for all three world views, and not only the Newtonian and systemic world views. Using all three world views provided the opportunity to link the literature findings with the research findings. In the literature review, it was found that theoretical coaching approaches are more aligned with GST, and do not incorporate true systemic thinking. Also, using all three world views would enable a clearer distinction between the GST and systemic approaches.
- It was important to define clearly to respondents the different coaching landscape (CL) building blocks, as respondents may have their own understanding of or meaning for a specific building block.
- One's personal perception or world view influences the meaning one attaches to the cards' statements and research. It was therefore important to try and create a domain of consensus in the research process by clarifying the meaning of each building block, without losing the value of constructivistic thinking, which forms part of a systemic approach.
- Although many of the statements were clear and comprehensive to the coaches, it was still important to refine the formulation of some card statements.
- A number of card statements were unclear to coachees, and had to be re-formulated.
- The interview process with the leaders (i.e. coachees) also brought some challenges to the fore. For example, it became clear that the venue of the interview had to be carefully chosen for minimum background noise, to ensure the quality of the recordings. Questions had to be clearly stated, to provide some structure in a semi-structured-process. And, lastly, two separate sets of cards were critical to explore the current and the ideal

future way of coaching, to ensure credibility and the smooth running of the process.

After the statements on the cards had been modified, I asked another coach, who had extensive experience in different coaching models and approaches, to look at the cards and provide input. His input was used to refine the card statements that were applied in the study. See Table 4.1 in Chapter 4 and Appendix A for the final list of card statements.

It is important to acknowledge that a substantial amount of time and effort was expended to ensure that the cards statements were a true reflection of the world views. In the selection of the cards, it was essential that the respondents had multiple options, with no forced-choice option. Coaches and coachees had the option to choose any card that described their experience best, without any indication of which world view was represented by that specific card statement.

### **5.3. SAMPLE OF MY RESEARCH STUDY**

In the present study, the decision was taken that the sample would be small but purposeful. The sample for the main study consisted of six coaches and 14 coachees from the same industry and linked to the same financial institution. The coaches and coachees were in a coaching relationship with one another, and the context was complex and ever-changing, due to a significant merger.

In Chapters 1 and 4, I identified specific criteria that were taken into account when selecting the sample of respondents. Identifying respondents and convincing them to participate in the research was a challenging process. Initially, the thought was to gather a diverse group of respondents from different organisations and industries.

After thorough investigation, it was clear that there was some reluctance from coaches in the field to expose their clients to the research process, due to the confidential nature of the relationship and the process. I could not resist the conclusion that the reluctance of the coaches actually reflected their own discomfort, rather than that of their clients. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 provide the profile of the sample.

The coachees in the sample functioned on the levels defined by Adair (2005), which are listed in Table 5.1



Table 5.1

*Levels of Leadership in the Coachee Sample*

Coachee	1A	1B	1C	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4C	5A	6A	6B	%
<b>Strategic Level</b>									X	x	X				21.5
<b>Operational level</b>								X				X	X		21.5
<b>Team level</b>	X	X	x	X	X	X	X							X	57.0
<b>TOTAL</b>															100.0

*Note: The numerical values (1-6) indicate the link to a specific coach, and the alphabetical letters (A-C) indicate their different coachees.*

As can be seen in Table 5.1, most (57%) of the coaches (n=8) were at a team level, being responsible for leading small to medium-sized teams. Three leaders were on an operational leadership level, being responsible for a broader function, and had team leaders reporting to them. The remaining three coachees operated on a strategic level, providing strategic leadership to the business, and had operational managers reporting to them.

The leadership passages (Charan et al., 2001) listed in Table 5.2 are relevant to the sample.



Table 5.2

*Different Leadership Passages in the Coachee Sample*

Coachee	1A	1B	1C	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4C	5A	6A	6B	%
<b>Passage 4: From functional manager to business manager</b>									X	X					14.3
<b>Passage 3: From managing managers to functional manager</b>											X				7.1
<b>Passage 2: From managing others to managing managers</b>								X					X		14.3
<b>Passage 1: From managing self to managing others</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X		X	64.3
<b>Total</b>															100

As reflected in Table 5.2, the majority of the coachees (64.3%) were in Passage 1: they had moved from managing self to managing others. Of the coachees, 14.3% were responsible for managing other managers (Passage 2). One was responsible for managing a specific function within a business unit (Passage 3). The remaining 14.3% were responsible for a wider area across different functions of the business unit, and were placed in Passage 4. The sample provided no representation in Passages 5 and 6, which relate to group- or enterprise management.

### **5.3.1 Summary of the sample profile**

The majority of the leaders in the sample were in Passage 1 of their leadership journey. They were team leaders responsible for a small operational team. Only three of the leaders were involved on a strategic level. Two of them were responsible for a complete business unit. The sample did not include any senior executives, where the focus is on the total group or enterprise management.

## **5.4. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE PREFERRED CURRENT CHOICES OF COACHING APPROACHES BY COACHES AND COACHEES IN PRACTICE?**

Within the different coaching approaches, a distinction was made between the current approach that was being applied by the respective coach, and the coachee's experience thereof, and the future (or ideal) approach that both the coach and coachee would prefer going forward. Their views were obtained through card-sorting and interviews.

After I had collected the data, I analysed the same using a multi-method approach, as discussed in Chapter 4. I will now discuss my findings in the order that these were obtained during the analysis process.

### **5.4.1 Card-sort method**

The set of cards - validated in the pilot study - was used as the first method for data gathering. The set of cards represents the coaching building blocks based on three significant world views, i.e. Newtonian, GST, and systemic thinking (refer to Table 4.1 in, Chapter 4 for the cards representing coaching building blocks).

First, the coaches each had to indicate which card best described their current approach to coaching, while the coachees had to select the card that best described their current experience of coaching. After completing Step 1, both

coaches and coachees had to focus on their ideal future coaching approach by selecting the appropriate cards. The card-sort method was applied within the defined framework of the CL building blocks (refer to Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2).

In the tables below, I indicate the findings of the card-sort method. The first two tables are a high-level indication of which approach the coaches and coachees were currently experiencing, and what they preferred for the future. In the next set of tables, I compare the views and preferences of the different coaches and coachees. Lastly, I will compare the different views in relation to the CL building blocks.

The following colour coding will be use throughout the chapter to indicate the different world views, and the current vs. future approaches.

<b>Newtonian world view</b>		<b>GST world view</b>		<b>Systemic world view</b>	
<b>Current</b>	<b>Future</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Future</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Future</b>

In the discussion below each table, I highlighted in bold throughout the chapter the dominant **world view**, as well as the **current** and the **future** approaches of the **coaches** and **coachees**.

Table 5.3 gives the findings of the current and preferred future coaching approaches as indicated by coaches.

Table 5.3

*A Comparison of the Current and Future Coaching Approaches as indicated by Coaches*

Coach	Newtonian world view		GST world view		Systemic world view	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
1					X	√
2					X	√
3					X	√
4					X	√
5			X		X	√
6			X		X	√
%	0	0	33		100	100

From Table 5.3, it can be seen that the majority (67%) of the **coaches were already** using **systemic** coaching principles. The remaining 33% were using a combination of GST and systemic approaches. All the **coaches** indicated that they would like to coach more **systemically** in the **future**.

Table 5.4 is a reflection of the top CL building blocks and card statements as selected by coaches for their current approach and their preferred future approach, which indicated a systemic approach. The results relating to the choice of CL building blocks were based on those most frequently chosen by all respondents.

Table 5.4

*Coaches: CL Building Block Statements of Preferred World View*

World view	Systemic world view		Systemic world view	
	Current	Card statement	Future	Card statement
<b>CL building block</b>	Agenda	The flow of the coaching agenda can be described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.	Context	The focus is on understanding me as a whole person by addressing all aspects of my life, and how they dynamically fit together.
	Coaching relationship	My coach, other significant role-players, and I form part of the co-creation of new patterns of acting for me.	Role of the coach	My coach explores with me the potential patterns and relationships that will enable me to grow.
	Process	The coaching process is a participative, explorative conversation about my life story.		My coach acts as a mirror to explore a set of coherent options for personal growth.
		The coaching process helps me to construct my relationships in an interconnected and holistic way.	Profile of the coach	My coach uses his/her holistic view of my life to co-create, with me, a new pattern of acting.
		The participative conversation helps me to understand my whole life in a more interconnected way.		My coach is comfortable to include the significant other people in my life into the coaching process.

Table 5.4 indicates that the coaches' current preferences were mainly for the CL building blocks *Agenda*, *Coaching relationship*, and *Coaching process*. For the future preferences, the greater consensus shifted to the CL building blocks *Context*, *Role of the coach*, and *Profile of the coach*.

Table 5.5 gives the overall findings regarding the current and preferred future coaching approaches according to coachees.

Table 5.5

*Coachees: A Comparison of the Current and Future Coaching Approaches*

Coachee	Newtonian		GST		Systemic	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
1A			X			√
1B					X	√
1C					X	√
2A				√	X	√
2B*				√	X	√
2C			X	√	X	
3A			X	√	X	√
3B					X	√
4A					X	√
4B			X	√	X	√
4C			X		X	√
5A	X	√	X	√		
6A			X	√	X	√
6B					X	√
%	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>86</b>

*Note: Coachee 2B was not very clear on current and future approach and had elements of all three, but focused more on the ones indicated.*

Table 5.5 indicates that 12 of the 14 **coachees** (86%) preferred a **systemic** approach to coaching, **currently** and in **future**. Five coachees (36%) preferred to also have elements of a GST coaching approach incorporated into their future systemic coaching.

Table 5.6 gives the CL building blocks and statements the coachees preferred in their selection of a systemic coaching approach.

Table 5.6

*Coachees: CL Building Block Statements of Preferred World View*

World view	Systemic world view		Systemic world view	
	Current	Card statement	Future	Card statement
CL building block	Agenda	The flow of the coaching agenda can be described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.	Agenda	The flow of the coaching agenda can be described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.
	Outcomes	Coaching outcomes are not predictable, but are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation.	Outcomes	Coaching outcomes are not predictable, but are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation.
	Profile of the coachee	I am comfortable to make other stakeholders in my life part of the coaching process.		After coaching, I am able to explore and create new life patterns conducive to the life I want to live.
	Coaching relationship	My coach, other significant role-players, and I form part of the co-creation of new patterns of acting for me.		Coaching helps me to explore my different life dimensions (internal and external) in a more interconnected way.
			Profile of the coach	My coach uses his/her holistic view of my life to co-create, with me, a new pattern of acting.
				My coach is comfortable to include the significant other people in my life into the coaching process.
			Profile of the coachee	I am comfortable to make other stakeholders in my life part of the coaching process.

According to Table 5.6 there was greater consensus on the CL building blocks *Agenda*, *Outcomes*, *Profile of the coachee*, and *Coaching relationship* for the current approach, as indicated by the coachees. The preferences for the future of the coachees were very similar to their current experiences. These included *Profile of the coachee*, *Outcomes*, and *Agenda*. An additional CL building block that was indicated as a preference for the future was *Profile of the coach*.

Table 5.7 illustrates the comparison of the current and future coaching approaches between the respective pairs of coaches and coachees.





Table 5.7

*Respective Pairs of Coaches and Coachees: Comparison of the Current and Future Coaching Approaches as reflected in Cards*

Coach vs. Coachee	Newtonian		GST		Systemic	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
Coach 1						
Coachee 1A						
Coachee 1B						
Coachee 1C						
Coach 2						
Coachee 2A						
Coachee 2B						
Coachee 2C						
Coach 3						
Coachee 3A						
Coachee 3B						
Coach 4						
Coachee 4A						
Coachee 4B						
Coachee 4C						
Coach 5						
Coachee 5A						
Coach 6						
Coachee 6A						
Coachee 6B						
% agreement	0	0	0	0	85	90

The findings reported in Table 5.7 show the following:

- Five of the **coaches** were in **agreement** with their **coachees** that the **current** approach to coaching was mainly a **systemic** approach, with some elements of GST.
- Regarding the **future** choice for coaching, there was **greater agreement**. All six coaches and the majority of their respective coachees agreed that the preferred choice should be a **systemic** approach.
- All the coaches and their respective coachees agreed on the following systemic CL building block statements for the current and the future approach:
  - *Coaching process: In coaching, change and insight/understanding are progressively created through the conversations we have.*
  - *Coaching outcomes: Coaching outcomes are not predictable, but are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation.*
- Coaches 1, 2, 3, and 4 and their respective coaches agreed on the *Agenda* CL building block statement, regarding current approach and future preference, which represents a systemic view:
  - *The flow of the coaching agenda can be described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.*
- Coaches 1, 2, 3, and 4 and their respective coaches agreed on the *Profile of coachee* CL building block being included in the current approach, which represents a systemic view:
  - *Profile of the coachee: I am comfortable to make other stakeholders in my life part of the coaching process.*
- Although there was significant agreement on the current and future approaches to coaching, as mentioned above, the choice of the different CL building block statements did vary between the different coaching pairs.
- The agreement between the coaches and their respective coachees with respect of the CL building block statements was high. The agreement

varied between four to eight CL building blocks (there were nine statements) for each coaching pair.

#### **5.4.2 The findings of the semi-structured interviews and cards as a complementary whole**

During the last part of the interview, my focus was to explore with each coach and coachees their current experience of coaching in relation to the CL building blocks. They also had to indicate, as with the card-sort method, what they would prefer in future, or if there was anything they would like to change from their current coaching experience. There was also a question posed to the coach about how his/her coaching approach had changed over time.

In the section below, I report the results as these evolved out of the data analysis. I describe the different methods (i.e. my analysis of the interviews, and the results of the ATLAS analysis), and provide a comparative analysis of the card-sorting and interview data.

My data analysis methods were:

- my own high-level analysis of the interviews;
- applying the ATLAS software to analyse the interview data;
- independent coaches doing a comparative analysis of cards vs. interviews; and
- a comparative analysis of the cards vs. interviews by me.

I will now describe the findings from the different data analysis approaches in the order in which they are listed above.

##### **5.4.2.1 My high-level analysis of the interviews**

I made field notes after each interview, and also read the interview transcripts, making additional notes, in order to give a high level-overview of the world views of the coaches and coachees. This method, used in my research process, links

to the constructivistic view adopted in my study: as a researcher I cannot be objective, and I did play an active role in the meaning-making process. My personal interpretation of what I heard and observed did shape the outcome of these results, and made me a co-creator of the research findings. However, the comments and statements of coaches and coachees shared in this chapter are direct quotations from the transcribed interview data. The themes I identified are reflected in Table 5.8.



Table 5.8

Researcher: high-level analysis of interviews

Coach vs. Coachee	Newtonian world view		GST world view		Systemic world view	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
Coach 1						
Coachee 1A						
Coachee 1B						
Coachee 1C						
Coach 2						
Coachee 2A						
Coachee 2B						
Coachee 2C						
Coach 3						
Coachee 3A						
Coachee 3B						
Coach 4						
Coachee 4A						
Coachee 4B						
Coachee 4C						
Coach 5						
Coachee 5A						
Coach 6						
Coachee 6A						
Coachee 6B						
% coaches	0	0	50	0	83	100
% coaches	7	14	29	14	86	93

The following themes provided a reflection of my view of the individual coaches' and coachees' responses, as indicated in Table 5.8:

- It seems that 50% of the **coaches** applied a GST approach in their **current** coaching, and **83%** applied a **systemic** approach.
- The **coaches all** preferred to work more **systemically** in the **future**.
- Most **coachees** also experienced the **current** coaching approach to which they were exposed as a combination of **GST and systemic**, except one coachee.
- The majority (**93%**) of **coachees** preferred a **systemic** approach in the **future**.
- One of the coaches (Coach 5) and her coachee (Coachee 5A) had very different views on and preferences for a coaching approach. Coach 5 perceived her current approach as GST and systemic, whilst her coachee (5A) perceived it as a combination of Newtonian and GST. Coachee 5A also preferred a Newtonian approach with some elements of GST for the future, while her coach wanted to work more systemically in the future.

In summary, my high-level analysis and personal interpretation of the transcribed interviews indicated that the majority of the coaches and coachees (except one coachee) experienced the current coaching approach as a combination of GST and systemic approaches. Both respondents groups preferred a systemic approach in the future.

One of the coaches said the following:

*"I had always thought about: 'How can I use those circumstances or situations to ensure that whatever solution comes out of that can have an impact, like a ripple impact or a ripple effect, so that we're not only addressing the problem but that, in doing that, we're actually working on other systems or other things that are linked to that problem?'*

*I think systems thinking helped me a lot as well, in terms of having that shift that, you know, you look at a problem and think: 'This is where we need to have the leverage,' but it's not always the case. But I think I want to actually apply more of the systems thinking principles in my coaching."*

#### **5.4.2.2 Findings from ATLAS analysis**

In this section, I describe the findings from the analysis of the interview data using the ATLAS software program. Coding was done electronically for all the transcribed interviews, and I used the software to run specific queries to provide me with the necessary analyses and results. ATLAS is a qualitative software programme where themes and patterns can be reflected in a table format.

Table 5.9 gives the findings of the ATLAS analysis of the interviews regarding the current and preferred future approaches of the coaches and their respective coachees.



Table 5.9

*ATLAS Analysis of Interviews: A Comparison of the Current and Future Coaching Approaches of Respective Pairs of Coaches and Coachees*

Coach vs. Coachee	Newtonian		GST		Systemic	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
Coach 1						
Coachee 1A						
Coachee 1B						
Coachee 1C						
Coach 2						
Coachee 2A						
Coachee 2B						
Coachee 2C						
Coach 3						
Coachee 3A						
Coachee 3B						
Coach 4						
Coachee 4A						
Coachee 4B						
Coachee 4C						
Coach 5						
Coachee 5A						
Coach 6						
Coachee 6A						
Coachee 6B						
% coaches	0	0	50	17	67	100
% coachees	7	7	38	21	71	93



The following trends are reflected in Table 5.9:

- The **current** approaches for both **coaches** and **coachees** were **systemic** (67% and 71% respectively) and GST (50% and 38% respectively).

The statement below is an example of a coach currently focussing on a linear or GST approach and preferring to shift to a systemic approach.

*"I think, in many instances, my coaching has been to solve problems. So, it hasn't been, you know, for overall personal growth. And, in those instances, I felt that we are only having a targeted solution, which might not necessarily have an impact on the person's growth. I had always thought about, how can I ... then use those circumstances or situations to ensure that, whatever solution comes out of that, can have an impact, like a ripple impact or a ripple effect, so that we're not only addressing the problem, but that, in doing that, we're actually working on other systems or other things that are linked to that problem.*

*So, I will have an instance of a manager that I've been coaching. They have wanted to really build relationships. We've talked about what is essential for building relationships, explored their experience, explored what they are comfortable with and all that, until the manager got to a point where they felt relationships have been built. We used some NLP approaches, but, in doing that, then there was a specific problem with one individual in the team, and the leader wanted me to help them to solve that problem.*

*So, for me, it's more about when they are faced with that problem, can they then utilise everything else that they have done, all the skills that they have acquired so that it's not disjointed, and it's not just about solving one problem, but it's integrated into a bigger system where they know that they can use those skills that they acquired anyway?*

*But also, you remember, when I picked that card, I said, 'I would like to explore this because it's something that we don't do.' I leave out that essential, critical stakeholder who can then ... pull her [the coachee] out of this coaching session, but continue on the journey with her. I think I haven't done it consistently, and I actually want to ensure that I always do it. Because, what happens is, then we sit in a coaching session; we really talk a lot of sense, and the conversation is great, but when that person goes out of the session — because some of the stakeholders that are really integral in the system are not really involved and they don't have the awareness or the picture that the coachee has had. It almost then loses the impact that the coaching could've had if the involvement of the stakeholder had been right from the onset. This is what has been happening. So, instead of just giving feedback to the stakeholder, to actually pull them in and involve them."*

- For the current approach, there was a 75% agreement between the five coaches and their coachees. Some of the differences were related to the view that GST was followed in the current approach.
- A total of 100% of the **coaches** and 93% of the **coachees** preferred a **systemic** approach for the **future**.

The following statements reflect the future choice of some of the coaches.

#### **Coaches' comments**

**Comment 1:** *"I would like to draw more attention to the fact that it is a holistic approach, and not only about your leadership ability or whatever the problem is that you are working on. I like the inter connectedness, the holistic approach, the integral part of the understanding of my action and impact it has on others and myself, my life externally — it is very important."*

**Comment 2:** *"Thinking systemically, the links, the causes, the effects, you know, and what might happen if this happens, has helped me a lot in terms of changing my focus recently when I coach. But, I want to actually apply more of the systems thinking principles in my coaching in future."*

One of the coachees described his view of and preference for systemic coaching as follows.

*“For me, the most important aspect of the coaching, or what I find the most valuable, is the fact that it's all-encompassing. So, it looks at every sphere of life, and that it is not aimed at a specific objective or goal that is apparent in the situation.*

*I think the objective and the context of our coaching is all-encompassing, as I said. So, it doesn't just look at my role, because, from the onset, the coach and I had both come to the agreement that life is not just you, you are a part of a community, of a family, of a work environment. So, there are lots of different factors that come into play into the coaching environment, and those all, I believe, contribute to who and what you are. And, in certain instances, certain behaviours are represented. And, for me, what has made the coaching valuable, even going forward, and what I'm sure will make more it valuable going forward, is the fact that I'm slowly but surely starting to identify and recognise patterns. The coach and I refer to that as ‘that's my story.’ So, we constantly refer back to that, and it's funny how you can start seeing when certain glide paths are used, if I can put it that way, how those are precipitated by different types of situations.”*

- Five of the coaches and their respective coachees agreed that their preferred approach for the future was systemic.
- In the findings obtained from the ATLAS analysis, the difference of opinion between Coach 5 and her coachee was highlighted again.

The difference is reflected in the statements below.

**The coach (current):** *“My style of coaching would be a very holistic style in terms of all the dimensions of a person's life, looking at health, looking at spirituality, etcetera.*

**The coachee (current):** *“Predominantly work related sort of issues where life comes into play or interplays in those scenarios, then that's obviously ... but I tend to leave personal life at the front door of the organisation.”*

**Interviewer:** *“If you have to change anything around the coaching in future, you are stepping into a new coaching relationship, what would you like to be different?”*

**The coach (future):** *“Ja, I think what I can add is to become a little bit more bold about the holistic context. Because everything is interlinked and everything has an effect on everything. So, I think I can — that's my preference and I can bring it in more.”*

**The coachee (future):** *“I actually don't think there is. I'm comfortable with the coaching process as it stands. It should stay the same.”* (This referred to her view that coaching was mainly Newtonian).

*In summary:* the findings from the ATLAS analysis provided a very similar view to those obtained through the card-sort method. The current experience varied from GST to a combination of GST and systemic for all the coaches and coachees. Except for one coachee, the preferred choice for the future of all the coaches and coachees was a systemic approach.

### **5.4.2.3 Results from the analyses by experts**

In this section, I focus on the views of the two independent experts. I provided two expert coaches with the transcribed interviews, as well as the cards, to determine their view of the preferred choices of the different respondents. They had to mark the card of each CL building block that they believed best described the content of the interview. The findings of expert A are displayed in Table 5.10.



Table 5.10

*Expert A: Comparison of the Current and Future Approaches of the Coaches and Respective Coachees in Comparing the Cards with Interviews*

Coach vs. Coachee	Newtonian		GST		Systemic	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
Coach 1						
Coachee 1A						
Coachee 1B						
Coachee 1C						
Coach 2						
Coachee 2A						
Coachee 2B						
Coachee 2C						
Coach 3						
Coachee 3A						
Coachee 3B						
Coach 4						
Coachee 4A						
Coachee 4B						
Coachee 4C						
Coach 5						
Coachee 5A						
Coach 6						
Coachee 6A						
Coachee 6B						
% coaches	0	0	83	33	50	83
% coachees	14	21	64	36	79	79

As shown in Table 5.10, the following were the views of expert A:

- The **current** approach according to both **coaches** and **coachees** was **systemic** (50% and 77% respectively) and GST (83% and 64% respectively).
- The current approach indicated by the coaching pairs was a combination of GST and a systemic approach, with a slight preference for GST.
- A total of 83% of the **coaches** and 79% of **coachees preferred a systemic** approach for the **future**.
- Two of the coaches and their respective coachees agreed that the preferred choice for the future was systemic.
- The difference in preference between Coach 5 and her coachee was again highlighted in the findings of Expert A.

Table 5.11 reflects the findings of Expert B.



Table 5.11

*Expert B: Comparison of the Current and Future Approaches of the Coaches and Respective Coachees in Comparing the Cards with Interviews*

Coach vs. Coachee	Newtonian		GST		Systemic	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
Coach 1						
Coachee 1A						
Coachee 1B						
Coachee 1C						
Coach 2						
Coachee 2A						
Coachee 2B						
Coachee 2C						
Coach 3						
Coachee 3A						
Coachee 3B						
Coach 4						
Coachee 4A						
Coachee 4B						
Coachee 4C						
Coach 5						
Coachee 5A						
Coach 6						
Coachee 6A						
Coachee 6B						
% coaches	17	0	67	50	33	67
% coachees	14	7	93	43	29	57

The findings of Expert B, provided in Table 5.11, reflected the following:



- Expert B had very different views when compared to some of the previous findings. Although similar themes were identified, her percentages were lower, and had a wider spread across the different world views.
- The **current** approach for both **coaches and coachees** was found to be **GST** (67% and 93% respectively) and Systemic (33% and 29% respectively). The current preference therefore leaned towards GST.
- A total of 67% of the **coaches** and 57% of **coachees preferred a systemic** approach for the **future**.
- Expert B also found a definite preference for **GST as an alternative** approach in **future** (almost 50% for coaches and coachees).
- No clear patterns in the findings on the different coaching pairs were indicated by Expert B.
- Expert B identified the difference in choice between Coach 5 and her coachee, which was highlighted previously.

#### 5.4.2.4 Findings from my analysis

In the section below, I give the results of my analysis of the views of the coaches and their coachees by comparing the CL building block statements on the cards with the interviews. My findings are reported in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12

*Researcher: Comparison of the Current and Future approach of the Coaches and Respective Coachees, Comparing Cards with Interviews*

Coach vs. Coachee	Newtonian		GST		Systemic	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
Coach 1						
Coachee 1A						
Coachee 1B						
Coachee 1C						
Coach 2						
Coachee 2A						
Coachee 2B						
Coachee 2C						
Coach 3						
Coachee 3A						
Coachee 3B						
Coach 4						
Coachee 4A						
Coachee 4B						
Coachee 4C						
Coach 5						
Coachee 5A						
Coach 6						
Coachee 6A						
Coachee 6B						
% coaches	0	0	67	17	50	100
% coachees	7	7	50	21	86	93

The following is evident from Table 5.12:

- The **current** approach was indicated by both **coaches and coachees** as **systemic** (50% and 86% respectively) and GST (67% and 50% respectively).
- For the current approach, there was a 75% agreement between the five coaches and their coachees. Some of the differences were related to the view that the current approach also included GST.
- A total of 100% of the **coaches** and 93% of **coachees** preferred a **systemic** approach for the **future**.
- Five of the coaches and their respective coachees agreed that the preferred choice for the future should be systemic.
- Once again, was there quite a difference between the views of Coach 5 and her coachee. Coach 5 believed that she followed an approach that combined GST and systemic principles, and also wanted to work more systemic, the current experience of her coachee was more Newtonian, and her preference for the future was a combination of Newtonian and GST.

#### **5.4.2.5 A summary of the key themes for the comparative choices of the coaching approaches for the coaches and coachees.**

What follows is a summary of the findings described in Sections 5.3.1 to 5.3.4. In the summary, I integrate the findings for all the mediums, as applied in the multi-method approach of my study. These were:

- the card-sort method;
- my high-level analysis of the interviews;
- applying the ATLAS software program to analyse the interview data;
- independent expert coaches doing an analysis of the interviews, using the card statements; and
- my analysis of interviews, using the cards statements.

The following findings are notable:

**(i) The current view of coaches and coachees:**

- All the **coaches already** focused on **systemic principles**, and **preferred** to do so even more **going forward**. The coaches viewed their **current** approach as **GST and systemic**.
- My analysis and that of the two experts indicated a slightly higher preference for a GST approach by coaches in their current view. The card-sort method indicated a higher current preference for a systemic approach.
- The majority of the **coachees** also experienced their **current** coaching approach as a combination of **GST and systemic**.
- There is a slight difference between the view I have and those of the two experts. My view leans somewhat more to a systemic approach with elements of GST.

**(ii) The future view of coaches and coachees:**

- All the mediums clearly indicated that a **systemic approach** was the **preferred choice** was for coaching in the future for the majority of **coaches and coachees**.
- My analysis and the findings from ATLAS differed slightly from those of the two experts. I found a stronger indication of systemic coaching being the choice of approach for the future for both coaches and coachees.

**(iii) Other key themes:**

- The results of all the mediums of analysis indicated that the views of the coaches and their respective coachees were very similar.
- All the different mediums confirmed the different experience of Coach 5 and her coachee. The coach preferred a more systemic focus, but the coachee selected a Newtonian approach, with some elements of GST.

## **5.5. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHAT DOES THE PICTURE OF THE COACHING LANDSCAPE LOOK LIKE AS A PREFERRED CHOICE FOR FUTURE COACHING?**

In the results provided above were obtained through a high-level analysis, using a macro-level view of the three world views. The coaches and coachees sometimes indicated a combination of different approaches, or included certain elements of a specific approach in their view. It was therefore important to explore the findings more in detail, to discover patterns.

A discussion of the card-sort method findings follows in Section in 5.4.1, and the interviews discussed in Section 5.4.2 focus specifically on the three world views as reflected in the CL with its building blocks. The CL building blocks were described in Section 2.2, Chapter 2, and were utilised as an overall roadmap for my study.

### **5.5.1 The world views as reflected in the choice of coaching landscape building blocks, using the card statements**

The detail results and figures are provided in the Appendix A. The figures illustrated the findings with respect to the different CL building blocks, and how the preferences of coach and coachees compared, with regard to both the present and the future. The findings are summarised in Table 5.13. Only the dominant world view for each CL building block is indicated, according to the colour coding convention used throughout this chapter.

Table 5.13

*Summary of the Findings for the CL Building Blocks*

World view	Newtonian				GST				Systemic			
	Coach		Coachee		Coach		Coachee		Coach		Coachee	
Current/Future	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F
CL building block												
Coaching context												
Coaching objectives												
Role of the coach												
Coaching relationship												
Coaching process												
Coaching agenda												
Profile of the coach												
Profile of the coachee												
Coaching outcomes												

The summary of the findings of Section 5.4.1, as illustrated in Table 5.13 above, clearly indicates that the majority of the coaches and coachees currently prefer a **systemic world view** in addressing the CL building blocks, and that they would also prefer to do so in the future. However, some participants' results did indicate a **GST approach**, both currently and as a future preference, to certain building blocks, for example, *Coaching context* and *Coaching objectives*.

## **5.5.2 Findings for CL building blocks when comparing the cards and interview findings: the researcher, the experts, and ATLAS**

In this section, I focus on the views of the two experts, my views, as well as the results of ATLAS, of how the different world views with reference to the CL building blocks discussed in the interviews. I will deal with the results for the coaches and coachees in separate sections.

### **5.5.2.1 Current and future views of coaches**

In this section, I compare the different results for the coaches, as indicated by the two experts, the ATLAS software program, and found in my own analyses.

The results captured in Table 5.14 provide a comparison of the findings relating to the coaches. Only the highest percentages are colour-coded in each instance.

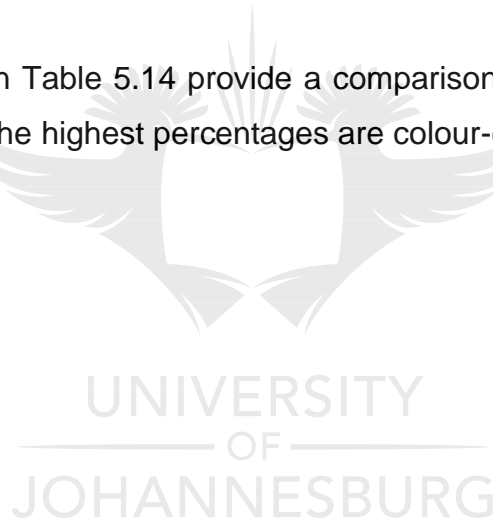


Table 5.14

*Researcher, Experts, and ATLAS: Comparison of the Findings on the Approach to CL Building Blocks for Coaches*

Coaching landscape building block	World view	Current					Future				
		Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %	Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %
Context	Newtonian	14%	14%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	GST	43%	57%	50%	22%	43%	0%	43%	0%	0%	11%
	Systemic	43%	29%	50%	78%	50%	100%	57%	100%	100%	89%
Objectives	Newtonian	22%	25%	27%	0%	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	GST	44%	50%	55%	55%	51%	29%	56%	33%	25%	36%
	Systemic	33%	25%	18%	45%	30%	71%	44%	67%	75%	64%
Role of the coach	Newtonian	10%	12.5%	10%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	GST	40%	37.5%	40%	50%	42%	25%	44%	14%	0%	21%
	Systemic	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	75%	56%	86%	100%	79%
Coaching relationship	Newtonian	17%	28.5%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	GST	50%	43%	67%	100%	65%	50%	57%	17%	0%	31%
	Systemic	33%	28.5%	33%	0%	24%	50%	43%	83%	100%	69%



Table 5.14 (continued)

CL building Block	World view	Current					Future				
		Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %	Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %
Process	Newtonian	0%	22%	0%	12%	8.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	GST	83%	56%	56%	41%	59%	29%	50%	14%	36%	32%
	Systemic	17%	22%	44%	47%	32.5%	71%	50%	86%	64%	68%
Agenda	Newtonian	0%	12.5%	0%	0%	3%	0%	11%	0%	0%	3%
	GST	33%	62.5%	17%	17%	32%	0%	33%	0%	0%	8%
	Systemic	67%	25%	83%	83%	65%	100%	56%	100%	100%	89%
Profile of the coach	Newtonian	0%	20%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	GST	67%	60%	50%	25%	50.5%	37.5%	50%	29%	0%	29%
	Systemic	33%	20%	50%	75%	44.5%	62.5%	50%	71%	100%	71%
Profile of the coachee	Newtonian	0%	28.5 %	17%	0%	15%	0%	0%	14%	0%	3.5%
	GST	100%	43%	50%	0%	64%	75%	67%	29%	0%	42.75%
	Systemic	0%	28.5%	33%	0%	21%	25%	33%	57%	100%	53.75%
Outcomes	Newtonian	0%	11%	25%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	GST	17%	56%	37.5%	33%	36%	12.5%	33%	14%	0%	15%
	Systemic	83%	33%	37.5%	67%	55%	87.5%	67%	86%	100%	85%
Average across building blocks	Newtonian					9.5%					0.7%
	GST					49.2%					25.1%
	Systemic					41.3%					74.2%

The key findings reflected in Table 5.14 are provided below, with the dominant world view is provided in bold.

### (i) Current approach of coaches

The coaches' current approaches to the different CL building blocks are as follows:

- **Context:** A combination of GST and a systemic approach, with **systemic** indicated by the majority.
  - **Objectives:** All analyses indicated a **GST** approach.
  - **Role of the coach:** The experts and I found a **systemic approach**, with only ATLAS finding a GST world view.
  - **Coaching relationship:** All analyses found a **GST** approach.
  - **Coaching process:** The experts and I found a **GST** approach, with only ATLAS finding a systemic approach.
  - **Agenda:** All the analyses found a **systemic** approach, with the exception of Expert B, who found a GST approach.
  - **Profile of the coach:** Both Expert A and B found a GST approach. I found an equal distribution for GST and systemic, and ATLAS found a systemic approach.
  - **Profile of the coachee:** All analyses found a **GST** approach.
  - **Outcomes:** All analyses found a combination of GST and systemic, but with a higher preference for **systemic**.
- The current approach to the following CL building blocks is a **GST** coaching approach: *Objectives, Coaching relationship, Process, Profile of the Coach, and Profile of the coachee*.
  - The current approach to the following CL building blocks is **systemic**: *Context, Role of the coach, Agenda, and Outcomes*.
  - Across all the CL building blocks, and looking at the average percentage, the dominant view of the current approach was **GST**, at 49.2%. The indication of **GST** and **systemic** for the current experience was almost the same for the all of the CL building blocks combined.

## (ii) Future approach for coaches

The coaches' preferred future approach to the different CL building blocks are:

- **Context:** A **systemic** approach was found in all analyses.
  - **Objectives:** All analyses found a **systemic** approach, except Expert B, found a GST approach.
  - **Role of the coach:** A **systemic** approach was found in all analyses.
  - **Coaching relationship:** All analyses found a preference for a **systemic** except Expert B, who found a preference for a GST approach for the future.
  - **Coaching process:** All analyses found a **systemic** approach, except Expert B, who found a preference for GST for the future.
  - **Agenda:** All analyses found a **systemic** approach as the preferred choice for the future.
  - **Profile of the coach:** All analyses found a **systemic** approach..
  - **Profile of the coachee:** Experts A and B perceived the choice for the future to be **GST**, while my analysis and that of ATLAS found a **systemic** approach to be the preferred choice.
  - **Outcomes:** A **systemic** approach was found in all the analyses to be the preferred choice for the future.
- A **systemic** approach in the future was indicated for all building blocks as the preferred choice by the coaches.
  - Across all the building blocks, and looking at the average percentage, the dominant future approach was **systemic**, at 74.2%.

When comparing the choice of current and future approaches for the **coaches**, there was a definite shift towards a systemic approach in the future. The current experience of coaching was described by the coaches as a combination of GST and systemic for the different CL building blocks. The preferred future approach of coaches is clearly systemic for all the CL building blocks.

Table 5.15 gives the results of similar analyses for coachees.

Table 5.15

*Researcher, Experts, and ATLAS: A Comparison of the different Findings for Coachees*

Coaching landscape building block	World view	Current					Future				
		Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %	Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %
Context	Newtonian	0%	16%	12%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	GST	47%	63%	29%	50%	47%	38%	53%	20%	29%	35%
	Systemic	53%	21%	59%	50%	46%	62%	47%	80%	71%	65%
Objectives	Newtonian	19%	20%	18%	0%	14%	21%	0%	18%	0%	9.75%
	GST	48%	55%	45%	50%	50%	32%	45%	12%	50%	34.75%
	Systemic	33%	25%	37%	50%	36%	47%	55%	70%	50%	55.5%
Role of the coach	Newtonian	10%	9%	4%	5%	7%	22%	0%	11%	15%	12%
	GST	40%	55%	48%	30%	43%	17%	39%	26%	15%	24%
	Systemic	50%	36%	48%	65%	50%	61%	61%	63%	70%	64%
Coaching relationship	Newtonian	17%	14%	0%	11%	10.5%	8%	7%	0%	17%	8%
	GST	50%	79%	60%	67%	64%	50%	40%	29%	66%	46%
	Systemic	33%	7%	40%	22%	25.5%	42%	53%	71%	17%	46%

Table 5.15 (continued)

CL building Block	World view	Current					Future				
		Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %	Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %
Process	Newtonian	6%	14%	4%	6%	7.5%	12%	5%	5%	8%	7.5%
	GST	35%	59%	41%	25%	40%	19%	40%	28%	11%	24.5%
	Systemic	59%	27%	55%	69%	52.5%	69%	55%	67%	81%	68%
Agenda	Newtonian	14%	14%	0%	0%	7%	13%	6%	0%	0%	4.75%
	GST	36%	50%	0%	8%	23%	40%	33%	0%	10%	20.75%
	Systemic	50%	36%	100%	92%	70%	47%	61%	100%	90%	74.5%
Profile of the coach	Newtonian	10%	9%	5%	12.5%	9%	12.5%	5%	7%	12%	9%
	GST	53%	67%	32%	25%	44%	50%	53%	13%	12%	32%
	Systemic	37%	24%	63%	62.5%	47%	37.5%	42%	80%	76%	59%
Profile of the coachee	Newtonian	8%	6%	8%	0%	6%	7%	12%	7%	0%	6.5%
	GST	77%	70.5%	15%	50%	53%	64%	44%	7%	33%	37%
	Systemic	15%	23.5%	77%	50%	41%	29%	44%	86%	67%	56.5%

**Table 5.15 (Continued)**

CL building block	World view	Current					Future						
		Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %	Expert A	Expert B	Researcher	ATLAS	Average %		
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Newtonian</b>	6%	17%	9%	0%	8%	17%	5%	13%	0%	9%		
	<b>GST</b>	38%	61%	36%	41%	44%	22%	42%	6%	22%	23%		
	<b>Systemic</b>	56%	22%	55%	59%	48%	61%	53%	81%	78%	68%		
<b>Average across building blocks</b>	<b>Newtonian</b>						8.5%						7.4%
	<b>GST</b>						45.3%						30.8%
	<b>Systemic</b>						46.2%						61.8%

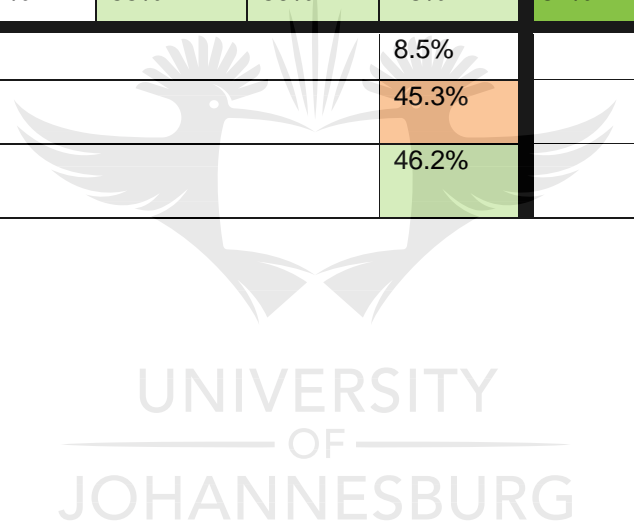


Table 5.15 reflects the key findings for the coachees:

**(i) Current view of coachees**

The analyses of results regarding the approaches to the CL building blocks revealed the following:

- **Context:** A combination of the GST and systemic approaches was found, with indications of a **systemic** approach being in the majority.
  - **Objectives:** All the analyses found a **GST** approach.
  - **Role of the coach:** All analyses found a combination of GST and systemic approaches, with indications of a **systemic** approach being in majority.
  - **Coaching relationship:** All the analyses found a **GST** approach.
  - **Coaching process:** All the analyses found a **systemic** approach, with only Expert B finding a GST approach.
  - **Agenda:** All the analyses found a **systemic** approach, with only Expert B finding a GST approach.
  - **Profile of the coach:** All analyses found a combination of GST and systemic, with indications of a **systemic** approach being in the majority.
  - **Profile of the coachee:** All analyses found a combination of GST and systemic, with indications of a **GST** approach being in the majority.
  - **Outcomes:** All the analyses found a **systemic** approach, with only Expert B finding a GST approach.
- The results for the following CL building blocks indicated the current experience of coaching as a GST coaching approach: *Context, Objectives, Coaching relationship, and Profile of the coachee.*
  - The CL building blocks that were indicated as following a **systemic** approach as current experience were: *Role of the coach, Process, Agenda, Profile of the coach, and Outcomes.*

- Across all the building blocks, and looking at the average percentage, there was no clear dominant view. The averages for **GST** and **systemic** approaches were very similar, 45.3% and 46.2% respectively, for the current experience of coaching.

The following comments confirmed the current focus as GST and systemic, but also the importance of life balance (homeostasis) for the coachees.

#### Coachees' comments

**Comment 1:** *“That's why it was so difficult for me to answer all these things, because there was the holistic view on the one side on the work, but then there was on a personal — the life balance as well. The work-life balance and looking after yourself first before you look after others.”*

**Comment 2:** *“Well, the biggest focus was on the work-related leadership role. Then, as I say, specifically around the leadership course that we were on and what we discussed there. But we also had many discussions around work-life balance.”*

**Comment 3:** *“I think, because we're whole persons. You know, for me, coaching deals with the whole person, and it even links with what I would want in coaching. So, my picture of coaching must look at the whole person, and I think that my current coaching acknowledges that the person is not just a one-dimensional person. There are life roles, and I think coaching has a huge role to play in how a person finds the balance to deal with all of those responsibilities. So I ... don't know if it's clear for you that coaching, I think, is an important thing, and helps you get perspective, and also balance all of the important stuff.”*

#### (ii) Preferred future approach of coachees

The analyses indicated the following preferred future approaches of the coachees in terms of the different CL building blocks:



- **Context:** All analyses found a preference for a **systemic** approach, except Expert B, found a GST approach to be the preference for the future.
  - **Objectives:** All the analyses found a **systemic** approach, with only ATLAS finding a preference for a combination of a GST and a systemic approach.
  - **Role of the coach:** A **systemic** approach was found to be the preferred future approach in all the analyses.
  - **Coaching relationship:** A combination of **GST** and **systemic** was found in all the analyses, with no clear preference for either.
  - **Coaching process:** A **systemic** approach was found to be the preferred choice in all the analyses.
  - **Agenda:** All the analyses found a **systemic** approach to be the preferred approach for the future.
  - **Profile of the coach:** Expert A perceived the approach for the future to be GST, Expert B perceived it to be a combination of GST and systemic, while my analysis and that of ATLAS found a preference for a systemic approach.
  - **Profile of the coachee:** Experts A and B perceived the preferred approach for the future to be GST, while my analysis and that of ATLAS found it to be systemic.
  - **Outcomes:** All the analyses found a **systemic** approach to be the preferred approach for the future.
- For all the CL building blocks, a **systemic** approach was indicated as the preferred choice for the future by the coachees, except for the building block **Coaching relationship**, where there was an equal distribution of the preferences for GST and systemic.
  - Across all the CL building blocks, and looking at the average percentage, the **dominant future preference** was a **systemic** approach, at 61.8%.

When comparing the current and future approaches for the **coachees**, there was also a shift towards a systemic approach for the future. Regarding their current experience of coaching, the card statements chosen by the coachees indicated as a combination of a GST and a systemic for the different CL building blocks. The future choice for coachees was clearly systemic for most the CL building blocks.

The pattern was very similar in the results of the **coaches**. Their current approach to coaching was a combination of a GST and a systemic approach, while the preference future coaching was clearly systemic.

### **5.5.3 The importance of coaching according to coachees**

One of the interview questions was designed to explore the importance of coaching as a medium for leadership development. The questions posed to the coachees were:

- (1) *Do you think coaching is important in the business world? and*
- (2) *Why do you think it is important?*

The reasons were analysed using ATLAS. The identified themes are summarised in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16

*Importance of Coaching according to Coachees*

Theme	Frequency	%	Current coaching approach		Future coaching approach	
Change in and complexity of the world of work	4	22	GST	Systemic	Systemic	
Dynamic, complex environment	2	11	GST	Systemic	Systemic	
A holistic view and interconnectedness of people	4	22	GST	Systemic	GST	Systemic
Relationships patterns	2	11	Systemic		Systemic	
Exploring alternative perceptions	3	17	GST	Systemic	Systemic	
A sense of personal awareness	2	11	GST	Systemic	GST	Systemic
Being empowered in the current world of work	1	6	GST	Systemic	GST	Systemic

As seen in Table 5.16, all the coachees confirmed the importance of coaching in the new world of work as a critical medium for the development of leaders. The key reasons for coaching were: *change in and complexity of the world of work* (22%), *a holistic view and interconnectedness of people* (22%), and *exploring alternative perceptions* (17%).

From these findings, it seems that a **systemic world view** would enable the coachee to better handle the demands of the world of work in the future that is characterised by complexities, interconnectedness, and ever-changing.

The comments below provide support for some of the findings for the coachees.

#### Coachees' comments

##### **Comment 1**

*"I think, in the context of the complex world, and also with the discussions that I do have with my leaders – ... perhaps some of the meetings we don't even call coaching, but it ends up in a coaching session. So, I think, with the complexity of work, it's actually more needed to give that space or hold that space for the person where they can go into the reflection mode, or thinking mode, in order to determine some actions for them."*

##### **Comment 2**

*"I think we live in a much more dynamic world. I mean, if we just look at technology and what you have to do with it during a day, it was much more simplified a few years ago versus now. Most definitely, I think you need the coaching and the guidance."*

#### **5.5.4 Coaching approach and impact as reflected in interviews**

In this section, the focus is on the experience and impact of coaching according to both coaches and coachees. It was not necessary to ask the respondents a question regarding their satisfaction with coaching in the interviews, as it was discussed spontaneously by all.

To be able to explore the reasons for coaching satisfaction, I used the interview data and coding through ATLAS to determine the key themes. I also used their

future coaching approach preference to determine the impact of **systemic** coaching.

Table 5.17 indicates the impact of coaching in relation to the coaching approach, as selected by the coaches and coachees for the future.

Table 5.17  
*Coaching Approach and Impact*

	Future choice		Impact of and reason according to each coach and coachee
<b>Coach 1</b>	Systemic		Deeper level of conversation; growth; more possibilities/ options.
<b>Coachee 1A</b>	GST	Systemic	Deeper level of conversation in times of change and complexity.
<b>Coachee 1B</b>	Systemic		Deeper level of conversation, impact on complex environment
<b>Coachee 1C</b>	Systemic		Deeper level of conversation, including more people; satisfaction.
<b>Coach 2</b>	Systemic		Deeper level of conversation.
<b>Coachee 2A</b>	Systemic		Deeper level of conversation, all-encompassing; satisfaction.
<b>Coachee 2B</b>	Systemic		Meaningful and improved thought patterns.
<b>Coachee 2C</b>	GST	Systemic	Coaching satisfaction; holistic impact.
<b>Coach 3</b>	GST	Systemic	Coaching satisfaction, holistic well-being, and life balance.
<b>Coachee 3A</b>	Systemic		Working with the whole person; deeper levels of conversation.
<b>Coachee 3B</b>	Systemic		Coaching satisfaction; exploring deeper levels.

**Table 5.17 (continued)**

	<b>Future choice</b>	<b>Impact of and reason according to each coach and coachee</b>
<b>Coach 4</b>	Systemic	Deeper, more meaningful conversations, dealing with complexity.
<b>Coachee 4A</b>	Systemic	Deeper levels of conversation; holistic.
<b>Coachee 4B</b>	GST Systemic	Deeper levels of conversation, exploring different aspects and blind spots/ possibilities and options.
<b>Coachee 4C</b>	Systemic	Holistic, deeper conversations, focusing on all aspects of life.
<b>Coach 5</b>	Systemic	Exploring deeper levels of conversations on all dimensions of life; fulfilment.
<b>Coachee 5A</b>	Newtonian GST	Satisfaction links to direct Newtonian coaching with some GST principles.
<b>Coach 6</b>	Systemic	More holistic and transformational.
<b>Coachee 6A</b>	GST Systemic	Deeper conversations evolve.
<b>Coachee 6B</b>	Systemic	Deeper levels of conversation; whole-person, holistic coaching.

*Note: Data used to determine future choice were a combination of card-selection, interviews (ATLAS's and researcher's analysis), and researcher's comparison of card-sort data with interview data.*

As reflected in Table 5.17, the following were considered important:

- The majority of respondents preferred a systemic approach for the future.
- Satisfaction with coaching was linked to a holistic approach dealing with complexities of an ever-changing context and deeper levels of conversation, focusing on all dimensions of life and the whole person.

- Four of the coaches (67%) linked satisfaction to deeper levels of conversations that create more meaning and growth or dealing with complexities. A total of 50% of the coaches referred to the importance of holistic coaching. One coach specifically focused on life balance, which is strongly related to GST.
- Eleven (79%) of the coachees linked satisfaction to deeper levels of conversations and complexities, and 57% mentioned the importance of holistic coaching that enables them to explore holistic patterns and include more people and aspects of their lives.

The comments below support some of the findings for coachees.

Coachees' comments:

**Comment 1**

*"The fact that she would check in with me made me realise that she's considerate of the fact that I am not an isolated [name] in the work environment. I'm [name] as a whole, with my home problems, with my home joys, with my work joys and my work problems. I'm [name] as a whole, and I'll be impacted by it; I cannot isolate it. And that approach helped me a lot."*

**Comment 2**

*"It was holistic... So, work at the time was very important and is important. My wife and family is [sic] very important, our church and stuff is [sic], and so we dealt with family, work, church, you know, all of that. ... so we had a conversation about that, because it's what is uppermost in your mind.... So, that was great, because ... it was interconnected."*

**Comment 3**

*"... because we're whole persons. You know, for me, coaching deals with the whole person, and it even links with what I would want in coaching. So, my picture of coaching must look at the whole person, and I think that coaching acknowledges that the person comes to business not just as a one-dimensional person. There are life roles, and I think coaching has a huge role to play... the balance, but deal with all of those responsibilities."*

- The respondents indicated that a systemic approach provided them with the opportunity to experience a deeper level of conversation, with a more holistic focus on meaning and fulfilment as well as dealing with complexities of the ever-changing context.

## 5.6. SUMMARY OF THE KEY THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE FINDINGS

In this section, I discuss the overall themes that emerged out of the findings, and how each theme is connected to the three world views.

Table 5.18 provides a summary of the findings reported above.

Table 5.18

*Summary of the Major Findings*

KEY THEME	THEMES
<p><b>What is the nature of the sample of my research study?</b></p>	<p><b>Leadership level</b>            The majority (64%) of the leaders (i.e. coachees) in the sample group were in Passage 1 of their leadership journey as a team leader, i.e. responsible for a smaller operational team.</p>



Table 5.18 (continued)

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES	NEWTONIAN (N)	GST	SYSTEMIC (S)
<p>Empirical Research Question 1: What are the comparative choices of the coaching approach of the coaches and coachees?</p>	<p>The card-sort method Current approach</p>			
	<p>The majority (67%) of the coaches were already using systemic principles. The remaining 33% were currently working with a combination of a GST and a systemic approach.</p>			
	<p>The coaches' current preference for a systemic world view related mainly to the card statements indicated for the CL building blocks <i>Agenda</i>, <i>Coaching relationship</i>, and <i>Coaching process</i>.</p>			
	<p>The selection of card statements was highest for the CL building blocks <i>Agenda</i>, <i>Outcome</i>, <i>Profile of the coachee</i>, and <i>Coaching relationship</i>.</p>			

**Table 5.18 (continued)**

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES	N	GST	S
	<b>Future approach</b>			
	All the coaches indicated that they would like to work more systemically in future.			
	Of the 14 coachees, 12 (86%) indicated a preference for a systemic approach to future coaching. Five coachees (36%) preferred to include elements of the GST approach in their future systemic coaching.			
	The coachees' preferences for the future were very similar to their current experience. The selected card statements referred to the building blocks <i>Profile of the coachee, Outcomes, Agenda, and Profile of the coach.</i>			
	The greatest preferences of the coachees for the future related the card statements indicating the CL building blocks <i>Context, Role of the coach,</i> and <i>Profile of the coach.</i>			
	<b>Interviews (researcher) — Current approach</b>			
	A total of 50% of the coaches applied a GST approach in current coaching, and 83% used a systemic approach.			
	Most coachees experienced the current coaching approach as a combination of GST and systemic.			

**Table 5.18 (continued)**

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES	N	GST	S
	<b>Future approach</b>			
	All coaches preferred to work more systemically in future.			
	A total of 93% of the coachees preferred a systemic approach for the future.			
	<b>Interviews (ATLAS) Current approach</b>			
	The current approaches, as indicated by both coaches and coachees were systemic (67% and 71% respectively) and GST (50% and 38% respectively).			
	<b>Future approach</b>			
	All the coaches and 93% of the coachees preferred a systemic approach for the future.			
	Five of the coaches and their respective coachees agreed that their preferred future approach was systemic.			
	<b>Interviews and cards as evaluated by experts Current approach</b>			
	All three experts indicated that a GST approach to coaching was currently important. Experts A and B found a significant presence of GST in the current approach to coaching.			

Table 5.18 (continued)

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES	N	GST	S
<b>Empirical Research Question 2: What does the picture of the coaching landscape look like as a preferred choice for future coaching?</b>	<b>Future approach</b>			
	Both the experts and I found that a systemic approach to be the preferred approach to coaching for the future for the majority of coaches and coachees.			
	Both the experts and I found the comparative views of the coaches and their coachees to be very similar.			
	<b>Card-sort method</b>			
	<b>Current approach</b>			
	The systemic CL building blocks indicated through the selected card statements were as representative of the current experience of both the coaches and the coachees were: <i>Role of the coach, Coaching process, Agenda, and Outcome.</i>			
	The coachees currently experienced a combination of GST and a systemic approach, but mostly systemic, to the CL building blocks <i>Context, Objective, Coaching relationship and Profile of the coach.</i>			
	<b>Future approach</b>			
The majority of the CL building blocks indicated through the selected card statements by both the coaches and the coachees for the future were those of the systemic approach				

**Table 5.18 (continued)**

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES	N	GST	S
	From the coachees' card statements, it is clear that the CL building block <i>Profile of the coachee</i> was currently addressed using a systemic approach, and this was also clearly their future choice.			
	For the CL building block <i>Profile of the coachee</i> , the coaches' selected card statements indicated GST as their preferred approach for the future.			
	The coaches and the coachees, through their selection of card statements, indicated that they prefer a systemic approach in the future to the following CL building blocks: approach <i>Role of the coach</i> , <i>Coaching relationship</i> , <i>Coaching process</i> , <i>Agenda</i> , <i>Profile of the coachee</i> , and <i>Outcomes</i> .			
	For the remaining CL building blocks: <i>Context</i> , <i>Objective</i> , and <i>Profile of the coach</i> , there was still an indication by the coachees that they would also consider a GST approach in future.			
	<b>CL building blocks: Experts, the researcher, and ATLAS — Current Approach</b>			
	The CL building blocks for which GST was indicated as the current experience were: <i>Objectives</i> , <i>Coaching Relationship</i> , <i>Process</i> , <i>Profile of the Coach</i> , and <i>Profile of the coachee</i> .			
	The CL building blocks that were indicated as following a systemic approach in the current experience were: <i>Context</i> , <i>Role of the Coach</i> , <i>Agenda</i> , and <i>Outcomes</i> .			
	Dominant approach across all the building blocks and average percentage			

Table 5.18 (Continued)

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES	N	GST	S
	<p>The approaches currently followed for the different CL building blocks compared as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Context:</b> All the analyses found that a combination of GST and a systemic approach were indicated by the participants, with the <b>systemic</b> approach being dominant.</li> <li>• <b>Objectives:</b> All the analyses found a <b>GST</b> approach.</li> <li>• <b>Role of the coach:</b> All analyses found the approach to be <b>systemic</b>, with only ATLAS finding a GST approach.</li> <li>• <b>Coaching relationship:</b> All the analyses found the approach to be <b>GST</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Coaching process:</b> All the analyses found that the approach was indicated as <b>GST</b>, with only ATLAS finding a systemic approach.</li> <li>• <b>Agenda:</b> All the analyses found the approach to be <b>systemic</b>, with only Expert B determining the approach as GST.</li> <li>• <b>Profile of the coach:</b> Experts A and B indicated a <b>GST</b> approach. I calculated the same percentage for both GST and systemic, and ATLAS found a systemic approach.</li> <li>• <b>Profile of the coachee:</b> All analyses found a <b>GST</b> approach.</li> <li>• <b>Outcomes:</b> All analyses found a combination of GST and systemic, but with a higher incidence of the <b>Systemic</b> approach.</li> </ul>		<p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p>	<p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p>

Table 5.18 (continued)

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES	N	GST	S
	CL building blocks: Experts, researcher, and ATLAS — Future preference of coaches			
	A <b>systemic</b> approach was indicated as the preferred choice for the future by all the coaches.			
	Dominant approach across all the building blocks and average percentage			
	<p>The analyses of the card statements relevant to the different CL building blocks found the following future preferences regarding coaching approach of the coaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Context:</b> All the analyses found a preference for the <b>systemic</b> approach for the future.</li> <li>• <b>Objectives:</b> All the analyses found a preference for a <b>systemic</b> approach, with only Expert B finding a preference for a GST approach for the future.</li> <li>• <b>Role of the coach:</b> A <b>systemic</b> approach was found by all.</li> <li>• <b>Coaching relationship:</b> All found a preference for a <b>systemic</b> approach, with only Expert B finding a preference for GST for the future.</li> <li>• <b>Coaching process:</b> All the analyses found a preference for a <b>systemic</b> approach, with only Expert B finding a preference for a GST approach.</li> <li>• <b>Agenda:</b> A preference for the <b>systemic</b> approach was found by all.</li> <li>• <b>Profile of the coach:</b> A preference for the <b>systemic</b> approach in the future was found by all.</li> </ul>			<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>

Table 5.18 (continued)

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEME	N	GST	S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Profile of the coachee:</b> Experts A and B found the choice for the future as leaning towards <b>GST</b>, while ATLAS and I found a preference for a more <b>systemic</b> approach.</li> <li>• <b>Outcomes:</b> A <b>systemic</b> approach was found to be the preferred choice for the future approach in all the analyses.</li> </ul>		x	x
	<b>CL building blocks: Experts, researcher, and ATLAS — Current experience of coaches</b>			
	The CL building blocks <i>Context, Objectives, Coaching Relationship, and Profile of the coachee</i> were indicated as currently following a GST approach.			
	The CL building blocks that were indicated as currently following a systemic approach were: <i>Role of the coach, Process, Agenda, Profile of the coach, and Outcomes</i> .			
	Dominant approach across all the building blocks and average percentage			



Table 5.18 (continued)

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEME	N	GST	S
	<p>The analyses of the card statements relevant to the different CL building blocks found the following approaches as currently experienced by coachees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Context:</b> All analyses found a combination of a GST and a systemic approach, with <b>GST</b> in the majority.</li> <li>• <b>Objectives:</b> All found a <b>GST</b> approach.</li> <li>• <b>Role of the coach:</b> All analyses found a combination of GST and systemic, with the highest preference being for a <b>systemic</b> approach.</li> <li>• <b>Coaching relationship:</b> All the analyses found a <b>GST</b> approach.</li> <li>• <b>Coaching process:</b> All analyses found a <b>systemic</b> approach, except Expert B, who found a GST approach.</li> <li>• <b>Agenda:</b> A <b>systemic</b> approach was found by all the analyses, with only Expert B finding a GST approach.</li> <li>• <b>Profile of the coach:</b> All the analyses found a combination of GST and systemic, with a higher preference for <b>systemic</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Profile of the coachee:</b> All the analyses found a combination of GST and systemic, with a higher preference for <b>GST</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Outcomes:</b> All the analyses found a <b>systemic</b> approach, except for Expert B, who found a GST approach.</li> </ul>		<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>

Table 5.18 (continued)

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEME	N	GST	S
	<b>CL Building Blocks: Expert, researcher and ATLAS — Future preferences of coaches</b>			
	Analysis of the card statements linked to the respective building blocks indicated that all the coachees preferred a <b>systemic</b> approach to all the CL building blocks for the future, except for the building block <i>Coaching relationship</i> , for which there was an equal distribution of the preferences for GST and for systemic.			
	Dominant approach across all the building blocks and average percentage			
	<p>The analyses of the card statements relevant to the different CL building blocks found the following approaches to be the future preference of the coachees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Context:</b> All findings indicated a preference for a <b>systemic</b> approach, with only Expert B finding a preference for a GST approach for the future.</li> <li>• <b>Objectives:</b> All the analyses indicated a preference for a <b>systemic</b> approach, with only ATLAS finding equal preferences for GST and a systemic approach.</li> <li>• <b>Role of the coach:</b> A <b>systemic</b> approach was found in all the analyses.</li> <li>• <b>Coaching relationship:</b> The analyses found a combination of <b>GST</b> and a <b>systemic</b> approach, with no clear preference for either.</li> <li>• <b>Coaching process:</b> A preference for a <b>systemic</b> approach was found by all.</li> </ul>		<p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p>

Table 5.18 (continued)

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEME	N	GST	S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agenda:</b> A preference for a <b>systemic</b> approach for the future was found by all.</li> <li>• <b>Profile of the coach:</b> Expert A found the preferred approach for the future to be GST, expert B found it to be both <b>GST</b> and <b>systemic</b>, and the preference found in my analysis and when using ATLAS was systemic.</li> <li>• <b>Profile of the coachee:</b> Experts A and B found the choice for the future to be <b>GST</b>, and the preference found by me and by the ATLAS program was <b>systemic</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Outcomes:</b> A <b>systemic</b> approach was found to be the preferred choice for the future in all the analyses.</li> </ul>		<p style="text-align: center;">x</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x</p>
<b>Reasons for coaching</b>	<p>The key reasons for coaching were related to the <b>changes and complexity</b> of the world of work, a <b>holistic view</b>, the <b>interconnectedness</b> of people, and being able to <b>explore alternative perceptions</b> and patterns. A systemic world view will enable the coachee to handle the complexities of the world of work more sufficiently in the future.</p>			

**Table 5.18 (continued)**

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION	THEME	N	GST	S
<b>Coaching approach and Impact</b>	The majority of respondents preferred a systemic approach for the future.			
	Satisfaction with coaching is linked to a holistic approach and deeper levels of conversation, focussing on all dimensions of life and the whole person.			
	Four of the coaches (67%) linked satisfaction to deeper levels of conversation that create more meaning and growth and dealing with complexities.			
	A total of 50% of the coaches also referred to the importance of holistic coaching.			
	One coach specifically focused on life balance, which is related to a GST approach.			
	A total of 11 (79%) of the coaches linked satisfaction to deeper levels of conversations, and 57% percent of the coaches mentioned the importance of holistic coaching, as it enables them to explore holistic patterns and include more people and aspects. The focus for both was the ability to deal more effectively with the complex, ever-changing world.			
	A systemic approach provides the opportunity for respondents to experience a deeper level of conversation with a more holistic focus, dealing with complexities and change, leading to meaning and fulfilment.			

### **5.7. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH QUESTION 3: CAN I ACCEPT OR NOT, MY STATED POSTULATES FOR THE GIVEN SAMPLE OF THE STUDY?**

In the following section, I only evaluate the acceptability or not of my four postulates in terms of the findings presented in this chapter. In Chapter 6, I will refer back to these postulates, to further discuss in detail their acceptance or not.

**Postulate 1: The current coaching approaches, given their world views as offered in the literature, may not fully meet the emerging, contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice.**

My critical literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 showed, that although some of the approaches emphasise holistic thinking with certain elements of GST, the majority focus was still linear. However, the work of Stelter (2014) with his framework in the classification of the different coaching approaches provides alternative strategies for coaching. Within 3<sup>rd</sup> generation coaching, his Narrative collaborative coaching approach aligned well with coaching from a systemic worldview.

In practice, as explored in my field study, a different pattern emerged. The majority of the respondents recognised elements of GST and systemic approaches in their current coaching processes, resonating with what I found in my literature review. However, most also confirmed that they preferred a systemic coaching approach for the future. Although there was at the time of my study was conducted little indication of a clearly articulated systemic approach in the existing literature, some elements of a systemic coaching approach were already preferred and applied in the practice of coaching. Coaches and coachees could easily identify principles, statements, and descriptions of a systemic approach in their current experience of coaching, and also indicated these as their preferred approach going into the future.

The current descriptions and approaches in theory, therefore, were at the time of the study not a complete reflection of what is happening in the coaching field in practice. It also did not address the need in practice to apply a comprehensive, formalised systemic coaching approach in the future, giving the emerging world faced by leaders

As reflected in the results and literature study the need in practice for a comprehensive, fully developed, systemic approach to coaching may be greater than what was available in the current literature at the time my study was conducted.

I can therefore accept Postulate 1.

**Postulate 2: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view adds more value in practice because it better meets the emerging, contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice.**

In analysing my interview data, as coded through ATLAS, I focused on three important variables related to this postulate. Firstly, I explored how the different respondents described their coaching experience in terms of value add. Next, I looked at the descriptions of the levels of the conversations, and, lastly, explored the coaching approach they preferred for the future.

All the respondents experience their coaching as valuable, and could easily identify what they would like to change in the future. The majority of the respondents preferred a systemic approach for the future, given the emerging context they were facing and had to deal with as termed in short hand for, the VUCA world. The key preference was for a systemic, organic, holistic process that enabled them to deal with complexities of the world in which they were embedded, as well as a deeper level of and more comprehensive conversation that included all dimensions of life.

From the findings, it is evident that the respondents experienced coaching from a systemic world view as more satisfying, because of the holistic focus and the deeper levels of conversation that evolve. The systemic approach enabled them to identify patterns and possibilities to deal more effectively with change and the complexities of their world and context. It allowed them to see the bigger picture, to understand its dynamics better, to understand better where they fit in, and to gain deeper insight into how they are affected by and affects patterns.

Leaders also confirmed the important need for coaching as leadership development strategy where the focus is on emerging patterns and co-creation of new realities with multiple stakeholders. This approach would enable them to deal more appropriately with the VUCA world and should therefore be systemic.

Leaders also confirmed that the need for coaching as leadership development strategy will enable them to deal more appropriately with the VUCA world and should therefore be systemic.

I can therefore accept Postulate 2.

**Postulate 3: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view enables the leader to deal more appropriately with change and complexity in the new world of work.**

As a basic rationale for coaching, coachees all had to reflect on the reason for coaching as medium for leadership development. The reasons highlighting the importance of coaching in the current world of work were all related to key concepts in a systemic approach, such as change and complexity, a dynamic and complex world, patterns, interconnected relationships, and alternative thinking and perspectives.

The question however was: What coaching approach in practice is the preferred going into the future? The preferred choice of coaching approach of the different coachees responding to this question was a systemic approach. Why? According to the coachees a systemic approach provides the opportunity to experience a deeper level of conversation with a more holistic focus, dealing with complexities and change, leading to meaning and fulfilment. Also a systemic world view would enable the coachee to better handle the demands of the dynamic world of work in the future that is characterised by complexities, interconnectedness, and ever-changing – the VUCA world.

I can therefore accept Postulate 3.

**Postulate 4: Based on expected, emerging contextual demands and requirements unfolding, a systemic coaching approach is the preferred choice for future coaching in practice.**

The findings reported in this chapter clearly confirm that a systemic world view was the preferred choice for future coaching of both coaches and coachees. Also, the acceptance of Postulate 2 and 3 confirmed the value add for systemic coaching in practice and enable the coachee to deal more appropriately with the dynamics of a VUCA world.

The majority of CL building blocks indicated through the selected card statements by both coaches and coachees for the future were those of a systemic approach. Interview data confirmed similar. Preferences re CL building blocks relative to systemic coaching allow refining the systemic coaching strategy proposed in Chapter 3. The voice of practice to inform what is in literature in order to arrive at a practice-informed and –enriched proposed approach.

I can therefore accept Postulate 4.



I will discuss this postulate in more detail in the next chapter.

## 5.8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the empirical findings of my field study were reported, to provide answers to the empirical questions formulated in Chapter 4. I provided the answers to the following empirical questions:

- **Empirical Research Question 1:** What are the preferred, current choices of coaching approaches by coaches and coaches in practice?
- **Empirical Research Question 2:** Based on these preferences, what would the coaching landscape look like in terms of a dominant, preferred choice(s) for future coaching?
- **Empirical Research Question 3:** In the light of the above, can I accept or not, my stated postulates for the given sample of the study?

The following trends were significant:

- Coaches and coachees experienced the current approach to coaching as a combination of GST and systemic.
- The majority of coaches and coachees preferred a systemic approach for the future.
- The comparative views of the coaches and coachees were very similar across all methods and for the three experts.
- The CL building blocks in the current approach were GST and systemic.
- The CL building blocks preferred by the coaches and coachees for the future, as indicated by their selection of card statements were systemic.
- Their key reasons for coaching were related to the changes and complexity of the world of work; the holistic view and interconnectedness of people; and being able to explore alternative perceptions and patterns. It also seemed that a systemic world view will enable the coachee to better handle the complexities of a VUCA world in the future.

- Value-add of coaching were linked to a holistic approach, dealing with complexity and change, deeper levels of conversation, and focussing on all dimensions of life and the whole person.
- A systemic approach provided respondents with the opportunity experience a deeper level of conversation, with a more holistic focus dealing with complexity and change, creating meaning and fulfilment and possibilities to thrive in a VUCA world.

Based on the findings, I could accept:

- Postulate 1: The current coaching approaches, given their world views as offered in the literature, may not fully meet the emerging, contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice
- Postulate 2: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view adds more value in practice because it better meets the emerging, contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice
- Postulate 3: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view enables the leader to deal more appropriately with change and complexity in the new world of work.
- Postulate 4: Based on expected, emerging contextual demands and requirements unfolding, a systemic coaching approach is the preferred choice for future coaching in practice.

In the next chapter, the reported findings will be discussed and interpreted in the context of my literature review.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of my study was to propose an alternative strategy to coaching in practice. Such a coaching strategy will be based on a systemic world view that will enable leaders to develop different capabilities for the new world. Additionally, the aim was to establish the relative value-add of a systemic world view for coaching in practice in the VUCA world leaders are facing, compared to coaching based on other world views currently informing the practice of coaching.

In this chapter, I discuss and interpret the empirical findings of my study, as reported in Chapter 5, against the backdrop of the literature reviewed on the respective world views and approaches to coaching, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively. My intention in this chapter is to arrive at an empirically confirmed, practice-referenced systemic coaching strategy, having considered the literature reviewed (Chapters 2 and 3), and having conducted my own investigation into the current coaching approaches in practice (Chapters 4 and 5).

This chapter covers the following:

- an evaluation of my study postulates, based on my findings;
- an integrated review of the coaching landscape with its respective building blocks (see Figure 2.1, Chapter 2) in light of my literature review and field study;
- a summary of the principles and a revised version of my proposed systemic coaching strategy, based on the findings from my field study;
- a description of a systemic coaching conversation; and
- the value-add of my revised systemic coaching strategy.

### **6.2. EVALUATION OF MY STUDY POSTULATES**

In Chapters 2 and 3, I provided a comprehensive review of the latest predominant coaching approaches in the literature. In Chapter 2, I discussed the different approaches to coaching using the coaching landscape as conceptual

frame of reference. I applied the following two frameworks in reviewing the respective coaching approaches:

1. the theory models of Barner and Higgens (2007), which include the clinical model, behavioural model, systems model, and the social constructionist model; and
2. the generation framework of Stelter (2014), which describes the evolution of coaching approaches over time as first-generation, second-generation, and third-generation coaching.

The different approaches to coaching that are representative of the above mentioned frameworks were: behavioural coaching, CBC coaching, solution-focused coaching, NLP, systems-psychodynamic coaching, and narrative collaborative coaching.

Key elements of the different approaches were presented in Table 2.1., Chapter 2. Considering the literature, it seems that the majority of coaches are trained in a specific coaching model, which is often first- or second-generation coaching. Coaching approaches from a third-generation perspective seem to be described only broadly in the literature.

Coaching as a strategy for leadership development should provide a leader with the possibility to co-construct new meaning and explore alternative options to deal with the complexities of his/her context. The perspective of Stelter on third-generation coaching formed the foundation of my study, where the focus is on exploring an alternative coaching strategy for coaching in a complex and ever-changing world.

Next, the dominant coaching approaches reviewed in Chapter 2 were analysed in terms of their underlying world views, presented in Chapter 3. I used three world views that are applied in the social sciences, namely Newtonian, GST, and Systemic, to do this analysis. The various world views that informed the chosen coaching approaches were then assessed in terms of how their key features

manifest in these approaches. The outcomes of these analyses can be found in Tables 3.1 – 3.4, Chapter 3 and Table A.1, Appendix A.

In Chapter 3, I proposed that the coaching approaches offered in the current literature focus mainly on Newtonian principles, with some elements of GST. The only approach that seemed to correlate well with a systemic world view was the third-generation approach: narrative collaborative coaching. However, the picture of coaching in practice looked somewhat different, as indicated by my research findings. As reported in Chapter 5, my findings supported all five postulates of the present study.

In Chapter 3, I built on the coaching approaches in the current literature that are informed by a systemic world view (see Chapter 2) by:

- firstly, integrating them into a single systemic coaching strategy, and
- secondly, congruently enriching, expanding, and deepening the literature-based integrated strategy with the distilled features of a systemic world view and a systemic approach to therapy (see Chapter 3),

in order to arrive at an integrative coaching strategy based on a systemic world view, together with its value for practice, which I assessed in my field study (see Section 3.5, Chapter 3).

Based on my research findings, reported in Chapter 5, I now discuss, in depth, the acceptance of the five postulates of my study.

***Postulate 1: The current coaching approaches, given their world views, as offered in the literature, may not fully meet the emerging, contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice.***

I accepted Postulate 1 in Chapter 5 based on the findings reported. As discussed in Chapter 5, my findings indicated a different pattern relative to the literature with respect to the preferred coaching in practice. In practice, the

majority of the coaches and coachees experienced the coaching approach as already systemic, with some indications of GST (according to analyses of the card statements, interviews, and the Atlas analysis — see Tables 5.3 and 5.5, Chapter 5).

The practice of coaching is therefore, in some regards, significantly different to what is currently proposed in the literature as the theoretical body of knowledge. In practice, coaches already apply a combination of GST and systemic coaching, in spite of the fact that the literature predominantly elucidates coaching approaches based on a Newtonian world view with some elements of GST. Similarly, coachees also experienced the current coaching approaches in practice, not as Newtonian, but rather as a combination of GST and systemic.

I found that, in practice, coaches already preferred and already applied specific systemic principles, as manifested in:

- acknowledging that the coachee forms part of a broader context;
- focusing on the coachee as whole person by addressing all aspects of life and how these dynamically fit together;
- exploring, together with the coachee, potential patterns and relationships, in order to attain growth and also to identify different, coherent options;
- not working according to a predetermined agenda, but allowing the agenda to evolve in the coaching conversation;
- not seeing coaching outcomes as predictable, but as co-created through an unfolding, two-way conversation; and
- exploring life dimensions in an interconnected way to create new life patterns.

In practice, the experience of the coachees was found to be very similar to that of the coaches regarding the emphasis on systemic principles in the coaching approach:

- Coachees did not experience their coaches as objective experts who controlled or predicted outcomes. Rather, the coach was experienced as accompanying the coachee on an unfolding, unpredictable journey, leaving the destination and solution to the coachee in an open-ended fashion.
- The holistic view of reality of the coach also enabled the coach and coachee to co-create new patterns of acting for the latter through sense-making and giving.
- Stakeholders were made part of the coaching process, presently and in the future. The inclusion of more people or perceptions in the process of coaching is very particular to the theory and application of a systemic coaching strategy.

In conclusion, at the time of the study, it seemed that the leaders were ready to embrace more systemic coaching principles in practice. This was in contrast to the literature predominantly offering Newtonian-based coaching approaches or, at best, GST coaching principles. In general, the literature did not offer an integrated, systemic coaching strategy with well-defined principles at the time of my study. The coaches and coachees who participated in my study could easily identify principles, statements, and descriptions of a systemic strategy in their current experience of coaching, and specifically for future coaching.

In view of the literature, it seems that the majority of coaches had been trained in a specific coaching model (Grant, 2005, 2012; Kauffman & Hodgetts, 2016), most frequently First or Second-generation coaching. Coaching approaches from a Third-generation perspective seemed to be not as comprehensively described in the literature, compared to First- and Second generation approaches.

In the past two years, there seems to have been more development and focus in coaching from a Third-generation perspective. The demands on leaders to be able to thrive in a complex, ever-changing world are increasing. Leaders need to

be stretched to think and act differently. Coaching needs to resonate with this leadership reality.

For leaders to move successfully through the pipeline of development, they need to be exposed to a deeper form of development. This implies that the way we look at leadership development also will need to change going into the future. In Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2, I referred to vertical leadership development, where the focus is to change the way leaders conceptualise the meaning of their world and process information differently (Petrie, 2013).

The key rationale offered in my study for undertaking coaching was related to the changes and complexity of the world of work, adopting a holistic view of the interconnectedness of people, and being able to explore alternative perceptions and patterns. The coachees in the present study also felt that a systemic world view would enable them to better handle the complexities of the world of work in the future (see Table 5.16, Chapter 5). These findings support my view that a systemic approach to coaching is already being applied in practice, and that there is a considerable need to apply it even more in future. The coaching literature must take account of this shift in practice, and pay more attention to systemic coaching.

Although some of the approaches in the literature emphasise holistic thinking with certain elements of GST, the majority focus was still linear. The work of Stelter (2014), in his framework of the classification of the different coaching approaches, provides some alternative strategies for coaching. In Third-generation coaching, his narrative collaborative coaching approach aligns well with coaching from a systemic world view.

***Postulate 2: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view adds more value in practice, because it better meets the emerging contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice.***



In Chapter 5, I accepted Postulate 2. I focused on three variables important to this postulate. Firstly, I explored how the different respondents described their coaching experiences in terms of satisfaction. Next, I looked at the impact of coaching and quality of the conversations, and, lastly, the coaching approach they preferred for the future.

The empirical findings reported in Chapter 5 (results of the card-sort method: Tables 5.3 to 5.7; interviews: Tables 5.8 and 5.9; the experts comparing card statements and interviews overall: Tables 5.10–15) were consistently the same: the majority of respondents preferred systemic coaching going into the future. The findings reported in Table 5.17, Chapter 5, indicated the reasons for satisfaction with a systemic coaching strategy. Respondents' satisfaction with coaching was linked to a holistic approach; more meaningful and deeper levels of conversation regarding the complex, ever-changing VUCA world; and the focus on all dimensions of life, including the person as a whole. A total of 67% of the coaches linked satisfaction to deeper levels of conversation that created more meaning or growth in a complex environment. A total of 50% of the coaches referred to the importance of holistic coaching.

For the coachees, the pattern was similar: 79% of the coachees linked coaching satisfaction to deeper levels of conversation regarding the complex VUCA world. A total of 57% of the coachees mentioned the importance of holistic coaching, as it enabled them to explore holistic patterns in their world, including more people and aspects.

All the respondents were satisfied with their coaching experience, and could easily identify what they would like to change in the future. The majority of the respondents preferred a systemic world view for the future. The key consideration was the holistic process and the deep levels of conversation that included all dimensions of life, enabling them to respond more appropriately to a more demanding world. It was evident that the respondents experienced

coaching from a systemic world view as more satisfying and as adding real value in practice, as it enabled them to better meet the contextual demands and requirements they faced.

***Postulate 3: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view enables the leader to more appropriately deal with change and complexity in the new world of work.***

In Chapter 5, I accepted Postulate 3. From the discussion under Postulate 1, it was apparent that the current coaching approaches in the literature offer linear solutions to complex challenges. The options within these approaches are overly simplistic, because their focus is mainly on predictability, control, and linear cause and effect. It was confirmed through the literature review and my research findings that the current context of the leader is characterised by complexity, continuous change, and an extended web of relationships, which have changed the leadership requirements, and therefore also the approach to coaching.

The literature regarding the complex and ever-changing context, the VUCA world, was discussed in Chapter 1. I referred throughout this study to the context in which the leader operates and the interconnected relationships between leaders as complex dynamic systems and the complexity of the world around them.

Leaders are faced with difficult challenges that they need to deal with in order to achieve sustainable success. Each of these challenges also requires different leadership behaviour and actions. Table 6.1 reflects the key aspects that define the emerging context of the leaders that I identified in my study, as well as leader requirements of the emerging organisational context.

Table 6.1

*Leadership Challenges and Requirement in the Emerging Organisational Context*

Leadership challenges/demands	Leadership requirements
<b>Substantive features</b>	
<p><b>Client-centricity and meeting customers' expectations</b></p> <p>The rising expectations of knowledgeable customers and new legislation like POPI Act and TCF (treat customers fairly)</p>	<p>The leader needs to be close to the customers, understand their needs, and respond effectively.</p>
<p><b>Changing societal values and shifting workforce demographics</b></p> <p>The workforce of today is diverse, with different needs and demands, which require a different set of leadership skills and capabilities. The leader needs to adapt his/her style to the needs of the new generation.</p>	<p>Leaders have to understand the needs of their employees, as they are vastly different from those of their predecessors. It is important that leaders enable direction and alignment, to create a sense of purpose and commitment in individuals, in order to achieve a collective outcome as all follow the vision.</p>
<p><b>Highly technological context</b></p> <p>The current organisational context includes generations who access information very differently, and in an instant, virtual, and on-going manner.</p>	<p>It is important that leaders have a multi-fold focus and explore options and possibilities. Leaders need to understand the impact of social media, be technologically confident, and focus on constant learning, which will accelerate as we move into the future.</p>
<p><b>Globalisation</b></p> <p>Today's market is competitive, with no clearly defined boundaries, and global changes seem utterly chaotic.</p>	<p>Leaders need to have the ability to work across boundaries and be effective in a competitive global market. They need to more comfortable to operate in ambiguity and chaos. Leaders need to adopt a global mind-set: thinking globally, but act locally.</p>

Table 6.1 (continued)

Leadership challenges/demands	Leadership requirements
<p><b>Investor demands and requirements</b> Investors judge the success of a CEO or leader, not on earnings of an organisation, but on the quality and depth of the leadership and people of the organisation.</p>	<p>Leaders need to be committed to the development of people and spend time on building a sustainable pipeline of quality employees, which require a focus on employee development.</p>
<p><b>More diverse and demanding stakeholders</b></p>	<p>Leaders need to be familiar with their stakeholder map, and invest in the relationships with different stakeholders. Collaboration and building sustainable partnerships are critical in the new world of work.</p>
<b>Qualitative features</b>	
<p><b>Increasing complexity and interdependency</b> The context is becoming increasingly complex, with all aspects much more connected and interdependent. The organisation is defined as a complex system, where one part of the system has a circular impact on the others. The environment impacts the system, and vice versa.</p>	<p>Leaders need to shift their thinking from a mechanistic or Newtonian world view to a systemic view, where the emphasis is on complexity, interconnected relationships, patterns, and unpredictability.</p>
<p><b>Accelerating change and uncertainty</b> The organisation is a living system that changes continuously. The context of leaders is ever-changing and characterised by uncertainty and turbulence.</p>	<p>Leaders need to manage change with high resilience, and also build change capabilities in their teams and organisations. As the rate and degree of organisational and contextual change increase, leaders need to keep up with newly required patterns of behaviour, spending less time on managing tasks and more on leading, enabling, and empowering people.</p>

Source: Ganz, 2010; Groothof, 2007; Higgs, 2003; Kanter, 2010; Rhinesmith, 2010; Veldsman, 2016; Wilyerd & Meister, 2010

As shown in Table 6.1, the world has changed, placing different demands on leaders. The context is characterised by relentless change and growing complexity. The leader is instrumental in this context, changing the overall dynamics of the system and thereby opening up new possibilities for the system, i.e. the organisation. Effective leadership occurs when the effected change is holistic and interconnected, and increases the fitness and sustainability of the organisation relative to its context. For the leader to thrive in this context of radical, fundamental change, leadership development — and coaching specifically, should offer alternative options to leaders to recognise the holistic patterns and complexity in the ever-changing organisational landscape of the VUCA world. Single, linear solutions are not good enough.

In the literature study, as well as in my research, I explored the different levels of leadership postulated by Adair (2005) and Charan et al. (2011). These levels correspond to the different levels of work proposed by Elliot Jaques (1998). Work is structured in levels of increasing complexity as one moves up the organisational levels. The different levels of work complexity have an impact on the leaders, as well as on their development. The higher the requisite level of work at the higher organisational levels, the more complex the role of the leader becomes. This higher level of complexity poses new conceptual challenges in decision-making. The leader deals with a broader scope, and needs to be able to identify the interconnected relationships and patterns across different functions of the organisation.

The majority (64%) of the leaders in the present study's sample group were in Passage 1 of their leadership journey — a team leader — and were responsible for a smaller operational team. This level of complexity does not pose the same challenges as being responsible for a complete business unit, but, overall, the broader context of the organisation under study was complex and ever-changing for all coaches, regardless of organisational level. Complexity and changes in the context of the leaders posed significant challenges. All the leaders acknowledged these challenges. They perceived this as an important reason for any leader to be exposed to coaching. This relates well to the views in the literature that leadership development and coaching are critical for all leaders, and should start as early as possible in their leadership careers.

One cannot make sense of today's VUCA world from a reductionist or a Newtonian perspective. A systemic world view provides an alternative to how we see and describe the world around us. The focus shifts to a holistic view, patterns of relationships, interconnectivity, recursive interaction, unpredictability, and complexity. Organisations and leaders are seen as examples of complex adaptive systems with the ability to self-organise. The following characteristics describe complex systems, and also offer possible reasons for the differences between the theory and practice with regard to the world view of current coaching approaches (Obolensky, 2010; Plowman & Duchon, 2007; Stacey, 2007; Stelter, 2014, 2016; Wheatley, 2010):

- **Interconnectedness** — the interconnectedness between the system and the context requires of the coach to observe the coachee within his/her context in relation to the whole context, made up of multiple relationships;
- **Recursive interaction** — the leader interacts with the people and the context around him/her. This interaction is circular, and has a recursive impact on all the parties involved. The respondents in my research study were in recursive interaction with a context characterised by change and complexity, which demanded a different way of thinking and acting. The context compelled the respondents to reconfigure themselves to a higher level of complexity, and to focus on the whole and patterns of connectivity, where change was required in a dynamic way;
- **Dynamic** — systems (including coaches and coachees or leaders) are not static, but change and evolve continuously over time;
- **Non-linear, circular patterns** — the impact of any small change in one part of the system on the rest of the system cannot be predicted, and has many possible outcomes. This implies that it is very difficult to predict the behaviour of dynamic systems. We need to consider the circular patterns and interactions between the different systems (i.e. coach and leader, leader and team/organisation) in a holistic way.
- **Self-organisation** — the system (i.e. coach or coachee) has an impact on the context, through which both the system and the context form into new patterns. *Entropy*, a well-known concept in quantum theory, was described in Chapter 3. The system will respond to complexity and chaos, and reconfigure

itself to a higher level of complexity (i.e. a new pattern of functioning) as a response, in order to be better able to deal with the change in its context (Guastello & Liebovitch, 2009). This relates well to the finding of the present research that the coaches and coachees adapted their pattern of behaviour in coaching to respond to the demands of their context. The adaptability of a leader is enhanced by his/her ability to self-organise, which depends on an understanding of how all aspects of his/her life are connected and interrelated. This adaptability enables him/her to develop strategies to cope with the complex, changing context. A systemic approach to coaching focuses on the leader as a whole, and considers all aspects of his/her life in an interconnected way.

The coachees in the present study all had to reflect on the reason for coaching as a medium for leadership development. The reasons highlighting the importance of coaching in the current world of work were all related to key concepts in a systemic approach, such as change and complexity in a dynamic, patterns, interconnected relationships, and alternative thinking and perspectives. The preferred choice of coaching of the different coachees responding to this question was also analysed, and it was clear they preferred a systemic approach to deal with these complexities in the future.

Furthermore my study highlighted the shift from a mechanistic one-on-one relationship to interconnected, complex adaptive systems and relationships. We moved from a one-on-one coaching relationship to multiple stakeholders, from individual to shared leadership in team coaching within broader leadership systems. The conversations in a shared leadership domain (leadership community) facilitate a collective approach to solve organisational challenges.

***Postulate 4: Based on expected emerging contextual demands and requirements, a systemic coaching strategy is the preferred choice for future coaching in practice.***

In Chapter 5, I accepted Postulate 4. My research findings obtained through the different methods (card-sort method and interviews analysed by me, two

independent experts, and the ATLAS software program), reported in Chapter 5, uncovered the preferred coaching approach of coaches and coachees in practice, in the present and going into the future.

The majority of the coaches and coachees were in agreement that the current approach to coaching in practice was mainly systemic, but included some elements of GST. The agreement was that the future approach would be predominantly systemic (Tables 5.3, 5.5, 5.8 to 5.12, Chapter 5). Overall, the findings with reference to the preferred coaching approach of the coaches and the coachees for the future (reported in Chapter 6), crystallised into the following themes:

- The preferred choice in practice for the future coaching approach is systemic.
- There was strong agreement between the coaches and their respective coachees on a systemic approach to coaching in the future.
- The research findings also indicated a significant shift towards systemic thinking in practice when comparing the current approach to the preferred future approach.

Coaches acknowledged that the coaching agenda cannot be predetermined, but evolves in the coaching conversation, and also indicated the role that significant role players play in co-creating new patterns of acting for the coachee. They stated that the coaching process already focused on the interconnected relationships of the coachee, to ensure that the coaching conversation was a participative process of understanding the life of the coachee in a holistic way. In future, coaches would need to focus more on the holistic context of the coachee by addressing all aspects of life and how these fit together dynamically. They indicated that the role and profile of the coach also needed to shift, to explore more patterns and relationships for growth. They admitted the need to co-create, with the coachee, a new pattern of acting by considering a holistic view of the leader and his/her context. The coaches also realised they would have to become more comfortable with including significant role players in the coaching process.

The coachees acknowledged that, with the current focus, the coaching agenda and its outcomes cannot be predetermined, but that these evolve during the process.



They also focused on the role of significant role players in the coaching process, and the majority of coachees indicated that they were comfortable to make other stakeholders part of the coaching process.

Having evaluated my study postulates, in the next section, I unpack each coaching building block of the coaching landscape as described in the literature, as well as my findings regarding the current practice of coaching. This discussion aims to provide further detailed support for my decision to accept the above five postulates directing my study.

### **6.3. THE COACHING LANDSCAPE BUILDING BLOCKS**

In Chapter 2, I defined the coaching landscape with the respective building blocks that were applied throughout the study, as shown in Figure 2.1, Chapter 2. It must be noted that the landscape itself is informed by a systemic world view. I will now apply the same framework to compare the literature and empirical findings, to justify my proposed systemic approach to coaching.

#### **6.3.1 COACHING CONTEXT**

##### **6.3.1.1 Where is the focus of the literature?**

The literature focus will be described according to the three world views that were discussed throughout my study, and this format will also be applied to the discussion of the individual CL building blocks.

##### **Newtonian world view**

In a Newtonian perspective, it is believed that the leader has the ability to solve organisational problems mechanistically, and to control the outcome in a rational manner. The underlying belief is that, once we have a complete understanding of the world by breaking it up into smaller parts (i.e. reductionist), perceive it rationally, and verify the truth (i.e. objectivity), we will be in control (O'Murchu, 2004).

The emphasis in coaching is on the leader as a single entity consisting of 'parts to be fixed,' and on how to re-engineer what he/she is doing, in order to equip the leader to achieve a more predictable, effective outcome.

Considering the different approaches to coaching, as discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of the approaches from a clinical model and behavioural model perspective (psychodynamic, behavioural, and CBC coaching) apply a Newtonian view to coaching. In some of the more recent literature on psychodynamic coaching, Kets de Vries (2006) refer to the importance of being more holistic in the coaching approach, but the world view is still Newtonian. Within systems psychodynamic coaching, seen as a clinical perspective, the problem is placed in a systemic context. This context may include the family or work group. The emotional weighting of the system is considered, as well as the unspoken, the repressed, and the denied (Obholzer, 2006). Coaching from a behavioural perspective, as well as cognitive-behavioural coaching (CBC) considers the context with a focus on the leader's understanding of the current thoughts and behaviours in a given situation (Good, Yeganeh, & Yeganeh, 2010; Neenan & Palmer, 2012; Neenan, 2018). Behavioural coaching considers the leader as a system, but the process is results-driven and based on a scientific, planned, and direct approach (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006).

Considering the framework of Stelter (2014), the clinical model, with regard to context, mainly focuses on coaching from a problem- and goal perspective, and therefore is aligned to First-generation coaching. Behavioural coaching, the GROW model, and CBC are examples of the behavioural model, and align well to the principles of First-generation coaching, where a specific goal needs to be achieved.

### **GST world view**

In the GST approach, leaders and coaches are described as systems. A system is defined as an organised whole composed of interacting parts (Midgley, 2003; O'Connor & McDermott, 1997; Von Bertalanffy, 1968, 2003). In order for a system to maintain itself, the principle of equilibrium is critical. Systems strive to preserve their balance through feedback loops that link outputs to inputs, which, in turn, affect the internal conversion process. An important aspect of GST is the principle of feedback. The feedback loops in all systems are used to monitor and respond to their contexts.

Four of the coaching approaches in the literature acknowledge the impact that the leader has on the context, and vice versa, which is one of the key principles of a

GST world view. For example, in CBC coaching, the leader is seen as a system that is affected by the systems around him/her. NLP, systems psychodynamic, and solution-focused coaching acknowledge the whole person and consider all life dimensions of the leader in the coaching process. These approaches align well to Second-generation coaching, where there is a solution or future-oriented perspective. There is, however, no reference to the inclusion of stakeholders in the coaching process, or to how the different aspects of life fit together dynamically.

### **Systemic world view**

The interactions within systems are unpredictable. Hence, the interdependence of systems is a complex, non-linear relationship. Understanding the complexity of relationships is essential in understanding phenomena (Kuhn, 2012).

Organisations and leaders should be seen as adaptive systems. These systems can adapt to different conditions, such as order, complexity, and chaos. As mentioned above in Section 6.1, complex adaptive systems interact with one another in a non-linear way, are interdependent, and have the capacity to self-organise (Obolensky, 2010).

As indicated in Table 6.1, the world has changed, placing different demands on leaders. The context is characterised by relentless change and complexity. Given this complex, changing context of leaders, the coaching context should be holistic, and should include multiple stakeholders. Furthermore, the coaching context is critical in exploring the whole.

A constructivist position for therapy, postulated by Lynn Hoffman (Midgley, 2003), focuses on the key principle of understanding the family within its context. There is no objective truth about the observed system. The therapist considers the views, beliefs, and behaviours of all the family members within the context. When applying these principles to coaching, the coaching becomes holistic, with the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. The focus is also not only on behaviour, but on ideas, as well as the co-evolution of collective rather than individual ideas.

The Milan method for family therapy (Midgley, 2003) offers a circular method to assess families within their context, offering therapy in a circular way through the

principles of hypothesising, circularity, and neutrality. The context is significant in the following way: before therapy commences, it is important that the therapist form a circular hypothesis with which to understand the family in a holistic manner. The hypothesis is systemic, and includes all components of the family.

The narrative collaborative approach to coaching, viewed as Third-generation coaching by Stelter (2014), aligns well to the constructionist model highlighted in the framework of Barner and Higgins (2007). The context of the leader forms an integral part of the coaching conversation, and specific situations inform the discussion. There is, however, no clear indication of the inclusion of multiple stakeholders in the coaching process.

### **6.3.1.2 What were my findings regarding practice?**

Both the coaches and the coachees indicated that the current approach to the *Coaching context* building block was a combination of GST and a systemic approach, with indications of a systemic approach being in the majority (Figure 1, Figure 16, and Figure 17, Addendum A). The two card statements were very similar, and both implied a holistic, interconnected context. In a systemic approach, the emphasis was on the whole person and how all aspects of life fit together dynamically. In GST, the emphasis is on the circular impact and connection between the coachee and people or events in his/her life. The coaches acknowledged that, in future, they would need to focus more on the holistic context of the coachee by addressing all aspects of life and how these fit together dynamically.

According to the collective research findings, the coaches and the coachees preferred a systemic approach to coaching for the future, where the context will include the whole and interconnectedness of all stakeholders (Figure 1.1, Figure 1.16, and Figure 1.17, Addendum 1). The findings presented in Chapter 5, Table 5.16, indicated that the key reasons for coaching were related to change and the complexity of the world of work, the holistic view and interconnectedness of people, and being able to explore alternative perceptions and patterns. The majority of the leaders preferred a systemic approach for future coaching.

Our world view determines how we see the world and how we choose to engage with the context around us. Leaders also choose how to deal with complexity (Groothof, 2007), whether they focus on the linear causality or specific rules, structure, and detail (i.e. Newtonian), or whether they want to conserve balance and order, and focus on the feedback loops in their context (i.e. GST). Another possible focus is on holistic patterns, interconnected relationships, unpredictability, and engaging with complexity (i.e. systemic).

A systemic world view enables the coachee to handle the complexities of the world of work more effectively. All the coachees (leaders) in the present study confirmed that the organisational context is complex. All the coachees were employed in an organisation with high levels of change and complexity. For the majority of the leaders, the coaching was also related to changes in the organisation. During their period of coaching, the organisation was in the process of a merger, which created significant leadership challenges. Coaching was offered by the organisation as a medium to deal with the change.

It was, however, interesting to note that, in spite of the complex ever-changing context, one of the coachees consistently indicated that she preferred a Newtonian approach to coaching, where the focus is on her as an individual, and is based on an objective coaching approach. This finding reinforces my earlier argument that leaders choose how they wish to deal with complexity. It also relates well to a systemic world view, where a leader is seen as a complex, adaptive system that will respond in unpredictable ways in striving to achieve a more appropriate pattern of functioning.

In summary then, the following was established with regard to the complex, changing context:

- The context of leaders is currently complex and ever-changing — the VUCA world.
- Leaders require a different way of thinking and acting to respond to the complex context.

- Leaders at all levels of the organisation are exposed to change and complexity. The coachees in my study were all challenged by change and complexity.
- Given the complex, changing context of leaders, the coaching context should also be holistic, and include multiple stakeholders.
- The inclusion of multiple stakeholders opens the opportunity for shared leadership systems or a thriving leadership community to collectively address organisational challenges.

It is evident from the findings reported in Chapter 5 that the coaches and coachees in my study preferred a systemic coaching strategy, in which the context is seen holistically, and the focus is on understanding the coachee as a whole person by addressing all aspects of life and how these aspects fit together dynamically.

### **6.3.2 COACHING OBJECTIVES**

#### **6.3.2.1 Where is the focus of the literature?**

##### **Newtonian world view**

The Newtonian world view is based on the notion of cause and effect, which is a linear process (O'Murchu, 2004; Obolensky, 2010). In coaching from a Newtonian perspective, it is important to identify the cause of not being the best leader, and trying to, in an objective way, guide the leader to bring about the right effect, i.e. to change or fix the identified problem linearly.

Four of the six coaching approaches that I discussed applied a Newtonian world view in the following way, focusing on linear causality and atomism:

- In psychodynamic coaching, one explores the unconscious meanings, desires, and feelings of the leader, and helps him/her to be more creative and alive (Kets de Vries, 2006).
- The aim of behavioural coaching is to change behaviour in a scientific and measurable way, and to ensure that these changes are lasting (Peterson, 2006; Skiffington & Zeus, 2006).
- The aim of the CBC coaching process is to increase the client's awareness of his/her inner narrator and the resulting negative behaviours, and to experiment with more flexible thoughts and behaviours, in order to develop

additional skills to sustain appropriate cognitive behavioural change (Good, Yeganeh, & Yeganeh, 2010; Williams, Edgerton, & Palmer, 2014).

- Coaching from a systems model perspective enables the leader to become increasingly aware of his/her patterns of perception and interpretation, in order to create the possibility of choosing patterns that are more effective (Hayes, 2006).

In all the approaches, the focus is mainly on one-on-one, predictable, and linear relationships, and on sequential cause and effect, fitting well with First-generation coaching as defined by Stelter (2014). The belief is that achieving these objectives will ensure better leadership.

### **GST world view**

In the GST approach, organisations and leaders are seen as goal-seeking, self-regulating, and equilibrium-seeking systems. In trying to achieve these goals, they use feedback to adapt to the context, and they change their behaviour with the aim to conserve equilibrium. Success for these systems (i.e. leader) is defined as “a state of stability, consistency and harmony” (Stacey, 2007, p. 51).

The aim in coaching from a GST perspective is to assist the leader as an open system to adapt to change, in order to conserve equilibrium or attain homeostasis. To this end, the leader has to gain insight into his/her inputs, how these are converted into outputs, and the impact of these outputs on his/her context and subsequent inputs through feedback loops.

In NLP coaching, the aim is to understand circular causality and to achieve equilibrium and order. The aim of NLP coaching is to maximise the leaders' resourcefulness, and to increase the choices they have in a given context, by creating their own reality and thus their own possibilities and limitations.

The aim of solution-focused coaching, for example, is mainly two tasks: i) to change how the leader views the problem and ii) a change in doing or how the leader will approach the solution (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014). The aim of solution-focused coaching aligns well to the systems model and Second-generation coaching.

## **Systemic world view**

According to the systemic world view, change in one part of a system will have an impact on rest of the system and on relationships (Hamdani, Jetha, & Norman, 2011). Each part of a system will influence the whole system in a circular way. Non-linear systems have high levels of interconnectedness and interdependence among individual components. This interconnectedness exists in a shared context, which is co-created. This relates well to the concept of Veldsman (2016) about shared leadership or the impact of a collective leadership community to deal with organisational challenges.

According to Bateson, this interconnectedness is essential for the survival of the system (Bateson, 2003). A system will always be in a continuous process of change, and will change in its own unique way. All living systems have the ability to know, think, decide, and form ideas.

The aim of coaching is therefore to observe and consider the leader as a whole system within his/her context, and, furthermore, to be aware of the interconnectedness that exists between him/her and everyone within that context, including the coach. It is also important to help the leader to become aware of these circular connections, as mentioned above. All connections are circular loops; they are not linear in nature.

According to Obolensky (2010) and Wheatley (2010), the growth of systems is impacted by the combination of key patterns (or principles) that define the system's overall identity and levels of autonomy that exist amongst individual system members. Bateson (1988) referred to this as 'patterns that connect.' Things are not polar opposites or 'either-or,' but, instead, are complementary relationships — 'both-and.' Everything exists in relationship with something else.

The aim in systemic coaching is to try and open new ways for the leader to consider the interconnected whole, as well as the patterns in-between. It is helping him/her to the uncover patterns, and to decide where to intervene in order to change a pattern. The two systemic approaches to therapy both apply a systemic objective, where the constructivist position of Hoffman (2003) emphasises the shift in focus from



behaviour to ideas. Exploring options and meanings is important. In coaching, the aim is not to explore or change behaviour or the intrapsychic system; instead, the focus is on interactional systems (interdependence/interconnectedness). In both family therapy and coaching, the interest is not only in personal ideas, but also in collective ideas. The system is viewed as more than a collection of people and ideas. In Milanian family therapy, the focus is on circularity. In applying this principle to coaching, the aim is to explore interconnected patterns in a circular way.

The only coaching approach that includes some systemic objectives is narrative collaborative coaching, also described by Stelter (2014) as Third-generation coaching. The main focus is on a collaborative approach and co-creative dialogues, with the emphasis on providing possibilities for meaning making, talking about values that shape society and life, and providing a space for unfolding narratives. Telling and listening to stories enables the leader to perceive and interpret his/her life as meaningful (Drake, 2010; Stelter, 2014).

#### **6.3.2.2. What were my findings regarding practice?**

The current experience in terms of *Coaching objectives* of the coaches was a combination of GST and systemic. The future preference shifted towards a systemic approach (see Figures 2 and 16, Addendum A).

The picture for the coachees was similar. Their current experience of the *Coaching objectives* building block was a GST approach with some systemic elements. The focus for coachees was mainly on balance and order. It was about adapting to change and attaining balance/order, and being more aware of the effect they have on external and internal systems.

The card statement that was selected most often for the *Coaching objectives* building block was to enable the coachee to be more alert to the effect he/she having on external and internal systems, which represents a GST world view. The coachees considered it important to explore the interconnectedness of the different systems. Also, some of the coachees indicated the need to achieve balance and order in their life through coaching. The need for a balanced life was highlighted in the context of the complex world in which they are living, where change is inevitable.

The future preferences of the coachees showed a shift towards a more systemic approach (Figures 2 and 17, Addendum A), where the focus is on exploring the immersed patterns making up the current complex world, to find alternative patterns of acting; and to be more aware of how aspects in their life are interconnected and hang together.

The context of the coaches and leaders in the empirical study was characterised by change and complexities, as a result of a merger to which the company was exposed. The need of leaders to focus on coaching objectives to achieve balance and order can be seen as a way to conserve themselves. Their choice of systemic objectives for the future also indicated their need to deal with complexities and to find alternative patterns of action to succeed in a context of significant change.

### **6.3.3 ROLE OF THE COACH**

#### **6.3.3.1. Where is the focus of the literature?**

##### **Newtonian world view**

In the Newtonian world view, reality is fixed and set within predetermined laws. The coach uses these laws in a direct way to ensure that the leader operates within a linear environment of cause and effect. If no response or shift occurs, the aim is to explore what causes the resistance or the lack of insight into the problem, and to try and fix it mechanistically. The coach is an objective, analytical observer who has a blueprint definition of what the components of good leadership are, and has to change what is wrong. A one-size-fits-all plan is devised to effect the change according to an objective and fixed truth (O'Murchu, 2004).

In psychodynamic and behavioural coaching, the role of the coach is that of an objective observer, and the coachee is a passive and reactive object requiring treatment. In psychodynamic coaching, the coach is an expert providing knowledge, skills, and technical assistance, in order to enhance the leader's personal and professional growth (Kets de Vries, 2006). In behavioural coaching, the role of the coach is described as very specific and direct, with pre-determined goals that need to be achieved. There is almost no place for spontaneity or changes to evolve in the moment. The roles in the coaching process are also clearly defined from the beginning of the process (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006). In CBC, the role of the coach is

active and direct, and the leader is encouraged to put the necessary changes in place as soon as possible to ensure he/she achieves his/her goal (Williams, Edgerton, & Palmer, 2014).

The role of the coach in systems psychodynamic coaching is to take a reflective stance from a meta-position, be alert to the leader's behaviour, and interpret the manifestation of the basic assumptions and behavioural concepts without judgement, memory, or desire (Campbell & Huffington, 2008).

Psychodynamic, systems psychodynamic, behavioural, and CBC coaching are approached from a problem- or goal perspective, which is aligned to First-generation coaching.

### **GST world view**

GST moves away from a reductionist approach, to one of dynamic interaction between different parts of a system and between different systems. However, the observer of the system is still seen as objective. Systems therefore have a purpose or goal, and can be objectively managed (Stacey, 2007). The coach considers different and holistic options, concentrating on the circular feedback loops, and has the ability to provide appropriate solutions to the leader's problem or challenge.

The coach and coachee are two independent and separate systems. Although connected through circular loops, both are objective and detached in the way they perceive the world.

The role of the coach in NLP and solution-focused coaching is that of an objective observer who forms part of the bigger system and observes the coachee as a system in his/her own right. The coach will find the best options or solutions for the coachee, determined by the context, the variables concerned, and the feedback received.

The NLP coach focuses on the goals the leader wants to achieve and the values that are important to him/her to live, and challenges the leader's limiting beliefs by giving

tasks requiring feedback. The role of the coach is described as highly active and direct, similar to that of a magician.

The role of the coach in solution-focused coaching is to facilitate the leader's journey through this cycle, while ensuring the leader stays focused on the goal (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014). Furthermore, the role of the coach is to enhance the coachee's awareness for his/her own capacity to find solutions for future challenges (Stelter, 2014).

Given the above view on the direct role of the coach and the clear goals to be achieved, NLP coaching aligns more with First-generation coaching. Solution-focused coaching, on the other hand, allows more for the creation of positive future scenarios and possibilities, and, hence, is more aligned to Second-generation coaching.

### **Systemic world view**

When observing the world, there are two fundamental perspectives: looking from the outside of the system in, or looking from inside the system. Systemic thinking uses both perspectives. There is no objectivity, as one can never stand completely outside of the system of which one is a part. One's mental models and those of others are also part of the system (O'Connor & Dermott, 1997). We do not see everything, because we all have blind spots. Therefore, finding solutions in the coaching process will be very difficult if the leader does not perceive the problem.

In constructivism, reality is perceived as an explanation of how people create their own realities of the world (Airasian & Walsh, 1997). Constructivism is evolutionary. Leaders therefore create their own versions of reality, and do not hold on to an objective reality of the world. We can only see something as reality if we have had the opportunity to personally interact with it. Reality is a construction that we create through participation (Wheatley, 2010).

Reality is therefore not static or objective, but needs to be co-created. However, this reality cannot be just anything. It has to fit with ideas the coachees have about themselves, other people, the problems they experience, or the world in general.

The coach may perceive a specific pattern in the leadership style of the coachee. In the coaching conversation, and through participation, both the coach and the coachee will co-construct a meaning related to what is being observed. Together, there will be a co-creation of a new way of thinking and doing.

The constructivist position of Hoffman (2003) in systemic therapy confirms the therapist is not an objective guru, and does offer more self-disclosure. A problem does exist, but only in the realm of meanings (Hoffman, 2003). When applying this process to a systemic strategy for coaching, the coach and leader will co-create or co-construct the reality or issue requiring focus. As within Milanian family therapy, where the principle of neutrality means that the therapist will not side with anybody, but will be close to everyone, the role of the coach is to gather information, understand, and provide feedback, rather than being the change agent or making moral judgments of any kind. The coach will explore, with the coachee, potential patterns and relationships that would enable growth.

In narrative collaborative coaching, the coach and coachee are dialogue partners, have a mutual relationship, and reflect as human beings on the important aspects of life, such as values, work life, career, family, and a search for new perspectives on existence (Drake, 2010). The role of the coach aligns to a constructionist model and Third-generation coaching.

#### **6.3.3.2. What were my findings regarding practice?**

The picture in practice is different from that presented in the literature, where there is very little focus on a systemic view with regard to the role of the coach. For the *Role of the coach* building block, my empirical findings clearly indicated a clear preference for a systemic approach by the coaches and the coachees, currently and in the future (Figure 3, Addendum A, and Tables 1.14 – 1.15, Chapter 5). The role of the coach in a systemic strategy is to explore, with the coachee, the potential patterns and relationships that will enable growth and to act as mirror to explore a set of coherent options for personal growth. The *Role of the coach* that representing a systemic view was also one of the CL building blocks frequently chosen by the coaches as preference for future coaching.

Coaches and coachees in the present study acknowledged that it is impossible to be objective, and that reality is co-constructed by the coach and the coachee. The roles of the coach and coachee were confirmed in the findings as equal. The coach and coachee act as co-explorers of patterns, and, through conversation and meaning-making, act as co-constructors of a different reality. Another system that functions within this shared role is the different stakeholders, who also act as co-creators of new patterns and ideas. The focus on shared roles provides the opportunity for leaders in an organisation to use the concept of shared leadership in creating a leadership community to collectively deal with the complexity of a VUCA world.

#### **6.3.4. COACHING RELATIONSHIP**

##### **6.3.4.1. Where is the focus of the literature?**

###### **Newtonian world view**

From a Newtonian perspective, the coaching relationship is linear and mechanistic, and aims to achieve a specific outcome. The coach, for example, focuses only on the leader within this mechanistic world, and sees the leader in isolation from the bigger context. The emphasis is on the leader as a single entity, consisting of parts to be fixed, and on how to re-engineer what he/she is doing, in order to equip the leader to achieve a more predictable, effective outcome.

Four of the five coaching approaches that I discussed apply a Newtonian world view in the following way:

- In psychodynamic and systems psychodynamic coaching, the coach is an objective expert who provides knowledge in a predictable, reliable, and trusting relationship.
- The coaching relationship in behavioural coaching and CBC is important, and sets the tone for a successful coaching process. However, the emphasis is on setting clear goals and achieving these in a controlled manner.
- The establishment of a trusting relationship is important in NLP coaching. Time is spent to build rapport with the leader as coachee, and on providing on-going support. The focus is on the coach and coachee only.

Defining and forming a trusting coaching relationship is an important component in all the different coaching models, strategies, and different generations of coaching. The emphasis, however, is still mainly on the coach being the expert in a very direct relationship or a partnership alliance.

### **GST world view**

According to the GST world view, the leader as coachee and the coach are described as individual systems. The leader does not lead or act in isolation. He/she forms part of a bigger team, organisation, or system, and interacts with the systems around him/her. In coaching, for example, to understand the leader better, one needs to look at him/her within the relevant context. To only deal with his/her behaviour, thought processes or internal belief systems are not considered holistically or sufficiently. The interaction with the context provides information through feedback loops, which help the coach in the coaching process. The coach and coachee are two independent and separate systems, and are objective in the way they perceive the world.

In solution-focused coaching, the relationship between the leader and the coach is a partnership in constructing solutions to enable the leader to move forward. Although a partnership, the coach remains the expert who moves the coachee from a deliberative mind-set to an implementation mind-set (Stelter, 2014). There are some elements of GST, but also a strong Newtonian focus. The approach, however, aligns more to Second-generation coaching.

### **Systemic world view**

With the formulation of quantum theory, we moved away from reductionism to a world of relationships, connections, and wholeness, which paved the way for systemic thinking. In the quantum world, relationships are *all* there is to reality (Wheatley, 2006; Stelter, 2014).

As mentioned before, leaders are complex, adaptive, and self-organising systems, and do not simply take in information. They have an impact on the context as well. In this process, both the system and the context change. In this coaching relationship with the leader, it is important to consider the leader's relationship

patterns within the broader system or organisation. The two applications of a systemic approach to therapy support the idea of interconnected relationships. In the constructivist position of Hoffman (2003), the therapist and the family are co-creators in the conversation, which includes the broader context in the relationship and, in the Milanian approach, the principle of circular questions allows family members to perceive things differently, as they are invited to meta-communicate about the different relationships in an interconnected way.

Once again, I could only find one coaching approach in the literature that applied a systemic world view to the coaching relationship. The coaching relationship in a constructionist model and in narrative collaborative coaching is an equal relationship characterised by various degrees of symmetry over time. Coach and coachee are co-creating a new emerging reality (Drake, 2010; Stelter, 2014). In my research findings, the practice, however, indicated a very different picture, with more examples of systemic coaching relationships.

#### **6.3.4.2. What were my findings regarding practice?**

In the present study, the coaches' selections of card statements indicated that they currently preferred a GST, and a systemic coaching relationship. For the future, the choice was a systemic relationship (Figure 4 and Table 5.14).

For the coachees, the current experiences of the relationship were GST and systemic, and their preference for the future was a systemic relationship. However, coachees' indications of their preference for the future had a slightly lower occurrence than that of the coaches (Figure 4 and Table 5.15). The *Coaching relationship* building block, which is representative of a systemic world view, and was chosen most often, emphasises the role significant stakeholders play in the co-creation of new patterns of acting for the coachee. In practice, coaches and coachees perceived the coaching relationship as already systemic — a co-creation of patterns by different role players, where relationships define reality.

It is, however, evident that there was hesitance on the part of some of the coachees to consider a variety of stakeholders as significant in the coaching engagement.



This was evident from their choice of the card statement: *My coach and I are the key role players in the coaching process.*

### **6.3.5. COACHING PROCESS**

#### **6.3.5.1. Where is the focus of the literature?**

##### **Newtonian world view**

In the Newtonian approach, the best way to understand a phenomenon is to break it into the smallest possible pieces, and then study the standalone, individual parts and their causal interdependencies (Heylighen, 2006).

To solve a problem from a Newtonian perspective, one tries to find the most recent analytical tool, or applies recent learning, to try and understand the cause of a difficult situation, such as low productivity and low morale or a high turnover of staff. Irrespective of the topic, the aim is to solve the presenting symptoms analytically. There is only one best solution to fix a problem, and the process followed to get there is analytical and rational. Cause and effect in Newtonian coaching are related in a straightforward and linear way, and the coach will ask questions to link cause and effect, and to understand how the inner dynamics of the coachee affect his/her behaviour.

Three of the six coaching approaches that I discussed apply a Newtonian world view in the following way:

- In psychodynamic coaching, the broad framework for a linear coaching process includes key aspects, such as defence mechanisms, transference, and counter-transference (Lee, 2010). The coaching process consists of planned, logical steps, linked to cause and effect, to achieve the outcome in a linear way.
- In behavioural coaching, much attention is paid to defined steps in the coaching process. Again important in these steps are clear goals, a specific and direct process, the continuous measurement of progress, reinforcement for sustainability, and a critical focus on achieving the set outcome (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006). The essence of behavioural coaching lies in these steps,

which form the basis of the coaching model and change process. The process is, once again, linear, with the aim to find one best solution.

- CBC includes a problem-solving and solution-focused model, and consists of seven different steps (Williams, Edgerton, & Palmer, 2014), similar to the steps mentioned above, consisting of clear identification of the problem, setting SMART goals, and ensuring that the best solution is implemented and evaluated for a sustainable outcome.

### **GST world view**

According to the GST world view, systems evolve through feedback and homeostasis. A feedback loop can be described as a series of actions that build on previous actions and then loop back into the circle. This feedback loop has an impact on the original state of the system. The feedback a leader receives from the context around him/her in terms of his/her output will influence (as input) his/her way of thinking and doing. This process of feedback forms an integral part of how the coaching will be structured and what questions will be asked to trigger growth in the leader.

In GST, one-way causality is no longer sufficient. Any system is considered to be more than the sum of its constituent parts. Words like 'wholeness' and 'holistic' became more meaningful. Systems are described in terms of elements in mutual interaction. The leader and his/her team are related to one another in a circular way, and no longer in a linear way. The leader's internal beliefs, for example, are not the only aspect that influence the way he/she leads, but also feedback (i.e. a series of actions) from the team and the context around him/her and the team. In the coaching process, it is important to understand all the circular feedback loops that influence the way the leader is leading. Questions asked by the coach are aimed at understanding the inner stability and balance that the coachee wants to achieve.

NLP and co-active coaching apply a GST view to the coaching process in the following way:

- With the systems-psychodynamic approach to coaching, an important part of the process are the key concepts from psychoanalytic theory, such as the

unconscious mental life of the leader, unconscious anxieties and defences, containment, and transference and counter-transference (Peltier, 2010; Lee, 2014). In the coaching process, the primary task of the leader is explored within the organisation, using the GST process of input–throughput–output, as well as acknowledging the task and role of the leader in relation to the culture of the organisation. Another concept from GST is understanding the boundaries of the leader as a system in relation to the organisational system (Roberts & Brunning, 2018).

- In NLP, the emphasis is on the coaching process and the steps therein. The use of thought-provoking questions is critical in exploring issues and helping the leader to solve problems. Whether looking at the interconnectedness between certain elements in the leader's life or considering the whole person in the coaching process, the focus is circular causality. The aim of the process is to create balance and order for the leader by changing the way he/she thinks (O'Connor & Lages, 2004).
- The aim of the coaching process in solution-focused coaching is to assist the leader through a strength based intervention to not spend time on the examination of problems or their psychological profile, but to feel enabled to experience him-/herself as healthy and capable.

Systems psychodynamic coaching applies some of the principles of GST and therefore aligns more to second-generation coaching and the systemic model. Further, looking at the coaching process, both the NLP and solution-focused approaches align well to the principles of the systems model (Barner & Higgins, 2007), as well as Second-generation coaching as described by Stelter (2014).

### **Systemic world view**

According to Güastello and Liebovitch (2009), living systems will respond to disorder or non-equilibrium with renewed life. Disorder can lead to the creation of a higher, new form of order (or pattern). There is a complementary relationship between order and chaos. Order and chaos are not two opposites or a paradox. One should rather see chaos as a full partner in the search for order. Order vs. chaos and stability vs.

change must be seen as two complementary aspects in the process of growth, and not paradoxes, as defined in the past (Keene, 2000; Stacey, 2007).

This view of paradoxes or wholeness enables leaders to re-examine their mental models and find alternative ways of doing. The coaching process explores these complementary aspects or paradoxes in order for the leader to find ways of thriving in the current turmoil of business and global change. It is a process of seeking, finding, and sustaining dynamic fusion between opposites. It is in this process of chaos that the system can reconfigure itself to a higher level of complexity (i.e. a new pattern of functioning) as a response, to be able to better deal with the change in its context (Wheatley, 2010).

In order to understand leaders as coachees, we need to understand how they are related to the situations, events, or other important systems in which they are involved. In a systemic coaching strategy, the focus is on feedback and the development of new patterns, in order for the leader to thrive in a VUCA world.

The coaching process is therefore a participative conversation to help coachees to understand their whole life in an interconnected way, and how things, people, and relationships in the coachee's life hang together. Change and understanding are progressively created through the coaching conversations between the coach and coachee. In the constructivist position of Hoffman (2003), families are seen as complex, dynamic systems, where chaos leads to growth. The focus is on the interconnectedness of relationships. The intervention is only one idea of many, and insight is co-created in the conversation with family. In Milanian family therapy, hypotheses are used to explore possible options, and not to determine what is true or false. The focus is not on predictability, but rather on tracking relationship patterns.

According to Stelter (2014), the coaching process or narrative coaching conversation is outlined in an ideal-typical format, which includes two parts and five stages. The purpose is to understand the story of the leader and to identify internalised problems with an impact on the leader's self-concept and identity. Meaning is created in a co-creative and collaborative approach between the coach and coachee. Through a

narrative perspective, the coach assists the leader to re-discover and remember previous events that will have an impact on the future. The coaching process in Third-generation coaching and a constructionist model define less rigid steps, and allows for co-creation of the future. The process, however, is still well defined in achieving agreed outcomes.

### **6.3.5.2. What were my findings regarding the practice?**

According to my empirical findings, the coaches preferred a coaching process that is systemic, currently and for the future (see Figure 5, Addendum A, and Table 5.14, Chapter 5). This means that the coaches already applied a systemic coaching process, and will keep doing so in the future. The experts' analyses of the data found some indication of the application of GST in the current coaching process; the results overall clearly indicated a preference for a systemic approach for the future. The views of the experts are a perceived reality of the coach and coachees' reality, while the card-sort method indicated the reality of the coach or coachee.

The coachees selected mostly a systemic approach for the current and the future coaching process (see Figure 5, Addendum A, and Table 5.14, Chapter 5). The coachees also indicated a slight preference for a GST approach. The focus of the systemic *Coaching process* building block, which was frequently chosen by the coaches as reflecting the current approach, is on coaching as a participative, explorative conversation about the life story of the coachee, constructing relationships in an interconnected and holistic way, and the participative conversation to understand life in a more interconnected way.

Coaches and coachees already experienced a systemic coaching process, and preferred the same for the future, which is very different from what is described in the literature, where the focus is mainly Newtonian, with some GST principles.

### **6.3.6. COACHING AGENDA**

#### **6.3.6.1. Where is the focus of the literature?**

##### **Newtonian world view**

According to the Newtonian world view, the cause of a problem needs to be determined in a logical and analytical way. The agenda will therefore be planned to be specific and to achieve one best solution for the coachee.

The coaching approaches in the literature that follow a Newtonian view, structure the coaching agenda as follows:

- Psychodynamic coaching has a specific outcome in mind. The coaching agenda is driven by the 'unconscious story' of the leader (Kilburg, 2004).
- The agenda for systems psychodynamic coaching is determined by the focus on the connection between the person, role, and organisation (Roberts & Brunning, 2018). Although the process of coaching includes the context of the leader and the organisation, the unconscious story remains the key focus of the agenda.
- Behavioural coaching focuses on finding solutions. By asking the right questions (which drive the agenda), the coach is able to test his/her hypotheses about behaviour, possible solutions, and sustainable outcomes (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006).
- In CBC coaching, the coach plays an integral role in setting an agenda jointly with the leader for each coaching session, to review homework from the previous session and to agree the main item for discussion. The agenda is structured according to a consistent framework (Dryden, 2017).

The agenda of coaching within a clinical and behavioural model is specific to the objective that needs to be achieved, for example, changing the inner world or a defined behaviour. The agenda is structured and planned. This aligns well with First-generation coaching.

### **GST world view**

Systems evolve through feedback and homeostasis. They are described in terms of elements in mutual interaction. The leader and his/her team are related to one another in a circular way, and no longer in a linear way. The feedback loops determine the coaching agenda.

The coaching approaches in the literature that follow a GST view structure the coaching agenda as follows:

- NLP coaching poses questions to determine the agenda. The art of questioning in this approach is important for a number of reasons. In the initial stage, it is to obtain information, where after it is used to explore beliefs, values, and thinking, in order to challenge the leader to action, and to give him/her additional choices. The agenda is determined by exploring different feedback loops (O'Connor & Lages, 1994, 2004).
- The solution-focused approach sees the leaders as fundamentally capable of solving their own problem as the expert on their life. The leaders are resourceful and whole, and will provide the agenda for discussion (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014).

NLP and CBC coaching, although viewed as First- and Second-generation coaching respectively by Stelter (2014), is more aligned to a systems model as described by Barner and Higgins (2007). Once again, how the agenda is applied may have a different impact on the framework or worldview informing the coaching approach.

### **Systemic world view**

In a systemic world view, interaction is seen as recursive, with non-linear patterns. Leaders are defined as complex, dynamic systems with emergent properties. They are autonomous, and have the ability to renew themselves in order to adapt to change. The coaching agenda allows the coach and coachee to explore multiple possible configurations to uncover the possible pattern. I described the agenda before as a spiral where meaning evolves and deepens through conversation. The coach and coachee co-construct meaning, and the agenda evolves during these conversations, similar to the constructivist position of Hoffman (2003), where the family and the therapist co-construct the meaning of a problem and the alternative options for dealing with it in the future. In Milanian family therapy, the principles of hypothesising and circularity allow for the agenda to be tentative and to be jointly explored by the therapist and family members in a circular way. In coaching, the agenda will evolve conversationally.

In narrative collaborative coaching, the leader determines the agenda by sharing a story of life and work. The coach and leader then co-create the agenda together. The coach acts as enabler to re-author the story and create new and alternative stories (Stelter, 2014). The agenda in Third-generation coaching and a constructionist model is co-created to re-author new possibilities. It is, however, important to notice that storytelling can be defined as direct, based on the unconscious mind.

### **6.3.6.2. What were my findings regarding practice?**

Coaches and coachees experienced the current approach of the *Coaching agenda* as already systemic. The choice for the future for both the coaches and the coachees was also very clearly indicated as systemic (Figure 6, Addendum A, and Tables 5.14–16, Chapter, 5), and the systemic *Coaching agenda* building block, was frequently chosen by both the coaches and the coachees for the current approach. It was also frequently chosen by the coachees for the future.

The current coaching approaches in the literature focus only on the Newtonian and the GST view in determining the coaching agenda. However, the coaches and coachees indicated the need for a systemic world view, where the agenda is not pre-determined, but rather is allowed to evolve and deepen in the recursive coaching conversation that is co-created between the coach and coachee. The flow of the systemic coaching agenda can be described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.

### **6.3.7. PROFILE OF THE COACH**

#### **6.3.7.1. Where is the focus of the literature?**

##### **Newtonian world view**

According to the Newtonian world view, the coach is an objective, analytical observer with a blueprint of how to act. The focus is on finding an objective, fixed truth. The coach is an expert, and is able to assist the leader in finding the best linear option.



In the coaching approaches I explored in the literature, the majority of the coaches are objective observers with a fixed role. The respective approach approaches apply a Newtonian view as follows:

- In psychodynamic and systems psychodynamic coaching, the coach must be trained and skilled to work from a psychodynamic perspective, and have the knowledge, skill, and ability to concentrate on the unconscious life of the individual and the organisation. The preference is the internal world and the psychodynamic realm of the leader. All interpretations, hypotheses, and foci are aimed at helping the leader with his/her unconscious storytelling (Kets de Vries, 2006).
- Behavioural coaching expects the coach to be informed by behavioural science and knowledge, and the application thereof is considered critical. The coach acts as a role model for the leader. He/she must have excellent communication skills, act from a values point of view, be assertive, and continuously mirror the correct behaviour to the leader (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006).
- The coach in CBC coaching does not seek to give the answers, but, through a collaborative process, guides discovery so that the leader may find solutions. Since CBC is focused on specific techniques to shift behaviour, the coach needs to be skilled in a number of areas to assist the leader to achieve the development-based objectives (Dryden, 2017).

The profile of the coach here is one of an objective expert who focuses on the leader only.

### **GST world view**

Here, the coach considers different and holistic options, concentrating on the circular feedback loops. The coach is still seen as objective, with the ability to provide appropriate solutions to the leader's problems and challenges. The coach will assist the leader to find balance and order in life (Stacey, 2007).

In some of the systems model coaching, for example, NLP, the role is also direct, as with First-generation coaching, as well as the clinical and behavioural models.

However, in solution-focused coaching, categorised as second-generation coaching, the role of the coach is to guide the leader to find possible solutions. In both NLP and solution-focused coaching, the coach is seen as an expert. The coach must also be comfortable with his/her personal mental style, and be able to easily spot thinking patterns. In solution-focused coaching, the coach must be able to meet the leader where he is and gradually enable a shift towards a solution-focused mind-set (Cavanagh & Grant, 2014). In this approach, the coach is perceived as an objective observer who is able to explore holistically and as an independent system.

### **Systemic world view**

In a systemic world view, the profile of the coach shifts from a positivistic outlook to a constructivist one. The coach focuses on the interconnected whole, and explores, with the leader, possible patterns. The journey is shared with the coachee, but the solution or destination is the choice of the coachee. The coach cannot be objective, since reality is co-created together with the coachee and relevant stakeholders. The coach is comfortable to include other stakeholders in the coaching process. In the constructivist position of Hoffman (2003), reality is co-constructed between the parties involved and applied to coaching, and realities are co-created; it is impossible for the coach to be objective. Within Milanian family therapy, the therapist is neutral, open, and non-judgemental, moving away from objectivity to a constructivist position. The coach plays a similar role when applying these systemic principles to coaching.

It is only in the constructionist model and Third-generation coaching that the coach is a conversational partner in shifting perspectives. For example, in narrative collaborative coaching, the coach acts as a conversational partner for the leader, and is open-minded, flexible, and willing to change. Generous listening is essential, and the coach uses questions that invite the leader to move forward and to embrace a shift in perspective (Stelter, 2014).

#### **6.3.7.2. What were my findings regarding the practice?**

The majority of the coaches described their current profile as systemic. The coachees' current experience and future preference for *Profile of the coach* were also systemic. In the comparison of views of the experts, the researcher, and ATLAS, the picture was slightly different. My view and those of the experts indicated

principles of GST in the current profiles of the coaches, while ATLAS indicated that these were systemic. Once again, the findings of the experts can be viewed as a perceived reality. The coaches' preferred profile, currently and for the future, is therefore systemic (Figure 7, Addendum A, and Table 5.16).

The coachees indicated a slight preference for the *Profile of the coach* being systemic. For the coachees, the systemic preference was more related to the coach as fellow traveller on the journey of the coachee, where the destination and solutions remain the responsibility of the coachee. Some of the coachees held the view that the coach should work with the individual only, and use his/her expert skills to assist the coachee to achieve life balance, which form part of a GST world view. Predominantly, the coachees preferred a systemic profile for the coach for the future.

### **6.3.8. PROFILE OF THE COACHEE**

#### **6.3.8.1. Where is the focus of the literature?**

##### **Newtonian world view**

A Newtonian world view sees reality as fixed. The coachee operates within this linear, mechanistic context of cause and effect. The coachee plays a passive, reactive role. The majority of the coaching approaches discussed in Chapter 2 work with the coachee in isolation. The role of the coachee differs in some of the approaches. None of the approaches gives an indication of the inclusion of stakeholders in the coaching process:

- In psychodynamic coaching, the focus is on the internal world of the leader — the unconscious forces, defence mechanisms, and hidden dynamics that influence behaviour (Peltier, 2010).
- In behavioural coaching and CBC, the focus is on behaviour change within the leader (Skiffington & Zeus, 2006). Although the coachee in CBC is an active collaborator, with inclusion of the broader context, the focus is still problem- and goal oriented, as with First-generation coaching.

## **GST world view**

In GST, the belief is that systems (i.e. leaders) evolve through feedback and homeostasis. The feedback a leader receives from the context around him/her in terms of his/her output influences (as input) his/her way of thinking and doing.

The coaching approaches that apply a GST world view consider the context holistically, and may explore the circular loops, but still work with the coachee alone. They see the coach and coachee as independent and separate systems. Three approaches apply a GST world view in the following way:

- In NLP, the emphasis is on the present and helping the coachee through his/her internal beliefs, in order to craft the future. The thinking patterns of the leader will be explored in order to change limiting beliefs.
- In systems psychodynamic coaching the focus here is still the internal world of the leader, but with an extension to the broader organisation. The role of the leader in relation to the organisation is considered part of the coachee's profile.

The coaching model for NLP in application, systems psychodynamic coaching, and solution-focused coaching is more systemic (GST) and Second-generation coaching.

## **Systemic world view**

In a systemic world view, the focus is on constructivism, where reality is perceived as an explanation of how people create the realities of their own world (Ariasian & Walsh, 1997). Constructivism is evolutionary. Leaders therefore create their own versions of reality, and do not hold an objective reality of the world. We only see something as reality if we have had the opportunity to personally interact with it. Reality is a construction that we create through participation (Wheatley, 2010).

In systemic coaching, therefore, reality is co-created by the coach, the coachee, and the relevant stakeholders in the context of the coachee. The coachee must be comfortable to include other stakeholders in the 'coaching room.' In the constructivist position of Hoffman (2003), reality cannot exist independently from our ideas. The ideas and views of the coachee and other stakeholders are critical in co-constructing a new reality. In Milanian family therapy, the therapist allows the family

to be part of the process of exploring the complexity in the system through circular questioning. The same can apply in coaching, with the coachee playing an active part in co-creating a new way of thinking, together with the coach and other stakeholders.

In narrative collaborative coaching, the coachee is the co-creator of his/her new life story and perspective. The coachee is curious, and seeks dialogue in a reflective space, focussing on meaning and values (Stelter, 2016). This approach aligns more to a systemic world view, although there is no clear reference in the literature on the stance to include other stakeholders in the coaching room.

#### **6.3.8.2. What were my findings regarding the practice?**

The majority of coaches and coachees in the present study felt that the coachees will be comfortable to make other stakeholders part of their coaching, and most indicated that they would do so in the future. Both the current and the future preferences of the coaches and the coachees in this regard indicated a systemic world view (see Figure 8 and Tables 5.14–16).

The selection of the card statements for the *Coachee profile* building block showed the greatest consensus amongst coachees in terms of the current approach and the preference for the future (see Table 5.6).

The findings of my study indicate that coachees (leaders) are comfortable with the systemic world principle of including other significant stakeholders in the coaching process, currently and also in the future. These findings differ from the literature, where the profile of the coachee is mainly Newtonian and GST.

### **6.3.9. COACHING OUTCOMES**

#### **6.3.9.1. Where is the focus of the literature?**

##### **Newtonian world view**

In a Newtonian world view, for every action, there is an equal, opposite reaction. Cause and effect are therefore related in a straightforward, linear way (O’Murchu, 2004; Obolensky, 2010). The outcome is therefore predictable. If we find the cause, we will be able to fix it and achieve the desired outcome.

In a Newtonian world view, it is important that the coach determine what is causing a specific problem, in order to be able to plan how to achieve a specific outcome. The coach and coachee also try to define the desired outcome upfront.

Four of the six coaching approaches that I discussed apply a Newtonian world view in the following way:

- The outcome of psychodynamic coaching is a leader who is more self-aware and free to choose actions that will increase his/her performance, as well as that of the organisation. The leader becomes free when he/she is aware of the impact of unconscious conflicts, defences, regression, and any other hidden dynamics on his/her behaviour.
- Within systems psychodynamic coaching, the outcome is having assisted the leader to gain insight in his/her inner world and to see the connections with the external world. The key focus remains the character of the person and to build emotional self-awareness (Brunning, 2006).
- Behavioural coaching is about finding solutions. By posing the right questions, the coach is able to test his/her hypotheses about behaviour, possible solutions, and sustainable outcomes. The emphasis in behavioural coaching is on meaningful, sustainable, and measurable outcomes.
- CBC focuses on improving self-awareness, enhancing the skills of the leader to solve problems, and supporting the leader in altering his/her limiting beliefs that inhibit performance, provoke stress, and block the achievement of goals (Neenan, 2010; O'Broin & Palmer, 2009).

For all four approaches, the outcome is clearly defined in a linear way. With a specific agenda focused on the goal and a direct coaching strategy, the coach and coachee will ensure outcomes are achieved as specified upfront. As with First-generation coaching, a problem is defined and dealt with in a goal-oriented manner.

### **GST world view**

The focus of a GST view is on leaders achieving their goals and purpose. Feedback is used to adapt to the context and to change behaviour, while conserving equilibrium. Success for leaders as systems is a state of stability and harmony

(Stacey, 2007). One of the key outcomes of GST coaching is achieving life balance in the context of change.

Two of the coaching approaches I discussed apply a GST world view in the following way:

- The outcome in NLP coaching is the leader changing his/her limiting beliefs and living a positive, successful life. Change means altered thought processes.
- Outcomes of coaching are viewed as an emergent property of the system, not the sole responsibility of a single party, and are co-created by the coach and the leader. The outcomes of solution-focused coaching align well with the purpose in Second-generation coaching, where the idea is to initiate a process of change and seeing the world from a different perspective (Stelter, 2016).

The desired outcome for both approaches relates to the process of exploring feedback or circular loops, with the aim to achieve balance or equilibrium in the coachee.

### **Systemic world view**

According to Stacey (2007), organisations are complex systems, where it is impossible to identify specific actions that will lead to specific outcomes. The traditional notion of cause and effect is no longer relevant. The perceived links between cause and affect are much more complex, and make the future difficult to predict. The new frame of reference, as Myburgh (2003) refers to it, is a world characterised by high levels of interconnectedness, uncertainty, unpredictability, and self-organisation.

According to Senge (1999), the emphasis is on the complete patterns that exist among interrelated components within a system, as well as how to change those patterns. It is seeing the bigger picture by understanding interrelationships among parts, and seeing processes with patterns as a 'film' instead of a slide show. In the

coaching process, leaders are encouraged to look at patterns, and not single events in isolation.

The aim in coaching is to try and open new ways or options to the leader to consider the interconnected whole, as well as the patterns in-between. It is helping him/her in uncovering patterns and identifying where to intervene in a pattern, in order to change the pattern.

Working with complex patterns that are connected in a circular way makes it very difficult to predict outcomes, as is done with linear thinking. Absolute prediction and uniformity are, therefore, not possible. In systemic coaching, the coachee is autonomous and decides how to react to the coaching intervention. The different role players in the coaching process co-create the outcome through conversation. In the constructivist position of Hoffman (2003), the focus is on many possibilities and on exploring options. This relates well to coaching from a systemic world view, where the outcome is not predictable and there is the possibility to explore multiple options. In Milanian family therapy, there is the notion of circularity as a way of exploring multiple relationship patterns with the family, in order to co-create new patterns. This also relates to systemic outcomes, as discussed.

In the narrative collaborative approach, the focus is on strengths and opportunities. The approach is based on the following dimensions essential in third-generation coaching as identified by Stelter (2014):

- There is less focus on quick fixing and more reflecting. In-depth meaning-making dialogue between the coach and coachee forms the basis for change and action.
- Coaching is a reflective process and focuses on an existential-experiential and relational perspective.
- The coaching conversation is based on a clear link between the coachee and his/her context. The coaching conversation facilitates a new narrative in relation to the challenges of the coachee.



### **6.3.9.2. What were my findings regarding practice?**

Most of the coaches and coachees agreed that coaching outcomes are difficult to predict, and that they are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation. The majority of the coaches and coachees also selected card statements that represented a systemic approach for coaching outcomes for the future (see Figure A9, Addendum A, and Tables 5.14–15).

There was some indication by coaches and coachees that they wish to achieve life balance through coaching, which is part of a GST world view. However, the card statements for the *Coaching outcomes* building block received the greatest consensus as the preferred choice for the future by coachees.

Once again, the findings regarding the practice indicated a completely different picture from that found in the literature. Coaches and coachees already focus on systemic outcomes in coaching, and prefer to do so in the future, while the approaches in the literature are limited to Newtonian and GST outcomes.

In the following section, I provide an update of my revised proposed systemic coaching strategy.

## **6.4 A REVISED SYSTEMIC STRATEGY FOR COACHING FIT FOR A COMPLEX AND EVER-CHANGING WORLD — A VUCA WORLD**

In Chapter 3, I proposed an alternative strategy for coaching, based on a systemic world view with the CL building blocks as a framework. I will now use the empirical findings from my study, reported in Chapter 5, as input from coaching in practice with a preference for a systemic strategy, to enhance my proposed strategy. The proposed strategy contributes to Third-generation coaching and enriches the theoretical thinking regarding coaching, but also offers a more integrated systemic strategy to be used in practice going forward.

Table 6.2

*A Summary of the Key Principles of my Systemic Strategy to Coaching*

<b>Coaching landscape (CL) building block</b>	<b>Key principles</b>	<b>Confirmed/Revised principles based on findings</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Coaching context</b>	<p>The focus is on the whole person, addressing all aspects of life and how these dynamically fit together.</p> <p>The context is made up of multiple stakeholders with multiple and different views of reality, as decided by the coach and coachee.</p> <p>The context includes a collection of meanings and ideas, and is physical, constitutional, normative, experiential, and historical.</p> <p>Coaching happens in a conversational domain, where meaning and perceptions are formed.</p>	<p>Confirmed.</p> <p>It will be important for the coach and coachee to agree who to include in the coaching conversation.</p>	<p>Not all the coachees felt comfortable to include all stakeholders in the coaching session, but saw it as critically important to explore their perceptions, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas. They were comfortable to focus on the interconnected relationships and the impact of relevant stakeholders and events on their lives.</p>
<b>Coaching objectives</b>	<p>To help the leader to discover, explore, reflect on, and learn about the past–present–future pattern, as well as many possible patterns in the complex world around him or her;</p> <p>To find or construct new ways of thinking, understanding, and doing, in order to thrive in the complex world, with <i>both/and</i> thinking;</p> <p>To become aware of his or her holistic being across all life dimensions.</p> <p>Objectives are interactive and connected.</p>	<p>Confirmed the need to explore alternative patterns, awareness of the holistic system and connected patterns.</p> <p>Due to the current VUCA world, there is a need to achieve life balance and to deal with complexities.</p>	<p>Although it can be seen as a quest for order, which is a GST principle, it is my belief that it rather forms part of a vicious pattern in the life of a leader, which needs to be explored, and for which and alternative pattern has to be co-created with the leader, to deal with change and complexity.</p>

Table 6.2 (continued)

CL building block	Key principles	Confirmed/Revised principles based on findings	Comments
<b>Roles of the coach and coachee</b>	<p>Equal roles in constructing a new reality in turbulent times;</p> <p>Different role players: coach, coachee, and stakeholders;</p> <p>Roles of the coach: story facilitator, resource finder and explorer, questioner to create meaning, question creator, supportive mirror, catalyst, and feedback explorer and implementer;</p> <p>Roles of the coachee: storyteller, pattern creator and maintainer, and resource mobiliser;</p> <p>Shared roles for coach, leader, and stakeholders: co-learners, co-explorers, co-constructors, and co-creators.</p>	<p>Confirmed principle, also aligned to Third-generation coaching, where coach and coachee co-create new realities.</p>	<p>Coach and coachee must co-decide on the role of the different stakeholders</p> <p>Shared coaching roles opens the opportunity for shared leadership or a leadership community in organisational excellence</p>
<b>Coaching relationship</b>	<p>The relationship with the leader is participative and collaborative, one of co-creating a conversation, meaning, or reality;</p> <p>High levels of interconnectedness, with a circular impact on the broader system;</p> <p><i>Both-and</i> relationship that include different stakeholders;</p> <p>The relationship is informed by values such as interconnectivity, equality, empathy, attentive listening, clear confidentiality boundaries, and immense understanding.</p>	<p>Equality of relationship confirmed.</p>	<p>Coach and coachee are key role players.</p>

Table 6.2 (continued)

<b>CL building block</b>	<b>Key principles</b>	<b>Confirmed/Revised principles based on findings</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Coaching process</b>	<p>Multiple interconnectedness, where the autonomy of the system will determine what the change will be;</p> <p>Systems are constructed by responsive and complex conversations a Socratic dialogue, where a co-evolution of ideas develops;</p> <p>The coaching process is a participative conversation or dialogue in the form of storytelling about the past, present, and future;</p> <p>Coaching engagement is a complex adaptive system, where the conversation is co-created in multiple reflective spaces;</p> <p>The coaching relationship, which is part of the bigger context, will be influenced by sources of information from the broader context;</p> <p>The inclusion of different stakeholder voices into the coaching conversation change the reflective spaces between the coach and coachee to complex, interactive circles in the coaching conversation, illustrating the interconnectedness of all systems.</p>	<p>Confirmed, with key focus on the participative, explorative conversation about the coachee's life story.</p> <p>The focus is on relationships and understanding his/her whole life in a more interconnected way.</p>	<p>Coachees and coaches confirmed the coaching process is not a linear, step-by-step approach, but an interconnected, recursive conversation. The coaching process and conversation create an opportunity for the coachee to construct relationships in an interconnected and holistic way, and to co-create, with the coach, new patterns of acting and connecting that are more fulfilling.</p>
<b>Coaching agenda</b>	<p>Questions are circular and interconnected, and include others, the context, and relationship patterns.</p> <p>Circular questioning provides the opportunity to explore the complexity, and allows for new meaning-making.</p> <p>Agenda co-created by the coach and the coachee, and the flow described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.</p>	<p>Confirmation: the coaching agenda should be not predetermined, but evolve, as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.</p>	<p>This was one of the most frequent card statements, consistently chosen by coaches and coachees as future choice, but also already applied in practice</p>

Table 6.2 (Continued)

<b>CL building block</b>	<b>Key principles</b>	<b>Confirmed/Revised principles based on findings</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Profile of the coach</b>	<p>The coach is not objective and does not provide the answers, but is a fellow traveller on a life journey and a co-creator of a new or reframed reality where the coachee determines the destination.</p> <p>The coach appreciates wholeness, has a circular perspective, and is comfortable with chaos and complexity.</p> <p>The coach needs to have a 'bifocal view' and be comfortable to include the bigger context and stakeholders into the coaching.</p>	<p>Confirmed. The coach undertakes the journey with the coachee, but leaves the destination/solution to the coachee.</p>	<p>Frequently chosen by coaches and coachees for future strategy; focus is on co-creating a new pattern.</p>
<b>Profile of the coachee</b>	<p>The coachee needs to be comfortable to include other stakeholders or spheres of his/her life in the coaching process.</p> <p>The coachee must be comfortable that the coach will not provide objective answers or solutions.</p> <p>The coachee must be comfortable with ambiguity and be willing to explore unknown territory.</p>	<p>Confirmed. In current practice, coachees are open-minded, willing to explore the unknown, take initiative, and discover new possibilities/ patterns.</p>	<p>Coachees (leaders) are more inclined than coaches to include other views, more people, and additional perceptions in the reflective space of coaching.</p>

Table 6.2 (Continued)

<b>CL building block</b>	<b>Key principles</b>	<b>Confirmed/Revised principles based on findings</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p>Systemic coaching should provide the leader with alternative and holistic options with which to reconfigure his/her life in an interconnected fashion.</p> <p>Systemic coaching will enable the leader to explore his/her different life dimensions (internal and external) in a more interconnected manner.</p> <p>Coaching outcomes are not predictable, but are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation.</p>	<p>Confirmed. Coaches and coachees were comfortable with the notion that coaching outcomes are systemic and unpredictable, and that they are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation.</p>	<p>Some coaches have a need to achieve a life balance in the current complex, ever-changing context. Coaching must enable the coachee to explore and create a new life pattern to deal with complexity, which includes a balanced lifestyle.</p>

## 6.5. DESCRIPTION OF A SYSTEMIC CONVERSATION

I will now use the schematic illustration of the interactive circles (refer to Figure 3.1, Chapter 3) of the systemic coaching process to describe the possible flow of a systemic coaching conversation. The model will be adapted to include my empirical findings and the key theoretical principles discussed. The model cannot be seen as the development of a new model, but rather a holistic integration of theory, practice, and perception.

Figure 6.1 graphically illustrates a systemic coaching conversation flow adapted from Cavanagh (2006) indicated before in Figure 3.1.

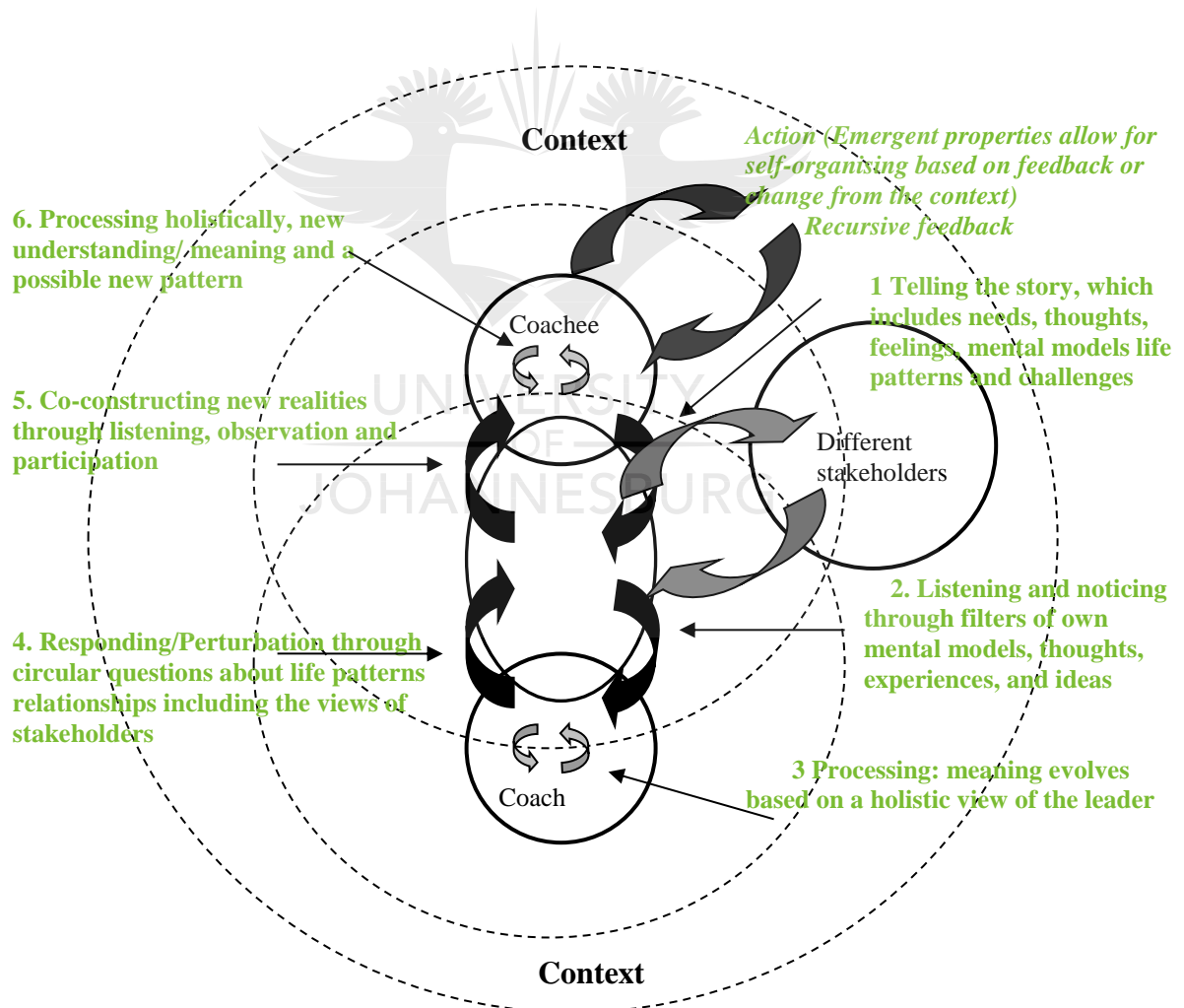


Figure 6.1. The flow of a systemic coaching conversation.

In the systemic coaching strategy, the coach and the leader are part of a broader system where meaning evolves through interpersonal constructs. Therefore, the only way to create a different reality or change is through participation in this conversation. The coaching conversation is a form of Socratic dialogue, where the aim is to encourage the coachee to reflect and think independently. The coach will ask the appropriate questions to direct and steer conversation, which conversation is aimed at self-discovery by the coachee, leading to self-initiated action.

The Milanian method of circular questioning can also be described as a Socratic dialogue. Through the use of circular questioning, the leader is challenged to think and reflect differently. The essence of the dialogue lies in the interaction of human minds or, as referred to in Figure 6.1, interactive circles that include the minds of different stakeholders.

In some instances, the coach may have some information about the leader before the first session starts. If the coach does have any information, this will form part of the reflective space within the leader, and the coaching process will start within the coach's mind with the forming of hypotheses about the leader and his/her context, in a tentative and circular way. The coach will reflect on possible patterns that may exist in the context of the leader.

The flow of the conversation process that I will focus on assumes that the coach does not have any information about the leader before the first coaching conversation. However, having no information does not mean that the coach will not have assumptions about the leader, the organisation, and the context. The systemic coaching conversation is made up of different elements that are interconnected, recursive, and integrated, creating a circular process flow.



## **6.5.1 The systemic conversation circular process flow**

### **Telling the story**

The leader starts the process with an internal conversation about his needs, experiences, feelings, thoughts, current life patterns, and the challenges he/she is currently facing. This internal conversation is the first link to the other interactive circles in the coaching conversation diagram, when the leader starts sharing his/her thoughts or story with the coach. His/her story or external conversation is a reflection of his/her internal conversations, as well as conversations he/she has with others, and includes experiences, mental models, personality, goals, values, emotions, ideas, and dreams. It is important for the coach to see this as a reflection of the whole person in relation to his/her context.

### **Listening and noticing**

The coach listens to this story, and then enters the next interactive circle with the leader. The coach enters this circle with his/her own mental models, experiences, thoughts, ideas, and feelings. The coach makes use of circular questions to understand the story of the leader in relation to his/her context. Through the coach asking questions about relationships and patterns, the leader has the opportunity to start seeing his/her different life dimensions and relationships in an interconnected way. The leader thereby becomes more aware of the role of multiple stakeholders in creating a certain life pattern.

### **Processing — meaning evolves**

The next element or focus is to explore, with the leader, who the significant stakeholders are, and to agree on how they will be part of the coaching journey. It is critical to involve them in an appropriate way, and to agree with the leader how they will form part of the conversational domain in order to provide more possible options for difference or change.

Difference or change lies in information and in relationships. Change emerges from the shared dialogue between the coach and the leader. The relationship, as

mentioned before, is participative, with high levels of interconnectedness, with the aim of co-creating meaning or a new reality. This relationship includes multiple stakeholders' views, which contribute to the story of the leader. The story will not only be that of the individual leader, but a reflection of a holistic pattern that includes relationships, ideas, and perceptions of others.

### **Responding/ perturbations through circular questions**

The coaching agenda is not fixed, but is co-created by the coach and the leader. Once again, the circular questions asked by the coach provide an opportunity to explore the complexity in the leader's system, are interconnected, and include others, the context, and relationship patterns. The same aspects may be discussed more than once, but will be explored from a different and/or deepened perspective. The agenda flow in the coaching conversation is a recursive pattern, where the level of understanding becomes ever deeper.

### **Processing holistically — new meaning or possibilities**

The coaching role is multi-faceted, and is shared by the coach, the leader, and the different stakeholders. All role players form part of co-creating a new reality for the leader. The coach plays the role of facilitating the leader's story by asking the right circular questions and acting as a catalyst for change. Change evolves out of the complementary processes of change and stability. Challenging the sameness of comfortable stability enables different thinking by the leader, from which new possibilities can evolve.

The storyteller role of the leader allows for the story to evolve in such a way that the leader as resource mobiliser discovers new patterns of acting that are more conducive to the life he/she wants to live.

The coach is not objective, but is a fellow traveller on the journey of the leader, and can only *assist* with the co-creation of a new or reframed reality. Leaders as complex adaptive systems determine with autonomy how to react to the coaching

questions or meaning that evolved during the conversation. The outcome of the coaching conversation or final destination of the journey of the leader cannot be predicted. It evolves over time, and is determined by the leader in interaction with his/her holistic context.

The six different elements, as reflected in Figure 6.1, form a circular process that can be repeated multiple times in a coaching session. At the end of a coaching session, the different interactive circles do not end in the coaching room. The leader will have certain patterns to act on, and, with feedback from the context, continuously adapt and evolve. The coach is also in interaction with the context, which brings about new thoughts, ideas, questions, and hypotheses that become part of the next coaching conversation. The connectedness of the different systems (circles) continuously provides a variety of possibilities that evolve in the coaching conversation.

## **6.6. THE VALUE-ADD OF SYSTEMIC COACHING AS STRATEGY FOR VERTICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

In this section, I explicate what I believe to be the primary value-add of my proposed coaching strategy, based on a systemic world view.

### **6.6.1. The inclusion of the whole context and multiple stakeholders**

The leader does not exist in isolation, but is impacted by the world around him/her. The leader is embedded in a context made up of multiple stakeholders who have become an inherent part of his/her world. Leaders are interconnected with the context in a circular and holistic way, physically and virtually. We can therefore not view leaders as separate entities. They are part of an interconnected whole. Leaders and the stakeholder in their context are co-creating certain patterns and realities.

An important value-add of a systemic coaching strategy is that it includes the broader context, including multiple stakeholders, in the coaching process, which

broadens the view of reality, enabling the leader to find alternative ways of dealing with complexities in a VUCA world. The interconnectedness of the coaching context may allow the opportunity for shared leadership to evolve to address organisational challenges collectively as a leadership community.

### **6.6.2. The focus on multiple patterns and connections serves to co-create alternative patterns in dealing with change and complexity in a VUCA world**

The leader must be seen as an integrated, whole being across all of his/her life dimensions. In order for a leader to thrive in the current VUCA world, it is important to be aware of the multiple patterns, and to respond appropriately to the demands of the context.

The strength of the proposed systemic coaching strategy is its focus on holistic patterns in the different life dimensions of the leader. This enables the leader to become more aware of the complexity of the context, and to see circular connections. The coach and the leader will explore the immersed patterns making up the complex world, and try to find alternative patterns of acting.

### **6.6.3. The coaching roles enable shared responsibility in an empowered way**

In an organisation, the leader is seen and treated as an adult who has to take responsibility for his/her own life, leadership decisions, and actions. Systemic coaching acknowledges this responsibility. Hence, the coaching roles are shared between the coach, the coachee, and multiple stakeholders, in a way that reflects how the leader is seen and treated in everyday organisational life. The proposed systemic approach provides more possible options and patterns to explore, but, more importantly, also creates a shared responsibility in an empowered way. The coachee owns the role he/she needs to play in relation to other stakeholders, due to the circular connections in the relationships.

Once again the concept and application of shared roles may provide the opportunity for leaders in an organisation to form a leadership community and collectively deal with the complexity and change of a VUCA world.

#### **6.6.4. The participative and interconnected relationship enables growth for the coach and coachee**

The primary objective of any coaching relationship is growth. In most coaching approaches, this is a linear concept that does not fit with a complex, ever-changing world. In a systemic world view, the coach is neither objective nor the expert. In a systemic coaching strategy, the relationship with the coachee is one of co-creating meaning or reality. The coach and coachee changing and growing through these conversations are possible due to the interconnectedness of the relationship. This also enables the coachee to take ownership of his/her growth, and not expect the coach to fix the problems.

#### **6.6.5. The interactive circles in the coaching process include multiple views and provide a variety of possibilities**

In the current VUCA world, it is important for the leader to have multiple options and a variety of possibilities to be able to create sustainable organisations. A systemic coaching strategy acknowledges this need. By including more people and more perceptions in the reflective space of coaching, the possible options for growth will also be multiple, and provide the leader with more possibilities for the complex context with which he/she has to deal.

#### **6.6.6. A systemic coaching agenda allows conversations to evolve into deeper meaning**

In order to explore the challenges in the current world of work, the coaching conversation must allow space to explore different thoughts and feelings on multiple levels, without being too prescriptive.

The agenda in systemic coaching is not predetermined, but evolves in the conversation, which was described earlier as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation. The openness to allow the conversation to go where needed provides the opportunity to explore more freely and without limitations.

#### **6.6.7. Willingness of leaders to explore unknown territory in an interconnected way**

The complex, dynamic context of the leader requires of him/her to be flexible and comfortable with ambiguity. A systemic approach enables the leader to explore the unknown territory with an open mind, and to not be afraid to experiment with different and new possibilities, and to include multiple views in the coaching process.

#### **6.6.8. Systemic coaching does not offer either/or solutions, but both/and possibilities**

It is very difficult to predict the outcome of coaching or the behaviour of the leader, due to emergent properties. The leader is a complex, adaptive system that is autonomous. The context of the leader, however, demands action to change disruptive and unsuitable patterns.

A real value-add of the proposed systemic coaching strategy is that it provides the leader with alternative, holistic, and multiple options and possibilities to re-create patterns. The coach and the coachee (leader) will co-construct something new that may evolve in growth and change in the ever-changing, complex context in which the leader is embedded.

In summary, I believe my coaching strategy based on a systemic world view provides a better fit with the merging new world faced by leaders and aligns well with the current need in practice.

## 6.7. CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter was to discuss and interpret the empirical findings of my study, as reported in Chapter 5, in light of the literature on the respective world views and key approaches to coaching reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. The intention was to arrive at a coaching strategy based on a systemic worldview. Input from coaching in practice with a preference for systemic coaching was applied to enhance the proposed systemic approach, in order to contribute to literature on third-generation coaching. The aim was to enrich the theoretical thinking with regard to coaching from practice, and to provide a more integrated systemic coaching strategy to be used in practice going forward.

I started this chapter with an evaluation of the postulates that guided my study, and accepted all four postulates. I used the coaching landscape building blocks to guide my discussion and interpretation in this chapter. I compared the literature with the practice, as evaluated in my empirical findings. Next, I provided an overview of a revised systemic approach to coaching, based on the preferences in practice, which is more suitable to a complex and ever-changing context — the VUCA world, using the coaching landscape building blocks as a framework. I ended the chapter with a description of a systemic coaching conversation and the value-add of a systemic coaching strategy.

Significant insights gained from the discussion in this chapter are the following:

- The context of leaders is complex and ever-changing, and requires a different way of thinking and acting from the leader of today. The current coaching approaches, given their world views as offered in the literature, may not fully meet the emerging, contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice.
- The research findings confirmed the need (and in some instances illustrated the current existence) in practice for a coaching strategy based on a systemic world view, and is also the preferred choice for the future, one where the focus is on:

- the coaching context to include the whole and interconnectedness of all stakeholders;
  - the aim of coaching being to explore the immersed patterns of the current VUCA world and to find, with the leader, alternative patterns;
  - the coach and leader being equal partners co-creating a new and alternative reality and life story;
  - the coaching process not being a linear, step-by-step approach, but an interconnected, recursive, and participative conversation;
  - the agenda evolving in the conversation, as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation, and not predetermined; and
  - the outcomes being systemic and unpredictable, co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation, where the coach is a fellow traveller and the leader determines the destination.
- A coaching strategy based on a systemic world view adds more value in practice, because it better meets the emerging contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice, and enables the leader to deal effectively with change and complexity in the new world of work.

The next, last chapter provides an overview of and critical reflection on my study.



## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND CRITICAL REFLECTIONS**

### **7.1. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 gave an introduction and orientation to my study and the research to be conducted. Chapters 2 and 3 were dedicated to a literature review. I provided an overview of different approaches to coaching, and discussed these approaches with reference to the building blocks of the coaching landscape. In Chapter 3, my emphasis was on the discussion and evaluation of the world view of each coaching approach – discussed in Chapter 2 - in relation to three significant world views that played critical roles in the development of social science. I proposed an alternative, integrated strategy to leadership coaching, based on a systemic world view and its expected value-add in practice. My proposed strategy was built on the limited views on systemic coaching available in the literature, extended by the application of the principles of a systemic world view to coaching, and enriched by insights from systemic therapy. Chapter 4 outlined the research design I adopted for my empirical field work. In Chapter 5, I presented and discussed my empirical results. Lastly, in Chapter 6, I discussed and interpreted my findings relative to my research problem and objectives.

In this chapter, I draw final conclusions and critically reflect on my study in its totality, including:

- how my research was structured and conducted;
- my study findings and their implications; and
- a critical reflection on my study.

### **7.2. AN OVERVIEW OF MY STUDY**

#### **7.2.1. Background to and motivation for my study**

For organisations to succeed in a VUCA world, an alternative framework is necessary to develop and equip leaders. Coaching as an important leadership development process needs to fit in terms of its epistemology to a VUCA world, as well as with the challenges, demands, and requirements that this world

imposes on leaders. I argued in my study that the epistemologies of the majority of current coaching approaches in the literature are mismatched to a VUCA world, and hence would be unfit in practice to develop leaders to succeed in this world. The majority of the coaching approaches in the literature offer linear solutions to complex challenges. The current world of work is one of uncertainty, continuous change, and an extended web of relationships. Our mental models are challenged by a different reality that demands a shift in our thinking. In order to handle these challenges differently, a leader must be exposed to alternative ways of development and of thinking, as well as alternative models with which to understand the world through the co-creation of new patterns.

Some attempts have been made in theory to define a new generation of coaching and to formulate a coaching approach more aligned to the demands of a VUCA world. But the picture, need, and demand for a coaching strategy based on a systemic world view seemingly looks different in practice to what is portrayed in the current literature, the theory of coaching.

The purpose of my study was to propose an alternative strategy to coaching, one that is based on a systemic world view. Such a coaching strategy will enable leaders to develop different capabilities for the new world characterised by complexity, interconnectedness, and an ever-changing context. Additionally, my study's aim was to establish the relative value-add of a systemic world view for coaching in practice in the VUCA world leaders are facing, compared to coaching based on other world views currently informing the practice of coaching.

### **7.2.2. Research question and study objectives**

In order to explore an alternative strategy for coaching, based on a specific epistemology or world view, I formulated the following research question for my study: *What is the relative value-add of a systemic world view, compared to other world views, as strategy for leadership development currently informing coaching in practice?*

The research objectives of my study were:

- To identify the underlying world views informing some of the current and dominant coaching approaches in the literature;
- To explore the possible application of alternative strategies to coaching, based on a systemic world view;
- To understand how coaches and coachees construct and interpret their world views in practice
- To explore the preferences for different coaching strategies as applied in practice currently and in the future, based on different world views; and;
- To propose an alternative strategy to coaching for practice and theory based on a systemic world view to be considered in the new world of work characterised by complexity, interconnectedness, and an ever-changing context.

### **7.2.3. Research design and study postulates**

#### **Research approach adopted**

I chose a qualitative research approach for my study. The focus of such an approach is on constructivism (or interpretation); where meaning evolves out of the themes and patterns that emerge out of the data. I also applied diverse research strategies, informed by features such as being contextually based, circular, and interconnected, phenomenological, flexible, and interpretive.

A qualitative research approach was chosen for my study, in order to understand in a questioning and systemic way how coaches and coachees construct and interpret their world. I wanted to understand the coachee in his/her context within the coaching process, in order to gain insight into and make sense of their views in a holistic, systemic way. The participants became part of the co-constructing of research themes and meanings. The research approach therefore involved studying a small number of subjects in order to uncover patterns of relationships, interactions, and meaning. Furthermore, the focus was on allowing holistic patterns and themes to emerge from the data collected. My study was

concerned with the process of circularity, and not the traditional positivist view of cause and effect, typical of linear thinking.

The methodology was inductive with flexibility to be deductive as well, for example through the use of the card sort method. My methodology also developed into an approach which was abductive where learning takes place in the interplay between search and discovery. My study therefore allowed for abductive reasoning where I could combine an inductive and deductive approach during different phases of the study.

### **Study postulates**

The following postulates guided my study:

- Postulate 1: The current coaching approaches, given their world views as offered in the literature, may not fully meet the emerging contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice.
- Postulate 2: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view adds more value in practice, because it better meets the emerging contextual demands and requirements imposed on coaching in practice.
- Postulate 3: A coaching approach based on a systemic world view enables the leader to deal more appropriately with change and complexity in the new world of work.
- Postulate 4: Based on expected emerging contextual demands and requirements unfolding, a systemic coaching approach is the preferred choice for future coaching.

### **Population, sampling, and sample**

The sample for the main study consisted of six coaches and 14 coachees from the same industry and linked to the same financial institution. Coachees were selected according to the following criteria: a leadership role on one of the different levels of the organisation, having been exposed to coaching from an

external or internal coach in the last 12 to 18 months, and having been coached for more than three months.

### **Empirical research questions**

The empirical questions informing my field work were as follows:

- **Empirical Research Question 1:** What are the preferred, current choices of coaching approaches by coaches and coaches in practice?
- **Empirical Research Question 2:** Based on these preferences, what would the coaching landscape look like in terms of a dominant, preferred choice(s) for future coaching?
- **Empirical Research Question 3:** In the light of the above, can I accept or not, my stated postulates for the given sample of the study?

### **Protection of the integrity of the research design**

Given my constructivist, qualitative research approach, my study had to meet the following criteria in order to qualify as sound scientific research: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Specific actions, described in Chapter 4, were taken to assure the integrity of my research approach.

### **7.3. MY RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

The aim of my study was to first identify the underlying world views informing some of the currently dominant coaching approaches available in the literature, and then to propose an alternative strategy to coaching, based on a systemic world view as a vertical leadership development strategy to be considered practically in the new world of work. The next step was to explore the application of different coaching approaches as informed by their underlying world view, and determine the current and preferred future approaches of my respondents. The overall framework used for the study was based on the coaching landscape building blocks, as well as the three most prominent world views, i.e. Newtonian, GST, and systemic.

I will review the following in this section as the outcomes of my study:

- the coaching approaches and world views as discussed in the literature;
- the key findings indicating the current and preferred future approaches to coaching, and how these compare to the demands of the new world of work;
- acceptance of the postulates, together with key insights; and
- the value-add of a coaching strategy in practice based on a systemic world view.

### **7.3.1. Coaching approaches with their underlying world views**

I discussed the different approaches to coaching with reference to the coaching building blocks important to coaching. I applied the following two frameworks in reviewing these:

1. The theory models of Barner and Higgins (2007), which include the clinical model, behavioural model, systems model, and the social constructionist model; and
2. The Generation framework of Stelter (2014), which describes the evolution of coaching approaches over time in first-generation, second-generation, and third-generation coaching.

The different approaches to coaching that are representative of the abovementioned frameworks were: behavioural coaching, CBC coaching, solution-focused coaching, NLP, systems-psychodynamic coaching, and narrative collaborative coaching. The different coaching approaches were evaluated in terms of their underlying world views, i.e. Newtonian, GST, and systemic. The various world views that inform the respective coaching approaches were then evaluated in terms of their key features. Four of the six coaching approaches in the literature are based on a Newtonian world view, with some elements of GST. Also, as researcher, I noticed, by unpacking the coaching approaches in an integrative manner that there is a conceptual convergence between the different approaches.

My literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 showed that, although some of the approaches emphasise holistic thinking with certain elements of GST, the majority still have a linear focus. The work of Stelter (2014), specifically his framework in the classification of the different coaching approaches, provides alternative strategies for coaching. In Third-generation coaching, his narrative collaborative coaching approach aligns well with coaching from a systemic world view. However, the picture in practice looks somewhat different. My research findings indicate that there is currently a different pattern and demand in the practice of coaching, which is described in the next section.

### **7.3.2. The current and preferred future approaches to coaching as indicated by my findings, and how these compare to the demands of the new world**

The current coaching approaches dealing with the coaching context is a combination of GST and systemic. In the collective research findings, both the coaches and the coachees preferred a systemic approach to coaching for the future, where the context is seen as a whole, and the interconnectedness of all stakeholders is acknowledged. All the coachees confirmed that their organisational context is complex, with high levels of change.

The coaching objectives were mainly to achieve balance and order, which is part of a GST world view, and can be seen as a way in which leaders are trying to conserve themselves. The findings for coaches and coachees regarding the choice of systemic objectives for the future indicated the need to deal with complexities and to find alternative patterns of action to succeed in a context of significant change.

In practice the coaches and coachees acknowledged that it was impossible to be objective. Reality is co-constructed by the coach and the coachee. The coaching roles were confirmed as equal. Another system that functions in a shared role with the coach and coachee is the different stakeholders who act as

co-creators of new patterns and ideas. The focus on shared roles provides the opportunity for leaders in an organisation to use the concept of shared leadership in creating a leadership community to collectively deal with the complexity of a VUCA world.

Some of the coaches already applied a systemic coaching process in practice. The preference of both coaches and coachees of the systemic approach was based on its focus on a participative, explorative conversation about the life story of the coachee, where change and insight/understanding were progressively co-created to help the coachee understand his/her whole life in a more interconnected way. The need in practice of coaches and coachees with regards to the coaching agenda differs from the literature. The choice was a systemic world view, where the agenda is not pre-determined, but rather is allowed to evolve and deepen in the recursive coaching conversation that was co-created between the coach, coachee and relevant stakeholders.

The findings of my study indicate that coachees are already comfortable to shift their thinking to a systemic world view; they are comfortable to make other significant stakeholders part of the coaching process, currently and also in the future. These findings differed from the literature, where the profile of the coachee is mainly Newtonian and GST.

Most of the coaches and coachees agreed that coaching outcomes are difficult to predict, and that these are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation. Once again, the findings regarding the practice indicated a completely different picture and need when compared to the literature. The coaches and coachees already focused on systemic outcomes in coaching, and indicated that they also preferred to do so in the future.

In summary, the current coaching approaches discussed in the literature do not offer appropriate options to deal with the demands of the new world. In the



present study, the coaches and coachees had already started to explore different ways of mastering the complexities in their context. A coaching strategy based on a systemic world view appears to be more suitable to deal with the complexities of the VUCA world.

### **7.3.3. The insights gained applicable to my postulates**

I accepted my four postulates, based on the outcome of my research findings. The following were key insights gained in assessing my postulates:

- The current theoretical coaching approaches, as described in the literature, mainly consider Newtonian principles, with some elements of GST. My study indicated that there is currently a different pattern in the practice of coaching. Coaches already apply a combination of a GST and a systemic approach in practice. The current descriptions and approaches in theory, therefore, were, at the time of the study, not a complete reflection of what was happening in the coaching field in practice. It also did not address the need in practice to apply a comprehensive, formalised systemic coaching strategy in the future, given the emerging world faced by leaders.
- The recursive interaction between the coachee and the complex, ever-changing context necessitated a different way of thinking and acting. The context prompted the respondents in my study to adapt to a higher level of complexity. My view is that this has impacted the need of the coachees (i.e., leaders) and coaches to focus on a systemic strategy to effectively deal with the complexities of the context, which confirms the interconnected relationship between the complex, changing context and the coaching approaches applied.
- A coaching strategy based on a systemic world view provided the opportunity to experience a deeper level of conversation with a more holistic focus, dealing with complexities and change, and ultimately leading to meaning and fulfilment.

- A coaching strategy based on a systemic world view enables the coachee to better handle the demands of the VUCA world of work, going into the future.
- Based on expected emerging contextual demands and requirements unfolding, a systemic world view as a coaching strategy was the preferred choice in practice for future coaching.

#### **7.3.4. My revised systemic strategy to coaching in a complex and ever-changing context**

My proposed coaching strategy, based on a systemic world view (see Chapter 3 & 6) was revised after my empirical study, based on certain key principles. The leader is embedded in a context made up of multiple stakeholders and forms part of an interconnected whole, where shared patterns and realities are co-created. In a systemic coaching strategy, it is important for the coach to work with a holistic view where coaching objectives are seen as interactive and connected, and explored to see how the complete pattern fits. Difference and change lie in information and interconnected relationships where change, meaning and new realities emerge from the shared, participative coaching dialogue between the coach and the leader. The outcome of the coaching conversation and final destination of the journey of the leader cannot be predicted and will evolve over time. The coaching role is multi-faceted in nature, and is shared by the coach, the leader, and the different stakeholders, with the opportunity to collectively explore organisational challenges through shared leadership. The coach is not an objective observer, but a fellow traveller on the journey of the leader. Leaders (*coachees*) are complex adaptive systems, and decide with autonomy how to respond to the coaching questions and meaning that emerge from the conversation.

The systemic coaching conversation (i.e. coaching process) illustrated in Figure 6.1 depicts the coach and the leader as part of a broader system, where meaning evolves through interpersonal constructs. Therefore, the only way to create a

different reality or change is through participation in this conversation. The coaching conversation is a form of Socratic dialogue, where the aim is to encourage the coachee to reflect and think independently. The coach will ask the appropriate questions to direct and steer conversation, which conversation is aimed at self-discovery by the coachee, leading to self-initiated action.

The six different elements in the coaching conversation form a circular process that can be repeated multiple times in a coaching session. At the end of a coaching session, the different interactive circles do not end in the coaching room. The leader will have certain patterns to act on, and, with feedback from the context, continuously adapt and evolve. The connectedness of the different systems (circles) continuously provides a variety of possibilities that evolve in the coaching conversation.

#### **7.3.5. Value-add of a coaching strategy based on a systemic world view**

I believe that my systemic coaching strategy provides a better fit with the emerging new world faced by leaders, which they have to deal with in the following way:

- The inclusion of the whole context and multiple stakeholders broadens the view of 'reality,' and enables the leader to find alternative ways of acting in dealing with complexities.
- The focus on multiple patterns and connections serves to co-create alternative patterns in dealing with change and complexity in a VUCA world.
- The shared coaching role enables shared responsibility in an empowered way. This may also allow the opportunity for the creation of a leadership community to deal with organisational challenges collectively.
- The participative, interconnected coaching relationship enables growth for the coach and the coachee.

- The interactive circles in the coaching process include multiple views, and provide a variety of possibilities for the complex context with which he/she is dealing.
- A systemic coaching agenda allows conversations to evolve to having a deeper meaning and providing more options to deal with demands of a VUCA world.
- A systemic strategy enables willingness in leaders to explore the unknown territory in an interconnected way.
- Systemic coaching does not offer either/or solutions, but both/and possibilities.

#### **7.4. A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON MY STUDY**

In this section, I focus on the strengths and possible weaknesses of my study, future research opportunities, the value-add of my study, and whether I have addressed the problem statement of my study and achieved my research objectives.

##### **7.4.1. Strengths and weaknesses of my study**

I believe my study has the following strengths. Firstly, a thorough literature review placed my study on a robust theoretical base. Secondly, findings in the literature review were applied to re-create and refine a systemic coaching strategy that incorporates the findings and realities of coaching in practice.

Thirdly, I applied a multi-method data-gathering and analysis approach (i.e. triangulation). With respect to data-gathering, I used a card-sort method, as well as semi-structured interviews with both coaches and coachees, to understand and evaluate their current experiences and future choices of coaching approaches.

Fourthly, regarding my data analysis, I included the views of two experts to assist with the comparison of the card-sort data and interview data, which served as

independent verification of my findings across the different data-gathering methods. The card-sorting data were compared with the transcribed interview data to ensure correspondence and integration. All data were analysed by me, ATLAS, and two experts, and were thematically compared and integrated.

Fifthly, the organisational world of the respondents provided the ideal context, as it was representative of a VUCA world, typified by volatility, change, uncertainty, ambiguity, interdependence, and complexity. The organisation was in the process of a large merger, which posed new challenges to its leaders. This context challenged the leaders and coaches to think differently about coaching — from a new perspective, one that is informed by change, chaos, and complexity.

The major weaknesses of my study centre around my sample. The initial aim was to include external coaches and coachees (leaders) across different industries. It was, however, very difficult to find coaches who were willing to involve their clients in the study. Coaches were reluctant to participate in the study or to give permission for their clients to participate, for the following reasons: the confidentiality of the coaching engagement, the time constraints of professionals, lack of interest in being part of a research study, and not being comfortable to expose their own coaching approach. I then decided to conduct the study in one organisation, where I had access to coaches and leaders. My findings are therefore applicable to one organisation only.

The sample of my study was small (six coaches and 14 coachees), and appropriate for a qualitative study, but would have been more representative if the sample were larger and representative of different industries. The current sample limits the generalisability of the findings. This weakness is, however, somewhat countered by the fact that the selected organisation was a good example of the new world of work, as discussed earlier, and rich data were collected.

#### **7.4.2. Future research opportunities**

The following future research opportunities have arisen from my study. Firstly, I recommend the further exploration of the impact of the complex, ever-changing world of work on leaders, and the validation of specifications for fit-for-purpose leadership development to suit this world, including coaching.

Secondly, there is the opportunity to study the practical application of the proposed systemic strategy in coaching, and empirically validate the impact and value-add of such a strategy on a broader sample.

Thirdly, future research could explore if there is a difference in experiences and expectations of coaching as a means of leadership development at different leadership levels, namely team leader (i.e. first-line manager), operational (i.e. leader of leaders), and strategic level (i.e. area, business or group manager). This was one of the initial objectives of my study, but was not achieved, due to the complexity of the study and the additional data needed to attend to this objective. The decision was made before my literature study was completed that the key focus of my study would be on the different approaches to coaching. More research is needed to unpack the different needs and demands of leaders on the different levels of work in relation to their needs and expectations of coaching.

Fourthly, I believe my study provided key systemic principles that are applicable to the concept of shared leadership or the creation of a leadership community to deal with organisational challenges collectively. More research is needed to explore the impact thereof.

#### **7.4.3. Value-add of the study**

Looking at my study holistically and evaluating what has been achieved, I will now reflect critically on whether my study generated the value-add promised in Chapter 1. Given the complexities and change leaders are exposed to, and the

importance of leaders being able to deal with this complexity, I believe that my study has contributed value in the following ways.

- **The theoretical value-add of my study**

My study contributed to the field of coaching, as well as to systems thinking, by providing an alternative strategy to coaching, based on a systemic world view, one that is more aligned to the features of the current world faced by leaders. Also, I provided a coaching strategy using the coaching landscape as a framework, which does not currently exist in the theory.

My study highlighted the gap between the current coaching literature and practice. In practice, there is a high demand and need for systemic coaching, because of the practical coaching demands of a VUCA world. The practice, according to my study, is ahead of theory, with practice reflecting a bigger demand for alternative strategies for leadership development in a VUCA world. By systematising the practice through the coaching landscape, I provided an alternative strategy to coaching, based on a systemic world view, which is more aligned to the features of the current world of work faced by leaders.

Furthermore my study highlighted the shift from a mechanistic one-on-one relationship to interconnected, complex adaptive systems and relationships. We moved from a one-on-one coaching relationship to multiple stakeholders, from individual to shared leadership in team coaching within broader leadership systems. The conversations in a shared leadership domain (leadership community) facilitate a collective approach to solve organisational challenges.

- **The methodological value-add of my study**

I employed a methodology to identify and contrast the different world views that inform the various coaching approaches: the card-sorting methodology, and to the best of my knowledge, a first in coaching

research. The statements on the cards enable one to make a clear selection of the world view used by different coaching approaches with respect to different coaching landscape building blocks.

- **The practical value-add of my study**

From a practical perspective, it has been shown that the coaching approaches in the literature are not fully aligned with the current needs of leaders in practice with respect to coaching. My proposed systemic strategy maps out a different approach to coaching, and provides an opportunity for coaches and leaders to explore the complex world around them in an interconnected and holistic way.

Furthermore, the practical value-add of my study includes the following:

- a. I applied the three dominant world views to coaching, focusing specifically on systemic world view as application for a coaching strategy, which has not been done in coaching practice to date; and
- b. I integrated what was available in the literature (i.e. the theory), the reality of the coaching in practice, as well as my empirical findings to enhance and refine an alternative strategy for coaching, one based on systemic world view.

- **Personal value-add**

As a practitioner in the coaching field, my research findings were a confirmation of the experiences I have had in my coaching conversations with leaders in the new world of work. I also became more aware of how easily I can contribute to the leader becoming stuck in a linear thought process.

I am excited about the role I can play with leaders and the different stakeholders to co-create new patterns of action. Although I considered the broader context of the leader in the coaching process,



through observing them in meetings and considering all life dimensions and feedback from stakeholders, I will in future explore additional ways of including multiple stakeholders.

As a researcher, it was a rewarding experience to be able to confirm my assumptions through a robust research study, using multiple methods and views of different experts to enrich my study.

#### **7.4.4. Addressing the problem statement of my study and answering the research questions**

Firstly, I believe that the study has successfully addressed the problem statement, namely: *To propose an alternative strategy to coaching, one that is based on a systemic world view that will enable leaders to develop different capabilities for the new world that is characterised by complexity, interconnectedness, and an ever-changing context.* I provided a strategy for coaching based on a systemic world view, informed by integrated theory and incorporating the recent views and expectations in practice, one which is more aligned to the features of the current VUCA world faced by leaders.

Also I addressed my research question fully: *What is the relative value-add of a systemic world view, compared to other world views, as strategy for leadership development currently informing coaching in practice?* I defined the value-add of systemic coaching and the possible benefits for leaders in a VUCA world.

Secondly, the research objectives set for my study were achieved:

- *To identify the underlying world views informing some of the currently dominantly coaching approaches available in the literature.* This was achieved through a comprehensive literature study.
- *To explore the possible application of alternative strategies to coaching, based on a systemic world view.* I did develop an alternative strategy,

based on a systemic world view, integrating the literature findings and what I found was occurring in the practice of coaching.

- *To explore the preferences for different coaching strategies as applied in practice currently and in the future, based on different world views.* My empirical findings provided me with significant insights with which to address this objective.
- *To understand how coaches and coachees construct and interpret their world views in practice.* This objective was met through my empirical study and the interpretation of my findings.
- *To propose an alternative strategy to coaching for practice and theory based on a systemic world view to be considered in the new world of work characterised by complexity, interconnectedness, and an ever-changing context.* The proposed systemic strategy to coaching was adapted after the empirical study, and provides a practical foundation for all that I had proposed.

## **7.5. CONCLUSION**

I believe that my study makes a major contribution by providing an alternative strategy for leadership coaching based on a systemic world view. This strategy contributes to a vertical leadership development strategy befitting the VUCA world faced by leaders.

The current dominant coaching approaches, carefully and eloquently elucidated in the literature, have not yet caught up with the needed practice of coaching in the world faced by our leaders, currently and going into the future.

I attempted to bring a more appropriate strategy to coaching, in order to offer a better way for leaders to be developed to deal with the emerging world.

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## Appendix A

Table A.1

### Current Coaching Approaches with their underlying World Views

Coaching approach	Principles and assumptions	Barner & Higgins (2007)	Stelter (2014)	Newt	GST	Syst
<b>Psychodynamic coaching</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> focus on individual leader, inner world/ unconscious and defence mechanisms</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> the influence of the unconscious</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> expert</p> <p><i>Relationship:</i> trust is important but the coach is a direct role player</p> <p><i>Process:</i> Well defined coaching steps and defined process</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> The inner world and unconscious “story” of the leader</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> direct and well trained in psychological processes/ unconscious</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> self-reflection and explore the unconscious mind</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> be more self-aware by understanding impact of the unconscious conflicts, regression and hidden dynamics</p>	All building blocks aligned to clinical model	1 <sup>st</sup> generation with focus on a problem or goal that needs to change	X		
<b>Systems Psychodynamic coaching</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> problem is placed in a systemic context – the leader’s role in relation to the organisation</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> to work with the conscious and unconscious impact of the organisation on the leader’s role and performance</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> expert but include transference and take a reflective stance from a meta position</p> <p>Coach is direct with well-defined steps and process.</p> <p><i>Process:</i> based on principles of GST to explore the role of the leader in the organisation focusing on deep anxiety and unconscious dynamics</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> skilled on unconscious dynamics and group process/ Tavistock exploring roles and group/ organisational dynamics</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> willing to explore deep anxieties about their role in the organisation</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> create insight in the inner world</p>	Most building blocks aligned to clinical with elements of systems or GST, for example the context, relationship, the process	1 <sup>st</sup> generation	X	(X)	

Table A.1 (continued)

Coaching approach	Principles and assumptions	Barner & Higgins (2007)	Stelter (2014)	Newt	GST	Syst
<b>Behavioural and CBC</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> thoughts and behaviour in a given situation. Leader seen as whole system but approach is planned, specific, with focus on recurring ineffective behaviour.</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> change behaviour in a scientific and measurable way.</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> specific and direct.</p> <p><i>Coaching relationship:</i> coach is setting the tone and ensure accountability but in a collaborative way.</p> <p><i>Process:</i> defined with steps and stages to change behaviour in a measurable scientific way</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> set jointly by coach and leader but driven by the specific outcome and structured with a consistent framework</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> skilled in behavioural techniques and role model correct behaviour</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> motivated to change through deliberate practice</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> enhancement of learning/ skill to solve problems and shift behaviour</p>	<p>Behavioural model: Focus is on behaviour and the aim is to change ineffective behaviour</p>	<p>1<sup>st</sup> Generation: Putting actions plans in place to achieve a specific goal</p>	X		
<b>NLP (Application)</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> intent is to understand the whole person within his context</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> increase the leader's resourcefulness and awareness of reality and change perception to open possibilities for a new reality</p> <p><i>Coaching relationship:</i> coach act in close alignment with the coachee</p> <p><i>Process:</i> specific steps are applied in a defined process working with patterns of thinking and beliefs</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> exploring beliefs, values and thinking with an expectation to directly challenge the leader to action</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> skilled in spotting and changing thinking patterns</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> willing to change beliefs and exploring new thinking patterns impacting all life dimensions</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> changing limiting beliefs</p>	<p>Focus is on general systems theory with direct focus of the coach. Mixture of models but more systems model</p>	<p>According to Stelter 1<sup>st</sup> generation, but exploring of patterns and creating new realities in application is more aligned to 2<sup>nd</sup> generation</p>		X	

Table A.1 (continued)

Coaching approach	Principles and assumptions	Barner & Higgins (2007)	Stelter (2014)	Newt	GST	Syst
<b>Solution-focused</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> Acknowledge the wholes system and describe the leader in relation to significant people in his context (interactional system)</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> change how the leader view the problem and to find an appropriate solution</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> coach and leader are co-constructing conversations and stories to shape the future</p> <p><i>Coaching relationship:</i> partnership in constructing solutions</p> <p><i>Process:</i> defined to shift the focus from problems to solutions through strength based interventions</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> leader is resourceful and provide the agenda but the coach will ensure it focus on the solution</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> trust the resourcefulness of the leader and find together solutions</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> able to shift from a problem-focused mind-set to a solution-focused mind-set</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> uncover own resourcefulness and achieving personal goals</p>	Systems model	2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation coaching		X	
<b>Narrative collaborative</b>	<p><i>Context:</i> full context of the leader forms an integrated part of the coaching conversation</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> co-create dialogue with the possibility for meaning making</p> <p><i>Role of the coach:</i> equal</p> <p>Coaching relationship: equal, dialogue partners</p> <p><i>Process:</i> defined to ensure meaning making, altering the story and to tie events together in new and alternative ways</p> <p><i>Agenda:</i> leader determines the agenda and they co-create together.</p> <p><i>Coach:</i> comfortable to be a flexible conversational partner</p> <p><i>Coachee:</i> open to co-create through metaphors an alternative life story</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> focus on strengths and opportunities and co-creating a new story</p>	Constructionist – co-creating a new story	3 <sup>rd</sup> generation coaching			X



Considering the application of the frameworks and evaluation in Table A.1, the world views of the different theoretical approaches to coaching are predominantly built on Newtonian principles. Psychodynamic coaching, although recently adapted to align with the complexity of today's world, is still essentially Newtonian. Behavioural coaching collects data systemically and holistically, utilising some GST principles, but is still based on the same world view. CBC is an integrated approach, but the role of the coach is direct with the aim to solve problems in a structured and systematic way, aligned to Newtonian principles. NLP works with the whole, and applies some GST and first-order systemic thinking principles, but still emphasises the objective reality.

Although Solution-focused coaching considers the whole, and works with all life dimensions of the leader in co-constructing solutions, the underlying principles and beliefs are mostly GST with some systemic principles. Systems psychodynamic coaching includes the broader context and explores relationship connections, but the emphasis is still on cause and effect, with a predetermined outcome. The world view is still Newtonian with some elements of GST or open systems.

The only approach that seems to correlate well with a systemic world view is the third-generation approach: Narrative collaborative coaching that was added after the empirical process. There is less focus on goals and quick fixes, and more focus on reflection, in-depth meaning-making dialogue and the relationship between the coach and coachee. The coaching conversation is based on a clear link between the coachee and his/her context, and facilitates a new narrative in relation to the challenges experienced. However, the process seems direct, with the aim to achieve specific outcomes. Although the coach and coachee co-create realities for future narratives, there is not a clear indication of the autonomy of the leader and the unpredictable outcome or the process, or of the impossibility of objectivity of the observer (coach), which also links well with GST principles.

## Appendix B

The world views as reflected in the choice of coaching landscape building blocks, using the card statements

In the figures that follows:

- the different CL building block card statements are given in a specific colour to indicate the respective selected worldviews as per the convention set for the chapter Newtonian: blue, GST: red, and systemic: green;
- *current* and *future* are distinguished by a lighter shade of colour for *current* and a darker colour for *future*; and
- the coaches' results are distinguished by a striped colour fill, while coachees' results have a solid colour fill.

The figures indicate the participants' preferences for a world view according to the card statements they selected, which statements represented the three world views under discussion. Their preferences were calculated as a percentage for each building block. The CL building block card statement that was most often selected by the coaches or coachees is also listed.

Figure B.1 provides the results regarding the **coaching context** building block for coaches and coachees respectively.

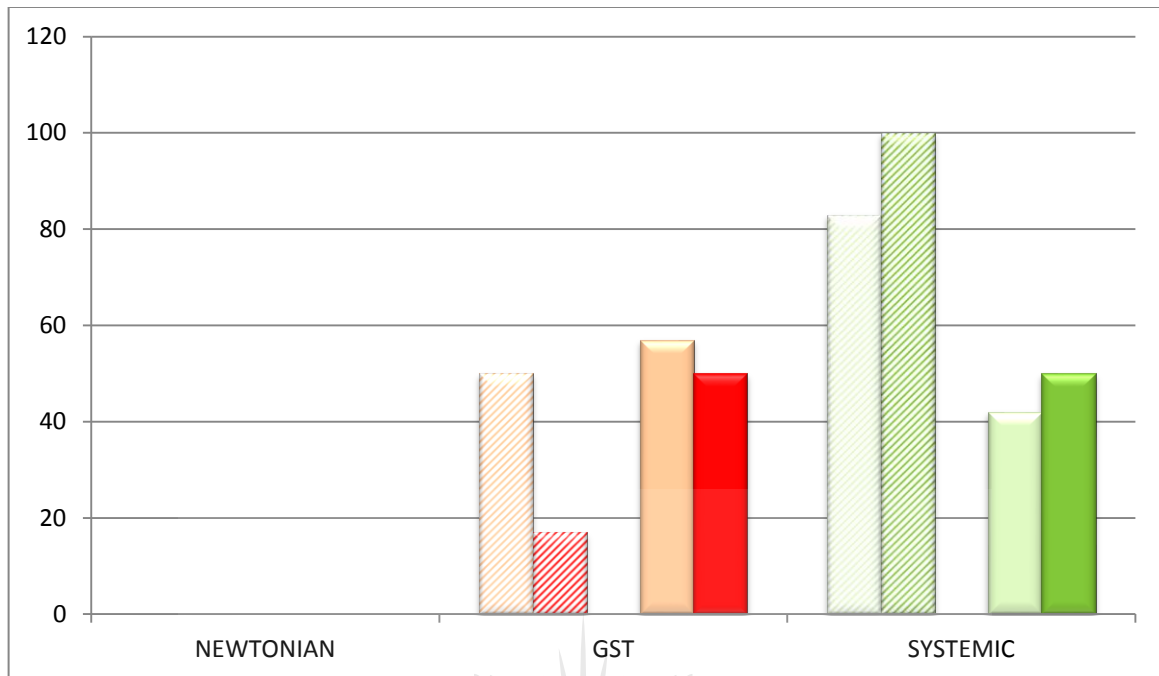


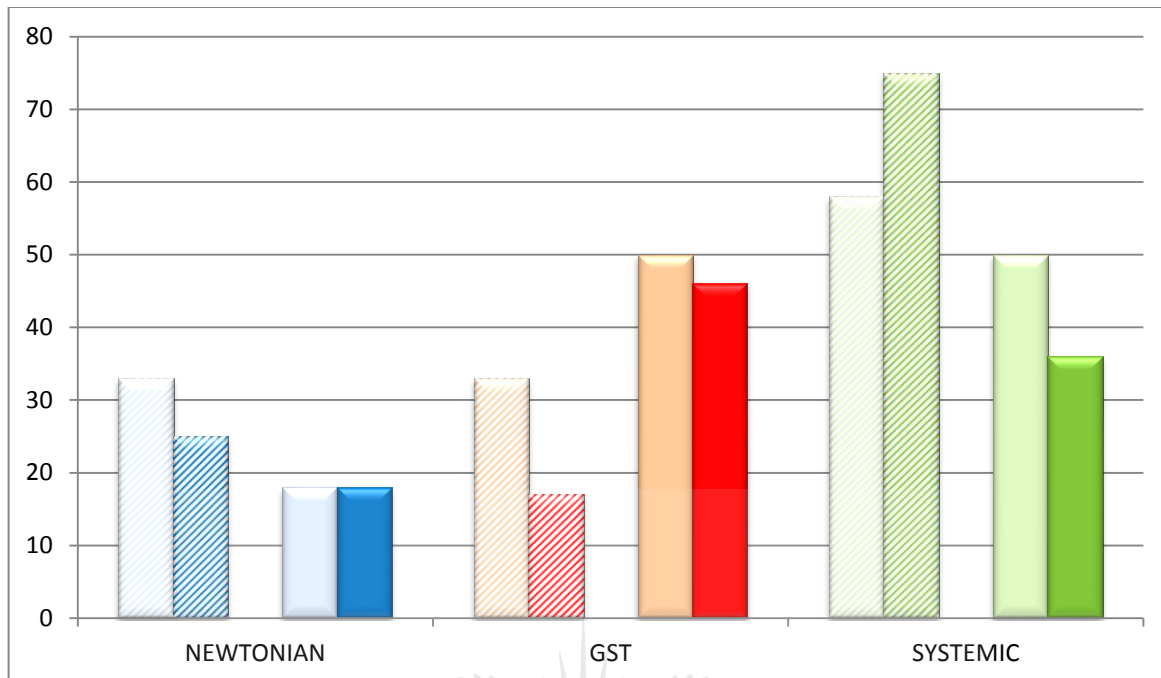
Figure B.1. Coaching context: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.

Note: Stripped colour fill – Coaches; solid colour fill – coachees; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.

Figure B.1 illustrates that 83% of the **coaches' current** approach to the coaching context was **systemic**, followed by 50% who preferred GST. The **future** preference for all the coaches was **systemic**. The relevant card statement (representing a systemic world view) read: *The focus is on understanding me as a whole person by addressing all aspects of my life, and how they fit together dynamically.*

The **coachees' current** experiences and **future** preferences were very similar, and equally divided between **GST and systemic** coaching. The relevant card statement (representing a GST world view) was: *The focus is on how persons and events in my context affect me, and on how I respond to them, and they to me.*

In Figure B.2, the findings regarding the building block **coaching objectives** are displayed.



*Figure B.2. Coaching objectives: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.*

*Note: Stripped colour fill – Coaches; solid colour fill – coachees; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.*

As seen in Figure B.2, the views of the approach to coaching **objectives current** preference of the **coaches** were Newtonian and GST, at 33% each, with the majority of 58% having indicated using a systemic approach. The **future preference** for the approach to coaching objectives for the **coaches** was **systemic** (75%).

The relevant card statements (reflecting a systemic world view) were:

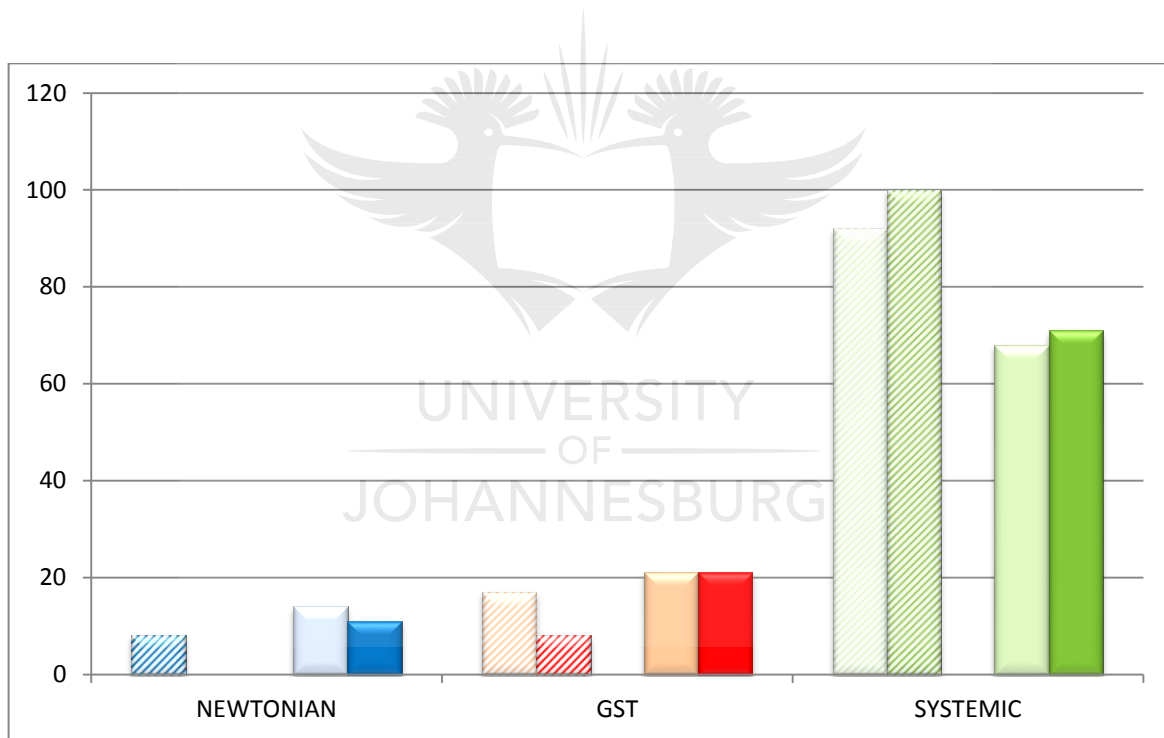
- (1) *The aim is to explore the immersed patterns making up the complex world in which I am living, and to find alternative patterns of acting; and*
- (2) *Coaching enables me to be more aware of how aspects in my life are interconnected and hang together.*

**Coachees'** for **current** preferences regarding coaching objectives were equally divided between **GST** and **systemic**, at 50%, while the **future** preference was

split between the three perspectives of Newtonian, at 18%, **GST**, at 46%, and **systemic**, at 36%. The relevant card statements (representing a GST world view) objective statements were:

- (1) *The aim is to adapt to change in order to attain balance/order in my life; and*
- (2) *Coaching helps me to be more alert to the effect I am having on external and internal systems.*

In Figure B.3, the findings for the CL building block: **Role of the coach** are displayed.



*Figure B.3. Role of the coach: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.*

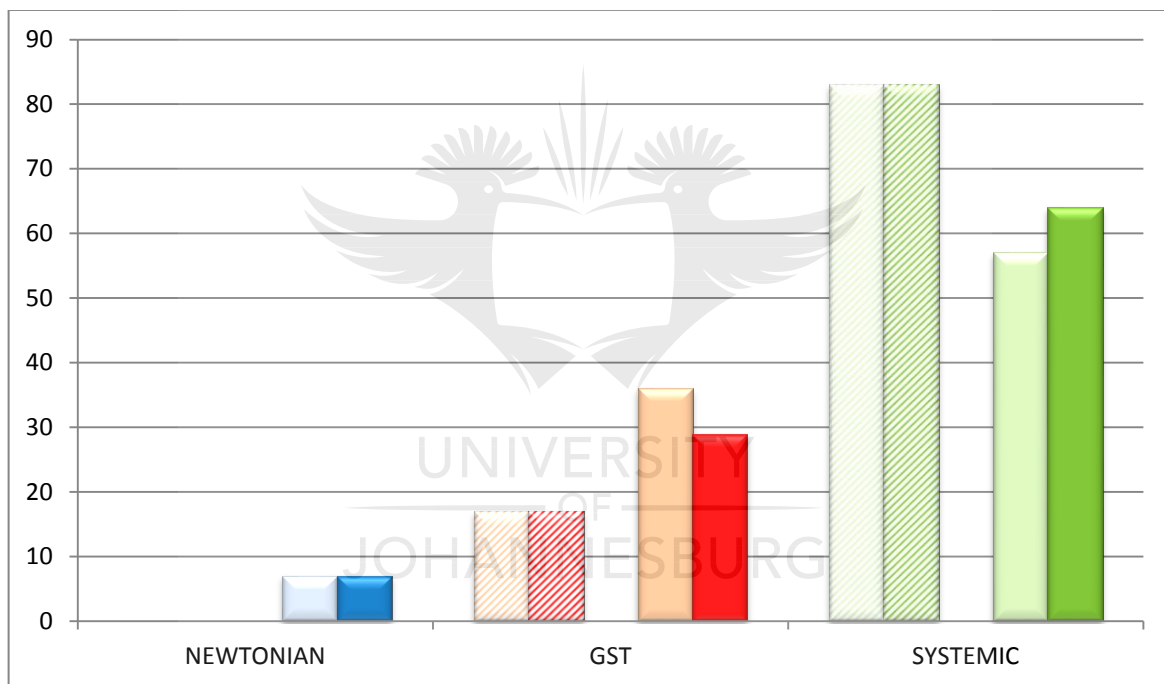
*Note: Stripped colour fill – Coaches; solid colour fill – coachees; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.*

Figure B.3 reflects that, for **Role of the coach** building block, the majority preference of both **coaches and coachees, currently** (90% and 68%) and in

**future** (100% and 71%), was **systemic**. The appropriate card statements (representing a systemic world view) were:

- (1) *My coach explores with me the potential patterns and relationships that will enable me to grow; and*
- (2) *My coach acts as a mirror to explore a set of coherent options for personal growth.*

Figure B.4 gives the results for the **Coaching relationship** building block for coaches and coachees.



*Figure B.4. Coaching relationship: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.*

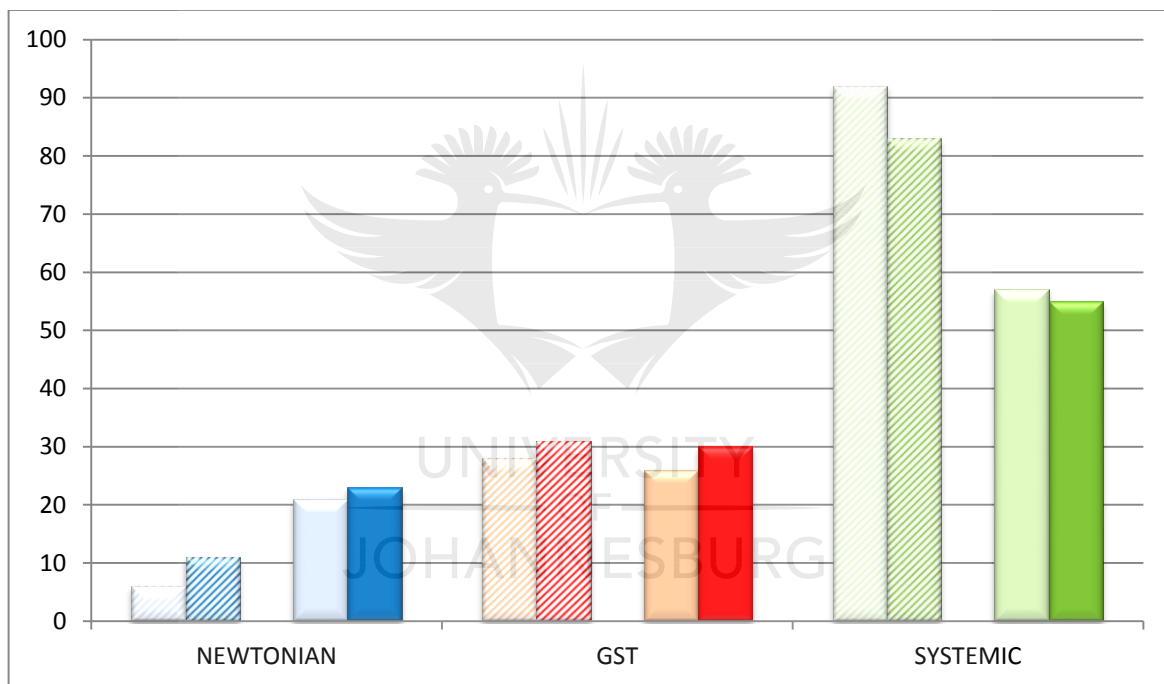
*Note: Stripped colour fill – Coaches; solid colour fill – coachees; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.*

As seen in Figure B.4, 83% of the **coaches** preferred a **systemic** coaching relationship approach, both **currently** and in the **future**. However, in the case of the **coachees**, only 57% currently experienced a **systemic** approach to this building block, and 64% indicated that they preferred a **systemic** approach for the **future**. The card statement (representing a systemic world view) was: *My*

*coach, other significant role players, and I form part of the co-creation of new patterns of acting for me.*

The rest of the respondents indicated it was important that the coach and coachee remain the key role players in the coaching process, which approach does not necessarily include all role players.

Figure B.5 gives the results for the **Coaching process** building block for coaches and coachees.



*Figure B.5. Coaching process: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.*

*Note: Stripped colour fill – Coaches; solid colour fill – coachees; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.*

Figure B.5 shows that the **coaches'** preferred approach to the coaching process was mainly **systemic**, at 92% and 83% for the **current and future** respectively.

Although the **coachees** also selected mostly a **systemic** approach, at 57% for the **current** approach and 55% for the **future** preference, the Newtonian world

view was also indicated as a possible approach for the future, at 23%, as was a GST approach, at 30%.

The relevant card statements (representing a systemic world view) were:

- (1) *In coaching, change and insight/understanding are progressively created through the conversations we have;*
- (2) *The coaching process is a participative, explorative conversation about my life story;*
- (3) *The coaching process helps me to construct my relationships in an interconnected and holistic way;*
- (4) *The questions asked by my coach focus on how things, people, and relationships in my life hang together;*
- (5) *The coaching process helps me with new patterns of acting and connecting that are more fulfilling; and*
- (6) *The participative conversation helps me to understand my whole life in a more interconnected way.*

Figure B.6 gives the results for the **Coaching agenda** building block for coaches and coachees.

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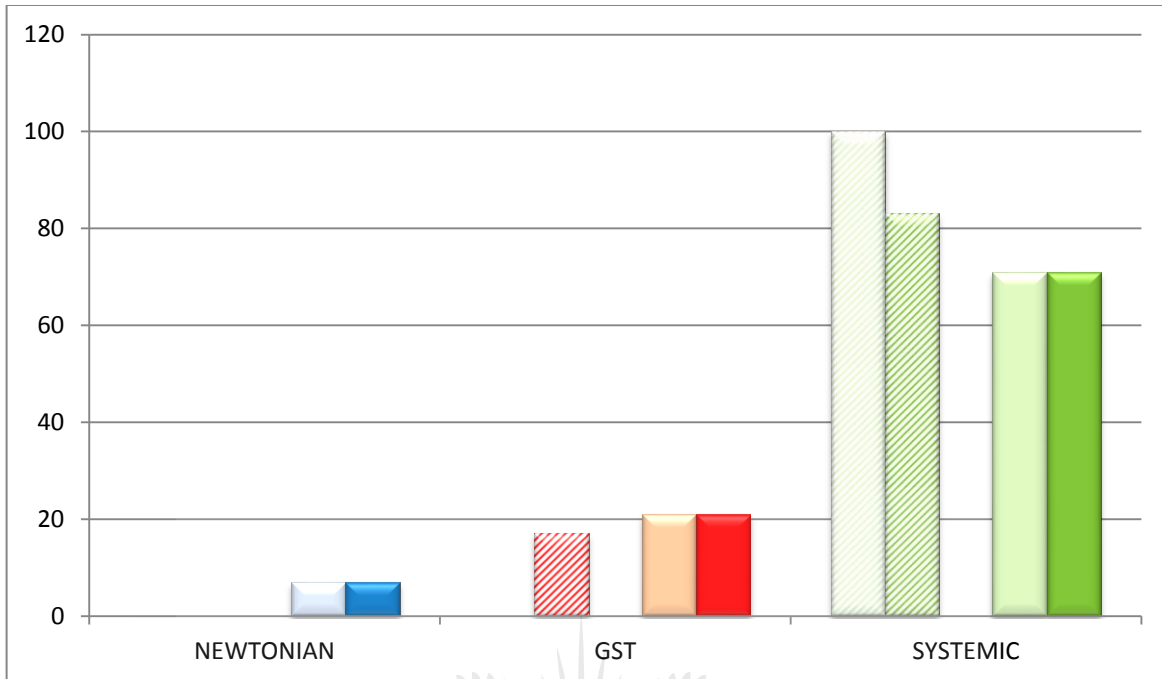


Figure B.6. Coaching agenda: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.

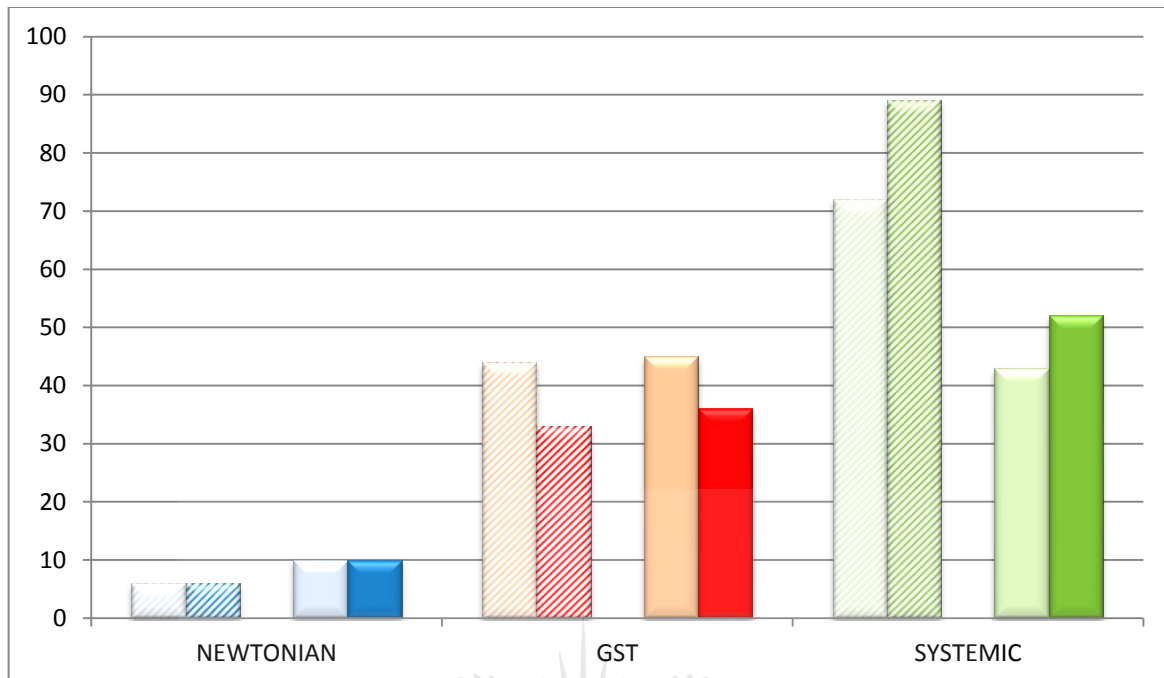
Note: Stripped colour fill – Coaches; solid colour fill – coachees; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.

Figure B.6 illustrates that all the **coaches** experienced the **current** approach as **systemic**. For the **future** approach, their preferred choices were **systemic** (83%) and GST (17%).

For the **coachees**, the choices were slightly different. The majority (71%) indicated that they **currently** experience a **systemic** approach and preferred same for the **future**, but some also indicated a preference for GST.

The relevant card statement (reflecting a systemic world view) was: *The flow of the coaching agenda can be described as a spiral of deepening meaning through conversation.*

Figure B.7 gives the results for the **Coaching profile of the coach** building block for coaches and coachees.



*Figure B.7. Coaching profile of the coach: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.*

*Note: Stripped colour fill – Coachees; solid colour fill – coaches; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.*

In Figure B.7, the majority of the **coaches** preferred to describe their profile as **systemic**. The **current and future** preferences for **systemic** principles in this regard were 72% and 89% respectively.

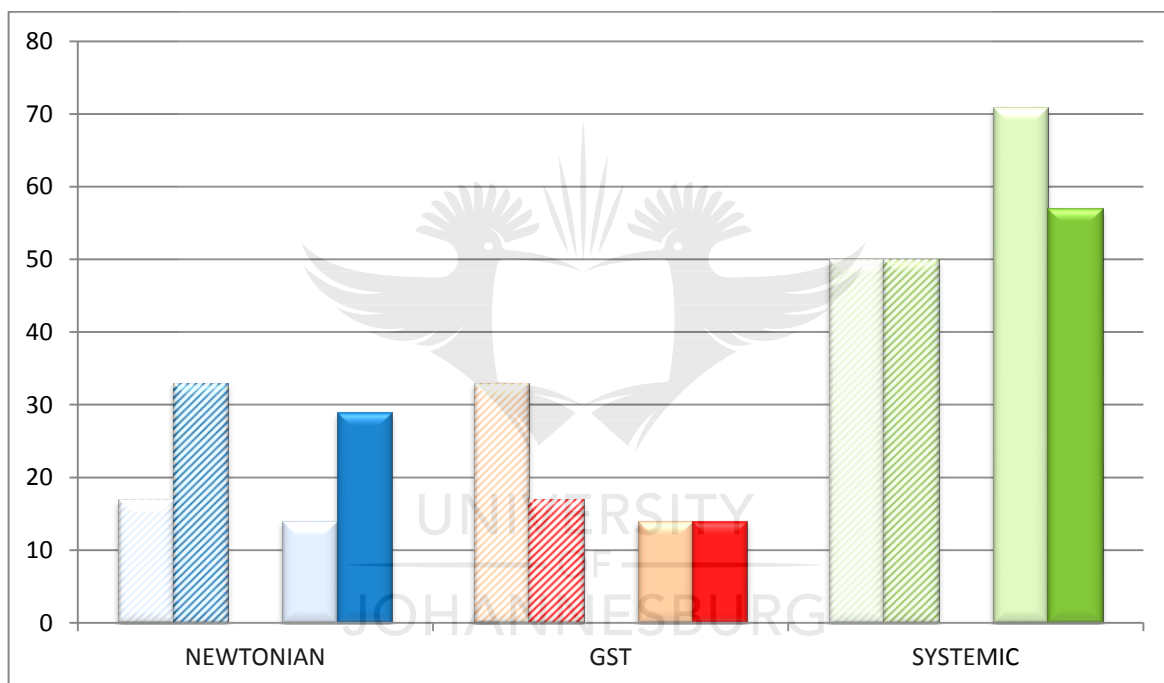
The relevant card statements (representing a systemic world view) were:

- (1) My coach undertakes the journey with me, but leaves the destination/solution to me;*
- (2) My coach uses his/her holistic view of my life to co-create, with me, a new pattern of acting; and*
- (3) My coach is comfortable to include the significant other people in my life in the coaching process.*

The **coachees'** results, however, show a different picture. Only 52% preferred a **systemic** approach in relation to the coaching profile of the coach. There was also an indication of a preference for a GST approach (36%) to this building

block, with a minority of 10% indicating a preference for a Newtonian approach. For the coachees, the finding that they preferred a systemic approach was related to the frequency of their selection of Statement 1, above. There was still a view that the coach should work only with the individual, and use his/her expert skill to assist the coachee to achieve life balance, which forms part of a GST world view.

Figure B.8 gives the results for the **Coachee profile** building block for coaches and coachees.



*Figure B.8.* Coachee profile: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.

*Note:* Stripped colour fill – Coaches; solid colour fill – coachees; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.

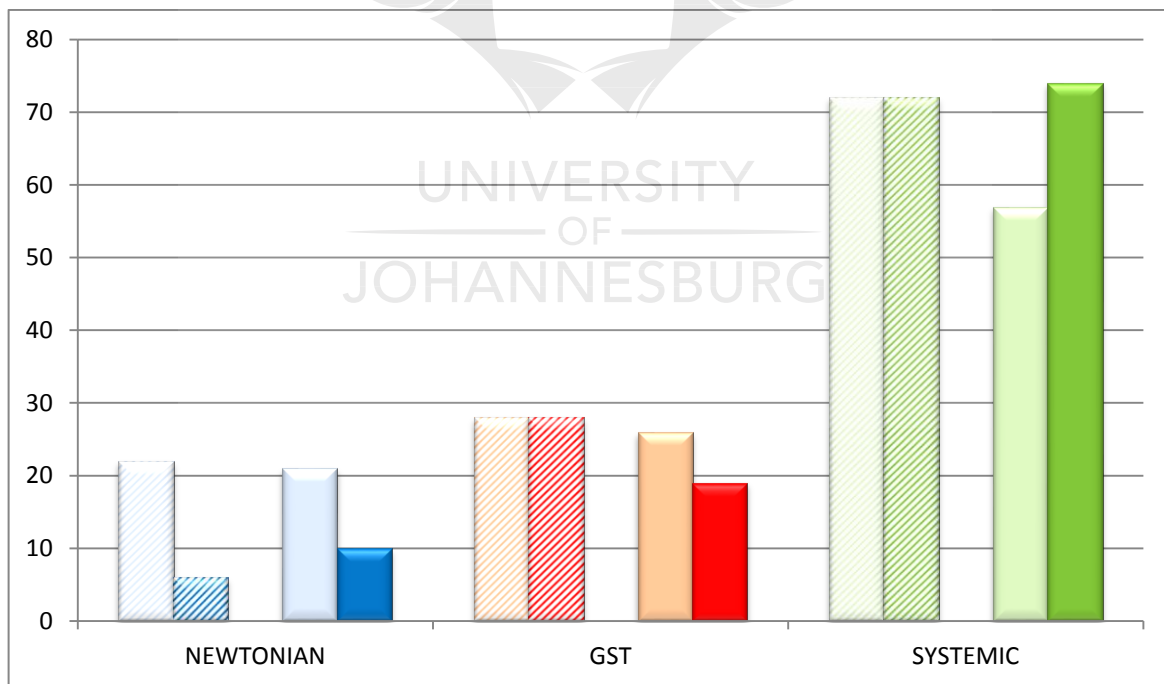
As illustrated in Figure B.8, the majority of coaches and coachees felt that the coaches were comfortable to make other stakeholders part of their coaching, and most indicated that they would do so in the future. A total of 50% of the **coaches**, indicated a preference for a **systemic** world view, both **currently** and for **future**, while 33% indicated a preference for the Newtonian approach of not including other stakeholders, and working only with the individual.

Of the **coachees**, 71% were **currently** experiencing a **systemic** approach, and 57% indicated this as their preference for the **future**.

The statement for the *Coachee profile* building block (representing a systemic world view) was: *I am comfortable to make other stakeholders in my life part of the coaching process.*

It was previously reported, in Table 5.6 (Chapter 5), that the results regarding the *Coachee profile* CL building block being addressed through a systemic approach, currently and in the future, showed the greatest consensus among the **coachees**.

Figure B.9 reflects the results for the CL coaching building block *Coaching outcomes*.



Note: Stripped colour fill – Coaches; solid colour fill – coachees; lighter shade – current; darker shade – future.

Figure B.9. Coaching outcomes: A comparison of the preferred world views of coaches and coachees.

As illustrated in Figure B.9, most of the **coaches and coachees** agreed that coaching outcomes were difficult to predict, and were co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation. This was confirmed earlier, in Section 5.3.1 (see Table 5.8 in chapter 5). The majority (72% of coaches and 74% of coachees) also selected card statements that indicated their preference for **systemic** coaching outcomes in the **future**. Some of the coaches and coachees also wanted to achieve life balance through coaching (28% of coaches and 19% of coachees), which is part of a GST world view.

It was previously reported, in Table 5.6 (Chapter 5), that the results regarding the *Coaching outcomes* CL building block being addressed through a systemic approach, currently and in the future, showed the greatest consensus among the **coachees**. The relevant card statements (representing a systemic world view) were:

- (1) Coaching outcomes are not predictable, but are co-created through an unfolding two-way conversation;*
- (2) After coaching, I am able to explore and create new life patterns conducive to the life I want to live; and*
- (3) Coaching helps me to explore my different life dimensions (internal and external) in a more interconnected way.*

In the section above, the figures illustrated the findings with respect to the different CL building blocks, and how the preferences of coach and coachees compared, with regard to both the present and the future. The findings are summarised in Table B.1. Only the dominant world view for each CL building block is indicated, according to the colour coding convention used throughout this chapter.

Table B.1

A Summary of the Findings for the CL Building Blocks

World view	Newtonian				GST				Systemic			
	Coach		Coachee		Coach		Coachee		Coach		Coachee	
Current/Future	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F
CL building block												
Coaching context												
Coaching objectives												
Role of the coach												
Coaching relationship												
Coaching process												
Coaching agenda												
Profile of the coach												
Profile of the coachee												
Coaching outcomes												

The summary of the findings discussed and illustrated in Table B.1 above, clearly indicates that the majority of the coaches and coachees currently prefer a **systemic world view** in addressing the CL building blocks, and that they would also prefer to do so in the future. However, some participants' results did indicate a **GST approach**, both currently and as a future preference, to certain building blocks, for example, *Coaching context* and *Coaching objectives*.