How do business leaders learn in peer-group coaching?

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ABSTRACT

Peer coaching has been established as a useful tool in educational learning. Peer-group coaching practice among business leaders is historically built on peer coaching practice and has received little academic attention so far. This study aims to understand the processes within peer-group coaching and the factors that participants experience as influencing their learning in order to develop a theoretical framework of how business leaders learn in peer-group coaching.

The methodology employed to achieve this aim is grounded theory. Data for this research came from two sources, focus groups and interviews. The processes of peer-group coaching were explored in four focus groups and twelve leaders from two private organisations were interviewed using a semi-structured interview approach to investigate individual aspects of learning in peer-group coaching.

The accounts of leader experiences were used to develop a theoretical peer-group coaching framework, conceptualising leaders' learning, applying grounded theory coding cycles and strategies, and identifying, comparing and connecting different categories. Core aspects of how leaders learn during peer-group coaching included the sharing of information, various forms of self-reflection and emotional reactions. The matching of peers, group-dynamics, and specific peer-group coaching processes are considered as factors that shape learning through influencing the learning environment. Psychological factors, such as trust and respect among peers, openness, empathy, and motivation were also identified as inter-connected with the learning experience. The results of the learning from peer-group coaching were manifested in new behaviour in leaders' daily work.

This thesis contributes to the academic debates on the role of peer-group coaching in the learning of leaders. A proposed theoretical framework adds new elements to the currently accepted models of experiential learning. Furthermore, the findings of this study are used to develop specific recommendations for practice on how to increase leader's learning and

personal growth by introducing an extended definition of peer-group coaching and key methods for initiating peer-group coaching. A proposed framework can add value for practitioners and for organisations who plan to employ this coaching method for leader development.

Further research is suggested to explore pragmatic conditions for peer-group coaching sessions and to understand what influences might jeopardise learning in peer-group coaching.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

"Feedback? I spoke to my boss last year only twice!"

…. one of my clients once told me, reflecting on her relationship with her boss, colleagues and direct reports.

In my work as a business consultant and leadership trainer I converse regularly with business leaders and executives from different kinds of industries. The higher leaders are assigned in the organisational hierarchy, the less feedback they receive from direct reports and colleagues (Ashford, et al., 2003). This is a phenomenon consistent across industries. Top leaders are presented with fewer chances for feedback which could contribute to personal development. Several scholars show that feedback can be an important factor in the development of new behaviours, leadership skills and for personal development (Hess, 2007; Kluger and DeNisi, 1996; Li, 2010; Shea and Howell, 1999; Thach, 2002). Feedback also plays an important role in improving performance by motivating individuals and leading them to correct their performance strategies (Ashford et al., 2003; Ashford and Tsui, 1991). One approach to overcoming the lack of feedback for leadership development is 'peer-group coaching' (PGC), which brings together leaders, here called peers, who do not usually work together but share similar professional and leadership challenges. PGC allows leaders to receive feedback, facilitate reflection and gives the opportunity to interact with each other on different business as well as personal issues in a secure and confidential learning environment (Pelan, 2009).

The interest in PGC is fuelled by increasing emphasis in organisations on the quality of leadership and the need for new ways to support leader development (Petrie, 2011). Leonard and Lang (2010) for example argue that the need for leaders to become both better leaders and better learners has increased in recent years. They argue that a high rate of leadership-failure in contemporary business points to an alarming trend that requirements for effective leadership have changed, adjusting to volatility and uncertainty. The need for better leaders and learners in business was

also explained in IBM's bi-annual Chief Executive Officer (CEO) survey (IBM, 2012), which is based on face-to-face conversations with more than 1,700 CEOs in 64 countries. The results of this survey suggest that "CEOs have a new strategy in the unending war for talent. They are creating more open and collaborative cultures – encouraging employees to connect, learn from each other and thrive in a world of rapid change. Collaboration is the number one trait CEOs are seeking in their employees, with 75 percent of CEOs calling it "critical" (IBM, 2012, p. 6). In this light PGC could be seen as one of the few coaching methods for leadership development that aims to achieve trustful and long lasting connections among a diverse group of members for professional as well as personal development while transferring the responsibility for learning to the learner, in pursuit of developing better learners. One distinct feature of PGC is its ability to enable such potentially close and long lasting relationships in a private business environment. One leader explained proudly, for example, that their peer-group for coaching still exists one year after finishing their leadership development programme, where leaders coached each other with the help of PGC.

My interest in conducting this study grew from both my professional practice and my academic interest in leadership development approaches, particularly various forms of coaching employed to increase the performance of business leaders. PGC presented itself as a cost effective method to provide the benefits of coaching without the need to match coaches with leaders or schedule coaching appointments. Usually a group of three to six leaders is first trained in how to apply the PGC method and, following this, meets periodically in PGC sessions. In these sessions, participants discuss and work on pressing issues and problems in an organised fashion using professional coaching tools. In PGC, one member takes the role of the coachee while the remaining group members takes the coach role. By applying a coaching skillset, participants help each other to find solutions and learn from experience. This coaching method particularly intrigued me because I could see the advantage of teaching a group of executive leaders a certain skillset and processes, so that consequently they could coach themselves, achieving individual benefits, without the need of

further intervention from an external trainer or coach. Coaching without the help of an external expert would be advantageous, as peers could come together for coaching without aligning their diaries with that of an expert. External coaches would not need to become familiar with an organisation's culture and peculiarities and PGC could be initiated quickly and whenever needed, and without the additional cost for external facilitation.

My company, Change, Leadership and Partners (CLP), has been working with the leadership development 'peer group' method for years in combination with leadership development programmes. The intention in working with peer groups is to increase the interaction of (non-competing) leaders from different functions and divisions. CLP sets up groups of peers and encourages them to interact with each other during and between corporate training modules. The stated goals are an increase in self-awareness, a higher ability for self-management and decision making and first and foremost a transfer of learning from seminars and coaching into behaviour change. At CLP we constantly improve the PGC method. We have changed group size, processes and intentions. Some groups focus more on problem solving, some on social interaction, while others 'coach' each other. We started to introduce coaching techniques while developing the peer group method and learned that non-judgemental peer groups that coached each other, using simple coaching techniques worked better than others. Most of the peer groups worked successfully together, some not. Most leaders reported collaboration among peers, friendship, increased learning and great value. Practitioners increasingly employ PGC in business, but PGC is diversely understood and practiced. This might result in different uses of PGC and potentially undesirable outcomes. Ineffective use of PGC might waste organisational resources such as time and money, and might harm the coaching reputation. These differing PGC approaches and outcomes suggested that the quality of learning in peer-coaching groups can be improved.

With the purpose of improving the quality of learning in PGC in mind, I turned to research on the development of leaders and PGC. I discovered that PGC among groups of business leaders has received very little attention

from researchers so far. Most peer coaching literature concentrates on impact and effectiveness (Bowman, Mccormick, and Taylor, 2002; Spence and Grant, 2007), particularly studying pairs, rather than groups coaching each other within the group (Barron, Dawson, and Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Browne, 2006; Shams and Law, 2012; Zwart, Wubbels, Bergen, and Bolhuis, 2007). Most of the literature on peer coaching is also found in education rather than in business (Elder and Padover, 2006; Huston and Weaver, 2007; Kohler, Crilley, and Shearer, 1997; Morgan, Menlove, Salzberg, and Hudson, 1994; Prince, Snowden, and Matthews, 2010; Rhodes and Beneicke, 2006; Swafford, 1998). Peer coaching research concentrates mainly on dyadic peer coaching, and PGC is under-researched. Today's research on peer coaching for business leader development is still surprisingly limited and researchers do not build their work on each other. A possible limitation of contemporary empirical PGC literature is that academic researchers have predominantly recruited students (MBA students) as their participants for study, while being interested in business leaders (Hall et al., 2008; Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005; Ladyshewsky, 2006, 2007, 2010a; Sue-Chan and Latham, 2004). These studies might have limitations due to the chosen sample when implemented in practice. Fascinated by PGC in general and the mechanics that facilitate learning in specific, and puzzled by the lack of knowledge in that field, I asked myself what enabling qualities lead to learning in PGC? Eventually, how business leaders learn in PGC, became the research question of this study.

My aim in this study is to develop a theoretical framework for leader learning in PGC using a scientific approach. The aim of this introduction is to familiarise the reader with PGC as different to other forms of coaching, and position PGC in relation to leadership development.

1.1 Defining peer-group coaching

The use of executive coaching as an instrument for business leader development has increased rapidly over the last 20 years. Paige (2002) reports that executive coaching is one of the fastest growing executive development processes in adult learning. According to the International Coach Federation (ICF) in 2012, annual revenue from professional coaching

worldwide was nearly two billion US dollars, doubled from 2003 (ICF, 2012). Coaching has been designed as a technique to help executives adapt to business change more rapidly and effectively (Diedrich, 1996). It provides practical development for business leaders where the outcomes can be targeted to the strategic objectives of an organisation (Jones, Rafferty, and Griffin, 2006). Several models of coaching have emerged and been developed in the past decade. Cox et al. (2014b) note that existing models of coaching have begun to be applied in wider contexts and have evolved into an array of models and approaches. It is not surprising, due to the recent coaching 'success', 'popularity' and current business challenges, that other forms of coaching such as peer-coaching are being explored.

One possible approach to increasing abilities and skills and still being sensitive to resources, might be that leaders coach each other without the help of an external coach. Hall et al. (2008) examined the nature of peer coaching, conducting a survey with MBA students (N = 209) which showed that peer coaching can be a useful developmental tool for professional and personal growth, and argued that peer coaching could serve as one approach to satisfy an organisation's needs for leader development. Ladyshewski (2009, p. 294) identifies the advantages of peer coaching as "…implemented at relative low cost for an organization" and that "…it can be an effective organizational learning strategy that can be used to build learning within an organization".

The coaching literature provides a number of different definitions, models and applications of peer coaching. Ackland (1991) concludes that all coaching programmes reported in the literature fit into two basic forms: a) coaching by experts; and b) reciprocal coaching. Many authors do not differentiate between reciprocal peer coaching that consists of the coach and the coachee (peer coaching) and reciprocal peer coaching that allows more than three members, here termed PGC. For example, Hall et al. (2008, p. 490) in their peer coaching research, combine reciprocal coaching with two and with more members: "As with other developmental activities, the interaction is between two or more people with the goal of personal or

professional development". In this study I focus on reciprocal peer coaching with more than two members, specifically PGC.

A distinction between peer coaching and other coaching genres, as well as theoretical traditions of coaching, was explored by Ladyshewski (2010b, p. 289) who claims that "peer coaching is distinct, yet symbiotic, with other forms of coaching such as: skills and performance coaching, executive and leadership coaching, and the 'manager as a coach' models. It is often used synonymously with mentoring but is, in fact, quite distinct". Ladyshewski argues that in skills coaching, the coach is supposed to possess greater expertise in order to be able to help the coachee. In mentoring, an element of seniority within the organisation and the formality of the matching process are distinctly different from peer coaching (Baker, 2005; D'Abate, et al., 2003). PGC is distinct compared to other coaching models and also distinct from peer coaching, as it is not dyadic but a group of peers who coach each other reciprocally. Coaches are not external experts, but inexperienced coaches and peers. This is the working definition of PGC that guides this research and distinguishes PGC from other types of coaching:

PGC is a form of reciprocal coaching, where 3 to 6 group members coach each other on business and personal issues without the support of an expert, external facilitator or coach.

Peers rotate through the role of the coach and that of the coachee so that in each PGC a participant is always at least once the coachee and - possibly multiple times - the coach. The duration of the coaching can vary, depending on the group's needs. Groups can meet for PGC on a regular basis, meeting face-to-face or virtually via telephone conference or Webex, Microsoft's Lync, Skype or other web conferencing software.

Group dynamics in PGC can be seen as another unique differentiator from the usual dyadic coaching relationship, as they are claimed to accelerate the transformation process of the participants (Ward, 2008). Kets de Vries (2007, pp. 179–180) explains why working in groups for coaching can be effective:

"Group experiences [in group coaching]…are journeys of self-discovery. If done in a safe environment, telling stories about significant events and situations...(it) helps an individual work through internal conflicts and crises and arrive at meaningful, personal life integration. The acceptance and support given by other members of the group help instil a sense of hope and change for the future. Listening…to others stories of their dysfunctional patterns helps participants recognize their own. This…paves the way for cognitive and emotional restructuring."

It is significant that PGC is not the same as group coaching or team coaching. Group coaching could be defined as coaching with "people with similar objectives who will co-create the group with the executive coach" (Pelan, 2009, p. 1). Pelan explains that group coaching is especially effective when peers are group members. In contrast to PGC, group coaching is facilitated by an external coach. In team coaching, members have agreed to participate to meet a joint project and organisational goals. Clutterbuck (2014a, p. 271) defines team coaching as "a learning intervention designed to increase collective capability or performance of a group…". In team coaching, as in group coaching, an external coach or facilitator is present and there is a collective team objective, which distinguishes this coaching method, from PGC.

PGC is sometimes compared with action learning and experiential learning, which is used as a synonym for action learning (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). PGC does have similarities with action learning as both recognise the possibilities for learners to generate knowledge rather than merely passively absorbing the results of knowledge, produced by experts (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). However, these activities also have very distinct features. First of all, according to Pedler, Burgoyne and Brook (2005) and Zuber-Skerritt (2002), there is no single definition of action learning that is accepted generally and variants of action learning have become numerous in the last decades. One way of defining action learning is proposed by Weinstein (1999, p. 3): "…a process underpinning a belief in individual potential: a way of learning from

our actions, and from what happens to us, and around us, by taking the time to question, understand and reflect, to gain insights, and consider how to act in future". Marquardt, et al. (2009, p. 11) describe six key components that distinguish action learning: "1) a diverse group of 4 to 8 members; 2) an urgent task or problem; 3) a question-driven communication process; 4) a commitment to learning; 5) implementation of action strategies; and 6) an action learning team coach". It could be argued that the last two components are not shared with PGC, and that the second component is not limited to problems or urgent tasks alone. Cho (2013) distinguishes two types of action learning programmes: individual projects and team projects. In an individual project, participants provide insightful questions, advice, and information and aim to assist other participants with a problem and to increase their learning. In team projects, participants collectively work on one project to solve different working issues within that certain project (Cho, 2013). A difference between action learning and PGC can be seen in the different intentions of each of these leadership development initiatives. PGC differs from action learning sets as it is not based on one single pressing problem or project. The intention in action learning sets is to work with problems (business or personal), or "…wicket or unpredictable problems, without easy, or indeed any, answers" (Brook, et al. 2012, p. 271), whereas PGC´s intention is to offer the learners "…a human development process … to promote desirable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders" (E. Cox et al., 2014b, p. 1). In PGC, it is not only problems that can be addressed but also cases, needs, feelings, solutions to a former problem or just thoughts about the patterns of issues. In many variations of action learning, an expert or coach is present who is responsible for the learning process and encourages the group to implement identified solutions, whereas in PGC the intention is to support the coachee with the help of peers (coaches) to enable the coachee to find their own solution. Implementation of a possibly identified solution might be chosen by the coachee, however it is not essential and it is left to the coachee to choose the course of action. The external expert, proposed in many action learning set variations, is not required nor intended for PGC. In summary, action learning was developed for different purposes and has been interpreted differently by practitioners since its inception by Revans

(1982) in 1945. In this study PGC is viewed as similar in some respect to action learning sets, however, partly different in intention and process.

Another feature of PGC is that it can be employed as a learning approach in leadership development programmes. Petrie (2011) detects four trends for the future of leadership development that are in line with PGC intentions. The first trend Petrie defined as the focus of vertical leadership development. In comparison to horizontal development, which is about growth through the gaining of knowledge and skills from experts (translation of knowledge), vertical development is a transformation of the current mind-set of a leader to a wider one, holding greater complexity (Passmore, 2010; Petrie, 2011). With regard to PGC, leaders grow vertically, due to their exchange with peers and peers help each other to make sense of the world "in more complex and inclusive ways" (Petrie, 2011, p. 12). The second leadership development trend is the transfer to greater development ownership by the individual (Petrie, 2011). Members of peer-groups for coaching set their own PGC agenda and thus decide for themselves how often they want to coach each other, how the coaching process will operate, and on which topic they want to work. The development ownership lies with the individual(s) and consequently, leaders have control over their own development. The third trend identified by Petrie, is to have greater focus on collective rather than individual leadership (2011). Collective leadership itself is "a dynamic leadership process in which a defined leader, or set of leaders, selectively utilize skills and expertise within a network, effectively distributing elements of the leadership role as the situation or problem at hand requires" (Friedrich, et al. 2009, p. 6). PGC is a collective process that builds collective leadership through the peer network. Petrie's fourth and final trend is to focus on innovation in leadership development methods (Petrie, 2011). Acknowledging the history of peer coaching and the novelty of PGC, PGC for leadership development satisfies all the named trends and has potential for customization and innovation. PGC might be a useful organisational learning technique for current and future leadership development that complies with today's leadership trends.

In this research the peer groups for coaching were formed by participants in a leadership development programme with more than two training modules, where PGC sessions were practiced between modules. To distinguish PGC and to familiarise delegates with the approach, PGC was introduced in a six-step approach, which is shown below in Table **1**. This approach was designed on the basis of previously designed peer coaching 'frameworks' (Broscious and Saunders, 2010; Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2003; Murphy, 2012; Shams and Law, 2012; Waddell and Dunn, 2005) and shows how participants started their PGC process. It is important to note this initial approach, as it shows the participants' first exposure to PGC. All participants in the leadership development initiative were introduced to PGC in the same way. Participants experienced, for example, the same introduction to the coaching method, they were matched in the same way to form groups, and peers practiced the same coaching skills. Groups, however, changed their PGC processes later in the process according to their particular needs and experienced learning in PGC differently. This adaption of processes and the different learning experience of participants is described later in the data analysis chapter.

No.	Label	Description and objective
1	Introduction and definition	PGC is defined and distinguished from other kinds of coaching. Participants know theoretically what PGC is.
2	Matching	Peers are matched in groups. Peers assess each other for personal compatibility, sustainability of partnership, and possible best diversity.
3	PGC process and planning	PGC processes are defined and planned according to the group's needs. The peer group knows what to do.
4	Coaching skills	Coaching skills are introduced and practiced. Participants learn one coaching method (similar to GROW (Whitmore, 2002) and how to phrase coaching questions.
5	Psychological safety	Psychological safety is discussed and agreed on: how to build trust, openness, confidentiality, how to give non-judgmental and non-evaluative feedback,

		and how to conduct non-threatening discussions.
6	Contracting	Contracting the upcoming group support. Participants agree on how they want to work together.

Table 1. Six stage PGC organising approach

1.2 Focus for research

Many peer coaching models for education and business are outlined in the literature that describes how peer coaching is performed (Kurtts and Levin, 2000; Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2003, 2005; Ladyshewsky, 2010b; McAllister and Neubert, 1995; Shams and Law, 2012) but the question remains of whether or not learning in an educational and leadership setting might be distinctly different? There is, as of today, no framework describing the actual processes, contexts and influences on how leaders learn in PGC. This lack of attention to peer coaching, and specifically to PGC for business leaders, is surprising considering the number of current organisational requirements PGC might satisfy. This study aims to address this gap and add to the current knowledge by illuminating the way leaders learn in PGC. It has three main research objectives:

1. To critically review and evaluate the literature relating to PGC.
2. To explore the way leaders learn in PGC.
3. To generate findings, which make a contribution to practice and to contribute to the wider body of knowledge by developing a framework for PGC.

This study aims to contribute to the academic debate on PGC by developing a conceptual framework for leader learning in PGC. The findings of this study could also contribute to the implementation of PGC in practice, as they could support organisations, leaders and human resource (HR) professionals in their leadership development activities. By understanding how learning is facilitated during PGC, the proposed framework might contribute to research on how to use PGC in a way that maximises its benefits.

To understand learning in PGC, this research aims to explore the experience of business leaders who have used PGC for their own development. Currently, a theory about business leader learning in PGC is missing, therefore grounded theory methodology has been used to explore participant experiences to build a theoretical framework of learning in PGC. Former PGC participants and leaders from two multinational organisations have been recruited for this research. All participants have been members of a leadership development initiative, where I was responsible for matching these leaders to form groups for coaching and responsible for training these leaders in the use of the PGC method. 13 leaders participated in four focus groups to understand how PGC processes are interpreted and executed by the target group. 12 individuals were interviewed with the help of two semi-structured interviews and data collection cycles. Two data collection and analysis cycles were necessary to achieve saturation and to develop a theoretical framework. Qualitative interview data was collected with the aim of creating a shared framework for understanding how learning is achieved in PGC that could inform practice. Data analysis began with open coding, using a brainstorming approach to analyse the data. Axial coding followed open coding. The emerging categories and their properties were compared with each other to identify connections between categories. Selective coding followed axial coding. The central core categories were identified and other categories were related, filling categories that needed further refinement until saturation was achieved (Gibbs, 2010). During coding, a theoretical conjecture of leader learning in PGC was generated. The coding cycles used in this study are visualized in Figure **1**. The participant perspectives and theoretical concepts were illustrated through selected quotes that are representative of key themes that emerged during the research. These themes and findings will be presented in Chapter Four and their implications for practice discussed in Chapter Five.
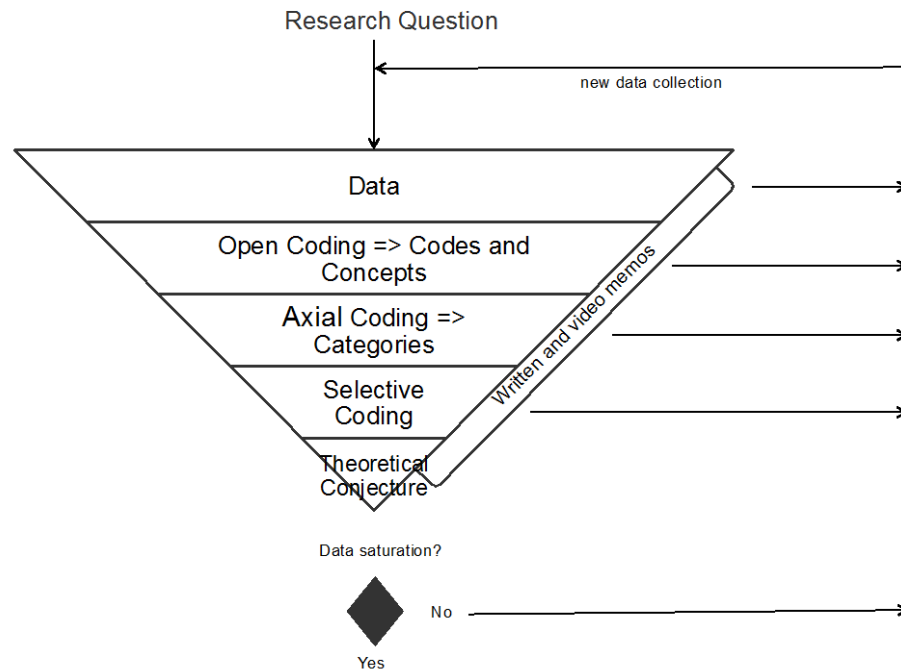
Figure 1: Coding cycles

Below is an outline of the chapters that gives insight into the conceptual approach of how this study was designed to answer the research question.

1.3 Outline of the chapters

Chapter Two provides the literature review for this study. It firstly critically reviews the literature on peer coaching for teachers and business leaders in order to understand the foundation of PGC for leadership development. The literature review explores over 150 peer coaching studies in the field of teacher education and over 50 in other fields. In the light of these studies five aspects of peer coaching were reviewed: i) peer coaching effectiveness, ii) challenges associated with peer coaching, iii) principles, frameworks and processes of peer coaching, and iv) learning in PGC.

Chapter Three explains the methodology that has been applied in this study. This chapter focuses on the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspective and the methodology for the study in relation to the central research question. My intention as a researcher is to generate rather than test a hypothesis. With regard to this intention I apply a version of grounded theory (GT) for qualitative research developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). This chapter justifies the choice of GT and its inductive research

approach and it explains why it is a suitable methodology to explore the research question and how it relates to the researcher's philosophical position.

Chapter Four introduces and discusses the results of the data analysis. All the data analysis evolved categories and their concepts will be described and possible relationships among categories and concepts shown, with the actual words of the participants to ground the research in the actual data. Chapter Four consists of four subchapters that are structured following the main developed categories of the proposed theoretical framework: i) Learning environment in PGC, ii) Psychological factors, iii) Learning operation in PGC, and iv) Implementation of learning in PGC.

Chapter Five describes the evolved theoretical PGC framework of how leaders learn by taking on a meta-perspective. The influences of categories and concepts on each other and their relationships are highlighted to give the reader of this thesis a comprehensive perspective of the framework that emerged from data analysis. Chapter Five concludes with a discussion of how this research contributes to knowledge, its implications for practice and its limitations, with suggestions for further research. The chapter closes with a personal reflection on the experience of conducting this research, describing my personal experience as a researcher.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter will critically evaluate the existing literature on peer coaching and PGC. The aim of this literature review is to consider the current knowledge base that might inform the way leaders learn in PGC to provide the research with a comprehensive, critical and contextualised theory base.

This literature review will discuss the existing research on PGC for business leader development. Due to the lack of research in this field it is necessary to expand this review to peer coaching in general and in specific to peer coaching in education, as well as to adjacent fields of literature that are helpful for understanding PGC processes and leaders' learning in PGC. The initial exploration was based on a systematic search of Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Emerald, PsycINFO, Education Research Complete, and other databases in the field of education. The search identified over 150 peer coaching studies in the field of teacher education and over 50 studies in other fields: 26 out of 27 dissertations in total aimed to research peer coaching for teacher education. Around 10 studies considered peer coaching for business leaders and only one study refers to PGC, and focuses on the skills-based development of entrepreneurs and the role of PGC in enterprise development.

This literature review will be structured into three parts to discuss and evaluate existing research in the field of peer coaching and selected adjacent fields. Firstly, a short history of peer coaching literature is presented, through which to understand the historical development of this approach. The second part will cover peer coaching literature for business leader development, to base this study on the deeper assumptions of the larger peer coaching community. The following aspects are discussed: i) principles, frameworks and processes; ii) peer coaching requirements; iii) impact effectiveness and benefits; and iv) challenges associated with peer coaching. Thirdly, this literature review will examine the literature on how leaders learn in PGC, summarising and discussing the broad themes of learning in general and leaders' learning specifically.

2.1 A short history of peer coaching literature

The history of peer coaching started about 60 years ago with educational movements in the United States to improve education focused on teaching strategies, quality and social equality (Farrell Buzbee Little, 2005; Showers and Joyce, 1996). One approach to improving the chances of achieving the desired change was to introduce team coaching. The Lazarus High School in Sacramento, California, was one of the schools who experimented in the late 1970s and early 1980s with team coaching, later known as peer coaching (Joyce and Showers, 1982). In Sacramento, English teachers began experimenting to incorporate Gordon's (1961) creativity technique *Synectics* into their curriculum. Difficulties in using *Synectics* in the classroom led teachers to form coaching teams that followed five elements to sustain teachers and helped them to transfer skills into the classroom. These elements were defined by Joyce and Showers (1961): (a) the provision of companionship, (b) giving of technical feedback, (c) analysis of application (extending executive control), (d) adaptation to the student, and (e) personal facilitation. Joyce and Showers (1980, p.348) believed that "modelling, practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback was the most productive training design". They described how school faculties were divided into coaching teams who regularly observed one another's teaching and provided information, feedback, etc. Joyce and Showers (1996) investigated the hypothesis that coaching, in the form of (weekly) seminars, following initial training, would result in much greater transfer of learning than training alone and thus directly affect student learning.

Since this initial approach peer coaching has been practiced, developed and researched primarily in the field of teacher education. Ackland (1991) authored the first literature review of peer coaching. The development of peer coaching resulted in different definitions and elements. Ackland reviewed 29 studies of peer coaching, which he divided into two groups: 'coaching by experts' and 'reciprocal coaching'. All 29 studies were based in the field of education. The most recent review of literature originates from Lu (2010) covering the years 1997 through to 2007 and identifies similarities and differences of peer coaching in pre-service teacher

education. A brief description of peer coaching evolution is presented in Figure 2. This evolution chart illustrates how peer coaching needed about 30 years to develop from peer coaching in education to peer coaching in business and another 10 years to evolve to PGC for leadership development.
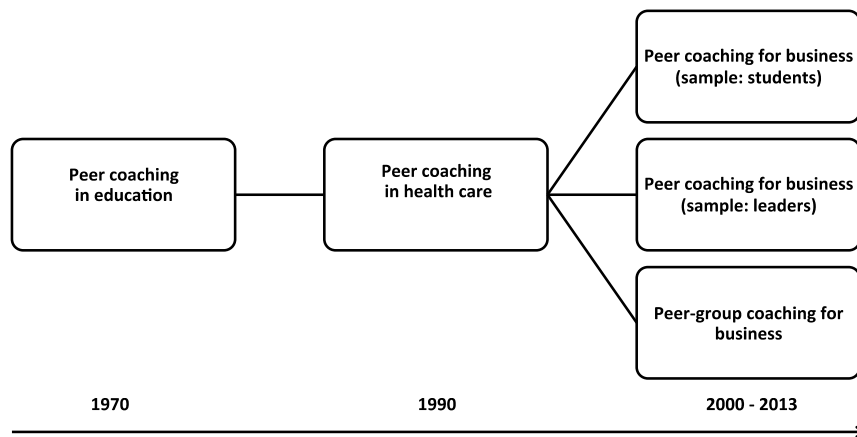
Figure 2: Peer coaching evolution

Hall et al. (2008) documented the way that peer coaching has been applied since its inception, in education, in several and varied fields including nursing, medical education, patient education, staff development and counselling. The first research in peer coaching for business leaders was published in 2004, and examined the "relative effectiveness of external, peer, and self-coaching on the performance of participants in two MBA programs" (Sue-Chan and Latham, 2004, p. 260). Peer coaching has been most researched in relation to teacher education, where it is designed to expand teaching experience. Staub and colleagues (2003) describe coaches in education as excellent teachers who work in the same discipline as the coachee, and are able to provide situation-specific assistance. "Peer coaching has typically operated as a process of collaborative planning, observation, and feedback, rather than serving as a formal evaluation or review, in order to increase the level of implementation of instructional

techniques and curriculum", recognize Wong and Nicotera (2003) in their preliminary synthesis of the literature. Teachers plan together a lesson and observe each other in the classroom to hereafter give each other technical feedback. The classroom differs widely from the working environment of business leaders. Peer feedback based on observation of practice is not usually an option in a business leader's domain. The health sector then took up peer coaching to train nurses and medical teams. Coaching in business differs from coaching in other professions, however. The coach's role in business is to facilitate reflection and growth. The coachee is the one who identifies specific problems, while the coach sometimes knows very little about the coachee's business and situation (Staub et al., 2006).

There is significant research on peer coaching in the educational and health sectors. It is unclear why PGC in business and management has seen such a late development and that the PGC literature is limited to a handful of studies. Reviewing the intentions, discussions and quality of these studies reveals that, in summary, peer coaching for business leader development is seriously under-researched considering the positive impact coaching has on leadership development (Thach, 2002) and the estimated high number of leaders practicing peer coaching worldwide. The following section will review peer coaching literature for business leaders to reflect the discussion of the larger peer coaching community and to enhance the current debate over peer coaching in business.

2.2 Peer coaching for business leader development

Peer coaching research for business leader development is limited, as mentioned above. There has been no researched theory or a well-tested framework published which an organisation's HR, Learning and Development Department, or consultants employing peer coaching for leader development, can follow. This deficit might result in the incorrect use of peer coaching and a disappointing coaching experience for its members.

Within the limited number of studies in the field of peer coaching for business leader development, findings are divergent. Hall et al. (2008, p. 488) examined the nature of peer coaching with the help of MBA students.

They deduced from their research that peer coaching is "a powerful tool …
it can be high-impact, just-in time, self-renewing, low-cost, and easily
learned". A study with MBA students by Sue-Chan and Latham (2004)
argues that external coaching and self-coaching is perceived as more
credible by participants than peer coaching. Ladyshewsky and Varey (2005)
describe peer coaching as the enhancement of critical thinking and
metacognition as well as managerial competency support, thus promoting
the cognitive development of learners. Various researchers ascribe peer
coaching different qualities and effectiveness.

Many differences prevail because peer coaching is defined differently and
no joint framework for initiating and executing peer coaching is agreed on.
Dissimilar uses of research paradigms, methodologies, and sample groups
differentiate the studies further. Existing research on peer coaching for
business leader development is surprisingly not built on previous work
either; researchers often build their work on the peer coaching research of
teacher education. Typically academic researchers prefer students (MBA
students) as their source for study, despite addressing business leaders (Hall
et al., 2008; Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005; Ladyshewsky, 2006, 2007,
2010c; Sue-Chan and Latham, 2004). It is acknowledged that many
universities require leadership experience for entry to their MBA
programmes and many students are part time students and full time business
leaders. While comparing MBA students and business leaders, I share
Mintzbergs's (2004) view that MBA students are not yet leaders.
Conventional MBAs, according to Mintzberg (2004, p. 6), "…are full-time
programs that take relatively young people, generally in their twenties, and
train them mostly in the business functions, out of context – in other words,
independently of any specific experience in management". MBA students
are likely to be in a different situation than full time business leaders
concerning responsibilities, leading direct reports, teams or functions.
Students may enter research with a different mentality than leaders. The
sample used in this research differs, in that it focuses on peers of business
organisations who coach each other in their capacity as leaders not students.
The sampling and the research strategy of this study is elaborated in the
methodology chapter.

A few studies have been conducted on peer coaching in the business sector but only one relates to learning in peer coaching. Kutzanova et al. (Kutzhanova, Lyons, & Lichtenstein, 2009) examined peer coaching effects on the skill-development of entrepreneurs, however, this research is brief in describing how entrepreneurs develop their skills in PGC and how PGC supports their learning. Other studies of peer coaching were conducted by Ladyshewsky (2006) in the health sector and Maitland (2005) on relationship-pairs (peers) within the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. However, neither study takes into consideration business leaders as participants and they do not answer the question of how business leaders learn in PGC.

This study aims to research PGC for business leaders to build on the knowledge of this wider field and to add to the aforementioned lack of research. Starting with the current discussion on leader learning in PGC and structuring the current debate in this field, this literature reviews four peer coaching parts: i) principles, structures and processes, ii) peer coaching communalities, iii) impact effectiveness and benefits, and iv) challenges associated with peer coaching. These last four parts of this literature review complete the discussion on peer coaching in business and enhance current PGC knowledge.

2.2.1 Principles, structures and processes

Peer coaching differs from other types of coaching due to its provision of reciprocal metacognitive learning opportunities and a unique structure that neutralise status imbalances (Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005). The review of peer coaching literature reveals only one proposed framework that aims at peer coaching for leadership development. This eight step framework, shown in Figure 3, was developed by Varey (2002), comparing and contrasting different types of coaching relationships and then modifying these for peer coaching.

| 1 Assessment and trust building | 2 Planning — time and place | 3 Formalise process and scope | 4 Define purpose and goals | 5 Clarify facts and assumptions | 6 Explore possibilities | 7 Gain commitment to actions | 8 Offer support and accounta-bility |
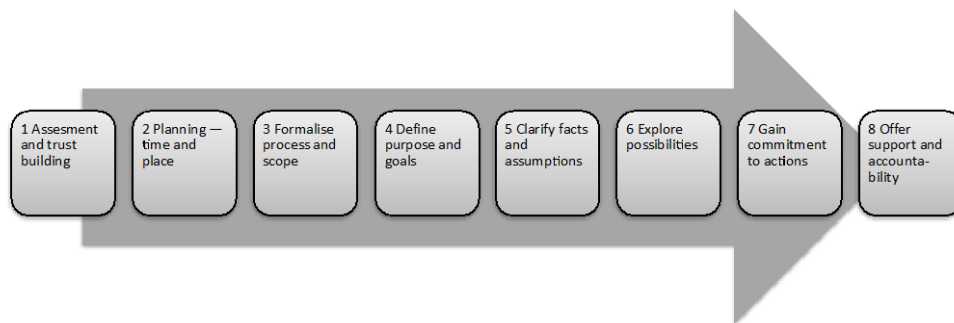
Figure 3: Eight step peer coaching framework by Varey (2002)

This framework is applied by Ladyshewsky and Varey (2005) to business, using a student sample (postgraduate business certificate/diploma or master's level course) within the university environment. Peer coaching literature in non-business related fields (e.g. education) provides guidelines, principles, frameworks and processes that differ from each other greatly. These differences exist due to individual understandings of peer coaching and its field of use. For example, Waddel and Dunn's (2005) framework for peer coaching to teach clinical breast examination skills, differs from other frameworks as it focuses to a large extent on learning through the practice of skills on models and is consulting and confronting in its nature. For example, the 'consulting' framework step is described as "review of self-assessment" (2004, p. 87), whereas the 'confrontational' step is explained as teaching, where the coach demonstrates core competencies. Other frameworks are designed for teacher development in an educational environment, using the exclusivity of peers observing one another in the classroom. Aligning Varey's (2002) framework with other peer coaching approaches shows that Varey's framework lacks certain steps, such as contracting or establishing a positive learning environment, that could help participants to achieve positive peer coaching learning outcomes. Seven

guidelines or principles are subsequently reviewed and discussed, which assist the purpose of this study. These principles are extracted from the peer coaching literature, searching for commonalities in frameworks and reflecting differences:

1. Peer coaching environment
2. Formal training
3. Formality of planning and contracting
4. Matching of peers and confidentiality agreement
5. Feedback
6. Reciprocity
7. Assessment

Peer coaching environment

The first principle of peer coaching can be called the 'coaching environment' or the psychological environment in which peer coaching actually happens. In their study, which concentrates on teachers skill development through peer coaching, Joyce and Showers (1961, p. 6) recommended developing a coaching environment "in which all individuals see themselves as one another's coaches". Later in 1996 Showers and Joyce conducted another survey where they reviewed the peer coaching evolution and changes in the conduct of coaching among teachers. While working with entire school faculties, Showers and Joyce (1996b) made all teachers agree to be members of peer coaching study teams. Teams had to collectively agree to support one another in the change process, including the sharing and planning of instructional objectives, and developing materials and lessons. Skinner and Welch (1996) draw attention to an overall culture and claim that peer coaching is more effective as an on-going part of an overall culture rather than a one time occurrence. The explicit creation of this coaching environment therefore appears important.

In a study by Lam et al. (2002), which examined the working factors of peer coaching among teachers, many participants explicitly stated that what most relieved their psychological pressure was their trusting relationship with each other. This intangible coaching environment (coaching culture) might

be one key element of the success of peer coaching. Peer coaching is built on confidentiality, honesty and trust, so as to achieve self-disclosure and the development of coach and coachee (Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005). Participants who are ordered to attend programmes are ambivalent about the process at best, and frequently hostile (Skinner and Welch, 1996). The condition for peer coaching is that peers participate "whole-heartedly" in helping themselves and one another (Mundy and Grabau, 1999, p. 31). Showers (1985), as well as Wong and Nicotera (2003), argue that the coaching environment has to be supported by allocated resources, time for collaborative planning, logistics, new norms that reward collegial planning, constructive feedback, and experimentation. Perkins (1998) suggests that institutions which are serious about building coaching programmes must provide the resources for extensive training and allow peer coaching participants to be trained in the use of the method.

Formal training

The second common factor in the success of peer coaching programmes is the provision of formal training for peer coaching participants (Skinner and Welch, 1996). It is often difficult for participants of peer coaching to move from the evaluative mode to the coaching mode; participants need practice in providing non-evaluative, observation-based feedback (Skinner and Welch, 1996). Formal training of participants in various communication and coaching skills seems significant, reflecting Perkins' (1998) study of the performance of inexperienced coaches. The study showed that inexperienced coaches tend not to act in line with the idea of peer coaching. In particular, untrained peer coaches used evaluation, negative presuppositions, little paraphrasing and probing, and the use of closed-ended questions. Reviewing the deployment of communication skills in peer coaching, Perkins (1998) showed that such coaches relied on closed questions rather than open questions, presuppositions were used more frequently than positive presuppositions, coaches used negative as well as positive evaluative comments and probed less frequently compared to the use of evaluation and closed questions. Overall, coaches used more judgemental than generative communication strategies (Perkins, 1998).

Formality of planning and contracting

The formality of planning and contracting was the third common factor. Ladyshewsky and Varey (2005) describe the relationships that flourished in their research as having commitment concerning time and place from both parties. An element of formality was confirmed by Ladyshewsky and Varey's (2005) and in Ladyshewsky's (2007) research; in particular formality in the form of a contract, regular meetings, an agenda, a focus on objectives, journal entries, and mapping out roles and the reviewing process were used to ensure that the peer coaching sessions were effective.

Matching of peers and confidentiality agreement

After formality in the planning and contracting of the process it is vital to the success of peer coaching that peers proactively get together with peers with whom they wish to establish a peer coaching relationship (Prince et al., 2010). Coaching is based on a collaborative relationship that aims to facilitate the development and enhancement of skills and performance through feedback, reflection and self-directed learning (Greene and Grant, 2003). As the study by Showers and Joyce (1996, p. 2) showed, teachers who had a working coaching relationship - "that is, who shared aspects of teaching, planned together, and pooled their experiences" - practiced new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more appropriately than did their research counterparts who worked alone. In the research by Prince et al. (2010) 38 peers self-selected their partner for peer coaching. By the end of the study year many students had changed their peer coach to someone who was in the same school (same location) or with whom it was easier to maintain a dialogue. The relationship was a pivotal part of the peer coaching process and students realised that the longer the peer coaching continued, the higher their degree of satisfaction with the peer coach and thus with the relationship (Prince et al., 2010). Successful relationships are based on "careful selection of a peer coach" (Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005, p. 175).

Norris (1997) suggests that peer relationships (co-teaching) go through three stages as teachers work together: forming, storming, and norming. In forming, peers share their irritating experiences, create a working routine,

and clarify their roles. The author emphasises that it is extremely important that peers value one another's strengths and that parity between peers is clearly evident. In the second stage – storming - Norris (1997) recognises that peer coaching resembles any interpersonal relationship in which conflict can occur. Here, peers must be open to working through possibly difficult times and be willingly to learn from this process. Finally, in the last stage - norming - peers begin to create their own norms of working together.

Confidentiality is essential to all peer coaching relationships (Kutzhanova et al., 2009; Ladyshewsky, 2007; Showers, 1984; Spence and Grant, 2007). The literature is consistent in defining confidentiality as a sustaining parameter for peer coaching, peer mentoring, peer learning or other forms of cooperative learning. In order to support a trusting relationship and for optimum performance and maintenance during the relationship, confidentiality is needed (Broscious & Saunders, 2010). Their findings suggest that a lack of confidentiality and trust can lead to a reluctance to open up, or can lead to missed opportunities. The content of the peer coaching relationship must remain confidential "including the colleague's questions, the coach's suggestions, and the colleague's receptiveness (or the lack thereof) to those suggestions..." (Huston and Weaver, 2007, p. 15) in order to achieve an honest and trustful learning relationship. Confidentiality was also recognised by the peers in Cox´s study, exploring organisational and peer dynamics that impact the potential for productive, trusting peer relationships, as an "…important part of trust building" (Cox and Jenkins, 2013, p. 434). Cox describes three main needs in relation to the foundation of trust: "the need for a non-cognitive, values-based attachment; the need for confidentiality; and the need to be open and make oneself vulnerable within the coaching interaction" (Cox and Jenkins, 2013, p. 433). The data from Cox and Jenkins (2013) highlights a particular need in peer coaching for pairs to form a trusting bond based on values and respect. Hall et al. (2008) looked at the nature or quality of the relationship between two peer coaches. They were able to confirm correlations between relationship variables and peer learning styles. There was an emotional component in peers' work together. The more peers agreed their relationship was mutually

respectful and professional, the higher they rated peer coaching's contribution to their own professional development.

Feedback

The literature is inconclusive on the topic of feedback in peer coaching. It is recognised that different authors use peer coaching for different target groups and applications. These different contexts result in a variety of opinions about the use of feedback in peer coaching. For example, it might be useful to give one another feedback after observing each other's teaching skills, while it might be unnecessary and disturbing to evaluate or to give feedback to someone who is disclosing and elaborating their coaching case, looking for support and help. Showers and Joyce (1982) described the provision of 'technical feedback' in the peer coaching process among teachers. Technical feedback was intended to provide team members with specific information about models of teaching: "They point out omissions, examine how materials are arranged, check to see whether all the parts of the strategy have been brought together, and so on" (Joyce and Showers, 1961, p. 6). Later in 1996 Showers and Joyce (1996 b) found it necessary and important to omit verbal feedback as a coaching component. They explained that when teachers try to give one another feedback, collaboration is lessened. Research suggests that feedback is an important element in learning (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Effective feedback is described as goal-directed, specific, detailed, corrective and balanced between positive and negative comments (Thurlings, Vermeulen, Kreijns, and Stijnen, 2012). Giving effective feedback, according to Thurlings et al. (2012) includes asking open-ended, solution-focused and clarifying questions. However, feedback can easily become evaluative in nature (Ladyshewsky, 2010a). Ladyshewsky (2010b) points out that evaluation must not be a focus of the peer coaching relationship otherwise a status difference emerges between the peers that undermines the idea of equality among peers.

Reciprocity

Ackland (1991) reports on two basic forms of peer coaching, by experts and reciprocal coaching. The former is characterised by the premise that teachers who possess a certain level of expertise can provide assistance to

other teachers by coaching. Reciprocal peer coaching implies a reciprocal relationship: 'you coach me, I coach you' which Ackland (1991, p. 25) describes as "you watch me teach and I watch you teach, and, together, we learn about teaching". Reciprocal peer coaching roles are described by Ladyshewsky (2002) as the role of the coach, who is a co-facilitator of the process, and the role of the coachee, whose learning objectives are to be the focus of the particular coaching session. Ladyshewsky (2002) describes that once the learning focus changes towards the needs of the other party, roles are reversed. This alternating action can take place concurrently or in parallel or even simultaneously. To prevent an imbalance from developing, both participants should over time have equivalent participation in both roles of coach and coachee. This maintains the level of perceived reciprocity and equality between the participants, thus maintaining the dynamic that enhances the prospects of on-going commitment and learning (Ladyshewsky, 2005). The reciprocity of peer coaching is advantageous to its members. Showers (1984, p. 55) describes the benefits of reciprocal peer coaching: "The benefits enjoyed by peer coaches in this project suggest that all teachers should be peer coaches. Training for coaching should be integrated with training in teaching strategies … or whatever the content of training happens to be". Reciprocal peer coaching is indicated as more effective (Skinner and Welch, 1996) than peer coaching by experts. Karlsen and Berg (2012) describe reciprocal peer coaching as a win-win situation, where the roles of the coach and the coachee should be turned around repeatedly in order to get the most out of it.

Assessment

Bearing in mind that confidentiality is crucial to peer coaching success, reporting or assessing the peer coaching relationship has to be done without revealing any content. Huston and Weaver (2007) recommend assessing coaching pairs experience, that of university faculty members, at least once during the year of reciprocal coaching and once afterwards. Pairs should do the assessment together, however the confidentiality of the participants must be protected. Ladyshewsky (2010b) talks about how the group's health must be assessed and maintained, meaning that healthy relationships communicate assertively when necessary, raise concerns about the groups

dynamics and work through difficulties in a productive manner. In addition to assessing the health and productivity of the peer coaching, Ladyshewsky (2010b, p. 80) addresses the formalisation of self-assessment embedded in the process to ensure maximum benefit: "The peer coach and coachee must be skilled at on-going self-assessment so that they can forecast appropriate learning needs and recognize when they have achieved their learning targets. For the peer coach, self-assessment should be centered around their coaching practice".

The literature described has covered the principles, structures and processes that help to shape PGC. The following sub-chapter discusses the literature on peer coaching requirements. Commonalities can be understood as influencing conditions that enhance or hinder PGC's desired outcome.

2.2.2 Peer coaching commonalities

Although there is no commonly agreed definition or joint framework on peer coaching, the reviewed literature identifies the following commonalities. Peer coaching programmes demand (a) emotional support, are based on (b) communication, dialogue and reflection, require a (c) climate of trust, honesty and authenticity, and (d) equality among group members. In the following, findings regarding these common factors are explored in detail.

Emotional support

Emotional support is difficult to find in business (Kutzhanova et al., 2009). Kutzhanova et al. (Kutzhanova et al., 2009) found that social interactions among entrepreneurs are rare and hindered by the very nature of entrepreneurship. The same applies to leaders who are ranked highly in the organisational hierarchy, where it is difficult to get feedback, and 'charismatic leadership' and performance is linked closely to effective feedback (Shea & Howell, 1999). Peer coaching involves moving beyond superficial networking towards to becoming 'critical friends' (Ashford et al., 2003). Critical friends, as Costa and Kallick (1993, p. 51) state: "Support mutual development by asking provocative questions, offering helpful critiques and providing feedback necessary for learning". The

literature on peer coaching for business leader development suggests that peer coaching provides a unique peer learning opportunity that creates emotional support which is fundamental for leaders' learning (Hall et al., 2008; Kurtts and Levin, 2000; Kutzhanova et al., 2009; Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005; Maitland, 2005) because of the related interplay of learning and emotions (Simpson and Marshall, 2010). Hall et al. (2008) predicted and confirmed in their quantitative study that a person's satisfaction with peer coaching was positively related to the emotional component in their relationship with the peer coach, as well as to the extent to which the relationship was mutually respectful and professional.

Communication, dialogue and reflection

Peer coaching produces a learning space which becomes a neutral territory in which issues can be processed (Hall et al., 2008). This space is for reflection, discussions, dialogue and feedback and it develops awareness of personal behaviour and uncovers underlying needs, mental models, and belief structures that affect performance. Hall et al. (2008) further report that peer coaching offers an ideal structure for reflection. Exploring possibilities and alternatives, and discovering new insights helps to boost the coachee's self-confidence and self-efficacy (Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005). One of Ladyshewsky's (2007, p. 437) interviewees reflects: "Our discussions during the peer coaching sessions went beyond that of conversations with our superiors and put forward ideas and concepts which may have otherwise been too controversial or perceived to shown a lack of competence or ability in a certain area". Reflection on PGC, self-reflection of an experience by the coachee and a shared reflection by the coaches, enables all parties in peer group coaching to "correct distortions in beliefs and a critique of the presuppositions on which beliefs have been built" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1).

Climate of trust, honesty and authenticity

According to Ladyshewsky (2007), trust, which grows over time between peers, is a psychological condition for peer coaching. Ladyshewsky found that participant comments related to trust indicate a shift towards a high risk, low blame culture that is an empowering factor in peer learning. One of Ladyshewsky and Varey's (2005, p. 175) participants framed honesty and

trust as professional rapport that enabled feedback to happen: "By building a professional rapport and getting to know each other at a deeper level, it broke down any barriers to open and honest communication and feedback". According to Maitland (2005), peer coaching relationships should attempt to adopt a stance of unconditional acceptance that enables vulnerability and curiosity in order to be successful. Hall et al. (2008) explains that trust requires both partners to be honest and open with both peers and with themselves, so as to raise delicate issues. Hall et al. (2008), however, reflect that openness and self-disclosure come with the price of deep feelings that may emerge from reflecting on critical events appropriately expressed with empathy, warmth, and genuineness.

Equality among group members

Perhaps one of the most influential peer coaching conditions is the lack of status differential in the peer relationship that supports more self-disclosure and discussions of learning initiatives and challenges (Ladyshewsky, 2007). According to Maitland (2005, p. 48), "Successful peer relationships were found to have three levels of mutuality, namely, the exchange of knowledge, roles, and rank". The equality in peer coaching enables leaders to be more open with one another and more fully explore areas of critical cognitive conflicts (Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005). Since peers are at equal level, it is more likely that leaders will open up and discuss delicate issues rather than, for example, disclose sensitive topics about their direct reports or boss. Karlsen and Berg (2012) emphasise that maintaining equality in status is central to the success of peer coaching. They recommend that peer coaching communication is non-evaluative and that possible feedback is non-threatening so as to build necessary trust between coach and coachee. Distrust, according to Berg and Karlsen, can evolve if peers are, for example, competing for the same position in an organisation. In that case equality between peers might be endangered.

2.2.3 Impact, effectiveness and benefits

There is significant support for peer coaching in the education literature, which supports its positive outcomes, effectiveness and reports its positive qualities (Barron et al., 2009; Bowman et al., 2002; Elder and Padover,

2006; Huston and Weaver, 2007; Kohler et al., 1997; Kurtts and Levin, 2000; Lu, 2010; Prince et al., 2010; Sekerka and Chao, 2003; Skinner and Welch, 1996; Swafford, 1998; Wong and Nicotera, 2003; Zwart et al., 2007). The UK Department of Education endorses the use of peer coaching, as does the US Department of Education, which has a long history of using peer support and coaching for teacher development (Short, et al., 2010). Peer coaching participants listed the perceived benefits of the peer coaching experience as positive feedback, advice, improvement of practice, sharing the same experience, development of self-confidence, and less intimidation during the observation process (Kurtts and Levin, 2000). Peer coaching can also provide a supportive environment conducive to professional development (Ovens, 2004). This supportive environment is expressed by testimony in Kurtts and Levin (2000, p. 305): "Peer coaching gave me an opportunity to come together with my peer coach and share thoughts about teaching. This helped a great deal. I knew I was not alone in some of my feelings when I was overwhelmed. I know I had support that I could lean on." Reflecting on the implementation of a peer coaching model, coachees appreciated having someone who was available to talk, solve problems and give feedback about teaching practice (Elder and Padover, 2006). In reviewing eight studies on peer coaching, Lu (2010) found that peer coaching helped student teachers to improve their professionalism. Peer coaching was reported to have contributed to the development of student teacher openness to accepting professional criticism of their teaching. Furthermore, student teachers became more accountable, committed, developed their listening skills, and appreciated the benefits of teamwork (Prince et al., 2010).

While reviewing the National Transformation Programme of the Learning and Skill Sector in the UK, Browne (2006, p. 36) reported that peer coaching was the key to transformation, "providing practitioners with the skills which were necessary for understanding the whole and acting upon it." Testimonies describe peer coaching in this research as an effective training tool to transform practice, "to impact on learners and change lives" (Browne, 2006, p. 41). Working with peers for coaching is not only beneficial in respect of the properties described above, but may even offer

some protection from an increase in psychological distress during a stressful period as well as protecting participants psychologically from enhanced interpersonal or personal problems (Short, Kinman, and Baker, 2010). Finally, it should be noted that peer coaching also appears to have a positive impact on those who coach in addition to those who receive the coaching (Sekerka and Chao, 2003). Peer coaching, according to Sekerka and Chao (2003), provides reciprocal benefits to all parties taking part.

The current education literature provides significant support for peer coaching and emphasises its positive outcomes, benefits and effectiveness. Peer coaching for business leaders might be partially comparable to peer coaching for teachers and university faculty in terms of process, so its positive qualities might also be comparable. Unfortunately, the reviewed literature on peer coaching effectiveness for business leaders is limited. In their qualitative study with MBA students, Ladyshewsky and Varey (2005) propose that peer coaching is effective in enhancing critical thinking and metacognition and can support the development of managerial competency. Ladyshewsky's (2007) quantitative study, which aimed to evaluate the impact of experiential learning, goal setting, peer coaching and reflective journaling as a combined strategy to influence leadership development, ascribes peer coaching as helpful and useful in leadership programmes. The author (2007, p. 439) quotes one of the research participants to evidence the value of peer coaching: "To me peer coaching was one of the most valuable learning experiences I have undertaken." Derven and Frappolli (2011, p. 10), researching a blended learning approach to global general manager development at Bristol-Myers Squibb in a case study, describe the reciprocal benefit for peer coaching pairs that could also be found in previously reviewed peer coaching literature for teachers: "… for the coach, there is an opportunity to build skills at a high level; for the 'coachee', to obtain much-needed help in a low-risk relationship." The peer coaching programme at Bristol-Myers Squibb showed a way to leverage best practices globally, and accelerate the integration and productivity of newly-promoted general managers. Sue-Chan and Latham (2004, p. 274) compared peer coaching with the relative effectiveness of an external coach and found, in contrast to former studies, that coaching from an external coach leads to

higher performance than coaching from a peer: "… there was very little that was either effective or ineffective about peer coaching". A limitation of this study might have been the lack of reciprocity in peer coaching and the choice of coaches. Peer coaches were first semester students who were trained in a half-day coaching course. The external coaches were the Associate Director of the MBA programme and a visiting assistant professor who received the same half-day coaching training. In their study Sue-Chan and Latham compared peer coaches with external coaches who rated, presumably because of their different professional experience and life-experience, higher in performance and credibility.

Reviewing the education and the business literature on peer coaching effectiveness, it can be concluded that peer coaching is beneficial to both coachee and coach in a peer coaching relationship and additionally to the organisation employing such coaching methods. Despite the many positive effects of peer coaching, peer coaching is far from being a panacea or ultimate key to leader/teacher development as it has its own challenges and can expose peers to distress. The following sub-chapter reviews the challenges associated with peer coaching.

2.2.4 Challenges associated with peer coaching

"Putting two people together and asking them to coach one another is not a guarantee for success" (Ladyshewsky, 2006, p. 8). Challenges to peer group coaching can be seen as the failure to understand the drivers that promote cooperative behaviour in PGC, as indicated by Hall et al. (2008). They argue that peer coaching does not always work. Peer coaching is a reflexive process which requires the full engagement of the peers with the process, practice, on-going dialogue and time in order to strengthen the needed skills (Hall et al., 2008). Peers can benefit from peer coaching relationships when trust is established, and individuals have the appropriate skills to coach and communicate suitably (Ladyshewsky, 2006), however, in business some leaders might work in a competitive environment. Such a competitive structure could result in disengagement, withholding information or omitting feedback from their 'peer-coach' (Ladyshewsky, 2006). If trust is breached in this way then peer partners may retaliate with competitive

behaviour or become more individualistic and withdraw from the peer coaching relationship (Ladyshewsky, 2006). Ladyshewsky (2006) describes three reward structures to peer learning where the last two are unhelpful to the positive learning experience: cooperative, competitive and individualistic.

Peer coaching problems encountered by participants in the research of Kurtts and Levin (2000) are centred around (a) scheduling, especially when other activities conflicted with the coaching session; (b) having fewer effective partners; (c) their own nervousness; and (d) a perception of their lack of professional knowledge when offering constructive feedback. Different personality structures of peers might also challenge the essentials of peer coaching as individuals have variable abilities to form trusting relationships, and different degrees of agreeableness, and openness to experience (Ladyshewsky, 2010b). Insufficient training, limited resources, logistic problems, and the lack of a formal evaluation process challenge peer coaching programmes. According to Lam et al. (2010), peer coaching for teacher development is facing a dilemma. Peer coaching is widely recognised as an effective tool for teacher development, but at the same time can be received by teachers with little enthusiasm or even resistance. This resistance, explained by Lam et al. (2010) is due to the culture of classroom isolation. Working mostly in isolation, teachers are not used to working in partnership with colleagues and a culture of collaboration does not exist. Peer coaching pairs often experience a contrived collegiality that is administratively imposed and controlled. Teachers were mandated to collaborate voluntarily, which is clearly paradoxical. Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) conclude that technical peer coaching, which focuses on the learning and transfer of new skills and strategies in the existing repertoire of teachers, fosters implementation rather than development, education rather than training, and contrived collegiality rather than a collaborative culture. The authors criticised the administrative practices that forced teachers to work together to implement practices, which they describe as contrived collegiality (Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990). The current literature above discusses challenges associated with dyadic peer coaching. PGC challenges,

however, especially in relation to the context of business leader development, receive very little attention in the literature.

2.3 Learning in peer-group coaching

This study concentrates on leader's learning in PGC, acknowledging that learning is a complex process that needs to be examined carefully. This section starts with a review of the literature on how leaders learn; defining what factors and conditions influence leader learning. This is followed by an examination of the literature on how leaders learn, particularly in PGC.

Adult learning theory, as Brown and Posner (2001) posit, is an important part of leadership development and there are various approaches. The debate on leader development and learning arose particularly within transformative learning theory (Brown and Posner, 2001; Taylor, 1997). Mezirow's definition of transformative learning describes it as "the process of constructing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of meaning of one's experience as a guide to action" (Mezirow,1994 in Taylor, 1997, p. 34). Transformative learning theory is based on the principles of adult learning theory such as andragogy and self-directed learning (Allen, 2007). This approach has its principles in cognitivism, which concentrates on learner potential in influencing the environment where they exist and their 'meaning-making system' (Allen, 2007). Transformative learning is a process which involves the following principles: 1) experience, 2) critical reflection, 3) affective learning, 4) dialogue and relationships which are supportive and trusting, and 5) individual development (Taylor, 2000). Experience alone may not necessarily lead to learning. Critical reflection of experience is necessary for transformation (Brown and Posner, 2001). Learning itself is a process of change, which leads to development (Mezirow, 2000). During the process of learning, present experience is transformed into knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and emotions, so changing the individual biography of the learner (Jarvis, 2004). The concepts of transformative learning theory are useful for achieving leadership development. From a transformative learning perspective, leadership development programmes, and so PGC as a coaching method for leadership development, could work with leaders at both a personal and

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emotional level, they could encourage critical reflection and meaning making, and could provide opportunity for experimentation (Brown and Posner, 2001). Adult learning theory, and in particular transformative learning theory, might help to clarify the learning principles of PGC. Affective learning or person-to-person learning, and dialogue and relationships, as part of transformative learning theory is fundamental to PGC and explored subsequently.

According to Vygotsky (1978) peer dialogue generates several critical characteristics of rational thinking such as a diversity of ideas, the planning of strategies, the symbolic representation of intellectual acts, and finding new solutions. Vygotsky distinguished certain processes in social and cognitive interaction, which motivate the learning of peers. Social and cognitive interaction with a more competent peer makes the collaboration more effective by helping the less competent learner to enter the zone of proximal development, in other words new areas of potential (Vygotsky, 1978). A competent partner alone is not enough for cognitive growth, however. It is important that peers come to a joint understanding by taking each other's opinion into account. As Ladyshewsky (2006, p. 5) argues: "a cooperative reward structure is in place when learners realise that the only way to achieve their personal goal is to ensure that the group achieves its goal". Hogan and Tudge (1999), in their critical review of Vygotsky's theory of child learning, state that interaction style, feedback and interpersonal socio-emotional factors are necessary for peer learning to be effective. Peer learning has a long history and is possibly as old as any form of collaborative or community action, as suggested by Topping (2005). Topping (2005, p. 631) defined peer learning "As the acquisition of knowledge and skills through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions. It involves people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by so doing".

Peer coaching is one method of peer learning that can, through actively helping and supporting equals, lead to significant gains in learning, and is one of many peer learning strategies that can be used to promote learning

and professional development (Ladyshewsky, 2010a). Various authors argue that learning is a social process that can be enhanced by involving peers (Kutzhanova et al., 2009). Kutzhanova et al. (Kutzhanova et al., 2009) describe peer coaching as providing a means to assist the learning process. Only a few studies have examined how peer coaching is a developmental process in contexts outside of educational settings. While asking how peer coaching contributes to the coach's professional development, Sekerka and Chao (2003) report that coaches explained personal benefits in five themes: i) the coaches' belief was strengthened, that they contributed something, ii) coaches recognised that they learned something new, iii) coaches described awareness that their views or behaviour had changed, iv) the coaches made a positive assessment evaluation of their own process, and v) the coaching experience provided the coaches with a challenge, which engaged their interest.

One of the few studies that examines learning and development of leaders in peer coaching is by Kutzhanova et al. (2009). The results of Kutzhanova's et al. case study suggest that learning starts when entrepreneur leaders reflect on their limitations and discover a gap between their capacity to deal with specific business situations and the skills they possess. This realisation of self-limitation is an essential condition for further learning. The discovery of a limitation creates the motivation to overcome it (Kutzhanova et al., 2009). Ladyshewski (2010) describes these cognitive limitations as the intellectual disagreements that occur when peers discuss issues related to their fields of practice in a manner that is easily understood by one another and is a non-threatening. These cognitive limitations, as Ladyshewsky and Varey (2005) argue, are triggered by peer interaction that promotes cognitive development. They give an explanation of these cognitive limitations - learners become aware of a contradiction in their knowledge base while discussing authentic problems and concerns with another peer (Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005). During the peer coaching, transfer of learning to practice is facilitated by a socio-cognitive learning approach through the discussions about training and the application to work that takes place (Ladyshewsky, 2006).

Ladyshewsky argues that without specific reward structures peer coaching interventions are likely to fail (2006). The reward structures influence the cognitive and affective outcomes of a learning experience by creating cooperative behaviour. This cooperative reward structure regulates learner willingness to learn, and their motivation for their intensity and way of learning. He asks what elements can be put in place to encourage cooperative learning outcomes during peer coaching and concludes that these elements are: positive interdependence; preparation of learners' interpersonal and small group skills; reflection on, and evaluation of, group processing; and individual accountability (Ladyshewsky, 2006).

2.4 Gaps in peer-group coaching literature

The literature reviewed so far indicates that there is little understanding of how business leaders learn in PGC. The literature review identifies the following three gaps, which will be addressed in this study and are shown in Figure 4 below.
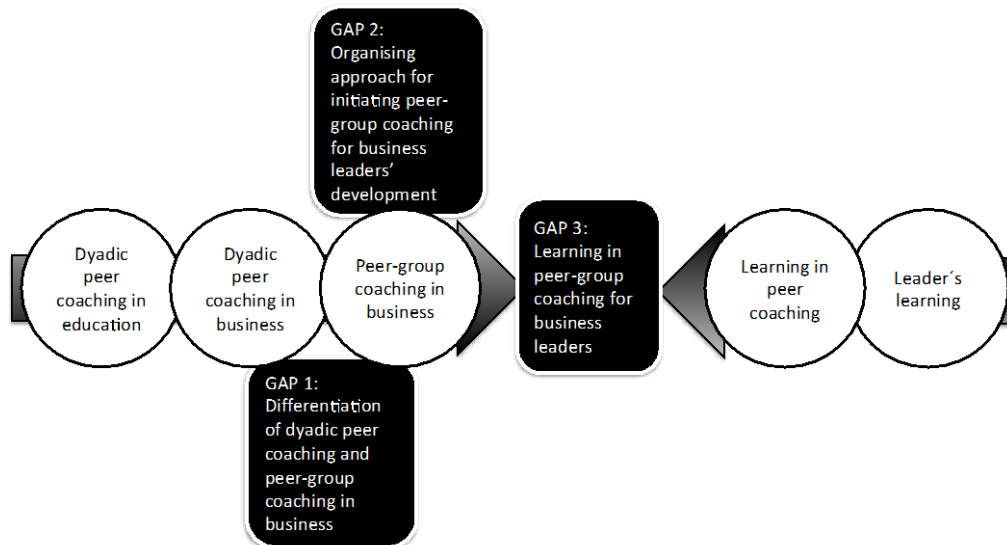
Figure 4: Identified gaps in the PGC literature

Firstly, existing research on peer coaching for business leaders is mostly based on work on peer coaching research in education. There is a lack of research that distinguishes between dyadic peer coaching and PGC, which is shown as gap number one in the conceptual framework above. The current peer coaching debate, which builds on educational research, confuses dyadic peer coaching with PGC, and might irritate or even compromise practitioners as well as the work of HR professionals who want to make use of PGC for leadership development.

Secondly, the existing research mainly concentrates on dyadic peer coaching and its effectiveness, conditions, principles and frameworks. PGC for business leader development is almost non-existent. No cohesive organising approach, which is identified as the second gap, is today researched and provided that might allow practitioners to initiate PGC as a leadership development intervention. Such an organising approach would help to answer questions, such as: What are the key fundamentals of PGC? How is it possible to guide leaders through PGC key fundamentals to enable learning?

Thirdly, the literature is providing a rich line of research on the processes of adult and leader learning and partially how learning is happening in dyadic peer coaching. The third literature gap is identified as learning in PGC for business leaders, and is positioned between research into learning in peer coaching and PGC in business in the conceptual framework above. This research aims to explain how business leaders learn in PGC, providing a theoretical framework that contributes to the PGC knowledge base and the application of PGC in business for leaders' learning.

This study aims to address each of these gaps. By gathering experiences from leaders who have experienced PGC, the study will generate understanding of how to understand PGC and to distinguish PGC from other kinds of coaching, of how leaders learn in PGC and contribute to the shared knowledge base of PGC. This, and a proposed organisational approach for initiating and guiding PGC, will help practitioners, HR professionals and

members of PGCs to understand this coaching method and how best to work with PGC and avoid unintended consequences.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspective and the methodology for the study in relation to the central research question. It provides details to explain why grounded theory (GT) and its qualitative research approach is a suitable methodology to explore the research question and suits the researcher's philosophical position. I discuss possible alternative methodological approaches and why, for the purpose of this study, they were rejected. I provide details of the development of two data collection approaches: focus groups and semi-structured interviews. I describe data management and data analysis, and summarise issues of trustworthiness, reflexivity and ethics in the context of this research, and indicate potential limitations to the research strategy and design.

Since the research purpose of this study is the development of a theoretical conjecture, with the help of the GT methodology, it is important to have a common understanding for 'theory', 'theoretical conjecture' and 'grounded theory' used in this work. For this research I will adopt Remenyi's definition of theory (2013, pp. 3–4):

> "A theory is systematically organised knowledge applicable in a relatively wide variety of circumstances, using a system of assumptions, accepted principles and rules of procedure devised to analyse, predict or otherwise explain the nature of behaviour of a specified set of phenomena. But it is also often simply the best explanation available at that time".

In this thesis I will aim to develop a theoretical conjecture or a framework for practice, and I will use these terms interchangeably. This differentiation is made based on Karl Popper's notion of 'falsification' which indicates that the logic normally associated with induction is flawed, because no matter how much data is collected in support of a proposed theory, it is possible that the next data acquired could contradict that theory (Remenyi, 2013).

"Although data can not be used to 'prove' a theory it can always be used to falsify a theory" (Remenyi, 2013, p. 5). This understanding of theory building underpins this research to acknowledge the conjectural nature of knowledge and explains the use of the term 'theoretical conjecture' or 'theoretical framework' instead of 'theory'.

3.2 The research question

The question and sub-questions for this research are:

▪ How do business leaders learn in PGC?

The related subsidiary questions are:

▪ What processes are in operation in PGC?
▪ What mechanisms in PGC facilitate learning for business leaders?

The research questions have been developed in the context of my professional experience as a business trainer and coach in the field of leadership development and my personal interest in learning and development. They developed in response to a lack of research that describes and explains PGC, it's underpinning theory and how participants learn in peer coaching.

3.3 Philosophical approach

The research is conducted under the umbrella of the pragmatic paradigm. The pragmatic paradigm "seeks to transcend psychology's dialectic culture wars by developing an integrative alternative" (Fishman, 1999, p. 8). Fishman (1999, p. 8) concludes that the pragmatic paradigm "…combines the epistemological insights and value awareness of sceptical, critical, and ontological postmodernism with the methodological and conceptual achievements of the positivist paradigm". Creswell (2008) argues that the pragmatic paradigm allows the researcher to reject being loyal towards one specific philosophical stance. Instead, it allows the researcher "to aid in understanding and improving real world practice" (Creswell, 1998, p. 6) and choose the methodology that is most suited to do so (Creswell, 2008). The

pragmatic paradigm best fits with my beliefs and worldview as a researcher and reflects my own 'conflict of beliefs'. This conflict can be described by the positivist culture and my upbringing in post-war Germany, my academic training as a mechanical engineer, and my current work with private businesses that use facts and figures for strategic decisions. This positivist tendency conflicts with my propensity towards constructivism that developed over the past decade. My work as an executive coach and leadership trainer, as well as my education in systemic family therapy, taught me that an individual's reality is largely constructed, and total objectivity is not possible. Here pragmatism "…offers a practical and outcome-oriented method of inquiry that is based on action and leads, iteratively, to further action and the elimination of doubt" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17) that represents my way of thinking and working in academia and in private business. Pragmatism is not committed to one particular view of what exists, and knowledge is seen as derived from interaction among groups of individuals and the artefacts in their environment, both of which create a reality. Some pragmatists recognise the existence and importance of the natural or physical world and have a high regard for the reality and influence of the inner world of experience in action (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). I share both views that: "social events and processes have an objective reality in the sense that they take place irrespective of the researcher and that they can be observed and researched by the researcher" and "social realities are negotiated by human actors and that participants' interpretations of events shape their consequences" (Willig, 2009, p. 48).

I reject a purely positivist position and believe that truth is also enacted (Mills, Bonner, and Francis, 2006). This belief is in tune with how I conceive my role as a researcher, as described by Willig (2009, p. 48): "…the researcher acts as a witness. He or she observes carefully what is going on, takes detailed notes of proceedings, questions participants in order to better understand what they are doing and why. The researcher takes care not to import his or her own assumptions and expectations into the analysis." As a researcher my intention was to remain open minded in order to generate rather than test hypotheses. My role was, amongst others, that of

a witness who observed data (Willig, 2008). Additionally, I would describe my research role as that of a 'cartographer' and 'inventor' who maps individual categories of experience and invents concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience. I was inclined to use my analytical skills to represent, in a systematic and accessible fashion, a clear picture of how leaders learn in PGC (Willig, 2008). I was open to anything that emerged from the data and tried to approach this data without any preconceptions. My identity as a researcher and my standpoint on data collection and data analysis remained secondary. I tried to deal sensitively with all data, as I am aware that objectivity in qualitative research is an impossible ideal as researchers bring to the research situation their particular paradigms, including perspectives, training, knowledge and biases (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Pragmatism is not only in tune with how I perceive my research role but also in tune with the research question, as business leader determine their own PGC processes in pre-determined PGC boundaries and rules. Hall et al. (2008) explain that peer coaching is grounded in process rather than content. PGC is goal oriented in nature and follows a process that enables participants to reflect on experiences and leads to interpretations of events for future consequences. The focus of peer coaching is on "understanding self, other people, events and patterns over time rather than 'truth' as measured by an external judge" (Hall et al., 2008, p. 491). In this sense, the process of peer coaching is also constructivist, as peers deal with multiple realities rather than a fixed 'truth' (Hall et al., 2008).

3.4 Choice of research strategy

My philosophical assumptions and the research question were the basis for choosing the methodology that guides this research, as outlined above. Strauss and Corbin's version of GT, "that vacillates between post-positivism and constructivism, with reliance on terms such as recognizing biases and maintaining objectivity" (Mills et al., 2006, p. 3), is chosen as the research methodology for this study. Viewing the permutations of GT on a spiral of methodological development, as introduced by Mills et al. (2006), Strauss and Corbin's version of GT would take the middle of the spiral, while

Glaser's 'traditional' and Charmaz's 'evolved' versions respectively the beginning and the end. I rejected an evolved, social constructivist version of GT, which actively repositions the researcher as the author of a reconstruction of experience and meaning (Mills et al., 2006). Constructivist GT is not aligned with my ontological orientation and the belief that PGC has an objective reality in the sense that it takes place irrespective of the researcher and has a measurable effect on relevant tangibles in business. Furthermore, PGC and its effects can be observed and documented (Willig, 2008). Glaser's version of GT was also rejected as the main methodology for this research, because I do not believe in a pre-existing reality 'out there', independent of individual and observer interpretations that would be in line with a purely positivist paradigm.

I have also considered other research methodologies applicable to my research question, but rejected them for various reasons. For example, the methodology of case study was rejected because of epistemological concerns, in terms of what assumptions case study research makes about the world and the role of the researcher in the research process. Case studies focus on the particular and case study researchers see each case as unique even where it shares characteristics with other cases (Willig, 2009). Willig (2009, p. 87) explains that case study research starts with a "careful and detailed description of individual cases in all their particularity before they move on to a cautious engagement with theory development or generalization. This means that case study research is based upon the assumption that the world is a complex place where even general laws or common patterns of experience or behaviour are never explained in predictable or uniform ways. Such a position resonates with a critical realist view of the word". Rowley (2002, p. 20) expands on generalisation and the development of theory: "…generalisation can only be performed if the case study design has been appropriately informed by theory, and can therefore be seen to add to the established theory". However, a theory of how leaders learn in PGC is absent and its development is a primary goal of this research. Willig (2009, p. 86) discusses difficulties in case studies and concludes that "a case study is capable of a certain movement from the local to the global. The case represents something beyond itself." Willig asks

(2009, 86): "But what does it represent?". Case studies can be used to develop or refine theory, and "researchers should be very careful about the way in which they generalise from their work" (Willig, 2009, 86). I, however, consider the development of theory as central to this research as there is no former PGC theory to build on. GT offers an approach that would produce theory that "fits or works" according to pragmatic paradigm, since the theory has been derived from data, not deduced from logical assumptions (Murphy, Grealish, Casey, & Keady, 2011, p. 7).

My role as a researcher, described above as that of a 'cartographer' and 'inventor' who maps individual categories of experience and invents concepts, models and schemes derived from data that is not interpreted, is different to that of a case study researcher. A case study researcher's role is described by Willig (2009) as that of a 'witness' or a 'reporter', who provides an accurate and detailed account of the case. "Whether descriptive or explanatory, the case study relies upon accuracy in matters of detail and the provision of sufficient evidence in support of the researcher's interpretations" (Willig, 2009, p. 88). Case study research requires active participant involvement to stimulate thoughts, feelings and self-reflection in the participant, which the participant may have not experienced otherwise (Willig, 2009). In this study my intention is to study participant experience inductively without actively engaging leaders to map their experiences, and progressively identify and integrate categories of meaning of data to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic (Martin and Turner, 1986).

According to Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011), research in the helping professions goes through different stages. In the first stage, descriptive methods and case studies are used to describe and distinguish a phenomenon. In the second stage, the research moves slowly from theory-generating methods towards a number of randomised control studies and affirmation research aimed at the solidification of theory in practical studies. The third stage deals with exceptions to the established theory and defines the fringes and borders of the theories developed. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) argue that we are currently, when it comes to executive

coaching, moving towards the later second stage and that we will see more and more randomised control trials. In PGC, we are currently moving to the early second stage, where we leave case studies and start generating theory that is later to be tested.

3.4.1 Grounded theory strategy

Corbin and Strauss (2008) see techniques and procedures as tools to be used by the researcher to solve methodological problems. Corbin (2009, pp. 40–41) describes the techniques and procedures of GT "not as a set of directives to be rigidly adhered to" and notes that, "no researcher should become so obsessed with following a set of coding procedures that the fluid and dynamic nature of qualitative analysis is lost". In progressing with my research I adapted Corbin's view that the analytical process is a thinking process that requires being empathetic. It requires one to step into the shoes of the other and try to see the world from their perspective. In the course of this research I discovered that it was advantageous to have followed GT as my methodology as it aligns with some of my personal strengths and preferences. In my profession I specialise in business creativity and creative processes, and I consider creativity as one of my personal strengths and passions. GT allowed me to work creatively with data collection as well as with data analysis. Furthermore, I aimed to be "relaxed, flexible, and driven by insight gained through interaction with data rather than being structured and based on procedures" (Corbin, 2009, p. 41). Stern and Phyllis (2009, p. 57) see GT as a "creative process – if you really want to know what is going on, you have to feel it; you have to be affected by it; you have to let it move you." After the first data analysis, in specific open and axial coding, I described concepts from extracted codes and built conceptual categories. These first categories or meta-concepts only represented parts of a possible theory, however I saw in it 'themes of learning' that I incorporated into a second interview guide with the intention of extracting the essence of learning as described by leaders in PGC. This was a creative and pivotal step in my research, as the succeeding data could be used for developing the intended theoretical conjecture. At this point I understood that there is, for this research, no fixed GT approach, but rather a GT way of thinking that can be enriched with creativity and intuition.

Working with the Corbin and Strauss version of GT, I followed certain key research principles. The first principle was to follow my philosophical view that "there is not one reality; there are multiple 'realities', and that collecting and analysing data requires capturing and taking into account those multiple viewpoints" (Corbin, 2009, p. 38). My second principle was to build knowledge out of multiple constructs, to invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience. I continually tested and modified these constructs in an iterative process of data collection and data analysis in light of new experience (Schwandt, 1998). Another research principle was that I was engaged proactively with the literature from the beginning of the research process. Strauss and Corbin (1998) identified many uses for interweaving the literature throughout the process of evolved GT. The literature helped to formulate the research questions and informed data collection and data analysis as well as the development of a theoretical conjecture. Data and frameworks that already existed were used and considered in order to understand similarities and differences between existing frameworks and inform the inductive process of theoretical conjecture development. Glaser and Strauss (2006) recommended that researchers should not spend much time in acquiring familiarity with the literature so as to avoid a 'confirmatory bias' that drives a researcher to look for data that will confirm their preconceptions. The existence of the confirmatory bias was kept constantly in mind and with this awareness I reflected on the data analysis process. Comparing pieces of data for similarities and differences has been used as another key principle in all data analysis stages of this research to differentiate one theme or category from another and to identify properties and dimensions specific to that theme or category (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

3.4.2 Sampling Process

For this research I worked with two organisations from different industries that granted me access in order to interview participants. Using data from more than one organisation allowed verification of codes and categories found in one organisation with those from another organisation. Further strengthening my research strategy, participants came from different

hierarchical levels, had different levels of responsibility and different functions in the organisation. Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 8) explain that sampling in GT "proceeds not in terms of drawing samples of specific groups of individuals, units of time, and so on, but in terms of concepts, their properties, dimensions, and variations".

My work as an innovation consultant and leadership trainer provided me with contacts within two private businesses that offer PGC as part of their leadership development programmes. The first organisation is a German insurance group. Worldwide, the organisation is represented in over 30 countries and employs almost 50,000 people. The second organisation is one of the world's leading medical technology companies, based in the United States with subsidiaries in Europe. Over 20,000 employees work in this organisation worldwide, with annual sales of almost nine billion dollars in 2012. Prior to the interviews, I shared the relevant participant information sheets with the HR representatives of the two organisations. For reasons of anonymity, I will refer to the insurance company in this study as 'GIG', an abbreviation for 'German insurance group' and the medical technology company as 'TECH'. The leadership development programmes of both GIG and TECH comprised a number of different training modules that were run over the course of several months. Between these modules, participants met in their allocated peer-groups to sustain and coach each other. In total, 36 leaders participated in both programmes, forming nine peer groups for coaching. The HR representatives randomly invited approximately 2/3 of the participants of the ongoing leadership development programmes to take part in the research interviews. A copy of the invitations can be found in Appendix 7.4. For this research, the main criterion was that participants were business leaders and took part in PGC during the LD programmes. There were no other criteria for selection. It was relevant that participants were randomly selected by the HR professionals in order to increase the representativeness of this sample. Another advantage of inviting potential participants with the help of the HR representative was that those who declined participation did not have to explain their reasons to the researcher. Twelve leaders were interviewed and thirteen leaders participated in four focus groups. Six participants of the total nineteen participated in both focus

groups, as well as in interviews. Each focus group, as well as each participant, was anonymised and given a pseudonym. The participant details, shown in Table **2**, list gender, industry, function and/or the hierarchical level of the participants to highlight the diversity of this sample.

Participant (pseudonym)	Male/ Female	Company/ Industry	Function/ Level	Participation in focus group and number	Participation in interview
Klaus	M	GIG/ Insurance		X1	
Petra	F	GIG/ Insurance		X1	
Michael	M	GIG/ Insurance		X1	
Tom	M	GIG/ Insurance		X1	
Hans	M	GIG/ Insurance		X2	
Dieter	M	GIG/ Insurance	Managing Director	X2	
John	M	GIG/ Insurance	Leader division claims	X2	
Marc	M	GIG/ Insurance	Group leader, health	X3	X
Denise	F	GIG/ Insurance	Advocate	X3	X
Andrew	M	GIG/ Insurance	Group leader, fraud prevention	X3	X
Rob	M	GIG/ Insurance	Head of IT	X3	X
Greta	F	GIG/ Insurance	Leader division claims	X4	X
Denis	M	GIG/ Insurance	Leader division accidents	X4	X
Roger	M	GIG/ Insurance			X
Anja	F	TECH/ Engineering	Project leader, R&D		X

Mohammed	M	TECH/ Engineering	Project leader, Advanced operations		X
Aida	F	TECH/ Engineering	Project leader, Quality		X
Olga	M	TECH/ Engineering	Project leader, R&D		X
Pierre	M	TECH/ Engineering	Project leader, Quality		X

Table 2: Participant details

3.5 Data collection

First, the processes of PGC were explored in four focus groups to give context to PGC. During the focus groups participants elaborated on the vertical as well as the horizontal processes in PGC. Intentionally the focus groups focused on PGC processes and did not explore individual learning aspects. I avoided the fact that individuals would have expressed subjective learning aspects in a group setting, where possible group dynamics might have limited participants from focusing on their individual experience. Subsequently, twelve individuals were interviewed using a semi-structured interview approach. This method was chosen to investigate individual aspects of learning in PGC. Since the study aimed for data collection until theoretical saturation had been achieved (Willig, 2008), the proposed research design allowed flexibility to add additional focus groups or interviews. Other alternative sources of data for this research were initially considered and rejected. For example, data collected by an independent observer could have affected the outcome of the PGC. The use of diaries for data collection was also considered and rejected as participants believed that filling in diaries would not fit their working habits and additional work should be avoided. Additionally, because of participant working habits, there was the concern that the diary content would be brief, incomplete and hence of poor value. In this section each data collection method is explained in detail to make replication of this research possible.

3.5.1 Focus groups

Bryman and Bell (2011) describe the essence of a focus group as a form of group interview to achieve a joint construction of meaning.

My intention in starting data collection with the help of focus groups was to explore the processes in peer group coaching and to clarify which processes and process steps participants chose in their PGCs. This exploration helped to understand how PGC was practiced by leaders and gave the context for building a later theoretical framework of the way leaders learn in PGC. At this stage my priority was to capture the jointly experienced PGC processes. I wished to explore two kinds of processes that can be identified in PGC and that I named: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal is the process that describes PGC from start to finish, with all PGC sessions and supporting activities in between. The vertical process is the process within a PGC session itself that describes the actual coaching process and choice of coaching method.

While facilitating focus groups I was sensitive to the fact that I should not be intrusive, but nevertheless provide enough structure and guidance so that participants could recall PGC processes in depth. My work experience as a leadership trainer and workshop facilitator helped me to keep the balance between control and flow. For example, I presented an agenda and objectives for the focus group that gave the participants structure and reassurance while at the same time I welcomed it when the group deviated from the agenda whenever I thought it appeared necessary. The focus groups lasted 60 minutes on average and participants recorded their own PGC processes on the provided flip-chart paper with the help of index-cards. At the beginning of each focus group I provided cards for all participants who were asked to recall individually all 'process elements' they experienced in PGC and to note each element on one single card. Process elements were described as all PGC process steps; for example, meetings, phone calls, discussions, techniques used etc. Subsequently all cards were placed on a timeline and explained and discussed. In placing the index-cards on the timeline, the record of the processes was immediately complete. The use of this technique was of advantage as it gave the focus

group a clear structure and ensured that all members played an equal part. Furthermore, this technique helped to avoid conformity issues as participants brainstormed individually, before presenting their process elements to the group. These focus groups promoted self-disclosure among participants who were then encouraged to question each other's responses, which elicited clarification and explored shortcomings to their statements (Freeman, 2006).

The first focus group was videotaped but all following focus groups only audio-taped. Videotaping was considered inadequate after the first recording showed only group members standing in front of a flip-chart or sitting at a table and discussing PGC processes. No 'physical' behaviour, group dynamics or gestures could be recorded that would have helped to describe the processes in PGC.

3.5.2 Interviews

Berg (2004, p. 75) defined interviewing as a "conversation with a purpose". The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to investigate how business leaders learn in PGC. To sustain the purpose, and to ground the theory in the data, the interviews were separated into two parts, six months apart.

Part One began at the end of January 2013, when I interviewed seven GIG leaders using a semi-structured interview approach. These interviews were analysed and a preliminary framework was developed. Part Two followed in July 2013, when I conducted five semi-standardised telephone interviews with participants from TECH. Again, these interviews were analysed and the initial framework was adjusted. All interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed with the individual permission of all participants, indicated by signed consent forms.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen over unstructured and structured interviews to allow flexibility and depth in the use of a pre-designed questionnaire. The guides helped me to listen actively and to probe when necessary without losing the flow of the interview. However, at no time

during the interviews did I strictly follow the interview guides. Whenever the interviewee started to explore a certain topic, I figuratively stepped aside to give room to their thoughts and experience of learning in PGC. My experience and skill in interviewing participants increased after each interview. The first data analysis also helped me to understand what differentiates a good interview and which questions and approaches provided me with rich data. For example, I learned that moments of silence were an effective approach to encourage interviewees to explore issues more deeply, or that questions related to 'helpfulness' could be addressed more than once and often new content emerged. The language for the questions was chosen to be comprehensible and relevant to the leaders. Closed questions were avoided. All first part interviews were held in the German language, as this was the participants' mother tongue. The questions for the interview guides were designed and structured so that they helped to answer the research question. Six topics relevant to answering the research question were chosen and sub-questions to each topic were developed. The complete interview guide can be found in Appendix 7.5. The six topics were:

1. Status quo: What happened in the PGC?
2. Helpfulness: How helpful was the PGC and what helped?
3. Surprises and special moments: What surprised you?
4. Behaviour change: What have you done differently (at work)?
5. Emotions: What emotions did you have during the PGC?
6. Hypothetical: What would you like to have happened differently?

Questions to answer the status quo helped to frame PGC. Status quo questions were redundant when interviewees had participated in a preceding focus group. The 16 sub-questions relating to the other five topics helped to gain a first understanding of how leaders learn in PGC. While almost all questions were asked in the interviews, interviewees expanded on different topics differently. To keep the flow of the interviews, I sometimes jumped among questions and topics. At other times, I found it helpful to start with one topic and come back to the same topic after asking questions about other topics in between.

The second interview guide for the second part interviews was developed after the first data analysis. It differed from the first in that in addition to the original questions, a list of 18 so called 'themes of learning' with quotes from former interviews were added. This list and a description of its use can be found in the following chapter, Data Analysis Procedures. The list was sent to the interviewees prior to the interviews by email. The interviews started with the interview guide from Part One so as to address, openly and in general terms, learning in PGC, and continued with the list of themes to explore particular aspects of learning in PGC that were detected in the first round of data analysis. Following this, I went step by step through the list provided and asked the interviewees to expand on themes that they experienced in their own PGCs and to reject all themes that they did not experience or could not relate to. I made it clear that the list was more for use as a guide and that themes could be expanded, rephrased, rejected or added if felt necessary. This second interview approach helped me to encourage the interviewees to explore their learning experience in PGC in a deeper way. The interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes and transcripts comprised around 5000 words each.

The chronological process of the research strategy is presented in Figure 5. The preceding section described the research strategy from the initial research question to data collection, whereas the following sub-chapter will focus on data analysis, conceptualisation and the development of a theoretical conjecture.

Design Focus Groups

Design Semi-Structure Interview-Guide 1

Design Semi-Structure Interview-Guide 2

Focus Groups GIG 1-4

Interviews GIG 1-7

Interviews TECH 8-12

Data Saturation – no more data needed

Research question

Description of PGC – Process

Data Analysis Part 1

Data Analysis Part 2

Theoretical Conjecture is developed and discussed

Literature
Research is guided by themes and categories and also informs themes and categories

Concept-ualizing (themes and categories)

Concept-ualizing (themes and categories)

Memos

Memos

Memos

2012   January 2013   June 2013   July 2013   November 2013

Figure 5: Chronological process of research strategy

3.5.3 Ethics

My research approach has been to work with leaders from two different organisations to explore how leaders learn in PGC. All participants for this study were recruited with the help of two HR representatives. All leaders were participants of two leadership development programmes in which 36 leaders participated in total. The HR representatives asked only a portion of the total leaders randomly for participation. The HR professionals were 'ranked lower' in the organisational hierarchy than the participants, and it was therefore assumed that leaders would not (consciously or subconsciously) feel obliged to participate in the research. Who and how many leaders were asked for participation and how many declined was never disclosed to me. This approach has helped participants to remain anonymous and easily decline participation if they wished so. Confidentiality was considered as fundamental between the researcher and the respondent(s) and was addressed prior to each interview or focus group. Here, the following ethical procedures were shared with the respondents. Participants needed to feel that whatever has been disclosed will not be used in ways which will compromise or harm them (Bond, 2006). Carroll (1995,

p. 25) reflects about the difficulties of internal counsellors of having multiples roles within the organisation: "Confidentiality is easily defined, but not always easily operationalized in work settings. Loyalties to the client and to the organization, which after all pays the salary, can be divided. Working with a client may unearth an organizational issue. Is it the task of the counsellor to feed this back into the system? Or to help the client build up the strength to deal with it? Or both?". I was aware of being, similar to internal counsellors, in multiple roles at the same time such as in the role of an independent researcher and dependent trainer who reports to the organisation. While conducting the research I was at no point asked by the organisation (e.g. HR representative) to reveal any participant information, I was questioning myself according to Carroll's ethical questions raised above and considering confidentially as an absolute principle (Bond, 2006).

Ethical procedures included the following steps:

- All focus groups and interviews were conducted on a confidential basis.

- Findings were reported in aggregated form.

- All data was de-identified to help to achieve participant anonymity. Codes were used to identify research participants in place of their names.

- All physical data generated in this research (e.g. notes, flipchart papers, index cards) was copied and electronically stored. Afterwards the physical data was destroyed. Data and codes and all identifying information is kept in a separate password protected hard drive.

- Only those quotations (non-attributable) where participants refer to themselves were considered for the final report, and only with their written consent.

All documentation required for ethical conduct of research is provided in Appendices 7.1 to 7.5.

3.6 Data analysis procedures

"Analysis is examining something in order to find out what it is and how it works." (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 46)

Data analysis began with transcribing the interviews, and first cycle coding began with data from the first seven interviews. The focus group recordings were intentionally not transcribed and data was not analysed. The purpose of the focus groups was to understand the different PGC approaches and processes used by the groups. It is important for this research to understand what participants referred to while speaking about PGC. The processes used by the participants for PGC build the understanding and definition of PGC. The focus groups were constructed and facilitated in such a way, as described previously, that the participants immediately visualised processes with the help of index cards that represented the process steps. As planned, the focus group data did not contain any information about how the individual learned within PGC. It was apparent that the data gathered from the focus groups mostly contributed to the way the groups had implemented PGC on a technical basis, not covering individual learning experiences. The results of the focus groups were handled like memos, informed the research, and can be found in Appendix 7.6.

Starting the open coding process of the first interviews, I worked through the transcripts line-by-line as well as paragraph-by-paragraph and extracted codes. These codes were then grouped by themes that seemed to belong to leaders learning in PGC. In this research codes are the smallest extracted unit of data. Concepts describe a group of codes that deal with a similar theme. Categories describe meta-concepts that group concepts together and the term 'theoretical conjecture' is used to describe a group of categories and their relationships. The coding process is shown schematically in Figure 6.
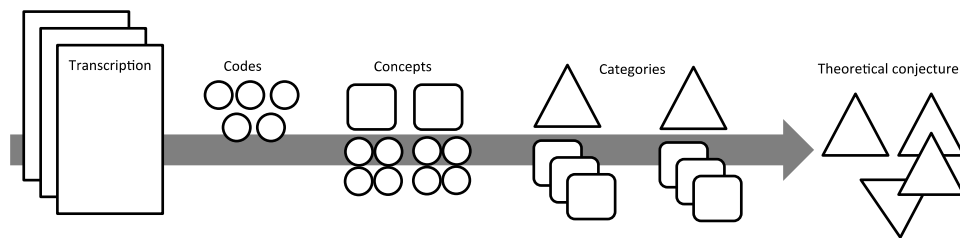
Figure 6: Coding process

During the initial open coding process, 26 concepts were developed and codes were assigned to concepts. The open coding process was conducted slowly and with care to increase the reliability and consistency of this study. I started with proofreading and simply underlying key phrases, looking for repetitions. I also searched for "local terms" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 89) or in vivo codes. For example 'trust' was understood and referred to differently and I categorised it into sub-themes such as kind of trust, ways to create trust, meaning of trust etc. Constantly I searched for similarities and differences in sentences, paragraphs or units. I usually asked: what is this sentence or paragraph about and how is it similar or different to the previous or following paragraph or sentence? Open coding was performed with the help of a colleague. We worked in parallel on the same transcripts and compared termed codes or themes after each paragraph, unit or page. This approach helped the research, as codes and participant accounts could be discussed and compared.

After the development of the first 26 concepts, a first axial coding process related the concepts to each other. Axial coding describes the process of relating concepts and categories in their dimensions with each other (Corbin

64

and Strauss, 1990). During this process, concepts could merge if they were similar or could be grouped within one category (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). I found that although there were a number of different concepts developed that dealt with learning, these interacted with other concepts, such as 'group matching' and 'social cohesion of the group'. The concepts were broadly assigned to categories such as 'psychological factors', 'learning elements' or 'influencing factors'. It became apparent that the relationship between psychological factors and learning, as well as the other categories, was not yet saturated or clear. Nevertheless, it was found helpful to form a first provisional framework from these concepts and categories, starting to visualise categories and their concepts as well as possible relationships among categories. This provisional framework was found useful as it stimulated discussions and questions about concepts, categories and connections. The whole process was documented in memos and video memos, which I could later revisit to understand my thinking process behind the initial framework.

The initial framework showed some concepts that seemed to be the centre of learning in PGC, however, they did not necessarily describe the mechanics of learning. I extracted 18 concepts for learning from the data, called 'elements of learning'. These concepts were used as the basis for an extended second interview guide. The list of 18 concepts for learning is shown in Table 3:

Nr.	Elements of learning	Quotes (Interviewees in first round of interviews)
1	Free your mind – get mental space	"...breaking out of the daily working routine....doing something totally different."
2	Self-reflection	"Time for reflecting on my own actions and on myself. It is stimulating to think about things…"
3	Competition	"Who has the most important case….it encourages me to do more!"
4	Trying out	"Trying out things – where you cannot do anything wrong!"
5	Confirmation and acknowledgment	"I was familiar with my colleague's cases, somehow. That gave me confidence."

6	Asking questions	"I could ask questions about my case."
7	Getting ideas and tips	"..to get ideas and tips from others!"
8	Different perspective	"Issues seen from different angles."
9	Peers ask a lot of questions	"…other asked me a lot of questions."
10	Comparing to peers	"…peer group members experience the same situation as I do."
11	Being surprised	"That was something I did not think of before."
12	Stepping beyond borders	".. trying to do something differently that I have never done before!"
14	Recognising patterns	"..I was able to recognise patterns in my behaviours…"
15	Doubt	"...sometimes I ask myself if I am a bit weird or just different to others!"
16	Learning through presenting my case	"I learned due to presenting my case and reflecting about it."
17	Other share their experience	"Peers shared their professional and personal experience."
18	Simply talking	"...we shared a lot information about our company…we just talked along."

Table 3: 18 concepts for learning in PGC

Five new participants from TECH were interviewed, using the amended interview guide. These participants were questioned about the concepts I had discovered and about one additional concept that was not found in the data. While analysing the data I reflected on the concepts that emerged. I noticed that all concepts helped learning in PGC, but no concept prevented learning. The literature raised an issue about competition among learners which might lead to disengagement in peer coaching (Ladyshewsky, 2006). To test the concepts and to examine if firstly my biases prevented me from identifying this additional concept, and secondly to probe whether participants agreed with the concepts I suggested, I added 'competition' as an additional concept, including the following expression as a quote: 'who has the most important case….it encourages me to do more!'. Surprisingly, all five interviewed participants replied that this concept did not arise in

their PGC sessions. Overall, the interviewees added information on the concepts of learning, and a few general concepts could be complemented and new concepts identified.

With the new data and codes, all concepts were presented in the form of post-its and every single code relating to a concept was hung below it. In axial coding, I then asked the questions: 'How do these new codes change the way the concepts relate to each other?' and 'How do they form certain categories?' Several interactions were found among concepts of learning and several conditions that influenced learning were also identified. This was achieved by comparing all categories with each other, for example, and asking questions such as: 'What impact does this concept have on other concepts?' or 'How does the concept 'trust' relate to the concept of 'asking questions' or 'getting tips and ideas'?'

I revisited the preliminary framework by watching my video memos and then started to relate the concepts to it to see if the framework was still congruent. The old framework lost its shape and new concepts and relationship were added while others were found unusable and were erased or merged. The concepts could later be grouped into four higher categories: learning environment, learning operation, psychological factors and implementation. All categories, its relationship and their underlying concepts and codes will be described and discussed in the following chapter.

3.7 Theoretical saturation

Theoretical saturation can be defined "as being reached when the researcher no longer finds new facts or figures or ideas being provided by additional data sources" (Remenyi, 2013, p. 15). Barney et al. (2009) note that theoretical saturation cannot be reached by studying only one incident in one group. From studying one group a researcher obtains basic categories and a few properties and propositions about those categories. "After the researcher should try to saturate the categories by maximising the differences among groups" (Barney et al., 2009, p.61). In this process the researcher generates the theory. While following the principles of GT, I went through different data analysis stages that influenced the choice of data

collection, and these were again driven by various phases of theoretical saturation.

Remenyi (2013) explains that GT requires a substantial amount of data and that it is quite difficult to demonstrate that data saturation is achieved and impossible to determine a priori. As Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 136) describe: "In reality if one looked long and hard enough, one would always find additional properties or dimensions". It seems to be a continuing rather than a discrete process. In the end it is the researcher's decision that saturation is achieved based on the research process and their philosophical approach.

After the first round of interviews and the first data analysis I started to conceptualise the evolved data, and visualised a preliminary PGC framework for learning. This preliminary framework included concepts that can now be found in the final proposed theoretical PGC framework. This preliminary framework, however, generated more question than answers. It showed many gaps in previously formed categories and concepts. For example, the later-termed category 'learning operation in PGC' was called 'inside PGC' after the first data analysis. This category, as an example, contained the concepts 'coachee role' and 'coach role' that later became part of the concept 'processes in PGC' because the second analysis showed that participants indeed learned in both roles, but coaching roles were part of the process and did not contribute to the later-termed category 'learning operation in PGC'. However, this first preliminary theoretical framework helped to discuss the elements of learning that helped to shape a new interview guide for the second round of interviews. The preliminary theoretical framework is shown in Appendix 7.9.

After the second round of interviews the subsequently proposed theoretical PGC framework evolved. While analysing one transcript after another, this framework became saturated. At one point I felt that analysing more transcripts would only add weight to the evolved categories and concepts but no longer add new concepts, categories or relationships. The lack of new material emerging caused me to become bored with the analysis process,

and I could see myself, from a meta-perspective, beginning to rush through the data which now only confirmed previous findings. At that point, I decided that data saturation had been achieved, bearing in mind that later new data could always theoretically complement the proposed theoretical PGC framework.

3.8 Reflexivity

Remenyi (2013, p. 16) explains that some aphorisms in academic research are untrue, especially "The facts speak for themselves!" Facts or data, according to Remenyi, are always subjected to interpretation. Only data that is evaluated is likely to answer a research question. In conducting this research, I was aware that my use of business jargon, my double role as a researcher and trainer of the former leadership development modules, and the business environment (data collection was conducted in the organisations' meeting facilities) must have had an influence on the participants during data collection and consequently on the data itself. Corbin and Strauss (2008) described how emotions are subconsciously conveyed to participants and, in turn, participants react to the researchers' responses by continually adjusting their stances. In applying GT as the methodology for this study I was reflecting carefully on what data was required, how it was acquired, whether it was comprehensive, and where the research activity was leading.

While analysing the data I took into account that the data collection might be, to a certain degree, "co-constructed" (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 35) and influenced by my social identity and background, for example, by my professional experience as a leadership development consultant, my academic education in mechanical engineering and family therapy, and my epistemological stance. McGhee, Marland, and Atkinson (2007) highlight the tension between emergence of categories and forcing categories in GT. Memo-writing and recording video memos helped me to review which data was potentially co-constructed and which emerged naturally. My creativity helped me with the emergence of categories, however, I derived ideas inductively and then went back deductively to re-evaluate them. At all times I stayed close to participants' words, naming codes and describing concepts.

As a native German, I used the original interview transcripts for the analysis. The quotes that formed the concepts were later translated for the writing of this thesis. While translating the quotes into English I tried to stay as close to the original as possible, to make sure that the quotes were comparable and equally easy to understand. A similar approach was applied to the interview guide that I used for the second round of interviews. Here, I used participant quotes with the intention of not influencing the interviewee with my interpretations. I also kept a reflexive journal to observe and take into account my personal reactions to the research process. In formulating the intermediate and the final theoretical framework I was tempted by my positivist background to see categories in relation to each other in the form of processes, steps and order. Discussions with my student peers and my supervisors helped me to realise that I potentially saw connections which had not emerged from the data. At the same time, it was important to me to retain balance and not to become "so reflexive as to stifle creativity and fail to produce a theoretical account which is worthy of being called 'grounded theory', instead producing a description only" (McGhee et al., 2007, p. 335).

3.9 Trustworthiness

This chapter reflects on the quality of this qualitative research. The methodology applied is a quality differentiator to ensure the necessary academic research standards. The reader needs to be able to understand the research, act on it, or conduct further research. In the positivistic paradigm, quality is confirmed, amongst other things, through measures of reliability and validity (Shenton, 2004). Mason (1996) argues that it might be useful to adopt the language of the positivist paradigm and to adapt the criteria for qualitative data. Others argue that adaptation is simply not possible and does not sufficiently deal with the issue of quality in qualitative research (Morse et al., 2002). Shenton (2004, p. 63) notes that "trustworthiness of qualitative research is often questioned by positivists, perhaps because their concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in naturalistic work". Morse et al. (2002) argue that it is necessary to not only achieve rigour or trustworthiness through post-hoc analysis, but to integrate methods and concepts to achieve quality throughout the whole study. To distance

itself from the positivistic paradigm and to respond to issues of validity and reliability, this study refers to the criteria of quality that were introduced by Guba (1981) and later Lincoln and Guba (1985). They propose four criteria they believe should be considered in pursuit of a trustworthy qualitative study (Guba, 1981, p. 80):

a) "credibility (in preference to internal validity)";
b) "transferability (in preference to external validity/generalizability)";
c) "dependability (in preference to reliability)";
d) "confirmability (in preference to objectivity)".

Credibility

Credibility questions how congruent the study is with reality (Merriam, 1998). To increase credibility, Shenton (2004) suggests the use of a recognised qualitative research methodology, such as GT, for answering a research question. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the researcher should be familiar with the organisation that is studied, to ensure that the researcher can reflect credibly on the subject of study. I have worked for a number of years with the organisations in this study, know their corporate strategies and stories, and am familiar with their corporate cultures. The purposive sample of this study was in itself random, as the researcher did not know the participants who were invited for data collection by the HR representatives. Furthermore, each potential participant could decline participation without giving any explanation and it was considered easy to decline participation through the HR representative. Trust was built in previous training modules, and the emphasis on confidentiality helped participants speak about their experience without constraint. In the training, participants were exposed to leadership topics such as 'showing vulnerability' and 'self-disclosure'. Participants shared business or personal problems openly, and this demonstrated that taking on a 'business-role' was counter-productive to learning in this context. My double role as that of researcher and trainer might have, despite the previously developed trustful relationships, influenced participant responses and openness. Peer support, here the data analysis that was conducted with the help of a colleague, helped to increase credibility of this study.

Transferability

Transferability deals with the issue of conclusions being transferable from the study to other similar situations (Shenton, 2004). Bassey (1981) states that transferability is achieved for situations that are similar to those that are part of a study. From this perspective, data was acquired from two organisations, from different industries, and from 19 leaders coming from different functions and divisions within their organisation. It might be assumed that the resulting theoretical PGC framework would equally fit peer groups from private business organisations. Shenton (2004, p. 69), however, being critical of transferability in qualitative research reminds us that: "Since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations.". One possible way of showing transferability, according to Bassey (1981), lies in the responsibility of the researcher to present sufficient contextual information about the research and its environment to enable the reader to make their own transfer of conclusions to other similar situations. In this study I was aware that sufficient information about the research context would help readers make such a transfer and I present research context in detail.

Dependability

Dependability, according to Shenton (2004), resembles reliability in that it ensures that if a researcher were to repeat a study, similar results would emerge. In this study, it was ensured that the concepts derived from the first data analysis were tested in the second round of interviews, developing a new interview guide. Lincoln and Guba (1985) go as far as stating that the achievement of credibility in fact ensures the achievement of dependability. In order for another researcher to achieve the same conclusions, however, it is necessary to document the process of research, as outlined in this chapter and in data analysis, so the reader can understand the process step by step, as well as the thoughts behind every step of the study. Ideally, the reader is also put in a position where they can make an accurate assessment of the degree to which proper research practice was followed. In this research the reader is shown the journey of the research process step by step, so as to

understand the decisions, thoughts and actions of the researcher. This methodology chapter and the appendix address the issue of opening the research process to as much transparency as feasible. The whole research procedure is described in the methodology chapter as transparently as possible following the actual process. I have documented every step of research through memos, appendices, photographs and the researcher diary.

Conformability

Confirmability describes the detachedness of a study from the researcher. While objectivity can be achieved in positivist studies through laboratory conditions, or achieving independent researcher testing through standardisation, this is not possible in qualitative research that, by its nature, deals with the richness of data rather than reductionist standardisation. In order to achieve confirmability, it is necessary for the qualitative researcher to use the data to guide their thought processes. According to Shenton (2004), the most useful tool for achieving confirmability is an audit trail. By documenting thoughts about the data and how results came to be, the researcher grounds their results in the data instead of individual thought. The theory is therefore confirmable in the data by an independent researcher. In order to achieve confirmability, I have created written and visual memos, detailing the thought and research process at several steps, and have documented why certain steps were taken and how the data required certain steps or led to certain choices. I have also documented my philosophical position within this methodology chapter, and certain biases that I might carry from my own idiosyncratic upbringing, education and work experience. This has been suggested by Miles and Hubermann (1994), who suggest that reflective commentary allows the reader to understand the researcher's predispositions. Data analysis was furthermore completed jointly and in parallel with another researcher. This approach enabled the researcher to compare what differences and commonalities emerged from the data analysis.

3.10 Methodological limitations

The limitations of this study are those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the later proposed PGC

framework. These limitations might constrain transferability and the utility of the findings. Although thorough precautions have been taken to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the study, several limitations will be discussed to show that grounded theory's flexibility is not used to cover for methodological weaknesses (Bryant, 2002).

The sample for this research was chosen carefully to increase the diversity of the participants group. Participants came from two different private organisations of different industries, from different hierarchical levels, different functions and divisions in the organisation, had different levels of responsibility, and gender was somewhat mixed, with 14 male and 5 female participants. Despite the diversity of participants this sample does not cover the aspects of diversity in terms of cultures or participants from non-private business such as politics or for-non-profit organisations. While it could be argued that politicians or participants from non-profit organisations could experience PGC similarly, it is doubtful whether participants such as those with a non-Western cultural background would experience and describe learning in PGC as presented later in the theoretical PGC framework.

Leaders practiced PGC in this research as part of a broader leadership development training, where participants met for training modules and practiced PGC between the modules. The proposed theoretical PGC framework lacks answering the question of the impact of the leadership development initiative on PGC and leaders learning. The training preceding PGC might have influenced psychological factors, such as trust and respect. Similarly, previous training could have influenced participant expectations of PGC.

Despite all efforts to initiate an atmosphere where participants could speak freely and openly in the interviews, such as introducing confidentiality or increasing the level of trust among participants and trainer in the modules, it might be assumed that the trainer/participant relationship possibly influenced the interviews and thus the data of this research. This influence could, for example, have effected how critically participants would speak

about the PGC method or about peers that the researcher would know personally.

Despite the aforementioned methodological limitations I am positive that this research does not undermine transferability or the utility of the findings. In all interviews I felt that interviewees spoke openly and would not have held back apparently undesirable opinions or comments. The relationship created with the participants even helped in having very open and candid conversations that gave me the impression that participants did not hold back their thoughts or potentially unpopular opinions. This impression was evidenced when some participants used jargon, swear words or gossiped. The participant information sheet and confidentiality agreement, the additional Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) signed with the organisation prior to the leadership development programme, and participant knowledge that after the training they were unlikely to have continuous contact with the trainer or researcher, helped to establish a research situation that gave me confidence that the research data was not compromised in any form.

This chapter focused on the methodology employed to answer my research question. In the next chapter, the findings and their origins will be described and the framework resulting from the research presented and discussed.

Chapter 4 - Grounding the theoretical PGC framework

In this chapter the results of the data analysis will be introduced and discussed. The main categories that evolved as a result of data analysis will be introduced in detail and explored with supporting or challenging literature. Each category will be explained by the concepts identified during both cycles of data analysis. These accounts will describe the categories and connections and illustrate them with the actual words of the participants. These in vivo quotation examples were chosen from the data to illustrate the theoretical concepts that emerged during analysis of the interview data. After introducing the categories and following a "faithful rendering of experience", the theoretical framework and its implications and limitations are described (Sandelowski, 1998, p. 377). The data is provided to give an account and overview of how it was analysed and interpreted. This chapter consists of four subchapters, which are structured in the main categories:

4.1 Learning environment in PGC,

4.2 Psychological factors,

4.3 Learning operation in PGC, and

4.4 Implementation of learning.

Each main sub-chapter is structured in the same way, based on a sequence of the same structural questions, to allow the reader to understand and gain insight into each category, the contents of its concepts and relationships between concepts such as those shown in Figure **7**:

Concept Concept Concept 4 Concept Concept

3

2 Concept Concept 7 6 ? Concept

1 Category Category

5

Structure of sub-chapters
1. What is the main category about and what are its concepts?
2. What are the contents of single concepts?
3. How do concepts relate to other concepts (of the same category)?
4. How do concepts relate to concepts of other categories?
5. How is the literature sustaining or contradicting the concepts and their relationships?

Questions discussed in chapter conclusion
6. What concept is missing?
7. What relationship from concept to concept would makes sense, but was not found in the data analysis?

Figure 7: Questions that guide data analysis

4.1 Learning environment in PGC

During data analysis a number of concepts were identified which are not directly core elements of learning, however they are part of PGC and they influence learning in PGC in different ways and create a learning environment. These concepts, which affect and influence the outcome of PGC were grouped in the category 'learning environment in PGC'. The learning environment category consists of three main concepts that were identified during data analysis: PGC processes, matching of peers, and group dynamics. How these factors of the learning environment, according to the participants, affect the learning experience and how they relate to each other is discussed in detail below.

4.1.1 Peer-group coaching processes

Two types of processes in PGC are identified in this study: 'vertical' and 'horizontal'. Vertical processes describe the development within one PGC session (role allocation and rotation, coaching, time to reflect, etc.), while

horizontal processes describe PGC from start to end (activities between meetings, frequency of meetings, duration of PGC), as shown in Figure **8**:
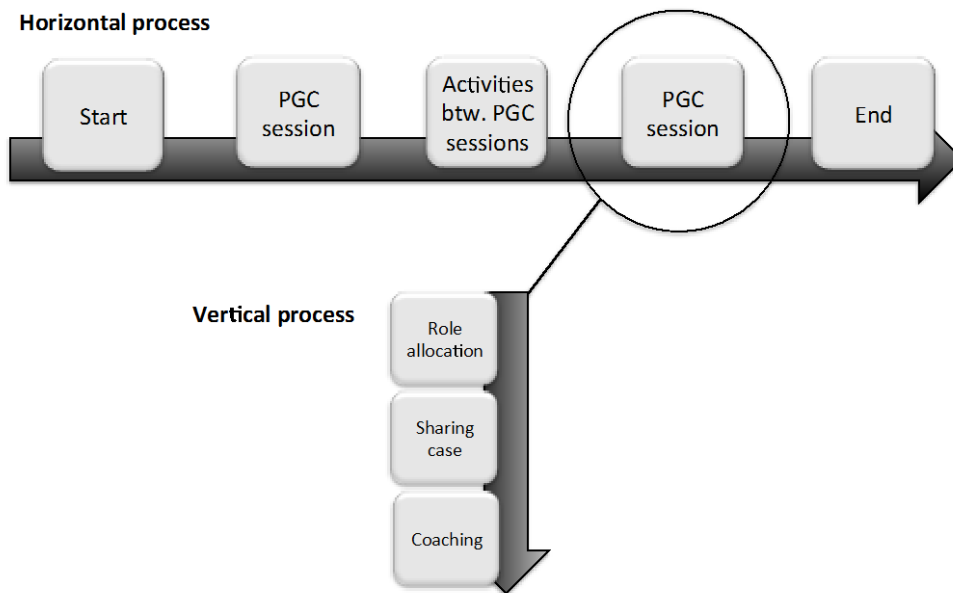
Figure 8: Horizontal and vertical processes in PGC

The terms 'vertical' and 'horizontal' processes were coined while facing misunderstandings in focus groups when participants described different PGC processes using the generic term process. Vertical and horizontal processes affect the learning environment of PGC and hence individual learning. Most of the participants talked about both vertical and horizontal processes in PGC and how these processes affected them during PGC.

Vertical processes in PGC

Vertical processes describe those within one PGC session. For example, during PGC, participants were asked to take on different roles. Participants contribute their own cases, which they would like to improve, in the role of the coachee. While one participant takes on the role of the coachee, the other members will be in the role of the coach. During data analysis it became apparent that the role of the coachee and coach were experienced differently. For most participants the role as coachee was easier to take on and was perceived as more comfortable. The coach role, in comparison to the coachee role, requires dealing with a problem or situation brought into

the session by the respective coachee. The role of coach demands, by definition, the use of coaching skills such as asking coaching questions or in this study, so called 'powerful questions'. 'Powerful questions', see Appendix 7.8, are questions that respondents found especially powerful or useful. It is not only the coachee that learns in PGC sessions, however. Participants in both roles reported learning, and being in the role of a coach was perceived as more challenging and uncomfortable. As an example, Denise shared her experience of being coachee and how natural it felt for her taking on this role.

So, taking on the role of coachee felt easy to me. Kind of, really easy to open up and I have lots of examples and I believe, I know what really isn't going too well and I can bring plenty of topics into the coaching, so I feel comfortable being in the coachee role. (Denise; translated from German)

In comparison, Andrew described how, as a coach, he had a feeling of uncertainty, being unfamiliar with the specific problem faced by the coachee. In contrast, the coachee role allowed him to be an "expert" in his own case, which gave him confidence:

Well, the coach role bears for me more insecurity than the coachee role. In the coachee, role, I know or believe that I am the expert, and can say most about my problem. With the coach role, I have the problem that at first I have to understand the coachee´s issue. So it is a more difficult role for me. (Andrew; translated from German)

Comparing the roles participants took on, Aida and Andrew both explained that they were learning in both roles:

[...] both when I am coaching or when someone else is coaching me, in both positions, I can learn something new, and then I can use what I learned later in a different situation. (Aida; translated from German)

[...] in the coach role I have the issue that first, I need to understand the problem, so it is the more difficult role. There I can also learn how to ask questions a bit from others. (Andrew; translated from German)

Role rotation became a fundamental part of the vertical PGC process and an important condition for learning. This reciprocity of roles, the switch between coach and coachee, has been described by Skinner and Welch (1996) as a key role in peer coaching among teachers. Reciprocity is known

to be a process whereby an individual feels obligated to return an action, whether it was originally wanted or not (Regan, 1971). In this regard, a study by Sekerka and Chao (2003), mentioned previously in the literature review, showed that taking the coach role stimulated interest in learning something new, allowed for self-reflection and allowed the realisation of learning. But similarly, this study showed that taking the coach role gave a feeling of contribution, that is, one of giving back. Thus, role changes and learning facilitated a feeling of reciprocity and contribution while allowing participants to learn from another perspective and give back to the session. Finally, the role change kept the participants engaged in the discussions.

Another vertical process that came up repeatedly during interviews was named 'assigned time for reflection' in PGC sessions. During the coaching sessions participants found assigned time to contemplate and to reflect. Having assigned time helped participants to think about their actions and selves. Assigned time describes a point in time, such as a fixed date in participant schedules, where presence for PGC is 'mandatory' and other work related duties are not the focus. Since PGC is considered as part of the job, members can participate in PGC without feeling 'guilty' about doing something work unrelated. Some participants found it helpful to have allocated time for reflection of personal or business issues specifically without being driven by the aim of solving a task or being under pressure to achieve an objective. Assigned time for reflection is a condition for self-reflection. Self-reflection was identified as a core learning element and will be discussed in Chapter 4.3, describing the operation of learning in PGC. Denise and Anja, for example, describe how assigned time was perceived as helpful:

It is helpful, that we have this organised frame, because you are forced to familiarise with it and you have to take time to reflect. (Denise; translated from German)

I think what it is helpful is not avoiding madness, but just taking time for it. For these topics. Working with topics and having appointments on a regular basis was just helpful. (Anja; translated from German)

The third concept, the use and constant development of coaching skills during PGC, was described as a condition necessary to learn for being

coach. The specific coaching skills introduced by the trainer included coaching questions such as resource oriented question or scaling questions, hypothesis forming and testing. The participants practiced using and applying these skills, which were learned in the pre-PGC training. Andrew connected the use of coaching skills (asking coaching or powerful questions) with his learning success:

[...] I see this learning success really achieved with the help of these questions. These techniques really forced me to come to the point. This made me learn how to use very analytical questioning to get to a new perspective. (Andrew; translated from German)

Another example comes from Anja who mentioned that in the role of coachee, when she was asked coaching questions, it helped her to get new perspectives and triggered self-reflection:

[...] the questions themselves, asked by the people, they activated some kind of self-reflection. These questions can range from uncomfortable questions to looking at other aspects you have not thought about before. (Anja; translated from German)

As described in the introduction of this thesis, the PGC method was introduced to the participants using a six-stage PGC organising approach, including a session on coaching skills. During coaching skills training, participants learned how to use and practiced a simple coaching method that resembles the well-known GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Way forward) model of coaching (Whitmore, 2002). Data analysis showed that not every PGC group succeeded in applying the proposed coaching model in their PGC sessions. Many groups tried to stick to the proposed model in the first session, as it gave guidance. Later, usually from the second session onwards, the groups did not follow the proposed coaching method in detail. Pierre even reports that it "costs energy" to guide the group back to the proposed coaching method after leaving it. The positive group relationship was more helpful to the coachee than sticking to a method, as Pierre highlighted:

That costs a lot of energy. It was Kerstin that was always reminding us: 'we should do that differently, changing course'. We have quickly built a friendly relationship and with such a relationship you are easily torn

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between: 'we are following a methodology' or 'I want to help you and I have an idea how to solve the issue'. That is, perhaps, the problem, that we abandoned the methodology. You can feel that. (Pierre, translated from German)

Horizontal processes in PGC

Horizontal processes in PGC are the processes that occur in each group from the point of setting up PGC until its closing, including the steps in between coaching sessions. Concepts that emerged as horizontal processes were described as activities between PGCs and the frequency of the PGC sessions. Often participants talked about social activities with other peers next to planned PGC sessions. Greta for example described lunch meetings with Aida where both could simply "chat" in a private setting about everyday issues without the other group members. Experiencing social activities or encounters with peer group members indicates the development of trust and comfort:

Aida and I have organised our personal meetings for lunch and it was very pleasant and secondly, it is the first peer group meeting that was very positive, where, because of the open-minded atmosphere, we discussed and talked and gossiped about topics like XXX and YYY. If I think back at the lunch meetings with Lotte, I remember, that it was very unproblematic to speak about personal aspects and of professional life and to discuss these in confidence. (Greta; translated from German)

Participants recognised such social activities as useful unintended consequences of PGC. Focus group memos showed that members of peer groups that were planning and experiencing social activities, such as having lunch or dinner together, visiting each other's site and working place, or planning evening activities beyond the PGC schedule, described these events as important. These events built familiarity and increased trust among members. Subsequently, this familiarity and trust helped to obtain a feeling of comfort during PGC. This comfort that developed among peer group members was based on the feeling that members had the possibility of discussing their issues in confidence with like-minded peers.

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, one of the principles, presented in the organising approach, was keeping the content of PGC confidential. Such

confidentiality was only suggested, not mandated by the trainer. Yet, according to participants, all groups and members unanimously adopted the principle of keeping PGC content confidential. The importance of confidentiality was mentioned several times by interviewees. As Olga noticed, confidentiality allowed participants to feel free to open up and share their accounts.

Yeah, and everybody was open, there were no secret topics, it was our space, we know it was confidential. So it was really a free space where you can say exactly what you think. (Olga)

Confidentiality is an important facilitator for trust, and trust not only among participants but towards the PGC method. Aida compared PGC with therapy because confidentiality was always present.

[…] there the rule was created; I think it was done consciously. I don't know anymore if it was done consciously or if this rule existed automatically. Those things are kept in confidence within the group, like in a therapy group […] This gives you trust in the individual that is taking part, because of their input and trust in the method. (Aida; translated from German)

In summary, participants shared sensitive and personal information with each other that required a high level of trust. This trust level was reached due to the nature of the group formation in an environment that assured each participant that others could be trusted. Throughout the data collected in this study the concept of trust was mentioned, often in combination with various other concepts. In this research the concept of trust is discussed numerous times, and more explicitly as part of the category psychological factors below. Using the participant accounts to describe the evolved theoretical framework, it is necessary to discuss trust and other psychological factors at various places in this thesis as they permeate and influence PGC from start to end.

Another factor influencing the learning environment was the frequency of peer group coaching sessions. The organising approach that guided participants for PGC, did not give instructions about how often the groups should meet. It appears that frequent meetings built more trust and retained the rhythm in PGC from start to finish. This was expected, considering that

the frequency of interaction and trust ratings tend to be connected (McAllister and Neubert, 1995). Not only the frequency of meetings, but also how participants were meeting (face to face, via video conference, telephone conference), was seen as important. For example Roger and Aida expressed the importance of meeting more often:

If we see each other twice a year, before or at the end of a module, I think it is difficult. Because you need this trust and these feedback: What happened? What did you experience? What happened to you, how did it develop? This cannot be created in a half-year rhythm. (Roger; translated from German)

Between the second and third module we decided to have a phone call periodically. With or without a topic We wanted to keep this rhythm. (Aida; translated from German)

Concerning the modus of coaching sessions, most of the participants explained that face-to face meetings were more helpful than virtual ones. Several studies emphasise that traditional face-to-face meetings are more effective than virtual ones (Hancock, et al., 2007; Reyes, 2009). Face-to-face interaction is believed to elicit feelings of empathy and/or of being emotionally close to the interactional partner (Reyes, 2009). It should be mentioned that some recent studies show that there are also several benefits from virtual meetings, such as time and cost effectiveness, built-in reflection time, just-in-time conversations, and a potential to create virtual networks (Clutterbuck and Iussain, 2010). According to Clutterbuck and Iussain (2010, p. 11) "…both face-to-face and virtual approaches have great strengths and some weaknesses and (that) judgments about efficacy need to be rooted in the context of the individual relationship, rather than in general comparisons of one process versus another". Demonstrated by quotes from Olga and Roger, it was found that participants argue that face-to-face meetings were better suited to PGC, but at the same time they argued hypothetically that virtual meetings including video would be similarly useful:

Phone calls were great but to do that face-to-face is better, so if we could meet every two months, that could be great. (Olga)

Having more frequent face-to-face contact, either by video conferences or on site, this would be what I would say was missing. (Roger; translated from German)

In this study, the conditions of face-to-face vs. virtual peer group coaching have not been explicitly and sufficiently addressed so as to give a conclusive account of whether or not they might be similarly effective for learning. The participants stressed its importance, but the study design is not suited to a comprehensive analysis of these conditions. There is, however, considerable evidence in the literature that suggests empathy among participants might be better facilitated through visual cues (Reyes, 2009). In summary, face-to-face meetings in PGC might have a positive impact on learning that needs to be studied further in a research setting suited for comparison.

It is of value to this research to compare the processes of all four focus groups to assess differences and commonalities and to understand how the participants interpreted PGC. All groups received the same training, but were free in their application of their own, individual setup of PGC. All groups acted independently of the others. All four peer-groups for coaching met between March 2012 and January 2013 for two or three face-to-face sessions. One focus group had six additional teleconference PGCs. Some members, from the same group, met individually between the sessions. The sessions were between 1.5 hours and two days in duration. All groups structured their meetings and their PGC processes, horizontally as well as vertically, to their individual and group needs. The focus groups helped to understand how participants understood and executed PGCs in practice to give context to this study. Memos helped to visualise the process of PGC for every single group, then the processes and the way groups executed PGC were compared. All PGC processes explored in focus groups were merged in one joint PGC process to show the method, shown in Figure **9**. Site tours, lunches, and dinners are indicated in this universal PGC process as 'social encounters' outside the coaching sessions because they were also valued by participants for trust building as discussed above.
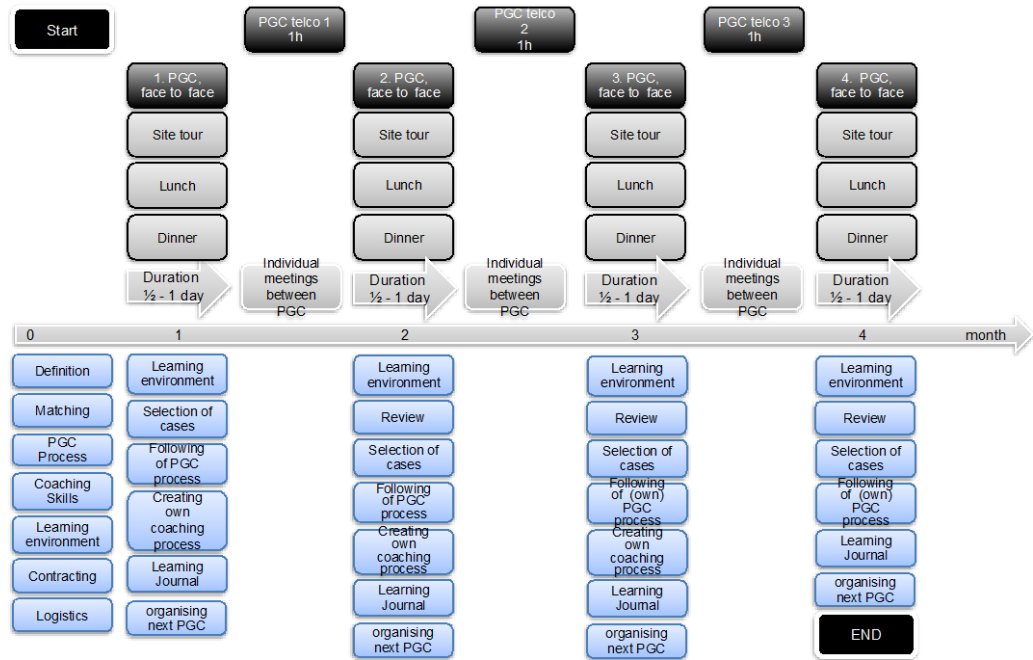
Figure 9: Summarised PGC process

The first concept that emerged from data analysis, grouped within the learning environment category was PGC processes. Here, vertical as well as horizontal processes are distinguished, which influenced the learning environment and thus learning for participants. Both processes helped the participants in different ways to reflect and to learn. The major findings of this concept are displayed in Table **4** below:

Category LEARNING ENVIRONMENT			
Concept: PGC processes			
Itm.	**Concept**	**Finding**	**Description**
1	PGC processes – vertical	**Learning in role of coach and coachee**	Being in the role of the coachee felt more comfortable for the participants than being in the role as coach. However, participants expressed that they learned in both roles.
2		**Reciprocity**	Role rotation and reciprocity of roles is a fundamental part of PGC and a condition for learning. Reciprocity increases trust and engages participants for coaching.
3		**Assigned time for reflection**	Participants found assigned time to contemplate and to reflect helpful for learning.
4		**Coaching questions**	Using coaching questions (powerful questions) helped participants to reflect and to learn. Powerful questions were practiced and used outside of the PGC sessions as a leadership tool.
5	PGC processes – horizontal	**Social encounters**	Social meetings between PGC sessions increase trust and build helpful precondition for learning in PGC.
6		**Confidentiality**	Confidentiality was adopted by participants and perceived as a condition for building trust and learning.
7		**Frequency of sessions**	Frequent meetings built more trust and retained a favourable rhythm of PGC sessions.
8		**Type of PGC session**	Face-to-face meetings are important for effective PGC sessions.

Table 4: Concept, findings, descriptions of PGC processes

Another concept that emerged from the data analysis that can be placed in the learning environment category is the matching of group members for peer group coaching.

4.1.2 Matching of peers

Peer group members in this study agreed that the characteristics of members made a difference to their experience. The matching of compatible members was argued to be very important if PGC was to be successful, yet

participants disagreed about how this matching should take place and what criteria led to PGC success. Data analysis shows disagreement between participants concerning matching criteria. For example, Mohammed said that it is an advantage to have peers with similar personalities in one group, while Roger referred to the advantage of having different personalities within his group:

Because we are relatively similar characters. We are on a similar wave length, our characters are not so different. I think this matched really well. I can imagine that it would be difficult, if you have somebody in the team you don't really connect with. (Mohammed; translated from German)

Kerstin is also very extroverted, talks a lot, but is also a bit 'digital', but Debbie and I, I think are more characters that express a lot. We are rather emotional characters. And this mixture is good (laughs) I would say. (Roger; translated from German)

Rob experienced similar professional experience among peers and that a common business understanding while coming from different business units or functions as an additional helpful matching factor:

Of course, all participants have already led or are in leading positions, so they have a certain basic understanding for the questions, but the precise situation is not known. That's really good. (Rob; translated from German)

The literature supports these findings. Boyce et al. (2010) shows that the commonality in personal characteristics and experiences is one of the core factors for matching. At the same time we have to assume that participants in this study had similar backgrounds in their business experience, because they all had multiple years and even decades of experience as a leader. While their experience provides valuable data, the participants did not take part in a peer group coaching process where participants had very diverse backgrounds and business experience.

Andrew talked about life-experience of peers as an important factor for peer relationships. In regards to this, age and life-experiences might be considerable factors for peer matching in PGC.

Life experience is higher in our group than in peer-groups with younger members, who contribute to the coaching mostly with their professional experience and not with life experience. (Andrew; translated from German)

Andrew did not expand on how exactly life experience was identified. Moreover, under life-experience Andrew mentioned the similar status of peers, for example most of them outside their jobs were parents and experienced familiar situations not only in their professional but also personal life.

What is interesting here is that all members are mothers or fathers. All of us have these similar situations in leading employees and having children and, I would say that this is very helpful regarding coaching. The composition of the peer-group, consisting of colleagues who are also parents, is an interesting factor in our peer-group. (Andrew; translated from German)

It is surprising that feeling comfortable with the group choice was not only a result of similar or different personality traits or professional experience. Personal experience was also felt to be important as peers felt comfortable building mutual relationships by sharing similar stories of work and of family.

Another matching factor that emerged during data analysis was 'diversity' which in this context refers to being a part of group with international and different cultural backgrounds. For Roger being part of an international group was a requirement for joining.

This was the reason for me to choose this group (being member of an international group). For Daniel, who isn't here anymore, it was a conscious choice as well (Roger; translated from German)

Although the group itself was not matched on culture, it is interesting that for Roger it was important to be part of an international group. Such a wish, the wish for being member of a more diverse group and therefore having an increased chance of getting different cultural input and experiences, might form a factor on its own. Being a part of a diverse group was similarly welcomed by Olga despite the fact it was her first experience of this type.

I've never done that before, you know, speaking with foreigners, but you know, having such personal discussion with people I do not really know that well, you know, I've never done that before. And it was great. (Olga).

Diversity seems to be a positive matching factor that brought a positive resonance amongst participants who were a part of an international group, but it was described only twice in this research.

As well as being a part of an international group, Roger highlighted the wish to be in a small group of four.

We wanted to be a group of four, the smallest group. (Roger; translated from German).

It is surprising that in all interviews the wish to be a member of a small group was mentioned only once. In practice, accessibility to the whole group is lowered with larger groups. Bigger groups cannot meet as easily and building trust is a variable dependent on seeing each other often. This was reported in the focus groups and is supported by research on trust and frequency of interaction (McAllister, 1995). During one focus group a belief was expressed by participants that four members was an ideal group size for peer group coaching. Testing this idea would contribute to research in the area of PGC.

Memo, focus group No 3.: The best group size to keep trust and honesty high and logistics low is 4 participants (balance).

Unfortunately participants did not provide information about unsuccessful matching in this research. Participants self-selected the members of their group after they had worked together for three days, taking part in the leadership training provided. The potential for choosing incompatible personalities might have been significantly minimised as participants got to know each other well over the course of these days. Potential for unsuccessful matching will be addressed as a limitation and suggestion for further research in the conclusion of this thesis.

Several studies show that the matching of peers is considered an influential factor for peer coaching success (Boyce et al., 2010; Ladyshewsky and Varey, 2005; Prince et al., 2010) as the performance of the group is influenced directly by the matching choice. In the study by Boyce et al. (2010), influential factors that were found to affect matching were a compatible leadership style and experience. In the study by Prince et al. (2010), a main matching issue that was found was accessibility. Prince et al. (2010) claimed that if peer coaches were not directly accessible due to living further apart or even being in a different building, and then later exchanged for a different peer coach who was physically nearby, these exchanges lead to higher ratings of the relationship.

Peers were asked in this research to self-match for coaching, allowing participants to choose their members freely, with only a little direction or constraint from the trainer. During the interviews many participants spoke about different matching factors such as having similar or different personalities, professional experience, family status, age or diversity that affected the PGC experience. Accessibility was addressed only indirectly, while participants referred to the advantage of meeting more often and face-to-face. One focus group mentioned explicitly that it was helpful to meet often and it was seen as helpful to easily arrange sessions due to accessibility.

In summary, peer-matching took place based on different factors. It was an important condition for forming a group. It is noteworthy that for some participants it was similarities that were an important matching element, while for others it was differences. This suggests that participant experiences of the importance of matching factors might be effected either by personal preferences, such as a wish for diversity and difference in a coaching situation, or they might reflect a backwards rationalisation of matching influences. It is possible that participants experienced PGC as positive and attributed their experience to the matching factors that were present in their own situation. Such errors in attribution are common and should be given consideration (Nisbett and Ross, 1980). Although the requirements varied from one group to another, not taking them into

consideration could have had a negative impact on conformity of participants and subsequently on a positive learning atmosphere which will be discussed later. Yet, it was found that participants had different ideas about what a good PGC matching would eventually look like. Some argued for diversity, others against diversity. The factors that participants agreed on were a match of life and business experience as well as of small group sizes.

4.1.3 Group dynamics

Matching has been discussed as having an effect on participants at an individual level. On the group level, matching might have similarly affected in-group dynamics during PGC. During interviews participants talked about their experiences, interactions or group relationships and how these contributed to group cohesiveness.

Denise mentioned, for example, that the existing atmosphere ("mood") of the group influences the learning environment. The word 'atmosphere' is used here to describe an individual's perception of the mood prevailing in the group.

What I want to add is that this learning atmosphere, especially given such sensible topics as personal development, really had a lot to do with the mood in the team and the group. (Denise; translated from German)

This finding is accentuated by the argument of Barsade (2002, p. 670) that "…emotional contagion influences not only other group members' emotions but their group dynamics and individual cognitions, attitudes, and behaviours." Group emotions influence group dynamics and therefore the learning environment in PGC. Roger mentioned eagerness and enthusiasm to attend the sessions. Even in difficult times, participants "had each other" and a learning atmosphere was "friendly", thus hinting at the presence of interpersonal cohesiveness:

I have the feeling that we are all looking forward to those events. During phone calls there's always a friendly atmosphere, even in very difficult periods we have each other. (Roger, translated from German)

Additionally, group dynamics might be affected by personality factors that emerged during data analysis. Some participants speculated on what would negatively affect their experience. As an example, Mohammed assumed that if the group changed its matching composition, the group atmosphere would be affected. Mohammed perceived such a situation as potentially problematic, although it had not happened:

I can imagine if there would be a person in the group who is a bit more extroverted, it would have been harder to communicate. (Mohammed; translated from German).

As discussed above, the matching of peers is perceived as important for peer relationship building and peer interaction. There is considerable evidence in the literature that personality can have an effect on group cohesiveness and performance (Barry and Stewart, 1997; Driskell, et al., 2006; Graziano, et al., 1997). Difference in personalities might influence peer interaction within the group and how a group learns during PGC. The data in this study is however not sufficient to make a claim about how personality influences learning in PGC. Further research is necessary to examine this influence.

Peer interactions during and outside the PGC sessions facilitated group cohesiveness. A trustworthy relationship of peers existed not only within the PGC sessions but also outside them. Group cohesion, as used in this study, is described as "…a total field of forces that acts on members to remain in the group" (Festinger, 1968, p. 185) and as "…the strength of relationship linking the members to one another and to the group itself" (Forsyth, 1990, p. 10). Some participants expressed clearly that trust built in PGC helped to support the relationship outside the PGC:

[...] indeed, I have the feeling, that I am really in a group in which I can trust. For example, I often see Birgit crossing the yard and we talk to each other, yes there is a, now I wouldn't say friendship, but it is a trustful team, it is a great feeling having such a team and to know that there are people you can just call. (Mohammed; translated from German)

Dörnyei (1997) argues that in a cooperative learning atmosphere, the cohesiveness and performance of a group tend to correlate strongly. Dörnyei (1997) explains that certain activities, such as group interaction, extracurricular group contact and cooperation on tasks are supportive of the

development of cohesiveness in a cooperative learning scenario. Group cohesiveness develops gradually within a group. Mohammed talked about trust being necessary for group cohesion. In this regard Dörnyei (1997, p. 485) argues that "the amount of time spent together and the shared group history are key factors that tend to develop stronger inter member ties". This relates to the aforementioned possible effect of meeting frequency and social encounters. As discussed in a previous chapter some participants mentioned the importance of the frequency of PGC meetings. Increasing trust needs time to build among peers and within a group. Roger explained that closeness developed gradually and that confidence (trust) increased from session to session as participants opened up.

It is uncomfortable that you don't see each other very often. This is more difficult. Right now, we meet three times. You already noticed it in the last module that there is more confidence, the phone calls get funnier and more open. At the beginning there is still a certain distance, you are reluctant talking openly and this is something you don't see now anymore. If you meet, you see how one acts, if he then sees only himself or if he only concentrates on the topic. (Roger; translated from German)

Mullen and Copper (1994) describe a strong correlation between group cohesiveness and performance. Similarly, they found that cohesion has different elements focusing on either task or interpersonal elements. Cohesion from task elements were found to correlate more strongly with performance than with interpersonal elements such as attraction or pride. Participants in this study mentioned task cohesion. The group structure of PGC forced participants to focus on a determination to learn which relates to task cohesion (Rosh, et al., 2012). This structural focusing effect is described by Aida:

[…] I think the positive thing in the peer-group is the focus, having these goals, the structure; and meeting to solve a problem, you come across new ways. (Aida; translated from German)

Although task cohesion and interpersonal cohesion correlate (Zaccaro, 1991), task cohesion is found to be a stronger predictor of group performance (Mullen and Copper, 1994). In the context of PGC, the participants described that through a form of matching and working together, the groups did show signs of developing task cohesiveness, but

also interpersonal cohesiveness. Aida associated the group dynamics she experienced with family:

Due to group dynamics, since this is by definition a small, suddenly intimate circle, it is immediately like in a small family, one is put into it and it becomes a group. You are in this whether you want it or not, you didn't choose, you were pulled in and you are a group now. (Aida; translated from German)

The analysis of group dynamics has shown an atmosphere that hints at both task and interpersonal cohesiveness within the PGC groups in this study. The group dynamics were characterised by cooperation and the development of trust, so that participants became closer to each other but at the same time understood the importance of being focused on the tasks at hand in order to learn and develop. According to Dörnyei (1997) group dynamics are inherent in cooperative learning scenarios and are one of the main factors in successful cooperative learning. The group dynamics characterizing PGC in this study appear to facilitate group cohesiveness. Group cohesiveness has been found to positively influence learning in groups (Dornyei, 1997; Mullen and Copper, 1994).

The learning environment theme is summarised in Figure **10** below. According to the participants, processes, vertical as well as horizontal, influence matching and group dynamics in PGC. Factors influencing matching include similar or dissimilar personality, professional experience, life experience and diversity. Matching that was of the participant's choice appears to have influence on the individual's experience of PGC and their experience of the group dynamics. Group dynamics is experienced by PGC participants in the form of group emotions, and interpersonal and task cohesiveness.
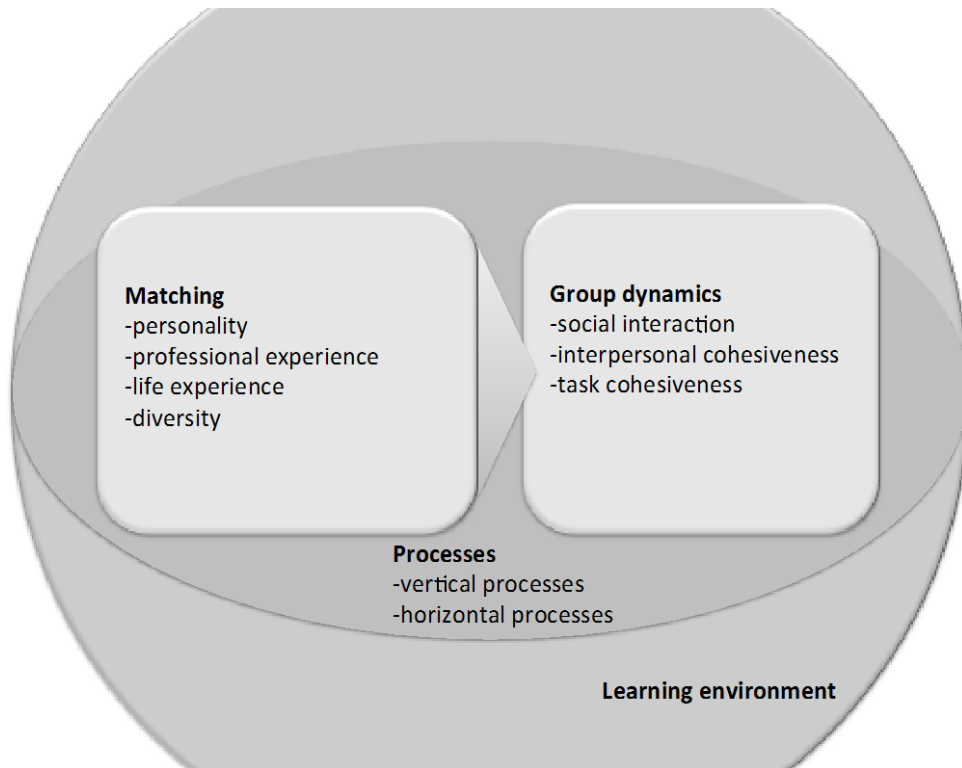
Figure 10: Relationships of processes, matching, and group dynamics in category learning environment

Category: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT			
Concepts: Matching and Group Dynamics			
Itm.	**Concept**	**Finding as heading**	**Description**
1	Matching	**Personalities**	Data analysis shows a disagreement in matching factors for similar and different personalities.
2		**Professional experience**	Similar professional experience among peers and a common business understanding while coming from different business units or functions was perceived as a helpful matching factor.
3		**Life-experience**	Life-experience of peers as an important factor for peer relationship was identified. In regards to this, similar age, and family status was mentioned.
4		**Diversity**	Diversity such as being member of an international group was perceived as helpful.
5	Group dynamics	**Group emotions**	Group emotions (mood/atmosphere) influence the group's group dynamics and thus learning environment.
6		**Interpersonal cohesiveness**	Peer interactions during and outside the PGC sessions facilitated group cohesiveness.
7		**Task cohesiveness**	The group structure of PGC forced participants to focus on a determination to learn.

Table 5: Concept, findings, descriptions of category learning environment

4.2 Psychological factors

The preceding section dealt with processes, matching and essential group dynamics in PGC that seem external to each particular individual, but emerged as factors relevant to the learning environment that allow learning in PGC to happen. Another group of concepts that emerged during data analysis was more internal and psychological in nature and also influenced learning environments. At first, this category was called 'attitude' since it

initially emerged from collected data that dealt with personal attitudes and feelings towards PGC. During the analysis the category was renamed 'psychological factors'. It was found that these factors, although they emerged on an individual level, influenced the whole learning process and played a crucial role in enabling PGC. Psychological factors affected participant behaviour and contributed to the inception of a positive learning environment. These factors have emerged either alone or in relationship with other concepts. Although each concept is described discretely, they are inherently inter-connected. The main concepts that were mentioned directly or indirectly by participants were:

1. Trust, as a base and all-influencing concept
2. Openness, as a catalyst for a positive atmosphere
3. Motivation, as an eagerness to attend sessions and to learn
4. Empathy, as a factor of inclusivity
5. Respect, as a psychological stance towards peers

4.2.1 Trust

During interviews, the concept of trust was mentioned at much higher frequency than any other psychological factor, as shown in Table **6** below. Trust was mentioned multiple times in every single interview. Trust was seen as a necessary foundation, which enabled cooperation between participants and enhanced the learning process. Trust was strongly related to other factors, as shown later in this subchapter.

Psychological factors	Frequency in total numbers	Frequency in %
Trust	43	68
Openness	9	14
Motivation	6	10
Empathy	3	5
Respect	2	3

Table 6: Frequency of psychological factors mentioned by participants

Figure **11** shows the relationships between the psychological factors of trust, openness, motivation, respect and empathy, which are based on the data as analysed in this study and elaborated on below. Trust and openness seem closely linked, and influenced the motivation of participants for PGC and in turn facilitated increased empathy and respect among participants. These relationships, as part of the proposed theoretical framework, are possibly provisional in its nature and further research might be necessary to fully comprehend the role of trust in PGC.
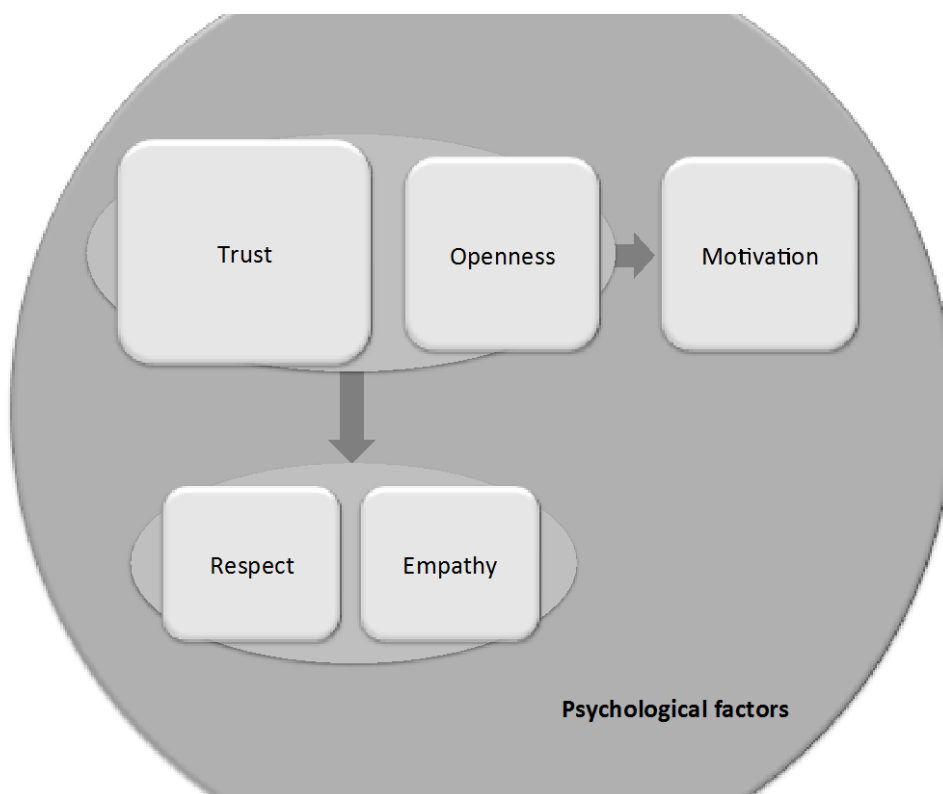
Figure 11: Psychological factors in PGC and their relationships

"Everyone opened up", as expressed by Mohammed below, and facilitated by the trust among the group, participants took risks and started discussing problems, issues or ideas that were often not shared with others. This shows that any trust-related barriers were lifted and 'psychological safety', a climate in which people are comfortable being (and expressing) themselves (Edmondson, 2004), evolved during the sessions.

I would say, that was the case because everyone opened up and presented his problems, nobody was hiding behind imaginary walls, everyone just said

openly "Hey, I have a problem, I don't know how to proceed." And if you open up yourself at this point and you see that everyone also does so, then trust develops. (Mohammed; translated from German)

Rob explains that trust had a significant place in PGC, which led to an open and trustworthy relationship:

What I want to emphasise is that trust we have. This was already successful in the first module, also for you guys, or I don't know, we succeeded in building up an open, trustful relationship. (Rob; translated from German)

Having formed a trustworthy relationship meant that participants could also speak about sensitive issues, facilitating intimacy among the group members:

Yes, very confidential and intimate, where leaking would have had consequences. You have to rely on the fact, that all things stay in the room or in the heads of the people participating and I experience it like that in practice. Extreme levels of trust. (Rob; translated from German)

The development of trust has been made possible partially through the establishment of certain rules at the beginning. These rules, such as confidentiality of meeting content, allowed the initial development of trust among members:

At the early beginning of the group, it was clear that we had to define the rules and it was really respectful. [So, it was respectful and it was trustworthy, so everyone was trustful and okay?] Exactly. (Olga).

Trust was described by participants not only in interpersonal relationships but also in regards to the method of PGC. This was also reached gradually with a continuation of sessions and self-reflection of learning outcomes:

With this trust, effectiveness, and implementation they (group members) were always creative, constructive and solution-orientated. [Hmhm.] Because of this: Soothing. And this creates trust in the individuals participating thanks to his input and trust in the approach. (Aida, translated from German)

As mentioned above, trust was fundamental in order for other psychological factors to evolve. Almost all participants explained that trust was there and

no one spoke of any mistrust. However, trust was not considered to be guaranteed as Pierre expressed his astonishment that it was present.

I was surprised, that it worked like that, that one can say "you three guys are friends now, and you have a trustful relationship." and you just do that. I was surprised, how you can take a group of 20 people that are randomly arranged and then you form small groups out of them telling them to talk to each other at a very high level of trust and it just works. I was surprised that you can say "Now, you trust in each other" and it works like that. (Pierre, translated from German)

McKnight and colleagues (1998) report that other researchers, although expecting an initially low level of trust, have been surprised by initially very high levels of trust (Berg, et al., 1995). Trust in groups in a business context, seems to start with a paradoxically high level of initial trust (McKnight, et al., 1998). Theory on trust building in close relationships has been built on the assumption that trust is gradually built over time (Rempel, et al., 1985). Trust in peer group coaching is reported to grow over time (Ladyshewsky, 2007), but it appears that PGC members started to trust each other immediately. The initial trust model by McKnight et al. (1998) provides us with an understanding that initial trust forms through an individual's disposition to trust in the form of a trusting stance and faith in humanity, and additionally with institution-based trust, and trusting beliefs. "Dispositional trust refers to a tendency to be willing to depend on others. Institution based trust means that one believes impersonal structures support one's likelihood for success in a given situation" (McKnight et al., 1998, p. 474). McKnight et al. (1998) explain that institution based trust at the beginning of a relationship may be high because of situation normality and structural assurance. Here, situational normality is the understanding that a situation is non-threatening, whereas structural assurance is the belief that success is likely because contextual conditions such as contracts and regulations are in place. Although the participants' disposition to trust was not specifically examined, it is notable that participants agreed freely to take part in peer group coaching. This voluntary agreement shows a willingness to trust others, but it is unclear whether this initial willingness to trust derived from institutional assurance or an inherent disposition to trust among participants.

Although the PGC situation was at first unfamiliar, PGC members could assume that the situation is normal and non-threatening through a shared organisational membership and structural assurance in form of the PGC method. Aida, as noted above, connected PGC's "rules" and the belief in the method with constant confidentiality and constant confidentiality with a high level of trust.

Trust was associated with another concept, that of openness. Aida described the reciprocal relationship between trust and openness in the following way:

[…] of course peer coaching is a matter of mutual trust, you have to be open. But openness is a result of trust. (Aida, translated from German)

The presence of both trust and openness contributed to the development of each other. As such, they were interrelated. In this regard, the established rules, which aided in facilitating and increasing the already high levels of trust, also aided the development of openness. Once openness was reached, trust was always present as the basis on which openness could emerge and affect participant mind-sets.

[…] but in the moment when there is a basis for trust, there are many things that would normally pose a problem without a foundation in trust, that you can just handle casually. (Pierre, translated from German).

A trustworthy relationship between members was therefore carried by the positive atmosphere, which emerged through this interaction of trust and openness. This was emphasised by Andrew:

[...] I think this point of openness and trust, how to get this atmosphere, talking openly and trustfully to each other, this is a very important component. And I have to say this is an aspect which you cannot really practice in PGC. It was because we had built an open and trustful atmosphere that we obviously don't have in our professional life. (Andrew, translated from German)

Trust in mutual relation to openness and other psychological factors led to a positive learning environment where participants abandoned mental barriers. This finding is compatible with the literature, explaining that once trust is established, the learning journey can be powerful (Ladyshewsky, 2006). Some participants even described the atmosphere as "fun" and

something to really look forward to. This positive atmosphere subsequently had an effect on participants' motivation to return and work with PGC.

I have the feeling that we are all looking forward to those events. During our calls there's always a fun atmosphere. Even in difficult times we have each other and our sense of humour. (Roger, translated from German)

Considering such emphasis on trust and openness, it is fair to assume that without them a positive atmosphere would have been unlikely and participants would not have been motivated to attend the sessions. Although no participant made this connection in the interviews, research has shown that trust moderates the conversion of group member's motivation into group performance (Dirks, 1999). Dirks (1999) describes how trust influences group performance indirectly by channelling the group's motivation and energy in order to achieve certain goals. A deeper analysis of the effects of indirect motivation follows in a subsequent subchapter.

Trust also helped participants to share uneasy experiences and led to the development of empathy between a speaker and listeners and vice versa. Rob explained that the trust and empathy from listening to other person's problem did not leave him untouched.

And as a result of that trust, I have to admit, there have been situations when somebody presented his problem, which was relatively serious, which really affected me. You don't want to be in this situation and it also affected me, that somebody talks about this in this open fashion including their own feelings in this situation. (Rob, translated from German)

The relationship between trust and openness could not be satisfactorily described using the data of this study. Participants argue that it was trust that developed, which ultimately allowed participants to be open about their cases and decisions. According to Stevens (2007), trust is merely a feeling that can be manufactured in terms of a conscious decision to trust. Stevens (2007, p. 87) claims that honesty or openness, for example, in contrast to trust, is not a feeling but a behaviour: "Honesty, however, is a behaviour and is something I can choose or not choose. I cannot decide to love or trust…". In this research, participants taking part in PGC made the decision to take part and share their cases with each other. This decision to trust

others and report a case might already be a conscious decision for openness and thus trust was experienced. The trusting feeling might consequently be a normal effect of the PGC process, since PGC requires reporting as part of its design. Despite evidence in the research data, it is possible that the behaviour of being open and showing vulnerability inherent in the PGC design and then also showing respect to other peer-group members might in fact be behavioural triggers for the feelings of trust, motivation and empathy. In this case, the psychological factors in the framework would need to split into two categories: behaviours and feelings.

4.2.2 Openness

PGC requires participants to share personal cases within a group of other professionals. Openness describes the willingness to openly share cases that might be embarrassing or uncomfortable and also be honest about one's opinion in such cases. After participants started to open up, the interaction between participants was characterised by a willingness to openly share experiences. This openness facilitated the exchange of ideas and experiences which was at the heart of the learning process and which was the original aim of PGC. Participants started to feel that the group allowed them to sincerely speak to others and concerns were left behind. Openness was not present immediately from the start. The willingness to open up to others developed gradually for the participants:

I mean, obviously you don't know the others at first? What is their story? Who are these people? At the beginning, there was a kind of mutual reservation on all sides. (Mohammed, translated from German)

The experience of gradual opening up has been described several times during the analysis, exemplified by Mohammad:

If I am taking the view of the person who has the problem, it feels very good to present the problem to someone and get it off your chest, that you have somebody you can talk to. (Mohammad, translated from German)

Andrew expressed a similar point of view, describing how different this open atmosphere was from daily work:

I think, the implementation of the experiences you gained in peer group coaching are good and helpful. However, in superior – employee situations there is not such an open atmosphere as in the peer-groups. (Andrew, translated from German)

These quotes emphasise the way that openness and the positive atmosphere during PGC were different from daily work and people tended to speak about the topics, which normally they would feel hesitant to share with their bosses or colleagues. Openness became a foundation which allowed participants to feel comfortable in contributing and discussing different topics. The importance and emotional impact of such an atmosphere are shown in Marc's and Roger's descriptions:

It is the open atmosphere in which you can discuss these problems I already mentioned, which you cannot talk about in other situations. This is the component which most impressed me. (Marc)

I think that when you have an open relationship between each other, in such case you always have a topic. (Roger, translated from German)

As described while introducing the concept of trust, openness did not emerge alone but was strongly connected with trust and it helped to generate a positive coaching atmosphere. This atmosphere increased the motivation of participants to be a part of PGC. The open atmosphere can also be understood as a form of hope and comfort. Aida describes the positive effect of knowing that there is a place where problems can be brought up and discussed. This freedom is highly valued by Aida:

And that there is a place where I can go and say "I have a problem". Already this freedom of being allowed to have a problem, which will be discussed together, I think this is positive. (Aida, translated from German)

In summary, 'openness' describes the ability of participants to freely discuss every topic they want to contribute and find solutions in an atmosphere that is non-judgmental. Participants describe this openness in PGC, which did not exist in their daily work, but was perceived as positive and helpful.

4.2.3 Motivation

Participants took part in PGC with a motivation to exchange ideas and to learn. They came into the sessions with different concepts regarding what PGC is about and what their role would be. Participants describe being motivated to attend sessions because they were learning something new and felt positive about being in a place where they could openly share their problems and learn from others. Motivation and enthusiasm grew with the flow of the sessions and mutual recognition as Rob said:

I was very surprised how well it worked that there is a group, which I would have not chosen consciously on my own. But it worked very well, also because we have very different personalities. Because of that I am very enthusiastic and I think I get something additional to what I would have with the colleagues I speak to anyway. (Rob, translated from German)

With an intention to learn, participants went through various topics and found solutions to problems as described by Pierre:

[...] I dug a bit deeper into a few topics and then they mentioned those things to which they said, "yes, these helped me to learn and to develop, these were helpful this or this was the trigger, this was the topic" (Pierre, translated from German)

Motivation to learn was connected to other interrelated psychological factors such as trust and openness. These contributed to a pleasant coaching environment which participants looked forward to. This environment allowed the sharing necessary for participants to contribute and come back with an intention to learn. Rob described this feeling as follows:

This is a result of the way we have built the social contact with each other. Yes, it is like that, when we see each other we are really happy. We welcome each other in a really heartfelt way; it is very interesting, this is an exception in the office, at least in my case. (Rob, translated from German)

In contrast to the previously described positive motivation for conducting PGC, Greta experienced difficulties in her peer group that resulted in frustration and in the thought of withdrawing from PGC activities.

And I remember our shared frustration, how difficult it was to make appointments and the boys trusting that the girls will get it done. And our feeling, if we don't, it is not going to happen. Those are the two points I remember, but I also remember how great the boys thought it was that we

organised it all. And then we thought, if we don't do it, what happens then?
(Greta, translated from German)

Reasons for being motivated to participate in PGC, were given as the coaching environment and the presence of positive associated psychological factors. Considering that 'goal setting theory' is one of the more prominent theories on motivation (Latham, 2007), it is surprising that participants did not explicitly connect motivation and the pursuit of their individual or collective objectives. The goals participants brought to PGC were diverse but mostly non-specific. Participants said they wanted to get into new situations, break free from habits and discuss their situations with peers. Some participants were also quite sceptical about PGC initially and later surprised when they found that PGC had a positive effect. Gradually, participants learned about PGC and how the process could help them, which led to their bringing more specific cases and goals they wanted to work on. Participants reported that they chose an issue that was relevant at the time, thus setting relevant goals with the resolution of their cases. Edmondson (2004) argues that without a clear goal people lack motivation in learning oriented activities. Similarly Zemke and Zemke (1996, p. 3) wrote, "adults can be ordered into a classroom and prodded into seats, but they can't be forced to learn." Research on goals and goal setting has shown that high performance and learning goals can lead to a higher motivation and performance across many tasks (Latham, 2007). Latham (2007) explains that to achieve performance goals, it is necessary for participants to understand the task they are aiming to complete. In PGC, participants were equipped with the PGC method in a seminar and learned how to use this method by applying what they had learned during the PGC session. Motivation grew when participant proficiency and familiarity with the method also grew. Many of the participants who experienced PGC in this study formulated goals during PGC either through developing their case or through the coaching questions they were asked. Participant motivation for PGC was aided by the generation of goals during this process, as well as by the atmosphere of openness and trust and the potential to exchange relevant information with like-minded peers.

4.2.4 Empathy

The participants of PGC sessions explained that when they took the role of the coach, they developed a feeling of understanding while listening to other participants. They learned that there were similarities between their own and others' problems and developed mutual empathy for each other. Empathy is an additional concept influencing the learning atmosphere. Empathy was related to the feeling that the participants were not alone, and that someone understood their situation while they also understood theirs. This empathy that developed for each other influenced the group by giving participants a feeling of belonging to the group or social inclusion, thus favouring group cohesiveness.

It makes things more bearable, the problems, the challenges, when you see that you are not alone with your problems and challenges, that's a wonderful place to be in. (Marc, translated from German)

Empathy was also described when PGC participants realised they had already been in a similar situation as their counterparts. This feeling of similarity caused empathy and a willingness to share one's own experiences:

There are suggestions or thought-provoking impulses about what you could do, or somebody says "I already had this once and I dealt with it this way".(Mohammad; translated from German)

Another form of empathy emerged when participants had been in the coaching role and asked powerful questions. Being in the role of the coach, the participants used question techniques to help the coachee. They realised that the way they posed a question influenced the emotional state of the coachee:

Okay, it is true that many of the questions I asked before concerned logical components and afterwards, also in the peer-group, you gained more sympathy and more sensitivity, and that many questions have to rely on gut feeling and not being logical and analytic. (Andrew, translated from German)

Andrew came to understand that emotions had to be taken into consideration when asking coaching questions during PGC. Questions asked should not only be based on logic or rationales, but sensitivity and an

understanding of the emotional state of the other person were crucial. This realisation developed empathy in the coachee, but also as Andrew described, as a form of self-development and realisation of their own predisposition to focus on more logical issues. The development of empathy played an important role in the mutual understanding of the participants in PGC. Empathy was linked to trust between members, as mentioned earlier, and empathy was also linked to respect among members. Respect allowed the participants to develop sensitivity towards other participants. This allowed them to relate to each other in a sensitive way, keeping the personality of other members in mind during their interaction:

The empathy, the interest concerning the professional things, 100% sympathy, in terms of problems are often related to emotionality, having the personality of the person in mind we take his problem more or less seriously. It's also linked to respect. (Aida translated from German)

Empathy in PGC describes how participants develop a feeling of similarity and emotional consideration for each other. Through the exchange of similar situations, participants realise that other participants are experiencing similar issues and thus get a chance to relate to each other through their shared experiences and suggested solutions. Similarly, while taking the role of coach and relating to each other through similar situations, participants learned that for learning to happen, one has to bear in mind the emotions of those they communicate with. This concept of empathy resembles what Cox (2012) calls empathic and authentic listening. Cox (2012) argues that empathic listening describes a reproductive form of listening, aimed at understanding the client's needs and suspending prejudice against the coach as helper. Authentic listening describes being completely in the present and confronting the prejudices of both clients and coaches. This clearly describes how empathy among peer group members allows them to understand each other and learn through being exposed to each other's experience.

4.2.5 Respect

Respect as a psychological factor describes the esteem and regard participants develop and keep for each other during PGC. Although PGC is guided by rules, such as keeping confidentiality, respecting these rules and

also respecting the views of other participants was found to be a necessary feature. Aida describes this in the following way:

[…] I think in PGC many things rely on mutual respect and ones willingness to listen. (Aida, translated from German)

Respect can be found on many levels, but it is closely related to the development of empathy and trust, as mentioned before. Empathy as a concept describes how participants learn to respect personal and emotional boundaries, and deliver, for example, coaching questions in a way that they suited the situation and emotional reaction of the coachee. Respect and empathy are thus closely related. To show empathy, it is necessary to mutually respect the values, situations and emotional states of other participants. Thus openness and a positive atmosphere in PGC require respect between participants as described by Aida above. It would be impossible to trust others and share ideas without respect for one another. This shows that although the psychological factors category contains concepts that can be described separately, they are in fact describing an interrelated and inseparable set of psychological factors that facilitates the learning experience participants described.

In summary, the psychological factors of peer group coaching are necessary factors contributing to the learning process that is described in the next sub-chapter. Trust, open communication, participant motivation, empathy among group members and mutual respect are catalysts for the learning process. These factors are not only in interaction and likely to be inseparable from each other but also influence the whole PGC process. In this study, these factors emerged and their relationship with learning was put into focus. So far, no conclusion can be drawn about how these factors can be additionally influenced or whether or not some of the concepts might potentially even have a negative effect. In this study, participants attributed some of their learning to the presence of an atmosphere characterised by these psychological factors.

Category: Psychological factors		
Itm.	Concept	Findings
1	Trust	Trust as an all-pervasive and mandatory psychological factor for learning and successful PGC.
2	Openness	Participant willingness to open up to others developed gradually. Openness became a foundation, which allowed participants to feel comfortable contributing to and discussing different topics.
3	Motivation	Participant motivation grew with the flow of PGC sessions. Motivation helped the learning process in PGC.
4	Empathy	Empathy was developed in PGC and PGC developed participant empathy. Empathy influenced trust building and a positive learning atmosphere.
5	Respect	Respect describes the esteem and regard that participants develop and retain for each other during PGC. Respect is closely related to empathy as well as to the other psychological factors and helps to create a positive learning atmosphere.

Table 7: Concept and findings of category psychological factors

This sub-chapter dealt with factors of influence, and the next chapter describes the learning operation in PGC that is how participants convert their experience in PGC into learning.

4.3 The learning operation in PGC

The defined goal and desired outcome of PGC is to provide members with a situation where learning can take place while following the PGC process of alternately taking on the role of coach and coachee. This operation, where participants use their own cases, topics and experiences for learning, leads ultimately to changes in perspectives and the implementation of new behaviour. This phenomenon was called the learning operation in this study. The learning operation was found to happen in three ways. One way, which was typically the first, was characterised by an exchange of information. Another means of learning took place through individual self-reflection, which was often followed by emotional reaction.

Exchange of information evolved in this study as a four step approach of: i) reporting on cases, situations and experience; ii) sharing ideas, tips, opinions and feedback; iii) observing passively through participant reactions and results; and iv) comparing all these insights with one's own situation. Self-reflection was reported by participants as including three factors: i) recognising patterns, ii) confirmation of similar behaviour, iii) acknowledgement of different behaviours, and iv) an emotional reaction. An emotional reaction after self-reflection builds the last part of the learning operation, as shown in Figure **12**. Participants described following the parts of the learning operation from left to right, possibly on multiple occasions in one coaching session.
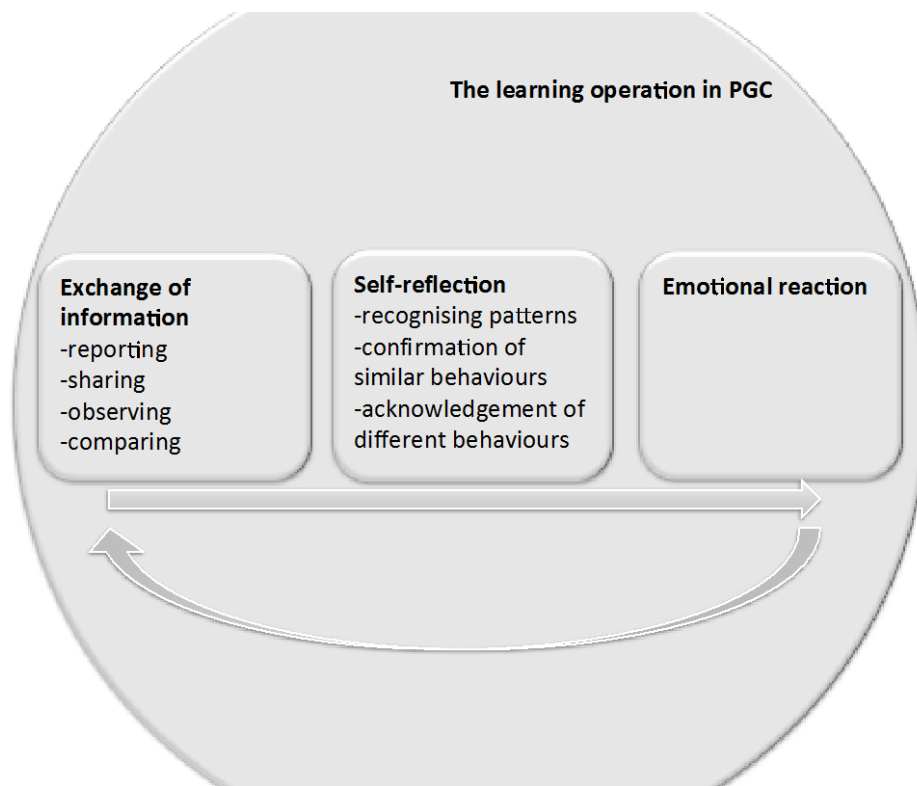
Figure 12: The learning operation in PCG

4.3.1 Exchange of information

The exchange of information happened in a number of different ways during PGC. The first that emerged from data is called 'reporting'. During this initial stage participants were reporting their own cases, stories or experiences regarding a specific topic they wanted to address at the PGC meeting. This reporting required the participants to think about the situation

and to present their account to the group in an ordered, understandable fashion. Participants were re-analysing and re-evaluating their own thoughts as they were reporting the case and also consequently when receiving input from other participants.

Simply the act of communicating your problems, simply thinking about them, helps you to see things from a different angle. [Yes]. And what comes back to you are suggestions or thought – provoking impulses what you could do, or somebody says "I already had this once and I dealt with it this way." (Mohammed, translated from German)

I think the most important thing for the person who had the case was that he could report it and there was somehow feedback about it. Just getting feedback somehow, that was really the most helpful thing. (Anja; translated from German)

Receiving input from other members was important and helpful as it made the presenter think of what could have been done differently or what others did in the same situation. This allowed participants to reflect on their situation from perspectives they had not considered before.

I think the most important thing was receiving feedback on one's issues. Getting feedback. I think this was the most helpful tool (Mohammed; translated from German).

After participants reported their cases, thoughts, and insight to a chosen topic, a 'sharing' stage subsequently followed. Sharing in this context describes the process that takes place when participants relate to each other. They shared thoughts, perspectives and feedback with the participant who reported a case. They also discussed, asked questions and shared their thoughts on the feedback of others. This led to the exchange of ideas, experiences and opinions. This sharing constructively contributed to discussions during which people acquired new information, knowledge or perspectives. Sharing was in a sense inspiration through exposure to different perspectives, opinions and ideas. Denise described how she learned about creative ideas shared by one of the participants. She was surprised because she did not expect the participant to share such useful feedback and creative ideas. Denise was exposed to information she did not expect and would not have developed alone.

Yes, one of the peer-group participants surprised me greatly with his creative ideas on how to deal with specific themes, along with his employees. To be honest, I wouldn't have trusted, or I would not have expected him to do so, yes I was impressed. (Denise, translated from German)

Roger found himself in the position of giving "tips" to others because he could relate to their shared situation:

And then you give and receive tips, because you had a similar problem, and he dealt with it that way, at the first meeting we have had some exercises from the first module with whose help we should try to talk about certain topics. (Roger, translated from German)

Another way of stimulating reflection was to ask coaching questions and to formulate hypotheses that are described by Roger as "statements". Instead of giving tips, participants used the skills to ask coaching questions and the skill to formulate hypotheses to help the coachees to develop their own solutions.

We had to concentrate on this exercise, because we often immediately thought about solutions, that somebody suggested "I would deal with it that way" but it was the point where the goal was to enhance reflection in the other person's mind via questions and statements. (Roger, translated from German)

Asking coaching questions led to discussions where people exchanged their experiences, opinions and received feedback. This exchange of questions happened in a typical process of several steps described by Anja:

First, we summed up what we heard. Afterwards everyone shared their spontaneous impression, the first things which came into your mind, and with that questions popped up. For example: Why are some things like that? And then we asked the coachee those questions. (Anja, translated from German)

This coaching process helped participants to focus on a specific problem and helped to receive advice as well as to develop solutions. During those discussions, learning occurred not only for participants in the role of coachee. All participants in PGC listened to and processed information and then asked questions, whether in the role of the coachee or coach.

Aida mentioned that the content and way of posing a question had an impact on participant learning:

With the aid of solutions. New solutions. Also new solutions but also the new way you ask. How you ask question. There were some very good questions. (Aida, translated from German)

In the PGC sessions, participants also faced difficult or unpleasant questions. These questions touched on issues or perspectives that participants perceived as uncomfortable. This was not perceived as something negative, however. Uncomfortable questions similarly contributed to self-reflection, as did more comfortable questions.

[…] I think these other ideas that people had and the questions people asked, because they stimulated a kind of self-reflection via uncomfortable questions or highlighting of other aspects, you didn't have in your mind because you are only in this situation. (Anja; translated from German)

At some points you feel there are questions, where you try to tiptoe around certain situations. Questions such as, "Why don't you do this or that?" and then you think "I could have, but I was too lazy, too faint hearted or something else to do it. (Mohammed, translated from German.)

Sharing enabled participants to exchange ideas and information that in turn allowed them to develop and to share solutions. The participants in all coaching roles experienced sharing. Being a part of this sharing process also enabled participants to observe how others responded to a diverse number of topics. Besides an active sharing of information, there was also a passive component in the form of observation. Participants observed how others thought about situations and connected these thoughts and insights to their own similar or different cases and problems.

The feedback, it is very interesting how much you can accept and how much you cannot. You get insights but at the end you have to find your own solutions, even if it doesn't happen via this questioning tool, but if there are suggestions and you can get impulses out of these suggestions, but at the end you have to find your own solution, I feel good because of that. (Denise, translated from German)

Again, learning was not only happening through active participation, but also by observing and reflecting on what happened in the group. This form of learning resembles modelled learning (Bandura, 1971). Bandura (1971)

describes how humans learn through the observation of other people performing tasks. In the context of PGC, members of the group learned indirectly through observing what was suggested, discussed and determined to be a possible solution. They observed how solutions were created and in a later PGC observed whether or not such solutions were successful.

Participants also learn through imagining solutions and reflecting on them. Being exposed to a solution or idea, they imagined how they could use what they heard for themselves. Thus, if participants encountered a situation after coaching that was similarly discussed in PGC before, they could access that information and act on it. This form of learning was possible through the group situation in PGC:

For sure, the first one is sharing, meaning yeah as a group, yeah, first, it's a group activity, you share and you prove or develop yourself, you know, learning from others, sharing, yeah, so group, sharing, development, own development, maybe. (Olga)

Figure **13** illustrates the sequence of the learning process regarding the exchange of information in PGC experienced by participants. At the initial stage participants report their cases, situations or experience, leading to a phase of sharing. Here, participants discussed different ideas, opinions, provided tips and feedback. In both reporting cases as well as in sharing, participants learned indirectly through observation. Comparison of the information to one's own experience led to self-reflection. Self-reflection will be discussed in the following sub-chapter.
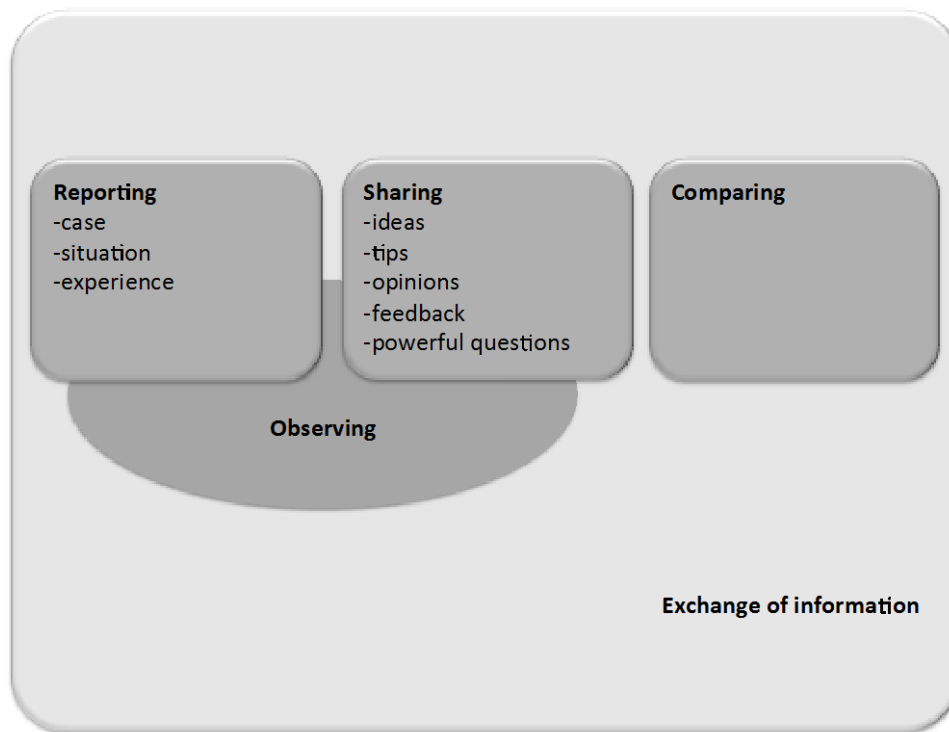
Figure 13: Exchange of information in PGC as part of learning operations

Exchange of information is an inseparable part of PGC. During the exchange of information participants open up, report their experiences, discuss different viewpoints, compare their situations, provide feedback and start to self-reflect on what was said and what could have been or will be done differently in their professional situations. Exchange of information can be seen as an enabler and catalyst for trust. Trust, as discussed earlier, is a prerequisite and is necessary for PGC to take place.

Exchange of information was seen equally crucial for learning in PGC and even labelled as unique by Kutzhanova, et al. (2009), studying skill-based development of entrepreneurs and the role of personal and PGC in enterprise development. Kutzhanova et al. (2009) report that "…the opportunity to meet with peers …, provides entrepreneurs with productive learning experiences, helps them to maintain positive self-esteem, and provides a forum for sharing ideas and receiving unbiased and trustworthy feedback". Exchange of information created a platform through which participants became closer to each other, started to self-reflect on their shared experiences and learned from one another.

4.3.2 Self-reflection in PGC

Self-reflection took place at all times during PGC. PGC processes provided a number of situations both inside and outside the sessions, where participants started to think about their own behaviour, actions and beliefs. While talking about her experience in PGC, Anja described self-reflection as follows:

[...] PGC is the most suitable - in my opinion it is the most important component, going there and speaking about it, you think about it once more and you get input, the others hold the mirror up to your issues. Also how other people could think about it, these can be things you were never aware of before, and I think this is also helpful in other situations which are not linked to this specific issue the peer-group dealt with (Anja, translated from German).

This example shows the process from the exchange of information and experience to self-reflection. PGC participants report their cases and receive input from other participants. Afterwards participants reflect on their own situations and experiences in the light of new information. This reflection brought participants something new to acknowledge or to reject, something that they had not thought about before. Thinking about the same situation in another way and being exposed to ideas and insights, led to a process where the information and experience affected participant thinking, and later behaviour. Some participants reported that in their day-to-day work situation they were approaching situations differently and seeing old situations from different perspectives after PGC. Roger and Rob, for example, changed their behaviour towards their direct reports, using coaching questions instead of only questions to elicit information:

I am trying with coaching to lead others, where you use these methods of questioning to get others somewhere without presenting a solution or telling them "That was really bad" and instead asking "How did that happen? Why was it this way? What did you do? How can we...?" Getting people into this pattern of thought, I try to do that. At the end of the day I break off at the last sentence and say "I would do it in this and that way". Doesn't matter, it works. This is really fascinating. (Roger, translated from German)

There were many things I really liked, I have used not only in my area. You realise, you ask a lot of questions you would not ask otherwise. (Rob, translated from German)

Participant reflections led to a cognitive restructuring of how they thought and felt about certain situations and thus converted their experience of PGC to real world applications.

It emerged from the data that the process of self-reflection started with comparison. Participants compared themselves and their own behaviour in a situation with other peers. They then recognised and acknowledged similarities or differences in their behaviour:

Yes, and then there is this effect: I am not alone, I am not alone with this problem. The others have similar problems, this affirmation not only "I am on the right track", this is also good and important, but also the awareness, that the others cope with the same issues. (Anja, translated from German)

Indeed, it is the case that nearly every issue somebody presented, another person had already experienced and dealt with it. This shows you that you are no exception and that it is not your fault for being in this situation, that you might just be too stupid, it is rather the case that these issues happen. One solves it that way, another a different way. There are always many possibilities, but it is like that, everyone faces similar problems. (Mohammed, translated from German)

Anja and Mohammed realised that by comparing themselves with others, they were not "alone", that other participants had the same problems and situations. Though behaviours in a similar situation and the chosen approach of solving problems might have been different from participant to participant, while sharing problems, participants often discovered that they could relate to the coachee's reported case. As a result, self-reflection was facilitated when participants found themselves in situations where they started 'recognising patterns'. Here, self-reflection was a process of constant comparison of one's own understanding and experience and other experiences.

Everyone has the problem, that there are some employees they don't get along with. Furthermore, everyone has problems in being overburdened at some point. And he doesn't know how to deal with or things like that, the pattern is, everyone has the same problems. (Mohammed, translated from German)

By 'recognising patterns' people recognised familiar situations and, as described when dealing with the factor of empathy, understood that they were not "alone" or unique with their problems. This gave confidence and

nurtured trust, which again resulted in empathy towards one another. Since participants had similar problems and felt they were in similar situations, the solutions developed or suggested for one coachee might also work for another participant in another situation. Thus, through comparison, participants learned how to solve their problems. Self-reflection also led to confirmation of behaviours, ideas or thoughts. One of the participants noted:

On the other hand, I experience, and because of that I feel positive, when we talk about the problems of others I realise "Oh, you have the same problem, this is a really good tip". This can be an idea I have had on my own or great ideas of the others, there are also themes I have no specific problem with, but I think, you should remember these approaches for the future. (Rob, translated from German)

Rob's statement shows, after the exchange of information for solving a problem, that participants reflected that there could be a common approach to solving a problem. Thus, they found the best practice and inspiration to try and implement later in job situations. These findings were not static and inflexible, however. The group discussion could also lead to acknowledgment of a behaviour which is different than the one the participant had, thus leading to an increase in options available to handle a scenario, and thus empowering participants.

[...] self-reflection by taking another position and reflecting on other perspectives and points of views, which enables me to think about my actual point of view and to see things from a different angle. (Aida, translated from German)

Learning took place through self-reflection and reflection with others, as addressed by interviewees of this research. Cseh and colleagues (2013) concluded in their studies, researching the different ways that leaders learn, that leaders had to become aware of their 'otherness', in the form of recognising differences, celebrate them and learn from them. Cseh et al. (2013, p. 489) write: "Self-reflection leading to the 'self-awareness of otherness' as well as reflection with others were at the core of learning and developing the global mind-set of these leaders."

The data from this study shows that self-reflection triggered emotional reactions in participants. Emotional reactions built the final part of the

learning process in PGC. Emotional reactions can be strong, such as being surprised or excited, or small and barely noticeable. For example, Aida talked about being surprised and experiencing an 'aha' moment after self-reflection, whereas Mohammed reported "enlightenment" after his coaching experience.

Yes, in my case, they got me on the track, I never got there on my own, indeed, they guided me over the red line. This was an a-ha moment. This is the real art, because normally you cannot go there on your own, because you only see your world and it is really hard to get out of this. [Yes] And I had this a-ha-experience. I thought "Wow this is amazing." (Aida; translated from German)

I mean, normally I am someone who does not love these things too much. I do not like exposing myself to others. But this worked really well, I must say. And this enlightenment was really that it helps doing that. (Mohammed, translated from German)

Such a-ha moments are often important moments in the coaching process (Longhurst, 2006). In these moments, participants feel that everything changes. Participants perceive this moment as a point where they cannot go back, where an ultimate insight takes place that changes their perspective forever. Some describe it as a moment of freedom and relief. In brief solution-focused therapy, this moment is often described as a turn or twist (de Shazer, 1988). De Shazer (1988) describes the way that insight culminates in such a turn moment and a session or process is changed immediately. The insight reached cannot be forgotten and enables the client to change and adapt. The emotions, triggered by such intense self-reflection and realisation moments, also motivated participants to learn further in the form of improving their skills and/or changing their behaviour.

Figure **14** illustrates the variations in how self-reflection led the participants to re-evaluate their behaviour by recognising patterns, gaining confirmation of similar behaviour from other participants, and by acknowledging a novel behaviour which is different from their own. As a result of self-reflection participants experienced a number of more or less intense emotions, such as surprise, feeling uncomfortable, and being happy. Self-reflection consequently led to learning and allowed a change of behaviour, perspective, and opinion.
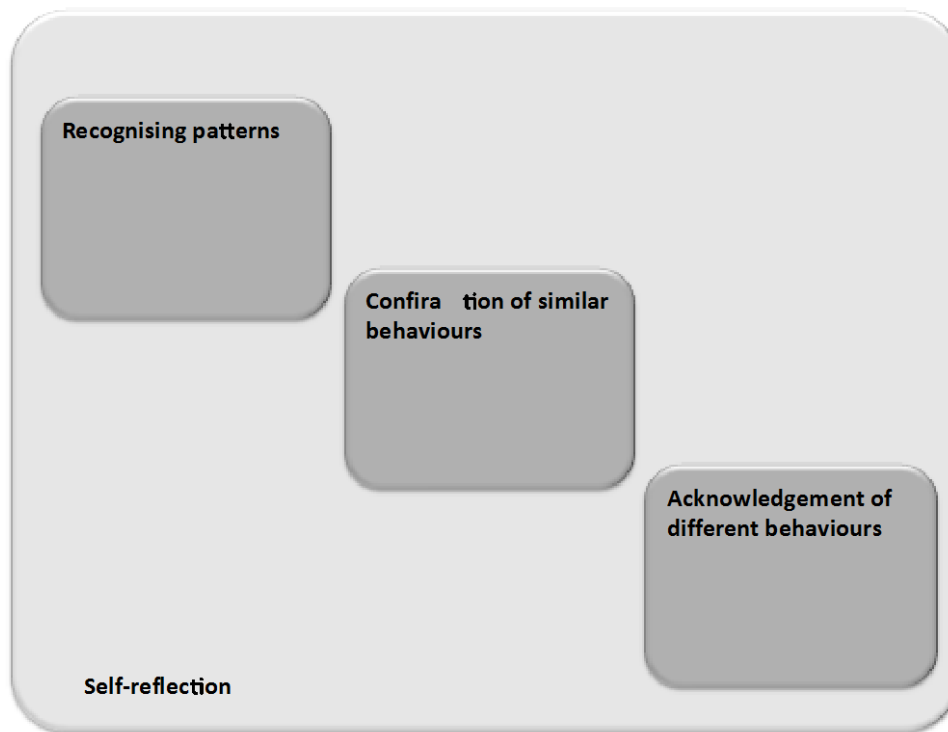
Figure 14: Variations of self-reflection

Self-reflection is a core element of the learning operation in PGC, since through self-reflection participants are brought into a position where they have the potential to change their behaviour, approach or position based on their new experiences and insights. This position is shared by authors who research peer group learning and argue that "learning starts with self-reflection" (Kutzhanova and Lyons, 2009, p. 12). In their study, Kutzhanova and Lyons (2009) noticed that entrepreneurs learn by self-reflecting, discovering and developing themselves. It is important to encourage self-reflection among participants. Psychological factors are important stimulants for participants to self-reflect. As explained previously, psychological factors influenced learning during PGC. Trust, empathy and openness, for example, facilitated the interaction in PGC that ultimately allowed an open exchange of information and experience, which again led to self-reflection as discussed above. Only through the development of trust did participants feel free to open up and share cases that were considered important and not easy to share, hence allowing others to make comparisons. As Kutzhanova and Lyons (2009) showed in their study, self-reflection is encouraged by trustworthy and non-competitive settings (Kutzhanova and Lyons, 2009). In this study, participants were asked how

competitive they perceived PGC to be. All participants who asked this question said that PGC was not perceived as competitive at all.

The learning operation in PGC shown in Figure **12** took place in three stages. At first, participants reported a certain topic or case which became the subject of a discussion consisting of information sharing (ideas, tips, opinions and feedback). In this first stage, exchange of information had the highest intensity and interaction between participants. Reporting cases and sharing information were accompanied by two other sub-processes, observing and comparing, which led to individual self-reflection, upon which was built Stage Two. During this second stage of the learning operation, participants recognised certain behavioural patterns. While seeing patterns, they either realised they were experiencing a certain situation uniquely or they discovered a different approach to a problem, or issue. Stage Two was followed by the third stage of this learning operation: emotional reaction. Emotions were always present after self-reflection, but differed in degree and kind. Particularly highlighted by participants were the so-called a-ha moments. These three steps can be summarised as the core of learning in PGC.

Cope (2005) suggests, while mapping how entrepreneurs learn, that learning can be understood as a dynamic process of awareness, reflection, association, and application. Cope highlights that the utilisation of entrepreneurial learning may take place long after the experience itself. This is in line with the findings in this study about awareness and reflection and can be found in the exchange of experience and self-reflecting, whereas 'association' might resemble comparison. The application and the utilisation that takes place after the experience itself is in line with the behaviour change of PGC participants in this study. Application and utilisation will be described as implementation of learning in the next section. Implementation describes the application of a new skills, new behaviour or insights into practice, and is actually the result of PGC as it reflects the impact of PGC on participants and highlights the consequences of learning.

4.4 Implementation of learning

Implementation is the phase after participants have reflected on what they have learned in PGC and consequently applied at their work place. Implementation can take place after the close of PGC or in between PGC sessions. Many interviewees talked about implementation of learning from PGC, particularly how it later changed their leadership behaviour, leadership style or problem solving approach. Marc, for example, explained that, in general, 80% of what was discussed in PGC could be implemented, but that not all implementation was successful.

[…] all hints were helpful and the approaches were good. All these could be implemented to 80%, that is my guess. However, not all that was implemented led to a 100% success rate. (Marc, translated from German)

Implementation describes how learning is translated into action. Since PGC is designed as a tool to help leaders learn and adapt new knowledge to their working life, the implementation of what was learned is a key necessity for PGC success. One of the first learnings that participants started to implement was the way and style of asking powerful questions to which they were exposed during coaching. This describes how participants learned to use what could be described as a 'coaching leadership style' in their daily job lives. This new behaviour in asking different questions also sometimes irritated participants' subordinates and possibly led to resistance in the working environment, as described below. These mechanisms appear similar to individual's resistance to other forms of organisational change described by Bovey and Hede (2001), where individuals externalised their internal thoughts and feelings, while perceiving a change (others change in behaviour) as the cause of their anxiety and responding with resistance. Andrew's subordinates were irritated by the new way of how he asked questions.

Yes, but I also had a positive experience in my professional life, at first the employees were irritated because of the questions I asked, because they didn't expect such questions. (Andrew, translated from German)

These changes describe the adoption of a 'coaching leadership style'. This coaching leadership style is characterised by applying the PGC coaching approach in day-to-day leadership situations. While the role of manager as

coach can lead to a number of conflicts, a coaching leadership style can be used to empower direct reports and peers (Bresser and Wilson, 2010). Andrew's subordinates were not used to these kinds of questions and to Andrew's change in behaviour, however, later they accepted this new leadership style.

In these situations I suggested we take the time to understand what the problem really is and they weren't used to it. I think now they've got used to it, I mean, I've done this for a few months now, but the beginning was exciting, at first they looked confused [(laughter)] because it depends on the leadership style. (Andrew, translated from German)

As the result of PGC, especially of learning to ask coaching questions, Andrew later managed to change his leadership style. Rather than being directive and giving solutions, he became more pragmatic as he started to focus on what works and what does not. Implementation was reflected in this change of behaviour:

People come to me, because they need a decision or a solution and until now I have been leading in a slightly directive way and given them the solution without really knowing whether that solves the problem. And now, the implementation of the question-technique, maybe not always done to perfection, but I think that this is not what is most important, it is important what works and what doesn't work, I think that in my leadership style, some things have changed. (Andrew, translated from German)

Many participants noticed a change in their behaviour after PGC. For example, Rob became more open and empathetic. Rob started to become empathetic by considering what his co-workers and also subordinates were thinking, which was perceived positively:

I have already mentioned, that many things which I implemented - not only in my department - pleased me. I already have an impression that I know what my employees think. (Rob, translated from German)

It works very well, I am totally enthusiastic. I have to say, employees with whom I speak and sit together recognise, that suddenly I do many things differently than before. So I had the chance to try out things, because this is totally okay, as most of them know the context. I have to confess, this was really very good. (Rob, translated from German)

Rob expressed positive feelings when he realised that others noticed a change in his behaviour. It was the result of his efforts as he tried to

implement everything new that had "added value" for him. The benefits of learning, achieved through PGC, are highlighted by Rob's positive view of his behavioural change. It appears that PGC can help leaders to learn listening and empathising skills through the coaching process and thus increase their leadership effectiveness. Rob describes the way that he aimed to incorporate everything that was learned during PGC:

After a module, I try to transfer and implement 100%. After a while implementation gets less. However, I also realise that some things really stick. I use these things that really stick in my daily work and this has a huge value. (Rob, translated from German)

Marc furthermore recognised as "substantial" the change in cooperation with colleagues.

OK, lets say it this way, we have annual employee evaluations with our subordinates and here I would use feedback. But I think that it had a certain effect and it was less for me but more for my subordinates. And in this context, I think indeed, that it is a substantial change. (Marc, translated from German)

Marc moreover discovered the importance and usefulness of regular feedback. As a result he sought more regular information about his performance after an annual performance review. He understood that receiving feedback only once per year was not sufficient for his own development.

Let's put it that way, we have a routine of conducting annual performance reviews and in this context I would ask for a feedback. (Marc, translated from German)

Denise described the relationship of trust, group dynamics, reflection and implementation:

[...] this morning, yes, the topic of trust, yes in this programme, yes it was so nicely built. The dynamic of this group was just working nicely. Not only with us, but in general. I left the group and I was really amazed and that not only in respect of my working life but also privately. I really had the feeling that this brought some things to evolve, and I think that is a lot for something like that. Generally, I am very sceptical about activities like that. I find that this caused something to evolve and stimulated things in my life, to re-think certain things. (Denise, translated from German)

Implementation of gained knowledge is seen as the result of learning in this research. For example, participants developed a coaching oriented leadership style that was met with some resistance by their direct reports. This research design did not focus on how implementation of learning takes place. The long-term effects of leaders adopting such leadership styles are unclear. Leadership styles have been described as useful for certain employees and situations and might thus be appropriate or not appropriate, depending on the situation (Goleman, et al., 2009; Goleman, 2002). At the same time, PGC has developed empathy for each other among participants and created a support network to similarly reflect on the leadership changes participants make. The effects of PGC on leadership styles and thus performance and the results of leadership need to be investigated further to understand how PGC affects leaders.

In summary, self-reflection resulted in learning, which further led to a change of behaviour, perspective or opinion. Individual learning was later implemented in participant's daily work. Implementation is deliberately not positioned at the core of the theoretical framework but next to it, as an essential stand-alone part that shows the consequence and the execution of participant learning.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

The previous chapter grounding the theoretical framework describes how the major categories and their concepts emerged during data analysis and discussed findings in relation to literature. This chapter will present the entire theoretical PGC framework of how leaders learn in PGC, by taking on a meta-perspective to describe how categories relate to one another. Subsequently, the contributions this research makes to theoretical knowledge and the implications for practice will be described. Lastly, the limitations and suggestions for further research will be explored, followed by my reflection as a researcher.

5.1 The theoretical PGC framework

It is challenging to visualise the evolved theoretical framework because its categories and parts are all interconnected. The learning operation is the core of the framework and where learning happens. The learning operation is based on the learning environment that gives structure and form, and represents the basis of the theoretical framework. Psychological factors permeate the learning environment as well as the learning operation. Reciprocally, the learning environment and the learning operation have an effect on psychological factors. The result of the PGC framework is implementation. For an overview and details of how the three main categories are interconnected, the categories and their concepts are laid out in Figure **15** and discussed below. Later in this chapter, in Figure **16**, the theoretical framework is presented in its concluding form, showing theoretical conjecture as a collection of categories that detail the subject of the research.
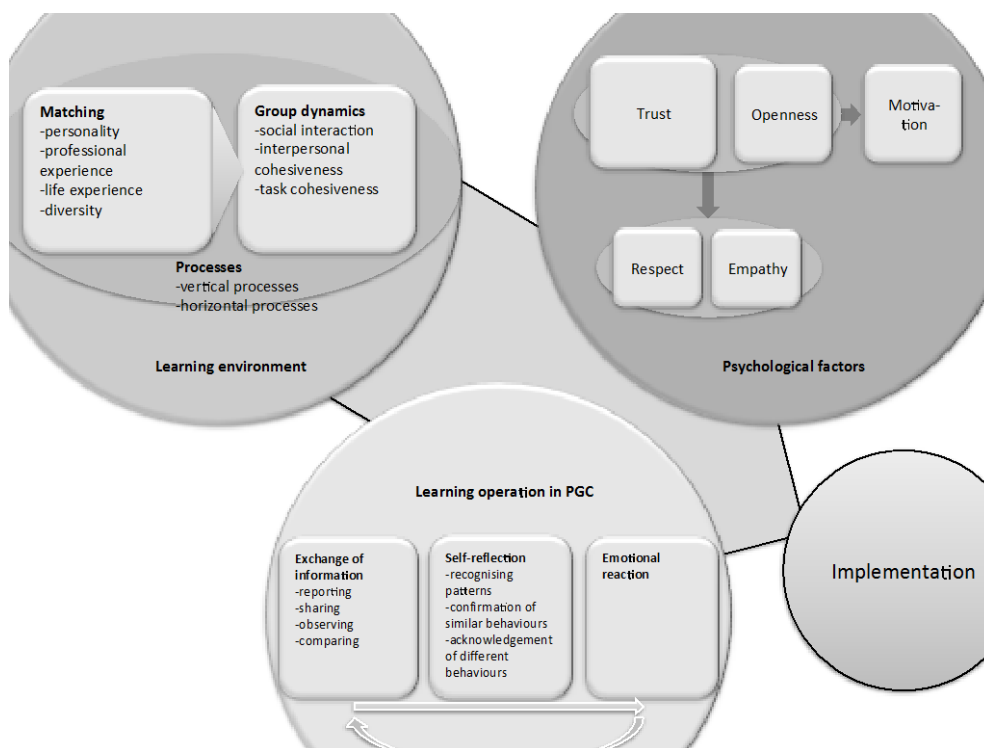
Figure 15: Layout of the theoretical PGC framework

From a chronological perspective, matching is the initial part of PGC and all participants began their PGC experience by forming peer groups. Peer group participants in this study agreed that the characteristics of members and thus the composition of groups made a difference to their experience. Learning environment is the basis of the framework and describes the processes followed by participants while employing the coaching method PGC. While being part of the group and coaching each other, members are exposed to different group dynamics that shape their experience. Embedded in this learning environment is the learning operation, which happens when participants coach each other. Here, an exchange of information and most importantly the sharing of knowledge and expertise, self-reflection and the recognition of similar or different behaviour, cause an emotional reaction. The psychological factors, foremost trust in one another and in the method of PGC, work as a catalyst, and enable participants to learn. This proposed theoretical framework abstains from adding connections in the form of arrows or vectors among concepts of different categories, possibly showing specific relationships, because all categories are interconnected and arrows would not show the complexity of these relationships. The

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interconnectedness of the PGC framework categories differs from one PGC group to another by the degree of magnitude and their direction. As an example, matching could be perceived as positive or negative by one participant or by the whole peer group. Depending on the perception, the relationship between the concepts of trust and consequently openness and motivation would differ as well, depending on amount of exchanged information, self-reflection or emotional reaction.

Implementation as the consequence of learning from PGC was happening post-PGC. Implementation is described here as behaviour change, resulting directly from learning in PGC emanating from the implementation of goals, tips and ideas that arose during PGC. This reconfirms that PGC and its processes are a useful activity for learning and result in behavioural change in the work of business leaders.

The PGC framework that emerged from this research is summarised and visually presented in Figure **16**. It is suggested that this theoretical framework be viewed as if all three parts were built on top of each other. This nesting of the learning operation shows how it is actually part of the learning environment and permeated by psychological factors.
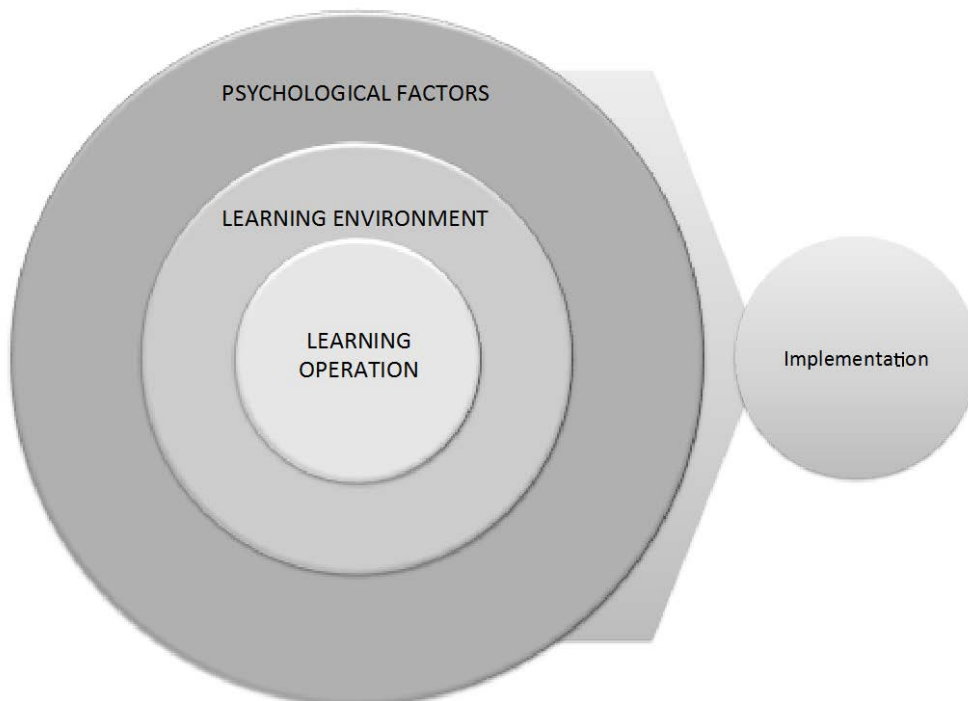

Figure 16: Theoretical PGC framework of how leaders learn

5.2 Contribution to knowledge

This study was focused on the question of how business leaders learn in PGC. It develops a theoretical framework for the way leaders learn in PGC with a view to supporting organisations in their leadership development initiatives, and aims to contribute to the recent academic coaching debate by addressing three gaps in the literature. Firstly, PGC in the literature is understood in multiple diverse ways, but it is not well distinguished from other forms of learning methods, in particular, dyadic peer coaching and action learning. Secondly, the existing literature provides little by way of a theoretical framework formed from empirical data about how learning takes place in the PGC setting for business leaders. Thirdly, existing literature does not suggest a single approach for organising PGC, stemming from empirical research, that can be applied in practice. In this chapter, I will describe how this research contributes to knowledge in these areas.

This research contributes to the existing literature by building an understanding and contrast to other coaching methods, specifically dyadic peer coaching. The historical context and the evolution of peer coaching that is discussed in the literature review of this thesis help to reflect on the principles that shape and outline PGC in this research and propose a working definition for PGC in business for leadership development that is presented in subsequent sub-chapters that consider the findings of this study.

The quality and contribution of a GT derived in the pragmatic paradigm is validated through "practical testing of its consequences as would-be valid solutions" (Strubing, 2007, p. 565). By way of reflecting on aspects of the thesis, the framework and its implications were presented to peers in the DCaM programme at Oxford Brookes University and also to some fifty coaches at the Centre for Creative Leadership's (CCL) Learning Days in June 2014. Presenting the framework and getting feedback was useful in reflecting on the influence of myself as a researcher on the interpretation of data (McGhee et al., 2007; Remenyi, 2013; Shenton, 2004). The coaches who attended perceived the model and method as viable for implementation in practice. Some members of the coaching audience considered the model

to resemble action learning. In the introduction to the thesis I demonstrated that PGC is distinct from action learning in terms of intention and process, however, PGC and action learning have similarities in the way that leaders learn. Zuber-Skerrit (2002) describes action learning as a process resembling the Kolb learning cycle (Kolb, 1984), shown in Figure 17. Additionally this figure shows the relationship between Kolb's learning cycle and the theoretical PGC framework. This process is also described as an internal form of learning from experience in contrast to learning from an external source, which is most appropriate when the answers to a question or issues are complex rather than straightforward and simple (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). PGC was found to demonstrate a similar process, comparable to the Kolb learning cycle. It is also a process that relies on experiential learning rather than external instruction. PGC and action learning both offer a method of raising learning from the unconscious to the more conscious levels through techniques of questioning that probe and illuminate what many often assume or ignore about their own prefiguring of what we learn (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). Zuber-Skerritt (2002, p. 118) reflects further that "this conscious use of the learning process can thus make tacit knowledge more explicit. Action learning does not ask definite questions that prompt such answers as 'yes'/'no', 'right'/'wrong', 'good'/'bad'. The action learning process is essentially developmental in that it encourages creative, innovative thinking by asking open-ended questions about how to improve or create what matters to us", as does PGC.
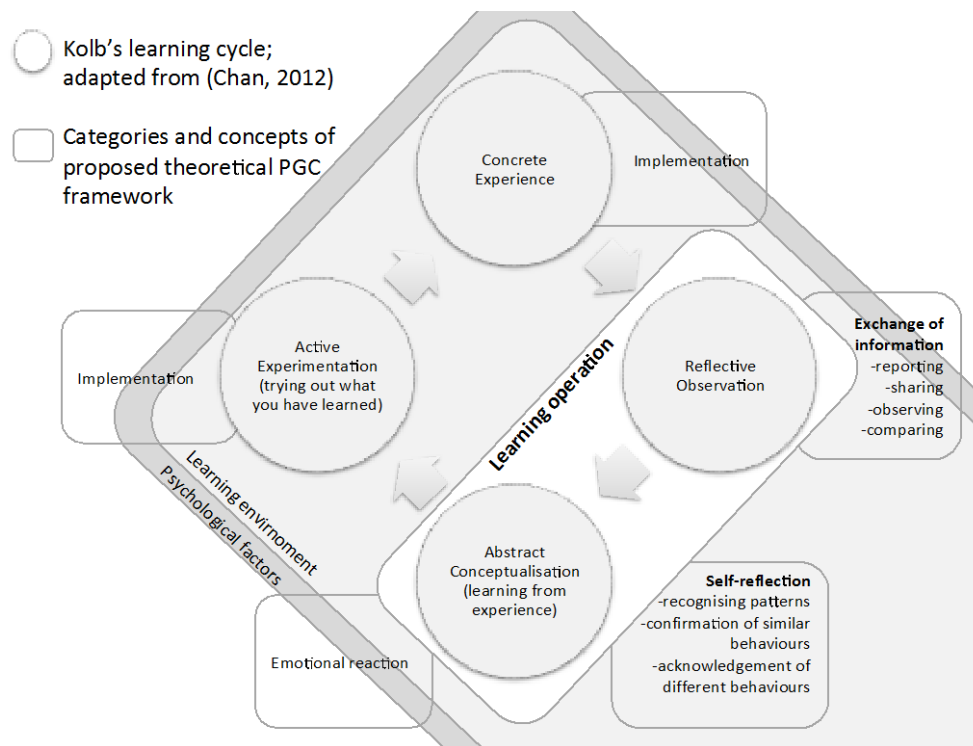
Figure 17: Relationship between Kolb's learning cycle and the theoretical PGC framework

This study provides a framework for the way learning takes place in PGC. The theoretical PGC framework based on the findings describes learning in PGC as happening while participants share and exchange information and start to self-reflect. Learning is understood, using Mezirow's (1997) transformational learning approach, as understanding the meaning of our experience. The learning operation in PGC within the theoretical framework is similar to 'reflective observation' and 'abstract conceptualisation' of the learning cycle by Kolb (1984), while 'active experimentation' and 'concrete experience' resemble implementation, as mentioned above and highlighted in Figure 17. In addition to confirming specific elements of Kolb's learning cycle the proposed theoretical PGC framework adds to his model new elements: emotional reactions, psychological factors and the learning environment that are essential for learning in PGC according to the findings of this study. Kolb (1984, p. 21) explains that "…learning, change and growth are seen to be facilitated best by an integrated process that begins with here-and-now experience followed by collection of data and observation of that experience. The data are then analysed and the

conclusions of this analysis are fed back to the actors in the experience for their use in the modification of their behaviours and choice of new experience." In PGC, participants were found to exchange information and here-and-now experience, which is followed by the collection of data and observation of that experience, stimulated by the coachee's sharing of information and coach's questioning. Self-reflection on raised issues and collected data is part of PGC's learning process, as is the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations. Participants have the chance to then test implications in their everyday work and to later report their successes or failures in succeeding PGCs. This learning process and Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model appear to be comparable and similar in nature.

The findings of this research show that not every PGC group succeeded in applying the proposed coaching method, which was described in the introduction of this thesis, in their PGC sessions. This observation invites the question of how important such a coaching method is for PGC, and why was it abandoned? Many authors suggest different methods for coaching and coaching groups. Examples include the aforementioned GROW (RE-GROW) model, GROUP or RE-GROUP by Brown and Grant (S. W. Brown & Grant, 2010), or Otto Scharma's U process for group dialogue (Scharmer, 2009). It is apparent that an external coach could make use of a fixed coaching method's intention and structure to guide coachees or coaching groups to facilitate their objectives. In PGC, however, where an external coach and thus a coaching expert is missing, the proposed coaching method was not followed in detail. As discussed earlier in this thesis only coaching questions, such as resource-oriented questions or scaling questions, which were part of the proposed coaching method, were perceived as valuable and found application throughout and after PGC, rather than the specifically taught coaching method.

While contributing to the literature and knowledge in the field by suggesting a single approach to organising PGC, this study highlights various aspects of PGC that influenced the theoretical framework, as well as the organising approach to PGC that will be explored in the following section.

5.3 Implications for practice

Beyond the theoretical contribution, the research has implications for practice, and provides suggestions about how practitioners might gain from this study. A theoretical PGC framework for leader learning can be used by HR and leadership development professionals, as well as external coaches, to enhance leader's personal and business growth. By focussing on leader learning in PGC, practitioners can understand and modify the factors and processes that shape the PGC experience. Understanding the role and importance of psychological factors and the learning environment might help practitioners to introduce PGC to leaders and to accompany leaders in the PGC processes in a way that facilitates learning. The theoretical framework that describes evolved learning operation can help to understand how learning takes place. This understanding can be used to reflect with leaders on their learning process, forming conceptualisations that again might lead to greater reflection on how leaders learn and develop.

The findings of this study were also used to develop specific recommendations for practice on how to set up PGC for leader's learning and growth, introducing an extended definition of PGC and key methods for initiating PGC. The main elements of these recommendations are described here.

In the introduction to this research a working definition for PGC was introduced, derived from current literature: *PGC is a form of reciprocal coaching, where 3 to 6 group members coach each other on business and personal issues without the support of an expert, external facilitator or coach.* This initial definition are now extended to enable the leader and potential participants of PGC to see how PGC is distinct, and which fundamental factors shape this coaching activity. This definition might additionally be used by practitioners to set up PGC and to guide leaders through suggested key elements.

PGC for business leader development is a form of reciprocal coaching, where ideally four leaders learn with and from each other, reflecting on

business and personal issues without the support of an expert, external facilitator or coach.

Key elements of PGC are:
1. Matching of leaders for best learning together
2. Creating processes that are customised to participant needs
3. Increasing psychological factors that enable learning
4. Following a defined learning operation to maximise implementation

Matching of leaders for best learning together

Matching, as described in the previous data analysis chapter, has an impact on the peer relationship and interactions as well as on group cohesiveness, performance and PGC success. Leaders should be matched so that they can best learn in PGC. Ease of accessibility with the potential to frequently meet face-to-face for coaching and for social activities with peer members, was recognised as a way to increase trust, interpersonal group cohesion, and high group performance. Similar life experiences were seen as beneficial for successful PGC. Similar professional experience, described as 'common business understanding' while coming from different business units or functions, was seen as helpful in matching for PGC. An element of diversity, here only defined as cultural diversity by the participants of this study, was also experienced by participants of this research as a helpful matching criterion. These findings can be represented for practitioners as a cob-web diagram (Figure 18) that helps to bring these recommendations together. Leaders could, for example, discuss whether these criteria would be subjectively high or low while forming a group. This dialogue could be enhanced by the external facilitator who is initiating PGC, introducing indicators for matching criteria that can be found in Table 8 below. This diagram cannot consider a differentiation of importance among the suggested matching criteria, which could be the subject of a further study. This diagram could guide leaders to find the best-suited groups for PGC and provide the practitioner with a practical approach to how to guide leader matching.
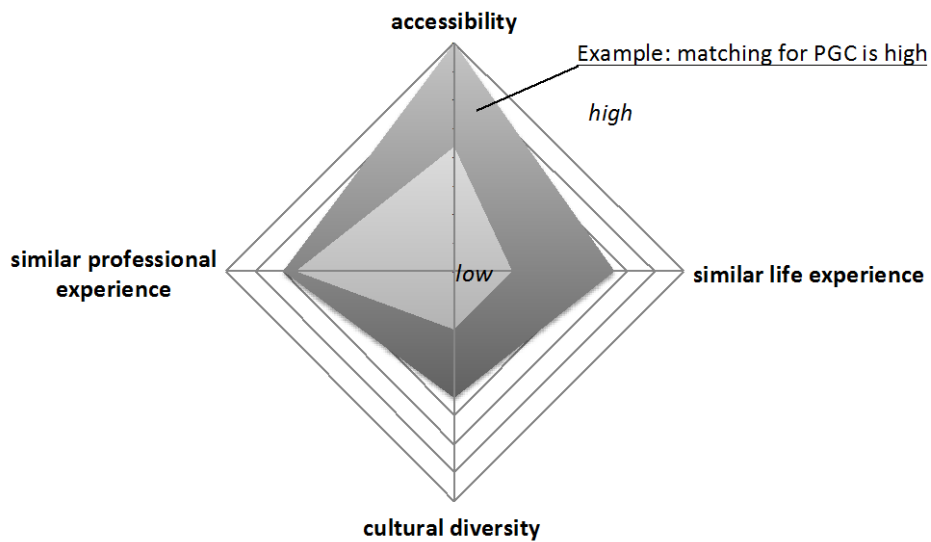
Figure 18: Matching diagram example for matching leaders for PGC

Matching criteria	Possible indicators given in this research by sample	Possible indicators not provided by sample
Accessibility: Availability for meetings.	Availability to meet face-to-face. Small group-size. Opportunity to meet frequently.	Distance from each other. Available time (resources) for PGC.
Similar professional experience: Similar professional experience among peers and a common business understanding while coming from different business units or functions.	Length of time employed in the organisation.	Experience of working in different functions.
Similar life experience: Similar age, and family status.	Being a parent. Having children. Age.	
Cultural diversity: Such as being member of an international group.	Different cultures, nationalities.	Cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1984).

Table 8: Matching criteria and possible indicators

Creating processes that are customised to participant needs

This research distinguished horizontal and vertical PGC processes, as discussed in the previous chapter. Participants of PGC customise their PGC processes to accommodate their particular business situation and preferences. The findings of this study show that participants increase their learning while considering the following process considerations.

Many participants mentioned the group size of PGC, and it was found that practitioners should not overload peer groups with too many members. PGC should be set up with a maximum of six members and a minimum of three members. The findings from this study indicate an optimal group size of around 4 members, due to issues of accessibility and dynamics in the peer groups.

Another factor that practitioners can take from the study is that groups should be encouraged to additionally meet outside PGC. Participants in the study described dinners, lunches or organised activities when they met, such as plant visits, as important and even crucial for building trust in the group. In practice, PGC participants are likely to benefit if trainers or coaches introduce these gatherings as part of the PGC meetings. Adding to the documented advantages of reciprocity in PGC, the responsibility of organising social activities could be rotated among peer group members. Although social activities are not exactly part of the PGC method, they should be added as a positive benefit whenever possible.

PGC is only initiated and finalised with the help of experts to set the appropriate actions so that leaders can learn effectively. After the initiation of PGC, peers work independently without the help of an external expert. The findings did not indicate the importance of the external PGC initiator, but emphasised the importance of the role of independent work as peers. A PGC diary that is designed by participants, including fixed and agreed PGC sessions over the course of months, as well as fixed and agreed social activities, such as lunches, dinners and possible plant-visits, allow leaders to reflect and to learn in 'assigned time' for reflection. PGC sessions should be regular to allow trust and increase openness, motivation, empathy and

mutual respect. Participants should agree on PGC's reciprocal arrangement, making sure that role rotation is equal and frequent for coaching as well as for organising coaching sessions and social activities. PGC sessions should preferably be face-to-face. It is recommended that at least the first session is face-to-face to deepen trust, and become comfortable with the coaching method.

As discussed in Chapter 4, group dynamics, such as task cohesion, facilitate group cohesiveness, and these again positively influence learning in PGC. Task cohesion in the form of mutually agreed learning objectives should be part of the start of each PGC session. It is recommended that the focus be on two forms of tasks: i) the organisational task in following the PGC process, and ii) the individual task or objective that is given by the coachee at the beginning of each coaching session. The first task could be agreed in the form of a contract or agreement that is consented to by the PGC group members at the end of the PGC-introduction with the help of the expert. It should contain procedural, psychological, and process agreements. Procedural agreements address behaviour during PGC, such as turning off mobile phones during coaching and informing members of any diary competing commitments. Psychological agreements should address how to create the 'safe space' or psychological safety that is necessary for PGC to succeed. Psychological agreements should address keeping confidentiality, building trust or how to handle disagreements. Process agreements address timings, frequency of meetings etc. A suggested contract for PGC can be found in Appendix 7.7. Each single PGC session should again begin with process and psychological agreements for the structure of each session and to determine whether psychological factors are still experienced as high or positive. The second goal is that each coachee starts their session by reporting on the topic or case they want to be coached in and also expresses an objective for the session.

Increasing psychological factors that enable learning

The findings of this study show that the psychological factors in PGC such as trust between one another and trust towards the coaching method, the openness of participants to sharing knowledge in the form of cases and

issues, motivation to conduct PGCs, empathy to allow empathetic discussions and mutual respect, that scaffold all PGC activities are linked directly to learning in PGC. It is the expert's responsibility to match group members successfully and to make sure that both psychological factors and the belief in the PGC method are strongly experienced by the group. Leadership development exercises could be employed before the start of PGC to give participants the chance to get to know each other and to increase trust. It could be suggested that practitioners provide PGC participants with tools to measure and to discuss psychological factors before each PGC session. Such tools could include the use of scales from low to high where participants anonymously evaluate the level of subjectively experienced trust, openness, etc. Additionally, the way to handle deviations from high scores should be considered and discussed with participants.

Following a defined learning operation

It is appealing to recommend an elaborated coaching method like GROW that incorporates various coaching steps. However, the findings of this study show that the suggested steps of the proposed coaching method were not followed through by groups. At the same time, all interviewees in this research mentioned the use, and a positive experience of, the so-called 'powerful questions'. Each coaching should consist of only two simple steps based on the findings of this study: 1) the coachee describes their individual objective(s) for the coaching session and shares their case or issue, and 2) the use of powerful questions by coaches. Asking powerful questions can be practiced with participants while initiating PGC. Additionally, participants can be provided with examples of powerful questions. A list of possible powerful questions can be found in Appendix 7.8.

5.4 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

For the ultimate purpose of understanding leader learning in PGC, this research is not without limitations. This study is qualitative by design and aimed at an in-depth understanding of how participants experience learning. For that reason the theoretical PGC framework is based on the analysis of experiences by a limited number of participants and is in need of evaluation

on a larger scale. Furthermore, several questions appeared in this research that could not be answered through the research design.

The reader of this study might wonder why no data is shown that presents a negative perception of PGC or its parts. All interviewees were content and positive about PGC in general and their learning experience. This study did not attempt to explore what leads to unsuccessful PGC and negative experiences. The sampling strategy of this research, was to ask the HR representatives to invite participants of on-going leadership development programmes to take part in the interviews. It was emphasised at this point that the research strategy did not suggest approaching only participants with a perceived positive experience of PGC to take part in this research. On the contrary, participants for this study with a perceived negative PGC experience would have increased the richness of the data and also extended transferability towards participants with negative experiences of PGC. Dependability would be higher, if similar results emerged from this research, if the research was repeated with participants who had negative PGC experiences. It should be emphasised that participants with perceived negative PGC experience would have been welcome to participate, because the emphasis of this study was on how leaders learn in PGC, which includes unsuccessful or non-learning. Reflecting on the fact that some leaders perceive PGC as negative, it might be speculated that only participants with positive experiences decided to take part in the research. Participants who did not perceive PGC as positive might have decided not to take part in interviews as a result. Further research might be necessary to explore (non)-learning in PGC with a sample who experienced PGC as unsuccessful or negative.

The horizontal PGC process was self-determined by leaders according to their organisational and individual needs. The ideal number and frequency of PGC sessions for learning is unknown and might have to be the subject to further research. In this study, participants who shared extracurricular activities such as lunches, dinners and plant visits in conjunction with PGC, described these encounters as crucial for bonding and trust development in the group. The effect of these kind of activities on success and learning in

PGC could not be determined by the qualitative design of the thesis. Considering psychological factors and especially the building of a trusting and open atmosphere in PGC, it would be useful to investigate how these factors actually influence learning in PGC. A hypothesis that emerged during analysis was that these factors might actually affect the experience of matching and group dynamics, but the findings suggest that they might have an effect on the actual outcomes of PGC, that is the learning that participants take from their sessions and implement in their day to day working lives. A future research design could investigate the actual strength of these factors when it comes to learning and outcomes.

PGC in this study seemed successful for all leaders who described their experience. This indicates that further research is needed to understand the factors that might jeopardize learning in PGC and where the PGC method might fail. For example, leaders were guided to form peer-groups for coaching that would work periodically over month meetings. This guidance might be experienced as contrived collegiality, which is believed to be harmful to PGC in an educational setting by Hargreves and Dawe (1990). Learning in PGC was found to resemble established theories of learning, which might give credence to its benefits. PGC resulted in positive learning experiences for all members of this study, however, it is these overall positive connotations of PGC that lead to a need for further investigation of what may jeopardize learning in PGC.

A study by Paige (2002), examining the effectiveness of executive coaching on executives, shows that three themes were found to be important for the executive client. One important theme included executive expectations towards coaching. The executives expected a pragmatic experience without someone "holding hands" (Paige, 2002, p. 64). They wanted to work with someone who was fairly challenging, in a purpose driven, structured process. Wasylyshyn (2003) reports in her outcome study on executive coaching that 76% of executives had positive expectations of working with an executive coach before their assignment. Expectations of a different kind shape the coaching experience. In this study, expectations towards PGC where not expressed by participants. It might be speculated why participants

had few expectations. A hypothesis might be that participants had 'low' expectations, as they were responsible for the PGC process and hence its processes and 'success'. The PGC experience was under participants' control. Possible scepticism about the coaching method PGC might have been reduced as the researcher of this study was the trainer of parts of the leadership development initiative and known by the group. It might be that the necessary trust towards the trainer and thus towards the method PGC was created. Further research is needed to investigate the influence of participant expectations on PGC.

Finally, it might be interesting to ask whether the proposed theoretical PGC framework would differ while practicing PGC outside a leadership development initiative. As mentioned earlier, PGC in this research was part of a broader leadership development programme. The training programme might have influenced psychological factors or the learning environment as participants interacted with each other before and after PGC. The influence of the programme on PGC is suggested as a subject of further research to determine whether learning in PGC would be different to what is proposed in this study.

5.5 Reflection as researcher

This doctoral research journey has been a valuable education that provided me with a number of challenges and useful lessons. When starting my research, looking for orientation and the essence of academic work, I was searching for a sort of formula or blueprint to apply to my doctoral research. Many academics had wise advice, but at the time I could not relate to what they were saying. The discovery of GT was an 'eye-opener' for me as it offered 'tools' and 'guidelines' that gave me a needed structure. In searching for a suitable methodology, my paradigm and GT helped me to understand that pragmatism, which relates to the application of knowledge, is inherent in my beliefs and worldview. Most importantly, GT gave me the feeling that I could contribute to my field of study and that I understood something about how qualitative research is conducted.

Grounded theory is, in my opinion, an important research methodology as it allows for scientific discovery following the process of induction. This intellectual process, of moving from data to theory challenged me as a novice to academic research, however. The challenge began with data collection and the first interview guide, which was based on assumptions around learning in PGC. Unfortunately, I could not simply approach the chosen sample with the straightforward question of how leaders learn in peer group coaching and expect an all-encompassing answer. Rather, I interviewed participants about their PGC experience, addressing different aspects of learning indirectly, in the hope that somewhere in all the collected data would be the answer to my research question. Fortunately, after completing several data collection cycles and analysing data in two rounds, I discovered no more new insights and decided that data saturation was achieved. This procedure also made me understand and able to reflect on the critique that inductive processes face in academia today, as any data that is analysed after proposing my theory could potentially contradict it.

The second challenge I faced was that of data coding and manipulation. GT provides a helpful guideline for coding data so as to arrive at a higher level of meaning. Although the proposed cycles for codes were followed consciously, coding, and the later manipulation and analysis of the codes, was challenging as it left me with many options and subjective decisions. Here, I reflected constantly about the degree to which my subjectivity and thus my confirmatory bias influenced the emerging codes, concepts, categories and their relations. This lesson made me also reflect on the outcome of this study. While proposing a theoretical framework in this study, I am aware that this framework is rather a theoretical conjecture, which has yet to be tested. Following GT's notion of 'grab', I am aware that this 'testing' process should begin with presenting the theory to the academic as well as business community and that there is the probability that new data and insights will add new aspects to the proposed theory. Finalising this reflection, I am glad that I could conduct and experience academic research with its challenges and advantages, increasing my knowledge and changing my way of working.

Chapter 6 - References

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Chapter 7 - Appendences

7.1 Consent form - focus group

Study title: Looking into the 'black box': learning and development in peer-group coaching.

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Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

I agree to take part in the above study and I understand that the focus group will be   video   recorded.

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be used for future research after it has been anonymised.

Please tick box

	Yes	No
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.	☐	☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date
    Signature

Marcus Gottschalk
_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   Date
    Signature

7.2 Consent form - interview

Study title: Looking into the 'black box': learning and development in peer-group coaching.

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Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

☐

I   agree   to   take   part   in   the   above   study.

☐

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be used for future research after it has been anonymised.

☐

Please tick box

Yes   No

I agree to the interview being audio recorded

☐   ☐

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

☐   ☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant
    Signature

Date

Marcus Gottschalk
_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher
    Signature

Date

7.3 Participant information sheet - focus group

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Study title: Looking into the 'black box': learning and development in peer-group coaching.
You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?
The aim of this research is to explore business leader perceptions of the processes in peer-group coaching and how these processes support their learning and development.

Peer-group coaching is a unique form of coaching, where 3 to 6 group members coach each other on business and personal issues without the support of an external facilitator or coach. As there is no external coach present who is observing peer-group coaching, it is challenging to understand what really happens in peer-group coaching. This research aims to look into this 'black box' of peer-group coaching to investigate the business leaders' perception of the group processes and the elements of this work that support their learning and development.

Why have I been invited to participate?
You have been invited to participate in this research because you have experienced peer-group coaching yourself. The researcher is interested in your experience and how you would describe the process in peer-group coaching.

What should I do to take part in the research? How can I decline participation?
Your HR representative is inviting you to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part and if you decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw later at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide to take part in this research simply contact the researcher (contact details below). The researcher then will contact you shortly for scheduling the focus group. If you decide not to take part in this research you do not need to contact the researcher and you do not have to explain yourself.

What will happen to me if I take part?
You will be invited to sign a consent form, which is a written agreement to take part in this research by you and the researcher. Then you will be asked to join a focus group with your peer-group members after completing your peer-group coaching. The focus group is about 90 minutes in length, 3 to 6 participants in size and aims to describe the process of peer-group coaching. You may be asked after the focus group to be interviewed individually about your learning and development in peer-group coaching.

The focus group will be structured in two parts. In part one, you and all other participants of that group will be asked to recall the process of your peer-group coaching. In part two, you and all other participants of that group will be asked to discuss jointly the process of peer-group coaching and to contribute to the model of the peer group coaching process which was developed by other focus groups (the

first focus group will be asked to develop the model of the peer group coaching process). The second part of the focus group will be video recorded because it is important for this study to witness and explore afterwards how the group decided on the different peer-group coaching stages.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
You and your colleagues will possibly benefit by reflecting on the process of peer-group coaching and you may be able to increase your understanding of the process. While recalling and discussing the peer-group coaching process you will be able to appreciate different participant experiences which may enrich your understanding of peer-group coaching in your business team.

What are potential risks of taking part?
Within the focus groups you will be asked to recall the peer coaching process you experienced. It is possible that you will discover issues in the focus group you would like to discuss further. In this case and by request, the researcher will offer you individual "supervision" to reflect on or to discuss questions (or private/confidential issues).

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?
All information collected about individuals will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and confidentiality will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material. Participants will be de-identified and names will be replaced with a code. All physical data (e.g. notes, flipchart papers) will be copied and electronically stored. The physical data will then be destroyed. Data, codes and all identifying information will be kept in a separate password protected hard drive and data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the university's policy on academic integrity. The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results of the research will be used in the researcher's thesis for their Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring degree and potential publications.

The sample size of this research is about 30 managers from two different organisations. All participants will be de-identified and names replaced with a code. However, the small sample size may have implications for anonymity.

What will happen to the results of the research study if I want to withdraw?
If you decide to withdraw from the research during or after a focus group any unanalysed individual data (e.g. notes) will be erased. The video data is a fundamental part of the research process and cannot be withdrawn if consent has previously been given.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The researcher is conducting the research as a doctoral student at Oxford Brookes University, Faculty of Business. This research is not externally funded.

What is the role of the researcher?

This research is being undertaken by the researcher in the capacity as a doctoral student and not in their capacity as a trainer or consultant.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University.

Contact for Further Information

Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring student:

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Director of Studies. Reader in Coaching and Psychology:

Dr Tatiana Bachkirova, tbachkirova@brookes.ac.uk, Tel.: 00441865 488367.

Second Supervisor:

Dr Christian Ehrlich, cehrlich@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.

20 November 2012, Oxford

7.4 Participant information sheet - interview

Marcus Gottschalk
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Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1HX
m.g.gottschalk@gmail.com
Tel. UK 00447831041160
Tel. D 00491785732848
Participant Information - Interview

Study title:
Looking into the 'black box': learning and development in peer-group coaching.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?
The aim of this research is to explore business leader perceptions of the processes in peer-group coaching and how these processes support their learning and development.

Peer-group coaching is a unique form of coaching, where 3 to 6 group members coach each other on business and personal issues without the support of an external facilitator or coach. Since there is no external coach present who is observing peer-group coaching, it is challenging to understand what really happens in peer-group coaching. This research aims to look into this 'black box' of peer-group coaching to investigate the business leaders' perception of the group processes and the elements of this work that support their learning and development.

Why have I been invited to participate?
You have been invited to participate in this research because you have experienced peer-group coaching yourself. The researcher is interested in your experience and how peer-group coaching supported your learning and development.

Do I have to take part? How can I decline participation?
Your HR representative is inviting you to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part and if you decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw later at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide to take part in this research simply contact the researcher (contact details below). If you decide not to take part in this research you do not need to contact the researcher or your HR representative and you do not have to explain yourself.

What will happen to me if I take part?
You will be asked to sign a consent form, which is a written agreement to take part in this research by you and the researcher. You will then be invited to take part an interview with the researcher. The interview is about 60 minutes in length and aims to reflect on your experience of your learning and developing in peer-group coaching.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
You will possibly benefit by reflecting on your experience of your learning and development in peer-group coaching and being able to increase your understanding of the elements in peer-group coaching that increase or inhibit your learning.

Furthermore, you might be able to incorporate that knowledge to structure and conduct future peer-group coaching yourself.

What are potential risks of taking part?
While being interviewed the researcher will ask you about your experiences concerning learning and development in peer group coaching. It could be the case that you will experience distress during or after the interview. If necessary, the researcher will help to refer you to professional counselling, which costs you will have to cover privately.

The sample size of this research is about 30 managers from two different organisations. All participants will be de-identified and names replaced with a code. However, the small sample size may have implications for anonymity.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?
All information collected about individuals will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and confidentiality will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material. Participants will be de-identified and replaced with a code. All physical data (e.g. notes, flipchart papers) will be copied and electronically stored. The physical data will then be destroyed. Data and codes and all identifying information will be kept in a separate password protected hard drive and data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the university's policy on academic integrity. The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

What should I do if I want to take part?
If you would like to take part, please get in touch with the researcher (contact details below). The researcher then will contact you shortly for scheduling the interview.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results of the research will be used in the researcher's thesis for a doctorate in the Coaching and Mentoring degree and potential publications.

What will happen to the results of the research study if I want to withdraw?
If you decide to withdraw from the research during or after an interview the audio recording will be erased and any notes by the researcher will be destroyed.

What is the role of the researcher?
This research is being undertaken by the researcher in the capacity as a doctoral student and not in their capacity as trainer or consultant.

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Dr Christian Ehrlich, cehrlich@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.
20 August 2013,Oxford

7.5 Interview guide

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29 October 2012, Oxford

Semi-structured interview guide

Research topic: Looking into the 'black box': learning and development in peer-group coaching.

1) Purpose of interviews
To understand business leader perceptions of the processes in peer-group coaching and how these processes support their learning and development.

2) Focus
Themes and perceptions related to the individual learning and development in peer-group coaching.

3) Central question: What supported your learning and development in the peer-group coaching?

4) Subsidiary topics and questions to answer central question

Status quo: What happened in the peer-group coaching?
Helpfulness: How helpful was the peer-group coaching and what helped?
Surprises and special moments: What surprised you?
Behaviour: What have you done differently (at work)?
Emotions: What emotions did you have during the peer-group coaching?
Hypothetical: What would you like to have had happened differently?

5) Interview questions

i. Status quo: What happened in the peer-group coaching?

I'd like you to tell me in as much detail as possible about your experiences of coaching with your colleagues in the peer-group coaching? If it is of help, you can use the peer-group coaching process (model) that was developed previously by (you and) your colleagues.

What do you recall mostly, looking back at the peer-group coaching?
How would you describe (using your own words) the process you and your colleagues went through?
When you look back at the part when you were coachee, how would you describe it?
Looking back at the part when you were coach, how would you describe it?
What do you think worked well in the peer-group coaching?
What do you think did not work well in the peer-group coaching?

ii. Helpfulness: How helpful was the peer-group coaching and what helped?

How helpful would you say the peer-group coaching was for you? Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all helpful' and 10 'extremely helpful'?
Please explain what made the peer-group coaching helpful (referring to the number picked on the scale)?
Please explain what was missing which meant that you did not give it (helpfulness of the peer-group coaching) a 10?
How helpful do you think the peer-group coaching was for your colleagues? Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all helpful' and 10 'extremely helpful'?
Please specify, why this score was given and what was missing?
Was there anything that confused you or hindered you during the course of the coaching? If yes, what was it?
Was there anything you said, raised or suggested that helped your colleagues? If yes, please describe it.
Was there anything your colleagues said, raised or suggested that helped you? If yes, please specify.

Surprises and special moments: What surprised you?

Was there a 'eureka' moment, a moment when you had an 'a-ha!', a great insight? If yes, please specify.
Was there anything that surprised you (during or) about the peer-group coaching? If yes, please explain.
Was there anything that surprised your peers? If yes, please specify.

Behaviour: What have you done differently?

What have you done differently at your work place due to PGC?
What do you think you will do differently at your work place?
How might the people you work with notice that you do something differently?

Emotions: What emotions did you have during the peer-group coaching?

Do you remember any positive emotions you had during the peer-group coaching? And if yes, what kind and how were these triggered?
Do you remember any negative (or puzzling, worrying) emotions you had during the peer-group coaching? And if yes, what kind and how were these triggered?

Hypothetical: What would you liked to have had happened differently?

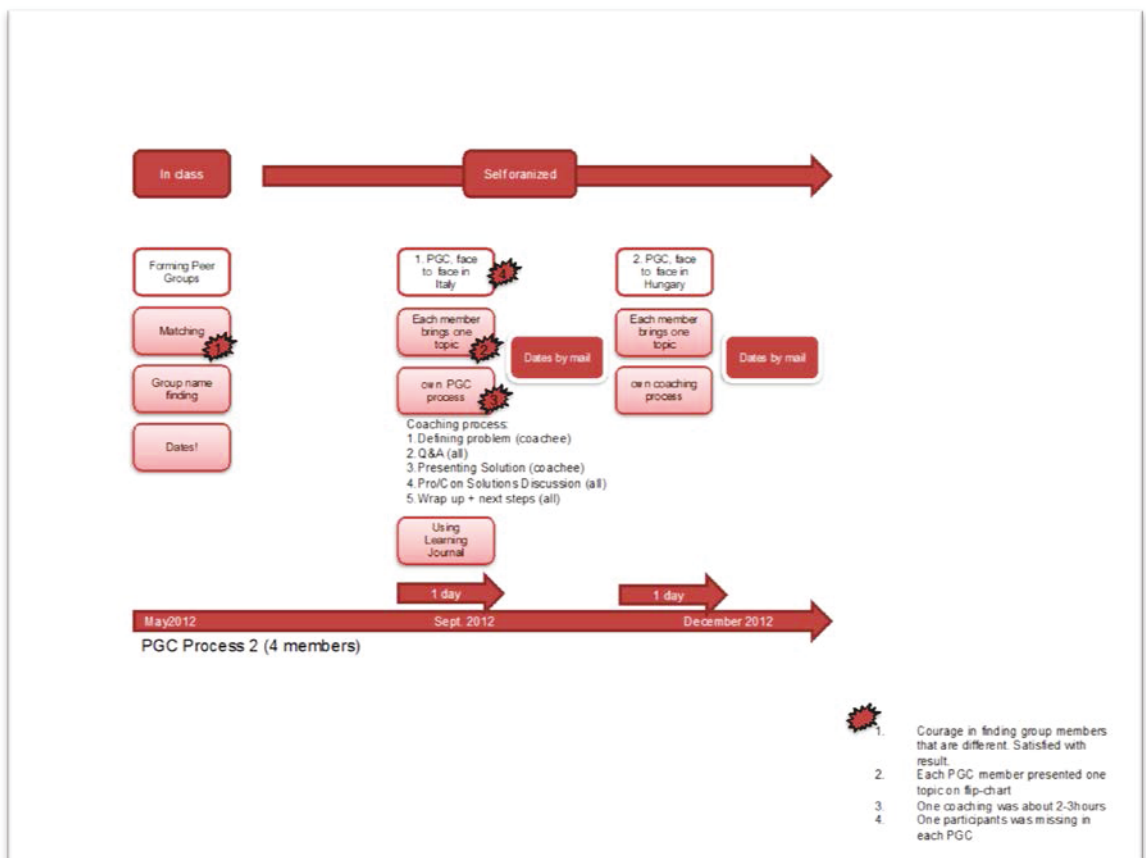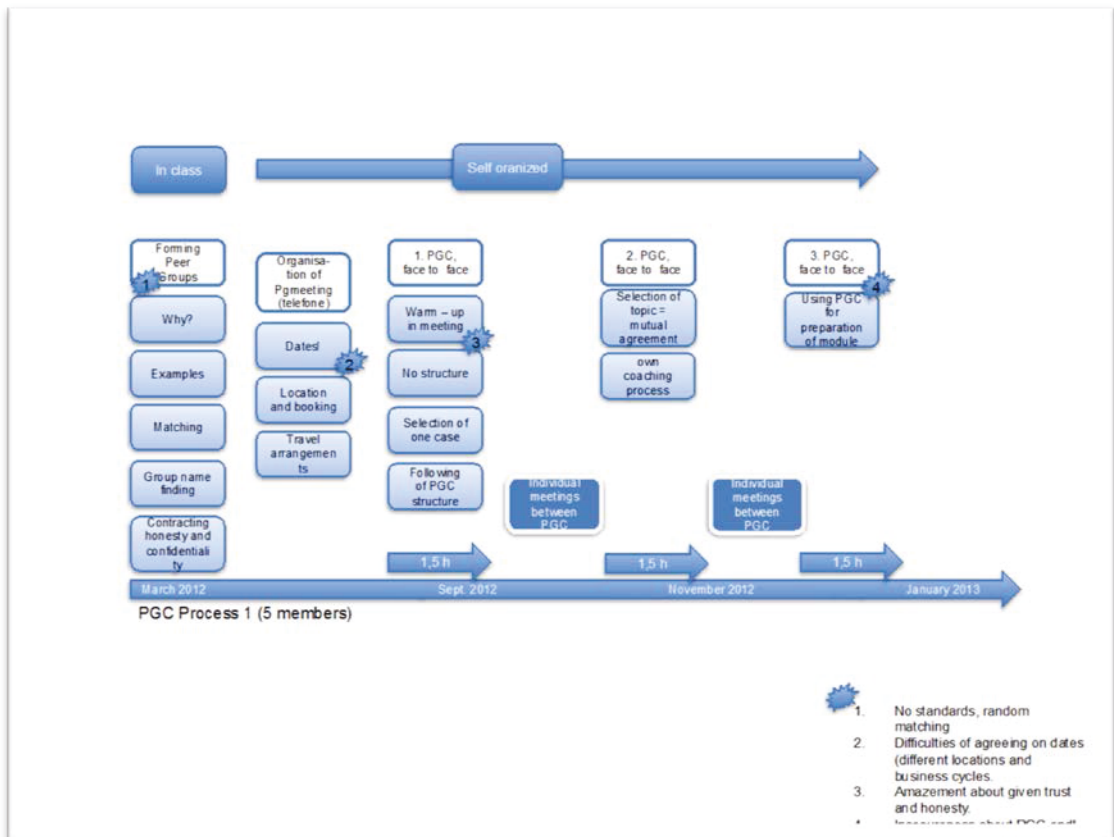Is there anything you wished had happened differently?
Is there anything you would like to have more of? Why?
Is there anything you would like to have less of? Why?
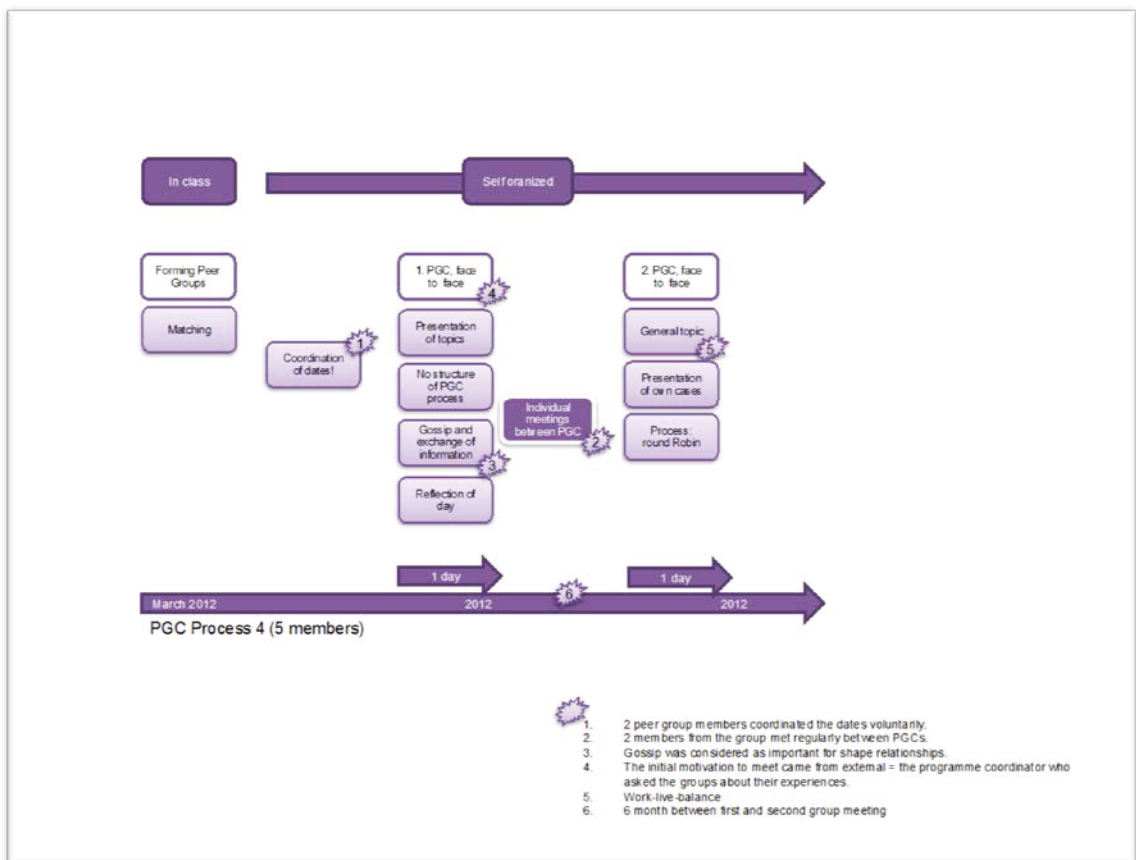
Finally…
Is there anything you would like to add or to mention about the peer-group coaching? Is there anything I forgot to ask?

7.6 Focus groups results: peer-group coaching processes

PGC Process 1 (5 members)

PGC Process 2 (4 members)

PGC Process 3 (4 members)

In class | Self oranized

| Forming Peer Groups | 1. PGC, face to face | 2. PGC, face to face | 3. PGC, face to face |

Definition PGC

Matching (1)

Contracting honesty and confidentiality

Agreement on Organisation (3)

Dates via mail, outlook, secretary

Site tour — Current topics (4) — Defining agenda — Following PGC structure — Lunch — Setting new pgc dates — Allocating one who organizes pgc — Filling Learning Journal

Site tour — Current topics — Defining agenda — Lunch — Follow up former topics (2) — own coaching process — Setting new pgc dates — Allocating one who organizes pgc — Filling Learning Journal

Site tour — Current topics — Follow up former topics — Lunch — Setting new pgc dates — Allocating one who organizes pgc — Filling Learning Journal — dinner

½ day | 1 day | 1 day

March 2012 ... 2012 ... 2012 ... January 2013

1. Intuitively; matching due to opposing and attracting factors
2. Sticking to systemic questions
3. Group agreed on changing locations for meetings, dates, responsibilities, face-to-face meetings.
4. For example: employee survey, current business, business news

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PGC Process 4 (5 members)

In class | Self oranized

| Forming Peer Groups | 1. PGC, face to face | 2. PGC, face to face |

Matching

Coordination of dates! (1)

Presentation of topics (4)

No structure of PGC process

Gossip and exchange of information (3)

Reflection of day

Individual meetings between PGC (2)

General topic (5)

Presentation of own cases

Process: round Robin

1 day | 1 day

March 2012 ... 2012 (6) ... 2012

1. 2 peer group members coordinated the dates voluntarily.
2. 2 members from the group met regularly between PGCs.
3. Gossip was considered as important for shape relationships.
4. The initial motivation to meet came from external = the programme coordinator who asked the groups about their experiences.
5. Work-live-balance
6. 6 month between first and second group meeting

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PGC Process 5 (3 members)
(from Interview)

7.7 PGC contract

Procedural agreements

To be fully present during the peer group session – for example mobile phones are turned off.

To make the group aware of any competing diary commitments – for example a need to leave early or to 'dip out' to make a call ; so that we can agree as a group how to manage this peer-group coaching.

We seek to work in the spirit of confidentiality: when talking about employees or colleagues you may choose to keep their identity anonymous.

It is possible that participants may wear different "hats" because of their "day jobs"– if at any point you become aware of a potential conflict of interest, please bring it up it so that we can decide as a group what best to do about it.

Our belief is that there are many different ways of handling coaching situations – each coach will be guided by their own experiences and value systems. Should you find that you take a different stance to another coach we would ask you to approach the difference in the spirit of enquiry. We welcome differences of opinion when they are offered without judgement.

Psychological agreements

When working with peers, making comparisons is quite natural - we invite you to be curious about difference and to honour both your own and other's diversity.

Our intention is that the peer group session will provide a safe space to explore our varied experiences – our aim is to raise awareness of our choices rather than create a sense of what is "right vs wrong".

Trusting one another, openness, motivated to be present at peer-group coachings, showing respect, and keeping the content of each coaching session confidential are important factors for successful peer-group coaching – we will ask regularly if these psychological factors are in place and valued by each participant.

Process agreements:

We agree to meet (also virtually) between today and .... Please describe your peer-group coaching plan below (when do we meet, how do we meet, how long do we meet, who is responsible for each meeting …)

7.8 Powerful questions

Resource oriented questions

What shall remain as it is? What would you like to maintain?

What is the positive side of the problem? Or: What would be different after the problem has been solved? What effects would that difference have?

How did you cope with the current situation until now?

How did you deal with the problem? What was helpful? What was not? How did you manage to keep the problem as it is without getting worse? Who supported you in coping with the problem and who will in the future?

How did others manage to keep the problem as it is without getting worse?

Who else could be helpful? How?

Exception questions

When do you not have the problem?

What is the difference compared to situations in which you have the problem?

What has to happen in order to increase the frequency of the exceptions?

Who except for yourself could contribute to keeping the frequency of the problem lower?

Assuming the exceptions would be more frequent, what would you perceive differently?

What have you done in order to solve the problem? What helped at least to some extent?

How did you treat comparable problems in the past?

What have you learned from previous experience that could be helpful in this situation?

Circular questions

If your colleague attended this interview, how would they describe the problem?

How would other centrally affected people give account of the chain of events?

What is this person likely to say?

You have known each other for a long time. Guess.

What would your main competitor advise you to do?

What effects would it have on your colleagues if you and XY decided to change?

Assuming the team would decide to change? How would the superior Y perceive this change? What would their reaction be?

What would the effects be on Z?

Hypothetical questions

Let us assume you would react differently (e.g. calm and considerate) next time.

What effects would that have?

What would have to happen in order to convince XY to react differently?

Who would first notice the change?

What would they do/say/think?

Scaling questions

To what extent do the described objectives match your objectives/the objectives of your colleagues/the objectives of your superior?

What is the probability of reaching the desired objective between 0% and 100%?

Assuming I could turn the wheel of time, what do you think the situation will be like in (five, twenty) year(s) from now?

What do you think is most realistic?

Do you think so or is that your wish?

Which criteria would fulfil a good solution?

7.9 Preliminary theoretical framework after coding and data analysis cycle one

7.10 Participant quotes in original language with translations

All quotes in this study from German participants and have been translated into English and are shown below.

Also, es fällt mir superleicht, die Rolle des coachees. So ne Form, ich kann mich superleicht öffnen und ich hab jede Menge Beispiele und ich glaub, ich weiß auch, was alles nicht gut läuft und, also da kann ich eine Fülle von Themen einbringen, insofern gehts mir mit der Rolle des coachees gut. (Denise)

So, taking on the role of coachee felt easy to me. Kind of, really easy to open up and I have lots of examples and I believe, I know what really isn't going too well and I can bring plenty of topics into the coaching, so I feel comfortable being in the coachee role. (Denise; translated from German)

Also, die coach Rolle ist für mich persönlich sogar mit mehr Unsicherheiten verbunden, als die coachee Rolle. Weil die coachee Rolle, ich kenne ja oder glaube ja, dass, ich bin ja zumindestens der Experte, der am meisten über das Problem sagen kann. Bei der coach Rolle hab ich natürlich das Thema, dass ich ja erstmal das Problem verstehen muss. Also es ist für mich die schwierigere Rolle. (Andrew)

Well, the coach role bears more insecurity for me than the coachee role. In the coachee, role, I know or believe that I am the expert, who can say most about my problem. With the coach role, I have the problem that at first I have to understand the coachee′s issue. So it is a more difficult role for me. (Andrew; translated from German)

[...] selbst wenn ich jemanden coache oder ob ich gecoached werde, in beiden Positionen kann ich was dazulernen, und kann es für mich verwerten an anderer Stelle. (Aida)

[...] both when I am coaching or when someone else is coaching me, in both positions, I can learn something new, and then I can use what I learned later in a different situation. (Aida; translated from German)

[...] bei der coach Rolle hab ich natürlich das Thema, dass ich ja erstmal das Problem verstehen muss, also es ist für mich die schwierigere Rolle. Da kann man eben auch so ein bisschen von den anderen lernen, wie die Fragen stellen. (Andrew)

[...] in the coach role I have the issue that first, I need to understand the problem, so it is the more difficult role. There I can also learn a bit from others how to ask questions. (Andrew; translated from German)

Es ist eben hilfreich, indem es diesen organisierten Rahmen gibt, weil man dadurch ja auch ein Stück weit selbst gezwungen ist, sich damit zu beschäftigen und sich die Zeit einzuräumen und zu reflektieren. (Denise)

It is helpful, that we have this organised framework, because you are forced to familiarise with it and you have to take time to reflect. (Denise; translated from German)

Ich glaube, was hilft ist sozusagen, nicht dem Wahnsinn ausbrechen, sondern einfach sich Zeit dafür nehmen. Für diese Themen und sich mit denen auch einfach zu beschäftigen und regelmäßige Termine haben auch einfach geholfen. (Anja)

I think what it is helpful is not avoiding madness, but just taking time for it. For these topics. Working with topics and having appointments on a regular basis was just helpful. (Anja; translated from German)

[...] ich sehen den Lernerfolg eigentlich wirklich durch diese Fragen die auch mir gestellt werden, durch diese Techniken von den anderen wirklich auf den Punkt zu kommen und das, das ich gelernt habe mit sehr analytischen Fragestellungen zu einem, zu einer neuen Perspektive zu kommen. (Andrew)

[...] I see this learning success really achieved with the help of these questions. These techniques really forced me to come to the point. This made me learn how to use very analytical question to get to a new perspective. (Andrew; translated from German)

[...] die Fragen selbst, die die Leute gestellt haben, weil die einfach nochmal so eine Art Selbstreflexion ausgelöst haben, ähm, das könnten unbequeme Fragen, von unbequemen Fragen bis zu ähm, auch einfach wirklich andere Aspekte beleuchten, die man vielleicht einfach gar nicht so auf dem Schirm hatte. (Anja)

[...] the questions themselves, asked by the people, they activated some kind of self-reflection. These questions can range from uncomfortable questions to looking at other aspects you have not thought about before. (Anja; translated from German)

Das hat viel Kraft gekostet, da war Kerstin immer diejenige, die gesagt hat „wir sollen das doch anders machen, wieder zurückkommen" [ja] Weil wir eben relativ schnell auch ein freundschaftliches Verhältnis aufgebaut haben und dann schwimmt das natürlich, dann geht das schnell über zwischen „wir machen das jetzt nach der Methodik" äh hin zu „ich will dir aber helfen und ich hab ne Idee, wie man das machen könnte". Ähm, also das ist

vielleicht, das ist schon ein Problem, dass wir schon die Methodiken manchmal vernachlässigen. Das merkt man.

That takes a lot of energy. It was Kerstin who was always reminding us: 'we should do that differently, changing course'. We have quickly built a friendly relationship and with such a relationship you are easily torn between: 'we are following a methodology' or 'I want to help you and I have an idea how to solve the issue'. That is, perhaps, the problem that meant we abandoned the methodology. You can feel that.   (Pierre, translated from German)

Das eine ist, dass Aida und ich uns aktiv um unsere persönliche Mittagessentreffen gekümmert haben und dass das sehr angenehm war und das Zweite ist das erste peer-group Treffen, das ich wegen dieser offenen Gesprächsatmosphäre, in der wir klatschtratsch-Informationen über XXX und YYY ausführlich hin- und her diskutiert haben, oder hin- und her besprochen haben. Wenn ich jetzt an die Mittagessentreffen mit Lotte zurückdenke, erinnere ich mich, dass das ganz und gar unproblematisch war auf persönlichere Punkte im Berufsalltag zu kommen und die zu besprechen unter vier Augen. (Greta)

Aida and I have organised our personal meetings for lunch and it was very pleasant and secondly, it is the first peer group meeting that was very positive, where, because of the open-minded atmosphere, we discussed and talked and gossiped about topics like XXX and YYY. If I think back at the lunch meetings with Lotte, I remember, that it was very unproblematic to speak about personal aspects and of professional life and to discuss these in confidence. (Greta; translated from German)

[...] es wurde ne Regel erstellt, ich glaube, das wurde bewusst, das weiß ich jetzt gar nicht mehr, ob man das bewusst thematisiert hat, aber automatisch hat die Regel gegolten, dass es innerhalb der peer Gruppe, dass die Dinge vertraulich behandelt werden, wie in ner Therapierunde. [...] das gibt natürlich Vertrauen in den Einzelnen, der da mitwirkt, aufgrund seines Inputs und Vertrauen in die Methode. (Aida)

[...] there the rule was created; I think it was done consciously. I don't know anymore if it was done consciously or if this rule existed automatically. Those things are kept in confidence within the group, like in a therapy group [...] This gives you trust in the individual that is taking part, because of their inputs and trust in the method. (Aida; translated from German)

Wenn wir uns zwei Mal sehen im Jahr, vor oder am Ende eines Moduls, das ist dann schwierig, find ich. Weil du brauchst dieses Vertrauen und diese Rückmeldung, was ist passiert? Was hast du erlebt? Was ist bei dir passiert,

wie hat sich das entwickelt? Das baust du halt nicht im Halbjahresrythmus auf. (Roger)

If we see each other twice a year, before or at the end of a module, I think it is difficult. Because you need this trust and these feedback: What happened? What did you experience? What happened to you, how did it develop? This cannot be created in a half-year rhythm. (Roger; translated from German)

Zwischen zweitem und drittem Modul haben wir uns entschieden, uns auf jeden Fall regelmäßig zusammen zu telefonieren. Entweder ist ein konkretes Thema da, was man lösen kann, oder nicht. Wir wollten den Rhythmus auf jeden Fall einbehalten. (Aida)

Between the second and third module we decided to have a phone call periodically. With or without a topic. We wanted to keep this rhythm. (Aida; translated from German)

Also, mehr face-to-face Kontakt, ob nun per Videokonferenz oder vor Ort, das wär das, wo ich sagen würde, das fehlt.(Roger)

Having more often face-to-face contact, either by video conferences or on site, this would be what I would say was missing. (Roger; translated from German)

Weil wir ziemlich ähnliche Typen sind. Auf einer ähnlichen Wellenlänge sind, sind charakterlich jetzt nicht so weit auseinander, glaub ich, da hat es ziemlich gut gepasst. Ich könnte mir vorstellen, dass es, dass es schwierig wäre, wenn man jemanden im Team hat, zu dem man keinen richtigen Draht findet. (Mohammed)

Because we are relatively similar characters. We are on a similar wave length, our characters are not so different. I think this matched really well. I can imagine that it would be difficult, if you have somebody in the team you don't really connect with. (Mohammed; translated from German)

Kerstin ist ja auch sehr extrovertiert, redet ja auch viel, ist aber auch ein bisschen digital, aber Debbie und ich sind glaube ich schon eher äh so ja Herzen auf der Zunge tragen, aber schon eher emotionalere Typen. Und das in der Mischung ist halt gut (lacht), würde ich sagen. (Roger)

Kerstin is also very extroverted, talks a lot, but is also a bit 'digital', but Debbie and I, I think are more characters that express a lot. We are rather emotional characters. And this mixture is good (laughs) I would say. (Roger; translated from German)

Alle kommen aus Führungssituationen oder Führungspositionen, so dass ein Grundverständnis für die Fragestellungen da ist, aber eben nicht meine konkrete Situation bekannt ist. Was wirklich gut ist (Rob).

Of course, all participants have already led or are in leading positions, so they have a certain basic understanding of the questions, but the precise situation is not known. That's really good. (Rob; translated from German)

Daher ist der Faktor Lebenserfahrung vielleicht auch ausgeprägter bei uns als bei jüngeren peer-groups, die ja im Wesentlichen ihre berufliche Situation oder die Erfahrung einbringen.(Andrew)

Life experience is higher in our group than in peer-groups with younger members, who contribute to the coaching mostly with their professional experience and not with life experience. (Andrew; translated from German)

Was interessant ist, alle sind Familienmütter oder –Väter, alle haben letztendlich Parallelsituationen in der Führung von Mitarbeitern und Kindern, und äh, ich sag mal so, das dass ist glaub ich, auch für das coachen sehr hilfreich…die Zusammensetzung der peer-group, dass man sowohl Kollegen, die auch Eltern sind, glaub ich, bei uns in der peer-group auch ein, ein Faktor, der interessant ist. (Andrew)

What is interesting here is that all members are mothers or fathers. All of us have these similar situations of leading employees and having children and, I would say, that this is very helpful regarding coaching. The composition of the peer-group, consisting of colleagues who are also parents, is an interesting factor in our peer-group. (Andrew; translated from German)

Interviewer: Okay super. Dann seid ihr die richtig Internationalen, das heißt ihr macht auch das alles auf englisch natürlich, wo die Anderen bestimmt nicht alle deutsch sprechen.
Genau, das war für mich eigentlich sogar ein Grund in die Gruppe zu gehen. Für den Daniel auch, der nun nicht mehr da ist, ganz bewusst. (Roger).

This was the reason for me to choose this group (being a member of an international group). For Daniel, who isn't here anymore, it was a conscious choice as well (Roger; translated from German)

Wir wollten eigentlich ne 4er Gruppe sein, die Kleinste. (Roger).

We wanted to be a group of four, the smallest group. (Roger; translated from German).

Was ich dazu sagen möchte ist, dass die Lernatmosphäre grade in so einem sensiblen Bereich wie persönlicher Entwicklung, wahnsinnig viel mit dieser Stimmung in dem team und in der Gruppe auch zu tun hatte (Denise).

What I want to add is that this learning atmosphere especially given such sensible topics like personal development, really came had a lot to do with the mood in the team and the group. (Denise; translated from German)

Also, ich hab immer das Gefühl, dass wir uns alle freuen auf diese Events. Also, wenn wir telefonieren, das ist immer ne lustige Atmosphäre, selbst in den beknacktesten Zeiten haben wir uns. (Roger)

I have the feeling that we are all looking forward to those events. During phone calls there's always a friendly atmosphere, even in very difficult periods we have each other. (Roger, translated from German)

Ich, ich könnte mir vorstellen, wenn bei uns in der Gruppe jemand drin wäre, der vielleicht ein bisschen extrovertiert wäre, dass dann die Kommunikation ein bisschen schwieriger werden würde (Mohammed).

I can imagine if there would be a person in the group who is a bit more extroverted, it would have been harder to communicate. (Mohammed; translated from German).

[...]dass ist schon ne Gruppe, der ich vertrauen kann, in der sehr drinstecke und ich mein, ich sehe Birgit jetzt öfter hier über den Hof laufen, wir äh reden miteinander, das ist schon ne, ich würde nicht sagen, dass ist ne Freundschaft geworden ist irgendwo, aber es ist ein vertrauensvolles Team, das ist schon ein gutes Gefühl eigentlich, so, so ein Team zu haben und jemanden zu haben, den man einfach mal anrufen kann (Mohammed).

[...] indeed, I have the feeling, that I am really in a group in which I can trust. For example, I often see Birgit crossing the yard and we talk to each other, yes there is a, now I wouldn't say friendship, but it is a trustful team, it is a great feeling having such a team and to know that there are people you can just call. (Mohammed; translated from German)

Unangenehm ist halt, dass du dich nicht so oft siehst. Das ist schwieriger. Aber gut, jetzt haben wir uns ja schon drei mal gesehen. Da hat man schon im letzten Modul gesehen, dass das viel enger ist, die Telefonate werden halt lustiger und offener. Am Anfang ist das ja schon noch sehr distanziert und sehr, hm, und das Ganze jetzt preisgeben oder nicht und das merkst du jetzt halt schon gar nicht mehr. Wenn man sich sieht, desto eher siehst du halt auch, wie man agiert, ob man nur auf sich bedacht ist, oder ob du mehr auf das Thema achtest. (Roger)

It is uncomfortable that you don't see each other very often. This is more difficult. Right now, we have met three times. You already noticed in the last module that there is more confidence, the phone calls get funnier and more open. At the beginning there is still a certain distance, you are reluctant talking openly and this is something you don't see now anymore. If you meet, you see how one acts, if he then sees only himself or if he only concentrates on the topic. (Roger; translated from German)

[...] also positiv finde ich im peer-group, also in dieser konzentrierten Form finde ich den Fokus, man trifft sich, also auch für ein Ziel, auch die Struktur an sich, man trifft sich, um ein Problem, was irgendeiner hat, zu lösen, wenns geht, oder neuer Weg aufzuzeigen. (Aida).

[...] I think the positive thing in the peer-group is the focus, having these goals, the structure; and meeting to solve a problem, you come across new ways. (Aida; translated from German)

Durch die Gruppendynamik, also das ist ja, dadurch dass das per Definition ein kleiner, plötzlich vertrauter Kreis ist, ist gleich ein bisschen mit ner Kleinfamilie, wird man plötzlich da reingeschmissen, man hats mit Leuten zu tun, wie in ner Familie, ob mans will oder net, man hat sich die ja net ausgesucht, man wurde ja gezogen und man ist ne Gruppe (Aida).

Due to group dynamics, since this is by definition a small, suddenly intimate circle, it is immediately like a small family, one is put into it and it becomes a group. You are in this if you want to be or not, you didn't choose, you are pulled in and you are a group now. (Aida; translated from German)

Ich würde sagen, es kam dadurch, dass, dass jeder sich geöffnet hat irgendwo, unsere Fälle vorgestellt und das war und es hat jeder nicht (xxx) hinterm, hinterm Berg gehalten, sondern einfach offen gesagt, "hey, ich hab da ein Problem, ich weiß da nicht mehr weiter" und wenn man sich da öffnet, dann, wenn man sieht, der andere öffnet sich, dann entsteht glaube ich Vertrauen.(Mohammed)

I would say, that was the case because everyone opened up and presented his problems, nobody was hiding behind imaginary walls, everyone just said openly "hey, I have a problem, I don't know how to proceed." And if you open up yourself at this point and you see that everyone also does so, then trust develops. (Mohammed; translated from German)

Was ich noch herausstellen müsste, ist ganz sicher, das Vertrauen, das wir da haben. Das ist schon im ersten Modul extrem gut gelungen, auch euch, oder weiß ich gar nicht, ist extrem gut gelungen, da ein offenes, vertrauensvolles Verhältnis zu machen. (Rob)

What I want to emphasise is that we have trust. This was already successful in the first module, also for you guys, or I don't know, we succeeded in building up an open, trustful relationship. (Rob; translated from German)

Ja, sehr vertrauliche Dinge, deren Weitererzählen auch Konsequenzen haben würde. Da muss man sich drauf verlassen, dass das im Raum bleibt, oder in den Köpfen der Leute und so erlebe ich das auch in der Praxis. Extremes Vertrauen. (Rob)

Yes, very confidential and intimate, where leaking would have had consequences. You have to rely on the fact, that all things stay in the room or in the heads of the people participating and I experience it like that in practice. Extreme levels of trust. (Rob; translated from German)

Vertrauen hat sich durch die Effektivität der Umsetzung, also es war immer kreativ, konstruktiv, lösungsorientiert. Erleichternd am Ende dadurch und das gibt natürlich Vertrauen in den Einzelnen, der da mitwirkt, aufgrund seines Inputs und Vertrauen in die Methode. (Aida)

This trust, effectiveness, and implementation they (group members) were always creative, constructive and solution-orientated. [Hmhm.] Because of this: Soothing. And this creates trust in the individuals participating thanks to his input and trust in the approach. (Aida, translated from German)

*Mich hat schon überrascht, dass das so funktioniert, dass man sagt "so, ihr drei seid
jetzt Freunde und habt ne Vertrauensbasis" und dass mans dann auch macht. Da war ich überrascht, wie man einfach durch so ein total Zufall 20 Leute nimmt und von den 20 nochmal Grüppchen und ihr tauscht euch jetzt auf nem echt hohen Vertrauensniveau aus und dass man das auch umsetzt. Dass man mit einer Anmoderation sagen kann "ihr vertraut euch jetzt", da war ich echt erstaunt, dass das so geht und das so war (Pierre).*

I was surprised, that it worked like that, that one can say "you three guys are friends now, and you have a trustful relationship." and you just do that. I was surprised, how you can take a group of 20 people that are randomly arranged and then you form small groups out of them telling them to talk to each other at a very high level of trust and it just works. I was surprised that you can say "Now, you trust in each other" and it works like that. (Pierre, translated from German)

[...]dazu muss man natürlich im peer coaching, und das ist ne Frage des gegenseitigen Vertrauens, dazu muss man auch offen sein. Aber Offenheit ergibt sich ja durch Vertrauen. (Aida)

[...] of course peer coaching is a matter of mutual trust, you have to be open. But openness is a result of trust. (Aida, translated from German)

[...] aber in dem Moment, in dem man so eine Vertrauensbasis da hat, sind auch ganz viele Sachen, die sonst, wenn man keine gute Basis hat, ein Problem darstellen, auf einmal Sachen, die man so mal eben regelt (Pierre).

[...] but in the moment when there is a basis for trust, there are many things that would normally pose a problem without a foundation in trust, that you can just handle casually. (Pierre, translated from German).

[...] ich glaube, diese dieser Punkt Offenheit und Vertrauen, wie man die Atmosphäre dann schafft, offen und vertrauensvoll miteinander zu reden, ist ein wesentliches Kriterium, wo ich sagen muss, das ist so ein Punkt, das kann man im PGC auch nicht richtig üben. Weil da haben wir eine offene und vertrauensvolle Atmosphäre geschaffen, die wir im Berufsleben so natürlich nicht haben. (Andrew)

[...] I think this point of openness and trust, how to get this atmosphere, talking openly and trustfully to each other, this is a very important component. And I have to say this is an aspect, which you cannot really practice in PGC. It was because we had built an open and trustful atmosphere, we obviously don't have in our professional life. (Andrew, translated from German)

Also, ich hab immer das Gefühl, dass wir uns alle freuen auf diese Events. Also, wenn wir telefonieren, das ist immer ne lustige Atmosphäre, selbst in den beknacktesten Zeiten haben wir uns, unsere Sprüche und wir können über die schlechtesten Themen, haben wir immer noch nen Galgenhumor. (Roger).

I have the feeling that we are all looking forward to those events. During our calls there's always a fun atmosphere. Even in difficult times we have each other and our sense of humour. (Roger, translated from German)

Und es resultiert auch aus dem Vertrauen heraus, muss ich sagen, also ich hatte
schon Situationen, wo jemand ner Runde sein Problem erzählt hat, was echt relativ spaßfrei ist, was mich echt relativ bewegt hat, in so ner Situation willst du nicht stecken, und auch bewegt hat, dass jemand so offen darüber erzählt, also wirklich sehr inklusive der eigenen Gefühle in der Situation. (Rob).

And as a result of that trust, I have to admit, there have been situations when somebody presented his problem, which was relative serious, which

really affected me. You don't want to be in this situation and it also affected me, that somebody talks about this in this open fashion including their own feelings in this situation. (Rob, translated from German)

Ich meine, am Anfang kennt man die Leute natürlich eigentlich, wir kannten uns ja am Anfang praktisch überhaupt nicht, wie geht das überhaupt, was wollen die? Wie sind die drauf? Das war am Anfang (---) so bissel, naja, kleine Berührungsängste, sag ich mal, von allen Seiten. (Mohammad).

I mean, obviously you don't know the others at first? What is their story? Who are these people? At the beginning, there were kind of mutual reservations on all sides. (Mohammed, translated from German)

Wenn, wenn ich jetzt mal es aus der Sicht von demjenigen, der das Problem hat, schildere, glaub ich, also, ist für mich einfach gut, jemand anderem das Problem nahe zu bringen und einfach, naja, (xxx) von der Seele reden zu können, [ja], dass man jemanden hat, mit dem man über so etwas reden kann. (Mohammad)

If I am taking the view of the person who has the problem, it feels very good to present the problem to someone and get it off your chest, that you have somebody you can talk to. (Mohammad, translated from German)

Von daher glaube ich, die grundsätzliche Umsetzung, dessen was man in dem PGC für Erfahrung gesammelt hat, ist vom Grunde her richtig und führt auch weiter. In Vorgesetzten-Mitarbeitersituationen hatten wir nicht so eine offene Atmosphäre, wie wir dieses in den peer-groups hatten. (Andrew).

I think, the implementation of the experiences you gained in peer group coaching are good and helpful. However, in superior – employee situations there is not such an open atmosphere as in the peer-groups. (Andrew, translated from German)

Also ich denke, wenn Du eine gute Beziehung hast, dann findest du immer ein Thema.

I think that when you have an open relationship between each other, in such case you always have a topic. (Roger, translated from German)

Und das es ne Plattform gibt, wo ich völlig frei hingehen kann und sagen kann, "ich hab ein Problem" und werde dafür aber schon, schon alleine,

also die Freiheit, ein Problem haben zu dürfen, was nun gemeinsam besprochen wird, das find ich positiv. (Aida).

And that there is a place where I can go and say "I have a problem". Already this freedom being allowed to have a problem which will be discussed together, I think this is positive. (Aida, translated from German)

Aber ich hab mich total gewundert, ah, wie gut es funktioniert, dann eine Gruppe zustande kommt, die dann tatsächlich der Fall ist, den ich mir ganz bewusst nicht selber ausgesucht hätte, muss ich ganz ehrlich sagen. Der dann aber so wunderbar funktioniert, auch weil wir eben echt sehr gegensätzlich sind. Dass ich da ganz begeistert bin und ich glaube, ich habe höheren Mehrwert als mit den Kollegen, mit denen ich sowieso öfter mal zu tun hab. (Rob)

I was very surprised how well it worked, that there is a group, which I would have not chosen consciously on my own. But it worked very well, also because we have very different personalities. Because of that I am very enthusiastic and I think, that I get additional value, than I would have with the colleagues I speak to anyway. (Rob, translated from German)

[...]ein paar Sachen bin ich noch ein bisschen tiefer reingegangen, penetranter eingegangen und da haben die alles so diese Themen genannt, wo die gesagt haben "ja, das hat mir was gebracht in Richtung Lernen, Weiterentwickeln, das fand ich hilfreich, das war so der Auslöser, das war das Thema (Pierre).

[...] I dug a bit deeper into a few topics and then they mentioned those things to which they said, "yes, these helped me to learn and to develop, these were helpful this or this was the trigger, this was the topic."(Pierre, translated from German).

Ein bisschen resultierend, nicht n bisschen, also resultierend auf dem Umgang, den wir untereinander aufgebaut haben. Das ist schon so, wenn wir uns sehen, freuen wir uns wirklich. Das ist schon ne sehr, sehr innige Begrüßung, das ist schon ganz interessant, was im Büro, zumindest in meinem Fall, relativ ne Ausnahme ist. (Rob)

This is a result of the way we have built the social contact with each other. Yes, it is like that, when we see each other we are really happy. We welcome each other in a really heartfelt way; it is very interesting, this is an exception in the office, at least in my case. (Rob, translated from German)

Ähm, und ich erinnere mich ganz stark an unseren gemeinsamen Frust, wie schwierig es ist, Termine zu machen und die Jungs sich drauf verlassen,

dass die Mädels das tun. [Hmmm] Und, und unser vorherrschenden Gefühl, wenn wir das jetzt nicht machen, passiert es nicht. [Hmhm] Das sind die beiden Punkte, ich erinnere mich dann aber auch daran, wie gut die Jungs das fanden, dass wir das organisiert haben. Aber wir haben auch überlegt, wenn wirs jetzt lassen, was ist denn dann? (Greta)

And I remember our shared frustration, how difficult it was to make appointments and the boys trusting that the girls will get it done. And our feeling, if we don't, it is not going to happen. Those are the two points I remember, but I also remember how great the boys thought it was that we organised it all. And then we thought, if we don't do it, what happens then? (Greta, translated from German)

Es relativiert eben wie man sieht, die Probleme oder Herausforderungen, die man selbst sieht. Letztendlich ist man damit nicht allein, sondern das ist eigentlich ein, ja, mehr oder weniger, prima Zustand. (Marc).

It makes things more bearable, the problems, the challenges, when you see that you are not alone with your problems and challenges, that's a wonderful place to be in. (Marc, translated from German)

[...]das sind dann Vorschläge, sag ich mal, oder auch Denkanstöße, was man tun könnte, oder jemand, oder die anderen sagen, "das hatte ich auch schon mal und das hab ich so und so gehandelt". (Mohammad)

There are suggestions or thought-provoking impulses what you could do, or somebody says "I already had this once and I dealt with it this way".(Mohammad; translated from German)

Okay, es stimmt, viele Fragen, die ich vorher gestellt hab, waren sehr auf die Logik bedacht und danach mehr, dann auch in unserer peer-group, dass man einfach mehr Verständnis und mehr Sensitivität hatte, dass manche Fragen dann auch in die Bauchrichtung gehen müssen und nicht in die Kopfrichtung. (Andrew)

Okay, it is true that many of the questions I asked before concerned logical components and afterwards, also in the peer-group, you gained more sympathy and more sensitivity, and that many questions have to rely on gut feeling and not being logical and analytic. (Andrew, translated from German)

Die Empathie also sagen wir mal, ne Anteilnahme, was das Sachliche angeht, zu 100%, ne Anteilnahme, also bei Problemen ist ja auch meistens, ne Emotionalität oder so mit verbunden und äh, ne also da würde ich jetzt

mal sagen, je nach Persönlichkeit, nehmen wir, der eine das Problem vom anderen ernster oder auch nicht. Hat auch was mit Respekt zu tun. (Aida)

The empathy, the interest concerning the professional things, 100% sympathy, in terms of problems are often related to emotions, having the personality of the person in mind we take his problem more or less seriously. It's also linked to respect. (Aida translated from German)

[...] ich denk so PGCs, ist sehr davon abhängig, in wie weit das ein gegenseitiger Respekt da ist und in wie weit eine Bereitschaft zum Zuhören da ist. (Aida)

[...] I think in PGC many things rely on mutual respect and one's willingness to listen. (Aida, translated from German)

Allein der Akt des, des Kommunizierens des Problems an die anderen hilft einem schon, selber da drüber nochmal nachzudenken, es anders zu sehen. [Ja.] Was dann halt zurückkommt, was dann halt zurückkommt, (--), das sind dann Vorschläge, sag ich mal, oder auch Denkanstöße, was man tun könnte, oder jemand, oder die anderen sagen, "das hatte ich auch schonmal und das hab ich so und so gehändelt. (Mohammad)

Simply the act of communicating your problems, simply thinking about them, helps you to see things from a different angle. [Yes]. And what comes back to you are suggestions or thought- provoking impulses about what you could do, or somebody says "I already had this once and I dealt with it this way." (Mohammed, translated from German)

Ich glaube, das Wichtigste war, ich glaube, für denjenigen, der den Fall hatte, war das Wichtigste, dass er ihn schildern konnte und dass er, dass er irgendwie Feedback dazu gekriegt hat. (xxx) Einfach Feedback zu kriegen. Ich glaube, das war das Hilfreichste irgendwo. (Anja)

I think it was most important for the person who had the case to know that he could report it and the there was somehow feedback about it. Just getting feedback somehow, that was really the most helpful thing. (Anja; translated from German)

Ich denke, dass er irgendwie Feedback dazu gekriegt hat. Einfach Feedback zu kriegen. Ich glaube, das war das Hilfreichste irgendwo. (Mohammad)

I think the most important thing was receiving feedback on one's issues. Getting feedback. I think this was the most helpful tool (Mohammed; translated from German).

Yes, one of the peer-group participants surprised me greatly with his creative ideas about how to deal with specific themes along with his employees. To be honest, I wouldn't trust or I would not have expected him to do so, yes I was impressed. (Denise, translated from German)

Oder dann gibt der eine nen Tipp dem Anderen, weil ich hab schon mal nen ähnlichen Fall gehabt, da habe ich das so und so gemacht, oder ich gehe damit so und so um, wir haben dann beim ersten Treffen, da hatten wir aus dem ersten Modul heraus ja noch so Aufgaben sozusagen, wo wir versuchen sollten, uns über gewisse Themen zu unterhalten. (Roger)

And then you give and receive tips, because you had a similar problem, and he dealt with it that way, at the first meeting we have had some exercises from the first module with whose help we should try to talk about certain topics. (Roger, translated from German)

Da mussten wir uns wirklich sehr oft wieder auf die Aufgabe zurückführen, weil wir sehr schnell wieder an Lösungen gedacht haben und gar nicht, also ne, das man schon gesagt hat, „ich würd das so und so machen", und es war ja eigentlich Sinn und Zweck, den Anderen über Fragen, über Aussagen in das Denken zu bringen. (Roger)

We had to concentrate on this exercise, because immediately we often thought about solutions, that somebody suggested "I would deal with it that way" but it was the point where the goal was to enhance reflection in the other person's mind via questions and statements. (Roger, translated from German)

Ich würde sagen, wir haben einfach diskutiert. In der Regel zuerstmal rekapituliert, das hat man also gehört. Und dann haben wir erstmal so die spontanen Eindrücke jeder so geäußert, würde ich sagen, also das Erste, was einem so in den Sinn kommt und dann kamen eigentlich in der Regel noch ein paar Fragen auf. Also, warum sind manche Sachen so? Die haben wir dann auch dem coachee, sozusagen, nochmal gestellt. (Anja)

First, we summed up what we heard. Afterwards everyone shared their spontaneous impression, the first things which came into your mind and with that questions popped up. For example: Why are some things like that? And then we asked the coachee those questions. (Anja, translated from German)

Durch Lösungen. Neue Lösungen. [Neue Lösungen.] Oder auch neue Lösungen, aber auch Art und Weise, wie man frägt. Wie man fragen kann. Auf jeden Fall, da waren sehr gute Fragen dabei. (Aida)

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With the aid of solutions. New solutions. Also new solutions but also the new way you ask. How you ask questions. There were some very good questions. (Aida, translated from German)

Ähm, ich glaube einfach, einfach die anderen Ideen, ähm, die die Leute eingebracht haben, ähm, die Fragen selbst, die die Leute gestellt haben, weil die einfach nochmal so eine Art Selbstreflexion ausgelöst haben, ähm, das könnten unbequeme Fragen, von unbequemen Fragen bis zu ähm, auch einfach wirklich andere Aspekte beleuchten, die man vielleicht einfach gar nicht so auf dem Schirm hatte, weil man so in der Situation drin war. (Anja)

[...] I think these other ideas, that people had and the questions people asked, because they stimulated a kind of self-reflection via uncomfortable questions or highlighting of other aspects, you don't have in your mind because you are only in this situation. (Anja; translated from German)

Man merkt halt an einigen Stellen, dass wenn so Fragen kommen, dass man ab und zu versucht, sich um Situationen rumzulabieren irgendwo, ne, und das, und da kommen Fragen zu "warum machst du das nicht? warum machst du das nicht?" und dann ist das schon, dann denkt man sich schon "hm, hätte ich eigentlich machen können, aber eigentlich war ich zu (-) zu faul oder zu feige oder sonst irgendwas, um das zu tun. (Mohammed)

At some points you feel there are questions, where you try to tip toe around certain situations. Questions like that, "Why don't you do this or that?" and then you think "I could have, but I was too lazy, too faint hearted or something else to do it. (Mohammed, translated from German.)

Die Rückmeldungen, das ist, ja, das ist einfach interessant, wie viel nimmt man davon an und wie viel nimmt man davon nicht an. Man, man kriegt, man kriegt Impulse, aber man muss letztendlich eben immer seine eigenen Lösungen finden, selbst wenns nicht in dieser Frage Formtechnik passiert, sondern wenn Vorschläge kommen, und man kann Impulse aus diesen Vorschlägen rausgreifen, aber am Ende muss man immer seine eigenen Lösungen finden, aber ansonsten gehts mir schon deswegen gut. (Denise)

The feedback, it is very interesting how much you can accept and how much you cannot. You get insights but at the end you have to find your own solutions, even if it doesn't happen via this questioning tool, but if there are suggestions and you can get impulses out of these suggestions, but at the end you have to find your own solution, I feel good because of that. (Denise, translated from German)

[...] PGC auf jeden Fall am meisten geeignet ist (--) eben überhaupt, ich mein, das ist ja, aus meiner Sicht, mit einer der wichtigsten Bausteine, dass

man eben hingeht, indem man das anderen erzählt, denkt man zum einen selber drüber, drüber nach plus man bekommt eben den Input von anderen und vor allen Dingen mal so einen Spiegel auch zu dem, was andere Leute vielleicht auch anders denken könnten, wo man einfach nicht so drüber nachgedacht hat und das macht einen glaube ich schon wacher für auch in anderen Situationen, die jetzt nicht konkret mit dem Fall zu tun haben. (Anja)

[...] PGC is the most suitable - in my opinion it is the most important component, going there and speaking about it, you think about it once more and you get input, the others hold the mirror up to your issues. Also how other people could think about it, these can be things you were never aware of before, and I think this is also helpful in other situations which are not linked to this specific issue the peer-group dealt with (Anja, translated from German).

Also grade beim, versuch ichs zumindestens, beim coaching, beim leading others, wo man eben durch diese Methoden des Fragens den Anderen dahin bringt, ohne gleich ne Lösung zu bringen, oder denen zu erzählen „Hm, was war das grade Mist", sondern sich zu sagen, „wie ist das und das passiert? Warum war das so? Was haben sie da gemacht? Wie können wir". Dass man die Leute in dieses Denkmuster kriegt, das versuch ich schon. Am Ende des Tages brech ich das bei den letzten Sätzen immer ab und sag „ich würd das so und so machen", egal, ich geh in dieses Thema rein, das merk ich schon. Und das fruchtet auch. Also da, ist das schon spannend. (Roger)

I am trying with coaching to lead others, where you use these methods of questioning to get others somewhere without presenting a solution or telling them "That was really bad" and instead asking "How did that happen? Why was it this way? What did you do? How can we...?" Getting people into this pattern of thought, I try to do that. At the end of the day I break off at the last sentence and say "I would do it in this and that way". Doesn't matter, it works. This is really fascinating. (Roger, translated from German)

...viele Sachen haben mir gut gefallen, die ich nicht nur bei mir im Bereich verwendet habe, ... Also, man merkt halt, man stellt halt Fragen, die man sonst vielleicht nicht stellt. (Rob)

There were many things I really liked, I have not only used in my area. You realise, you ask a lot of questions you would not ask otherwise. (Rob, translated from German)

Ja, und und dieser Effekt: Ich bin, bin halt nicht alleine im in, in, in der Sektion. Die anderen haben auch ähnliche Probleme, auch die Art von Bestätigung, nicht nur, "ich bin auf dem richtigen Weg", das ist natürlich auch gut und wichtig, aber auch dieses ähm, andere kämpfen mit den gleichen (-) Hürden. (Anja)

Yes, and then there is this effect: I am not alone, I am not alone with this problem. The others have similar problems, this affirmation not only "I am on the right track", this is also good and important, but also the awareness, that the others cope with the same issues. (Anja, translated from German)

Also, es ist tatsächlich so, dass fast jeder Fall, der, den irgendjemand geschildert hat, jemand anders so oder in ähnlicher Fall schon mal jemand hatte und ja auch damit umgegangen ist, ja. Also, so, das zeigt einem schon, dass man selber kein Sonderfall ist und dass es nicht der Fall ist, dass man einfach nur zu blöd ist dafür, sondern es ist einfach so, dass es sind Situationen, die aufkommen. Der eine löst sie so, der andere löst sie so. Es gibt immer mehrere Möglichkeiten, aber es ist schon (-), jeder steht vor ähnlichen Problemen irgendwo. (Mohammed)

Indeed, it is the case that nearly every issue somebody presented, another person had already experienced and dealt with. This shows you, that you are no exception that it is not your fault being in this situation, that you might just be too stupid, it is rather the case that these issues happen. One solves it that way, another a different way. There are always many possibilities, but it is like that, everyone faces similar problems. (Mohammed, translated from German)

Jeder hat das Problem mit irgendwelchen Mitarbeitern, die (-), mit denen er aus irgendwelchen Gründen nicht klar kommt. Oder jeder hat, Probleme, dass er (--), dass er sich überlastet ist, an irgendeiner Stelle. Und nicht weiß, wie er damit umgehen soll, oder oder solche Sachen, also, das Muster ist, dass eigentlich jeder dieselben Probleme grundsätzlich hat. (Mohammed)

Everyone has the problem, that there are some employees he doesn't get along with. Furthermore, everyone has problems in being overburdened at some point. And he doesn't know how to deal with or things like that, the pattern is, everyone has the same problems. (Mohammed, translated from German)

Ich erlebe aber, und deshalb bin ich trotzdem im positiven Bereich, in den Gesprächen zu den Problemen, die die anderen aber einbringen, immer wieder Dinge wie, „Oh, guck mal, das hast du eigentlich auch, das ist aber ein guter Tipp". Ähm, entweder ne eigene Idee, die ich habe, oder aber die anderen, haben natürlich tolle Ideen, da sind Sachen dabei, da habe ich kein konkretes Problem, aber wenn (xxx), das ist echt ne gute Rangehensweise, die merkste dir mal. (Rob)

On the other hand, I experience, and because of that I feel positive, when we talk about the problems of others I realise "Oh, you have the same problem, this is a really good tip". This can be an idea I have had on my own or great ideas of the others, there are also themes I have no specific problem

with, but I think, you should remember these approaches for the future. (Rob, translated from German)

Selbstreflexion, indem man ne andere Position annimmt, auch also Selbstreflexion dadurch, dass ich andere Perspektiven, andere Sichtweisen, was ja dann wiederum auf mich zurückfällt, sodass ich in der Lage bin, meine jetzige Position zu überdenken und ne andere einzunehmen. (Aida)

[…] self-reflection by taking another position and reflecting on other perspectives and points of views, which enables me to think about my actual point of view and to see things from a different angle. (Aida, translated from German)

Ja, also, grad was meinen Fall angeht, haben die mich auf ne Spur gebracht, da wäre ich im Leben selbst nicht drauf, also die haben mich über meine eigene rote Linie hinausgeführt. Und das war, das war für mich ein Aha-Moment. Also, das ist ja immer die Kunst und da kommt man ja meist selbst, also in viele Situationen selbst nicht hin, man sieht immer nur den Punkt, auf dem man steht und es ist unglaublich schwierig da wegzukommen, davon.[Ja.] Und dieses Aha-Erlebnis hab ich äh (---) da gehabt. Fand ich "woa, das ist jetzt aber klasse". (Aida)

Yes, in my case, they got me on track, I never got there on my own, indeed, they guided me over the red line. This was an a-ha moment. This is the real art, because normally you cannot go there on your own, because you only see your world and it is really hard to get out of this. [Yes] And I had this a-ha experience. I thought "Wow this is amazing." (Aida; translated from German)

[…] ich mein, ich bin ja eigentlich jemand, der, der solche Sachen nicht so sehr liebt, sag ich mal, ne. Ich mag nicht so, mich vor anderen so zu exponieren irgendwo. [Ja. Ja.] Aber das hat gut funktioniert eigentlich, muss ich sagen. Und das, die Erleuchtung war dann eigentlich schon, dass es eigentlich schon hilft, das zu tun. (Mohammed)

I mean, normally I am someone who does not like these things very much. I do not like exposing myself to others. But this worked really well, I must say. And this enlightenment was really that it helps doing that. (Mohammed, translated from German)

[…] die Hinweise waren alle hilfreich, die die Ansätze waren gut, sie konnten also auch, würd ich sagen, zu 80% umgesetzt werden, aber haben nicht so zu 100% zu dem Erfolg geführt. (Marc)

[...] all hints were being helpful and the approaches were good. All these could be implemented to 80%, that is my guess. However, not all that was implemented led to a 100% success rate. (Marc, translated from German)

Ja, wobei ich schon teilweise die positive Erfahrung auch im Berufsleben gemacht habe, dass die Mitarbeiter erstmal irritiert sind über Fragen, die ich stelle, weil mit solchen Fragen rechnen sie nicht (Andrew).

Yes, but I also get the positive experience in my professional life, at first the employees were irritated because of these questions I ask, because they don't expect such questions. (Andrew, translated from German)

Wo ich dann auch sage, „nehmen wir uns mal ein bisschen mehr Zeit, um das richtig zuverstehen, was ist wirklich das Problem" und das kannten die von mir vorher nicht. Ich mein, mittlerweile haben sich auch viele dran gewöhnt, ne, ich mein, ich mach das ja jetzt schon ein paar Monate, aber die Anfangszeit war spannend, dass die dann erstmal was verdutzt geschaut haben [(lacht)], weil es eben auch führungsstilabhängig war. (Andrew)

In these situations I suggest: let's take the time to understand what the problem really is and they weren't used to it. I think now they got used to it, I mean, I have done this for a few months now, but the beginning was exciting, first they looked confused [(laughter)] because it depends on the leadership style. (Andrew, translated from German)

Leute kommen zu mir, weil sie irgendwie ne Entscheidung brauchen oder ne Lösung und bisher ein bisschen dominierend geführt hab, hab ich die Lösung gesagt, ohne dass ich wirklich absehen konnte, ob es das Problem wirklich löst, und jetzt diese, diese Anwendung der, der Fragetechniken, vielleicht nicht immer in Reinkultur muss ich zugeben, aber darum geht's meines Erachtens nicht, es geht darum, was funktioniert und was funktioniert nicht, glaube ich schon, hat auch in meinem Führungsverhalten schon ein paar Sachen verändert (Andrew).

People come to me, because they need a decision or a solution and until now I have been leading in a slightly directive way and told them the solution without really knowing whether it solves the problem. And now, the implementation of the question-technique, maybe not always done to its perfection, but I think that this is not most important, it is important what works and what doesn't work, I think in my leadership style, some things have changed. (Andrew, translated from German)

Ich hab schon gemerkt, viele Sachen haben mir gut gefallen, die ich nicht nur bei mir im Bereich verwendet habe. So habe ich schon den Eindruck, dass ich weiß was meine Mitarbeiter denken. (Rob)

I have already mentioned, many things which I implemented - not only in my department - that pleased me. I get the impression already that I know what my employees think. (Rob, translated from German)

Das wirkt total gut, ich bin total begeistert davon, muss ich sagen, Mitarbeiter mit
denen ich rede und zusammensitze, hier, die merken schon, dass ich
plötzlich alles anders mache als, als vorher. Ähm, so und da habe ich halt die Chance gehabt, das einfach mal zu üben, ( ), weil das ist ja völlig okay, weil die ja wissen, worums geht. Weil das war wirklich eigentlich ganz gut, muss ich sagen. (Rob)

It works very well, I am totally enthusiastic. I have to say, employees with whom I speak and sit together recognise, that suddenly I do many things differently than before. So I had the chance to try out things, because this is totally okay, as most of them know the context. I have to confess, this was really very good. (Rob, translated from German)

Nach einem Modul versuche ich das 100% alles, alles durchzuziehen, merke, es lässt aber ein bisschen nach, was ich aber auch merke, und das ist schön, paar Sachen bleiben auch hängen. Die bleiben hängen und die übernehme ich dann in meine tägliche Arbeit, was dann ein echter Mehrwert ist. (Rob)

After a module, I try to transfer and implement it 100%. After a while implementation gets less. However, I also realise that some things really stick. These things that really stick, I am using in my daily work and this has a huge value. (Rob, translated from German)

Sagen wirs mal so, ich würde auch sagen, ( ), es war fast so als würde ich jetzt, wir haben ja bei uns routinemäßig Mitarbeitergespräche ein Mal im Jahr und in dem Zusammenhang würde ich sowas über ein Feedback dann nochmal abfragen. Ähm, aber ich ähm denke schon, ähm, dass das die entsprechenden Effekt hatte und ähm, es war jetzt weniger für mich als vielmehr für eben ähm, ja, meine Mitarbeiter, ist vielleicht entscheidend. Und in dem Zusammenhang glaube ich schon, dass es ne wesentliche Veränderung ist, auch wenn es für mich jetzt vielleicht nicht so der entscheidende Schritt war, vielmehr insgesamt gesehen. (Marc)

OK, let's say it this way, we have annually employee evaluations with our direct reports and here I would use feedback. But I think that it had a certain effect and it was less for me but more for my direct reports. And in this context, I think indeed, that it is a substantial change. (Marc, translated from German)

Sagen wirs mal so, ich würde auch sagen, ( ), es war fast so als würde ich jetzt, wir haben ja bei uns routinemäßig Mitarbeitergespräche ein Mal im Jahr und in dem Zusammenhang würde ich sowas über ein Feedback dann nochmal abfragen. (Marc)

Let's put it this way, we have a routine of conducting annual performance reviews and in this context I would ask for feedback. (Marc, translated from German)

[...] heute Vormittag schon, war ja das Thema Vertrauensbildung ja in diesem MPP Modul, ähm, ja so gut ausgebildet war. Dass diese, diese Dynamik von der Gruppe äh einfach sehr gut funktioniert hat, jetzt nicht nur von uns hier, sondern einfach insgesamt. Ich bin damals aus dieser Gruppe rausgegangen und ich war sehr beeindruckt und zwar nicht nur beeindruckt im Hinblick auf mein Berufsleben, sondern auch privat. Ich hatte wirklich das Gefühl, das hat ein paar Saiten zum Schwingen gebracht und das finde ich sehr viel für so was. Ich bin grundsätzlich relativ skeptisch bei solchen Veranstaltungen (lacht kurz) [ja] hingegen und daher finde ich das sehr finde, wenn das was zum schwingen bringt und wenn, wenns mich anregt in meinem Leben, bestimmte Dinge zu überdenken. (Denise)

[...] this morning, yes, the topic of trust, yes in this programme, yes it was so nicely built. The dynamic of this group was just working nicely. Not only with us, but in general. I left the group and I was really amazed, that not only in respect of my working life but also privately. I really had the feeling that this caused some things to evolve, and I think that is a lot for something like that. Generally, I am very sceptical towards activities like that. I find that this caused something to evolve and stimulated things in my life, to re-think certain things. (Denise, translated from German)