

The role of coaching and mentoring in transformational change, focusing on housing association mergers

Muhammad Tahir Rafique (2014)

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**The role of coaching and mentoring in
transformational change, focusing on housing
association mergers**

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of doctorate in coaching and
mentoring.

Faculty of Business

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Declaration

I, Muhammad Tahir Rafique hereby declare that the work described in this thesis is my own. This thesis does not contain written or published materials prepared by others except where acknowledged in the text and has not been submitted to any other university or institution as a part or whole requirement for any higher degree.

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Abstract

Coaching and mentoring have grown rapidly in the last twenty years, reflecting increased level of interest in these fields. The widespread popularity, however, has been largely attributed to the anecdotal feedback about their effectiveness due to considerable gaps in the empirical research base. The aim of this study was to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in relation to transformational changes with particular reference to housing association mergers in the UK. As a result of constant merger activity, the largest twenty housing associations own 30% of the market share and the trend is likely to continue, making the research outcomes useful for future strategic planning of housing association mergers. This thesis includes empirical work through data gathered by semi-structured interviews and analysed by constructivist grounded theory methodology.

The study found that coaching and mentoring play an important role in housing association mergers and transformational changes especially in creating a new shared identity and staff integration after housing association mergers. Integration can keep the merged housing associations together, thus reducing the merger failures in

the housing associations. This study makes an original contribution to knowledge by presenting a conceptual framework. The framework incorporates different forms of coaching and mentoring, such as, one to one coaching, team coaching, executive mentoring and peer mentoring used in housing associations for the transformative learning of the housing officials.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my late father Chaudhry Mohammad Rafiq Akhtar [1944 – 2002]. He devoted a significant part of his life promoting education and grass root sports in Chak No. 334 GB Rajjowal, Pirmahal and surrounding villages. For me, dad was a guide and a mentor. From a young age, he instilled in me very strong work ethics, including persistence, pursuit of excellence and the sense of responsibility to help those who are less fortunate than me.

Having grown up in a fairly backward village in central Punjab, with no electricity until 1985, parental support was crucial for our character building. I am sure my dad would have been proud of my achievements as well as the achievements of my brothers and sisters. Having come from a modest background, we now have an accountant, a banker, a pilot and two military officers in the family. Even though we miss dad, we are blessed to have the guidance and support of mum, who thankfully enjoys good health.

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Muhammad Tahir Rafique
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February 2014

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis discusses the role of coaching and mentoring in coping with organisational changes related to dynamic developments, such as mergers, in the housing association sector in the UK. Although the relationship between coaching, mentoring and transformation has been documented (Mezirow, 1991; Griffiths, 2005; Rogers, 2012), the housing association merger perspective remains a neglected area of research in the UK. Recent research shows that currently housing associations manage a far larger number of homes than ever before (Gulliver et al., 2011; Rees et al., 2012) and that the most recent trend is that of mergers. Literature on corporate mergers in general has shown that many mergers fail or at least are highly problematic. These problems include 'lowered commitment and productivity, increased dissatisfaction and disloyalty, high turnover among key managers, leadership and power struggle among the managers who stay, and, in general, a rise in dysfunctional work-related behaviours at all levels of hierarchy' (Buono and Bowditch, 2003, p. 3). These behaviours are caused by human factors such as stress, uncertainty and anxiety (Mirvis and Marks, 2003). Coaching and mentoring are regarded as vital resources to lessen stress and manage uncertainty (Rigsby et al., 1998; Grant et al., 2009) during large-scale organisational changes such as mergers and restructures.

The trajectory of housing association development presented in the following quote is opportunistic rather than strategic:

... the rise of housing associations in the past should be seen as incremental and opportunistic. If we stand back far enough to take a long-term view of what is today called social housing, it is arguable that there is a consistent direction of travel, away from the overwhelming municipalist and collectivist dominance of the period from 1919 to 1979 (Malpass, 2009, pp. 116–117).

But, from 1980 onwards, a strategic direction started to evolve as housing associations started to merge with one another. As a result of constant merger activity in the last twenty-five years, average housing associations doubled in size from 955 homes to 1,816 homes, whereas market share amongst the largest twenty housing associations increased from 26 per cent to 30 per cent (Rees et al., 2012). Some larger housing associations own and manage over 50,000 homes, whereas the largest housing group, Sanctuary, through a series of mergers now owns and manages 94,000 properties. With this level of activity, housing association mergers are important. To fully appreciate the housing association merger process, it is important to recognise the interventions used to deal with human factors. This in turn presents a clear rationale for this study and links directly with the research aim.

1.1 Aims and objectives of this study

The aim of this study is to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in mergers and organisational changes in the housing association sector.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Critically review literature on coaching, mentoring, organisational change, housing associations and mergers.
2. Explore the experiences and perceptions of external coaches and housing officials with respect to learning and development in the housing sector, using a constructivist grounded theory approach.
3. Analyse the data and develop a time line model of merger process for practitioners expressing the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers.
4. Produce a theoretical perspective that incorporates different learning and development interventions used in housing associations, to enable future researchers to develop formal theories.

1.2 Theoretical positioning and research context

Coaching and mentoring fields are in the process of building their own research bases by drawing on related disciplines that have an established theoretical grounding, such as adult learning, psychology

and behavioural sciences (Ehrich et al., 2001; Grant, 2005; Cox, 2006; Orenstein, 2007; Rogers, 2012). In the adult learning context, coaching and mentoring support self-reflection, which leads to self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-discovery (Griffiths, 2005); reflection is therefore the central process of transformative learning, and may result in transformational change (Mezirow, 1991). The relationship between transformational changes in the housing association sector in view of the potential demand for the learning, development and transformation of housing officials has not been examined.

This study seeks to contribute to theory development in the fields of coaching and mentoring by presenting a time line model of merger process. It also adds to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), the transformational change model (Anderson and Anderson, 2001) and team coaching. At a practical level, the findings will be of value to housing officials involved in managing future mergers. It will also inform the practice of coaches and mentors working in the housing association sector.

The study is set in the context of housing associations in the UK. Data was collected from three separate groups: (1) coaches with extensive experience of providing coaching and mentoring in the housing sector; (2) housing executives at director to chief executive levels, all involved in housing association mergers between January 2011 and December 2012; and (3) housing officers up to assistant

manager level, all involved in housing association mergers between January 2011 and December 2012.

A Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) report (2013) argued that an organisation's success was attributed to the skills of its leadership. However, the report noted that 48 per cent of the respondents identified a skills deficit in coaching and mentoring areas, whereas 47 per cent thought the leaders 'lacked the ability to manage change' (p. 23). The CIPD report did not present a skills deficit specific to the housing sector, but the high level of mergers and resultant organisational change was noted, and it would be useful to examine whether the benefits of coaching and mentoring have been recognised by housing associations, especially during periods of significant change, such as mergers.

It is well known that there is a rising popularity of coaching and mentoring in workplace settings, but at the same time, empirical evidence of the impact of coaching and mentoring on staff is lacking (Garvey and Alred, 2000; Garvey, 2004; Joo, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2008). There is limited scholarly literature covering the use of coaching in the housing association sector. This study seeks to make a contribution to closing the empirical gap in this area.

Coaching is a relatively young profession, and the evidence base of research is still growing. Conversely, research on mergers has matured and different theories have been developed. Seo and Hill (2005) identify six theories to explain the problems in managing

mergers and acquisitions: anxiety theory, social identity theory, acculturation theory, role conflict theory, job characteristic theory and organisational justice theory. In contrast to merger theories, there is an acute dearth of housing theories. This represents an opportunity for studies that bring together different aspects of coaching and mentoring in the housing sector, and their impact on housing association mergers.

Research grounded in the perspective of housing officials and external coaches will allow the development of theories around how coaching and mentoring are used in the housing sector, and will provide insights into their impact during housing association mergers. This will inform theory and practice in relation to coaching and mentoring in housing associations, and will add to some small but important work on housing association mergers.

1.3 Methodology

This study is informed by the constructivist grounded theory developed by Charmaz (2000), who argued that theories are not discovered but are constructed from the interactions between the researcher, the research participants and the research process. Thus a constructed theory is an interpretation of the studied world and not an objective reporting of it. In this study I explored the perspectives of housing executives, front-line officers and external coaches with regard to coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers and organisational changes.

The constructivist approach assumes a relativist ontological position, as the world is assumed to consist of multiple realities. It starts with experience and explores how the participants constructed it. Consequently, all participants were considered as co-constructors. Constructivist grounded theory results in the construction of the interpretive renderings of the world of study, which fosters openness and an empathetic understanding of participants' meanings, actions and worlds, and has the potential to transform practice (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory provided a suitable method for this study, as it is aimed at unravelling the merger experience and perceptions of different participant groups, which is complemented by my own prior knowledge and experience of coaching, mentoring and transformational changes in the housing association sector.

1.4 My interest in the topic

This study is informed by my experiences as a coach, mentor, chartered accountant, educator and former housing official. I have worked for housing associations that have gone through the merger process. However, I did not have the responsibility of actually managing the merger process, but instead provided strategic direction and monitored the process as a non-executive director. As a chartered accountant, I acted as a project manager to integrate the asset register of two newly merged further education colleges in the north of England. The aim of this project was to ensure that the true worth of the non-current assets such as buildings, land and vehicles

was recorded in the consolidated financial statements following the merger. As an educator, I teach the due diligence process to undergraduates and MBA students. This includes the analysis and validation of financial, commercial, operational and strategic assumptions made by the potential merger partners; the risk profiles and critical success factors. I also teach accounting techniques used for the valuation of companies.

My interest in this study comes from my background as an accountant, an academic and housing official. As an accountant and academic, I am aware of the benefits of mergers, as well as the potential risk of merger failure. As a practising coach and mentor, I understand the importance of effective management of human emotions during a large scale change. I closely observed the merger of two housing associations in my capacity as a non executive director of one of the merging housing associations.

I observed that rather than concentrating on financial due diligence, the executive directors were spending a lot of time with the non-executive directors, tenant groups and management team of the potential merger partner. These groups were invited to visit the housing group head office, local housing offices and housing estates owned and managed by the housing group. The open management culture and the resultant employee and tenant satisfaction were the key selling points. The delegates were encouraged to spend time with employees and tenants and ask them any questions. The

merger process was initiated to realise potential economies of scale but the focus shifted from financial matters to human factors. I was interested to bring these aspects together into this study. This original work makes significant contribution to knowledge, thus warrants a doctoral research.

I am an executive coach and member of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council. I have provided mentoring to unemployed youngsters from underprivileged backgrounds as part of 'Fempowerment' and 'Young Britain Mentoring' initiatives, funded by the UK government and the European Social Fund.

The diverse roles I have held indicate that I bring a distinct blend of prior knowledge and experience to this study. Therefore, as a researcher I face the challenge of managing the element of potential bias. In Chapter 4 I have explained various approaches I used, such as memo writing, reflection and an audit trail to manage the potential impact of my own views, values and underlying assumptions on the research process and the findings of this study. I have consciously reflected time and again on the notion of giving voice to all participants, and have presented different perspectives as profoundly as I was able to.

1.5 Structure and chapter outline

This thesis has been organised into eight chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a detailed context of this study.

Different literature strands are explored, including the development of housing associations, the impact of the recent economic downturn on housing associations, coaching, including coaching cultures, mentoring, mergers and the relationship between mergers and transformational change. Key research terms, such as 'housing association', 'coaching', 'mentoring' and 'merger' are defined in this chapter.

Chapter 3 provides a preliminary review of the literature in order to set the stage for the research, and provides a detailed context for the study. The chapter discusses different claims made by authors about the effectiveness of coaching and the empirical evidence afforded to support those claims. Coaching studies that were conducted in the workplace context are discussed along with their relevance to this study. Mentoring studies together with the contribution of mentoring in facilitating organisational change are reviewed next. The chapter moves on to the literature that covers coaching and mentoring in the housing sector. The importance of human factors in the management of mergers is examined with specific reference to the theories that highlight staff-related problems in the management of mergers. Workplace learning theories relating to the desirability and acceptability of the need for transformational changes in the housing association sector are reviewed. The chapter refers to the recent financial crisis and the impact of government policies on the housing sector. The studies that link financial pressures to housing association restructuring are also included. There is ample literature

covering different aspects of merger failures. Some selected studies that highlight the failure rate of mergers are included in the chapter, in conjunction with evidence of an apparent gap in this literature base.

Chapter 4 addresses methodological considerations. A justification for the selection of a constructivist research paradigm and constructivist grounded theory methodology are provided. The purpose of the pilot interview and its influence on the selection of research methodology is described in this chapter. Also discussed is the development of grounded theory, starting with its inception in 1967 and its three main versions at present: classic grounded theory by Glaser (1992); the Straussian version by Strauss and Corbin (1990); and constructivist grounded theory by Charmaz (2000). This chapter explains the processes for participant selection and recruitment, the interview process, data collection and data analysis. The process of keeping an audit trail including memos, diaries and draft diagrams is described in detail. The strategies used to enhance the quality and rigour of the study are explained. I have provided a detailed account of my role as a researcher, the potential risk of bias, the strategies I adopted to manage this risk, and its overall bearing on the findings of this study. Research ethics and the limitations of using constructivist grounded theory are also discussed in this chapter.

Three main themes emerged from the analysis of data collected for this study, which are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In Chapter 5 different forms of mentoring interventions used by housing associations are viewed through the lens of the mentoring model presented by Patel et al. (2011). The appointment and matching of mentors with mentees from within and outside the housing sector and the remits of different mentoring relationships are discussed with reference to the housing association mergers. Different mentoring initiatives are presented in a diagram, which demonstrates how housing associations benefitted from various mentoring relationships. In this chapter, I have argued that the mentoring model of Patel et al. (2011) is only partially relevant to housing association mergers, because of the additional dimensions of mentoring relationships in housing associations.

In Chapter 6 the use of coaching in housing associations is discussed with reference to human-oriented theories of mergers, as argued by Seo and Hill (2005). The relevance of some of these theories to housing association mergers is explicated. Significant issues about the perception and use of coaching and the distinction between coaching and mentoring interventions are discussed in this chapter. In the housing associations, it was noted that in some cases there were negative connotations associated with coaching. The factors behind the reluctance of some housing officials to receive coaching as part of their professional development are discussed in

this context. The study found that team coaching was used to deal with divergent issues to achieve similar strategic outcomes.

Chapter 7, the last of the data analysis chapters, examines how some housing associations use coaching, mentoring and other interventions such as teaching and training, as part of a transformational change package. I shall argue that supplementing academic and vocational qualifications with coaching, mentoring and training, as part of the transformational change programmes, helps to embed learning in practice. The rationale for and the factors necessitating organisation-wide transformational change are discussed in this chapter. The reactions, as observed by coaches, of some housing officials who received coaching and mentoring for the first time are also presented. The importance of the time span of transformational change programmes in winning over the support of reluctant housing officials is explored. Merger failures in housing associations are also discussed in this chapter.

Finally, Chapter 8, the conclusion, summarises the key findings of this study. I present a time line model of merger process that brings together different forms of coaching, mentoring and training used in the management of housing association mergers. Reflections on my own research journey are also included in this chapter. The strengths and limitations of this study along with the contribution to knowledge and practice are discussed next. The chapter ends with a discussion of areas that would be interesting to explore through further research.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This study seeks to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers and transformational change. In this chapter, I set the context of the study. The focus in this chapter is on: (a) housing associations, (b) coaching, (c) mentoring, and (d) the relationship between mergers and transformational change. I start by discussing developments in the housing association sector. The impact of the recent economic downturn and the government's reform agenda on housing associations is evaluated next. Then I move on to define coaching, mentoring and mergers with reference to this study. I have also considered literature relating to coaching cultures as there is some evidence of coaching culture in the housing associations. The use of coaching and mentoring in housing associations is discussed next. The chapter ends with an outline of potential gaps in the literature and where this study is positioned to make a contribution to knowledge and practice.

2.2 Housing associations

There are over 1,500 housing associations of various sizes in the UK, which manage more than 2.4 million homes (Gulliver et al., 2011). The term 'housing association' was not in common usage until the mid-1930s (Malpass, 2000), when this generic term became

known with the introduction of the Housing Act 1936. The term 'housing association', embraces charitable housing trusts (including almshouse trusts) and 'public utility' housing societies (including housing cooperatives) (Gulliver et al., 2011). The housing association sector in the UK is made up of diverse non-profit making organisations including charities, limited companies and industrial and provident societies (Lam, 2009). In this study I have used Best's (1991) definition of a housing association:

[A] not-for-profit housing provider, which is controlled by a voluntary committee and is constitutionally independent of government (Best, 1991: p. 142).

Many housing associations claim to have deep historical roots (Gulliver et al., 2011) but this history is discontinuous (Malpass, 2000; Gulliver et al., 2011). Malpass (2000) claims that the connection between modern housing associations and their roots in the nineteenth century has been taken for granted rather than supported by evidence. Morris (2001) states that in nineteenth-century England, decent working-class housing was developed by a group of market institutions called model dwellings companies (MDCs). According to Malpass (2000), the Society for Improving the Conditions of the Labouring Classes had built four housing schemes in London between 1925 and 1935, and in the mid-1960s the society had 361 dwellings when it merged with the Peabody Trust. This could be argued to be the first merger of housing associations.

2.3 Development of housing associations

It took over a century for housing associations to develop into their present-day shape and structure. Gulliver et al. (2011) asserted that housing associations were established in four waves:

The first wave (pre-1914): Consisting of 5 per cent philanthropy, voluntary housing organisations, MDCs, co-partnership societies and Octavia Hill-style management philosophies.

The second wave (1920s and 1930s): The foundation of a range of 'front-line' housing societies and trusts under the legal banner of 'public utility societies'. 'Housing society' becomes the term of preference for most, although the term 'housing association' is introduced by the Housing Act 1936.

The third wave (1960s and 1970s): The emergence of new 'social action' associations, which were involved in urban regeneration and received state funding, exemplified by the Housing Act 1974.

The fourth wave (1980s onward): The creation of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) following the stock transfer from local authorities as per the Housing Act 1988.

These waves are reflective of the economic cycle, which impinges on non-profit as well as for-profit organisations (Van Bortel et al., 2010).

In the case of housing associations, large-scale changes to their organisational structure can be seen as transformational. Rafferty and Griffin (2006) described transformational change as a significant shift in the basic aspects of an organisation. They argue that transformational change affects 'core systems, traditional ways of working, values, structure and strategy' in an organisation (p. 1155). A number of housing associations have gone through such transformational change, according to their websites, including: Gateway Housing Association (London), Knightstone Housing Association (Weston-Super-Mare), Orbit Group (Coventry), Sadeh Lok Housing Group (Yorkshire and Humber), St Vincent's Housing Association (Manchester) and Glasgow Housing Association (Glasgow). Wilcox and Perry (2013) highlight the need for transformational change for housing associations to meet the challenges posed by welfare reforms, economic austerity, changes in government policy and financial pressures.

Because of their significant effect on systems, structures and strategies, the mergers of housing associations can be classified as transformational changes. Mergers between housing associations appear to be a common phenomenon. Merrick (2005) observed that in 2005 a large number of housing associations were seeking rule changes to allow them to merge or set up new groups. Following a series of mergers, 95 per cent of the social housing stock is managed by the largest 390 housing associations (Gulliver et al., 2011).

The motives for housing association mergers, according to Merrick (2005), include gaining economies of scale and the ability to influence the national housing agenda by virtue of size. Therefore, the size of housing associations is an important factor in: lobbying and influencing the policy agenda; cost savings; and remaining competitive in a new era. Organic expansions take years, while mergers seem to offer a quick route to obtaining the desired volume and weight.

Housing associations reflect a unique context owing to their constitutional status. Mullins (2010, p. 49) suggests that housing associations could be regarded as the 'distinct uncle' of the third sector in England, because of their experience of forty years of capacity building, struggles around combining public sector delivery while preserving some independence and shifting from charity to social entrepreneurial models. The housing departments of local councils were funded by the tax payers, led by elected councillors and managed by civil servants. In their journey of transition, housing departments were set up as ALMOs (Arm's Length Management Organisations) to provide housing services on behalf of the local councils. These ALMOs were not-for-profit organisations, fully owned by the local councils and operated under the terms of management agreement. However, later on housing associations became independent of the local councils. Housing associations now have diverse boards of directors and some are raising funds on the open market through the issue of bonds, although grant funding from the

government remains an important source of finance. This hybrid financial model places housing associations squarely between the state and the market (Mullins, 2010). Therefore, literature on coaching and mentoring in the public and private sectors will be included in the next chapter.

Pawson and Sosenko (2012: p. 2) note that housing associations are 'reshaping' their organisational status by allying themselves or merging with other similar bodies. They identify three modes of business combinations in the housing sector:

1. The initial establishment or enlargement of a 'group structure' involving two or more previously unrelated housing associations.
2. Two or more – existing but previously unrelated – housing associations come together to form a single entity.
3. A group consolidation – where previously established housing groups are 'collapsed' into a new unitary entity (Pawson and Sosenko, 2012: p. 7).

The definition of a 'housing association merger' in this study incorporates all these three modes of business combinations. A housing association merger is defined as:

An arrangement in which a housing association joins an established housing group, or two or more previously unrelated housing associations form a new housing group, or two or more previously established housing groups collapse into a single housing group.

2.4 Financial pressures on housing associations

The recent economic downturn and changes in government policy appear to have had far-reaching consequences for the housing sector in the UK (Mullins, 2010; Gibb and O’Sullivan, 2010; Robinson, 2012; Wilcox and Perry, 2013). Wilcox and Perry (2013) refer to the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s intention to reduce the fiscal deficit with spending cuts and increased taxation, and they describe the present time as ‘an era of unprecedented spending cuts’ (p. 6). They claim that housing associations are operating in an increasingly difficult environment, as changes in government policy have brought both immediate and long-term challenges. Housing associations are about to see the impact of policy changes and welfare reforms on their income streams, while many tenants fear the impact on their lives and aspirations, according to Wilcox and Perry (2013). The papers discussed below highlight the challenges faced by housing associations at present. This study is based in England, but the papers by Gibb and O’Sullivan (2010) and Gibb (2011) have focused on Scottish housing associations. Even though Scottish housing associations are subject to the devolved housing policy of

the Scottish government, the reduction in grant funding by the UK government has a UK-wide impact; I have therefore included papers by Gibb and O'Sullivan (2010) and Gibb (2011) in this chapter. It is not the intention of this study to examine the motives for housing association mergers. Rather, this section provides the context of circumstances under which housing associations might enter into mergers.

In his article examining the government's reform agenda, Robinson (2012) describes it as a radical programme that will change funding and tenancy arrangements in the social housing sector. Funding for new build has been drastically slashed, and housing associations will be expected to make up the financial shortfall through borrowing. However, landlords will be allowed to charge a higher rent. The affordable rent charged by landlords on new tenancies could be up to 80 per cent of the local market rent. Robinson (2012) raises a concern that the higher rent might be unaffordable to some tenants. Hence, housing associations might experience a reduction in rental income, additional recovery costs and a strain on tenant-landlord relations.

Gibb and O'Sullivan (2010) observe that the funding models in the UK are unsustainable, and as a result of the credit crunch, housing developers are often left with semi-finished properties and unsold homes on their balance sheets. Despite the low risk of lending to social housing, the supply of new finance has largely dried up. So

innovative thinking around new funding models for property development in regeneration areas is required. Some recent policy innovations, according to Gibb and O'Sullivan (2010), include asking housing associations to buy up unsold new homes and expanding shared equity schemes to support first-time buyers. They assert that only the largest and financially strongest housing associations (specifically, RSLs) have sufficient collateral to justify borrowings, or have the ability to raise funds through alternative sources, such as bond issue. The paper did not identify *how* the housing associations could become larger and financially strong enough to benefit from the alternative funding sources suggested by Gibb and O'Sullivan (2010). They do, however, use as an example the alliance of a number of local housing associations in the Scottish Highlands, named The Highlands Housing Alliance, established as a development vehicle to build new, predominantly affordable housing. By virtue of their size, the housing associations within the alliance can collectively secure a housing association grant, whereas individually the housing associations would not qualify in their own right. The model appears to be working in a small part of Scotland, but its applicability across Scotland, never mind across the UK, has not been tested. Nevertheless, this could be the beginning of a new wave of business partnerships.

In a later paper Gibb (2011) critically evaluates the affordable housing policies in Scotland. He acknowledges that Scottish housing policy is devolved, but the wider context remains in large part set by

Her Majesty's Treasury and the UK government (Gibb, 2011: p. 358). As a result of the financial crisis, capital housing grants for Scottish housing associations to spend on new build have been significantly reduced from £67,000 to £40,000 per housing unit. Gibb (2011) questions whether in the wake of reduced grant levels 'housing associations can remain genuinely social in terms of rent levels' (p. 362); as a result of this, the housing association sector appears to be moving into an uncertain future. He predicts that some housing associations would forge partnerships with pension funds or private sector partners, whereas others might inevitably become a target for consolidation or takeover. Gibb (2011) concludes that housing associations are the main 'losers' (p. 365), as they will have to redesign their business models to reflect grant reductions. Even though the paper is written in the Scottish context, it appears to portray an austere picture of the situation in which housing associations in the UK find themselves.

In summary, the studies discussed in this section highlight the potential impact of the economic situation in the UK and the housing-related decisions taken by the present government. It seems that a lack of resources – that is, grants and capital funding for new build – would affect housing officials and their tenants. The ability to influence the housing agenda and to make efficiency savings through economies of scale appears to be driving housing association mergers, as noted in the previous section. Additional financial pressures and the emergence of strategic alliances as discussed in

this section indicate that housing association mergers are expected to continue. Therefore, by exploring the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers and transformational change, this study seeks to inform housing officials as well as coaching and mentoring practitioners. Coaching and mentoring, with reference to this study, are discussed in the next section.

2.5 Coaching and mentoring in context

Coaching

There are various definitions of the coaching process as perceived by different researchers. Grant (2001) points out that the definitions vary in their degree of clarity and succinctness. Joo (2005: p. 468), after reviewing all the definitions in previous literature, defined coaching as 'a process of a one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive (coachee) for the purpose of enhancing the coachee's behavioural change through self-awareness and learning, and thus ultimately for the success of [the] individual and [the] organization'. Hamlin et al. (2008) reviewed empirical literature associated with coaching using a neo-empiricist stance and critical realist ontology. They collated definitions of coaching, mainly taken from two studies carried out by Grant (2001) and Joo (2005), and additional definitions they came across from their own literature research. These definitions differ in terms of the complexity and comprehensiveness of the coaching process. Hamlin et al. (2008) listed thirty-seven coaching definitions, but in my view,

just eight of these definitions capture the breadth of coaching activities such as empowerment, performance enhancement, transformation, self-directed learning and personal growth that are considered relevant for this study. These eight definitions are shown in Table 2.1. As presented by Hamlin et al. (2008), the **bold** refers to the intention and purpose, whereas the *italics* refer to the coaching process.

Table 2.1. Examples of Coaching Definitions Selected from Hamlin et al. (2008).

| Definitions, purposes and <i>processes</i> | Authors |
|---|--------------------------|
| Coaching ... refers to <i>the managerial activity of creating, by communication only, the climate, environment, and context</i> that empowers individuals and teams to generate results. | Evered and Selman (1989) |
| Coaching is a process that enables learning and development to occur and performance to improve. | Parsloe (1995) |
| Coaching is, exclusively, <i>a process</i> focusing on enhanced performance. | Burdett (1998) |
| A coach is a person who <i>facilitates</i> experiential learning that results in future-oriented abilities and who is <i>trained</i> and devoted to <i>guiding</i> others into | Hudson (1999) |

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| increased competence, commitment and confidence. | |
| [Coaching] is a <i>collaborative, individualized relationship</i> between an executive and a coach, the aims of which are to bring about sustained behavioural change and to transform the quality of the executive's working and personal life. | Zeus and Skiffington (2000) |
| [Coaching] is a powerful process that <i>supports</i> people in releasing their true potential and in making changes in their lives. | Richardson (2004) |
| Professional coaching is a theoretically grounded, <i>systematic, goal-directed process</i> designed to <i>facilitate sustained change</i> and foster the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee and is aimed at skills development, performance enhancement and personal development. | Grant and Cavanagh (2004) |
| Professional coaching is an ongoing <i>professional relationship</i> that <i>helps</i> people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses or organizations. It deepens learning to improve performance and enhance quality of life. | International Coach Federation (2007) |

The eight definitions of coaching in Table 2.1 have elements of learning, growth, development and change. I have utilised Grant and Cavanagh's (2004) definition of coaching, as it encapsulates learning, growth, development and change; these arguably might be key elements of coaching within the housing association merger and transformational change context. Therefore, in this study, coaching is defined as:

A goal-directed process designed to facilitate sustained change and foster the ongoing self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee, aimed at skills development, performance enhancement and personal development.

Cavanagh and Grant (2004) broadly categorised it into personal and professional coaching. Personal coaching is also referred to as 'life coaching', which in the literature addresses personal as opposed to professional (work-related) issues (Portnoy, 2006; Yanovski, 2011). Personal coaching studies cover different aspects of life, including maternity coaching (Filsinger, 2012), dietary coaching (Yanovski, 2011), financial / domestic budgeting coaching (Collins and O'Rourke, 2012) and divorce coaching (Portnoy, 2006). Since my study is set in the workplace context, I have focused on professional rather than personal or life coaching literature. Cavanagh and Grant (2004) divided professional coaching in the organisational setting into two categories: executive coaching for senior executives, and workplace coaching for non-executive employees. They claim that

executive coaching focuses on strategic planning and leadership development, whereas workplace coaching aims at skill development and performance improvement. In my view the overall purpose of professional coaching is to develop the coachee's skills in accordance with the requirements of the job. Therefore, I do not see the benefits of differentiating coaching into executive and workplace coaching; all forms of professional coaching are considered relevant in this study. Organisations that integrate coaching into their staff development programmes show their intent of creating a coaching culture.

Coaching culture exists in some housing associations, according to Bentley (2012). A coaching culture is defined by Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005, p.19) as one where, 'coaching is the predominant style of managing and working together, and where a commitment to grow the organisation is embedded in a parallel commitment to grow the people in the organisation'. Chidiac (2013) described this as embedding coaching strategically and rewarding coaching in performance appraisals in organisations. Characteristics of a coaching culture include a belief in human potential and the value of striving to unleash that potential (Rosinski, 2011). Creating a coaching culture may be important but it is a lengthy and gradual process, according to Megginson and Clutterbuck (2005). In the observation of Ralfe (2010), where a coaching culture is present, employees are less resistant to change. This may be because a coaching culture requires an ability to liaise and co-operate with

others who have differing views of the organisation and of the purpose of coaching (Garvey et al, 2009). Additionally, employees have a vested interest in their own success and a passion for shared goals, which is intertwined with the success of the organisation (Ralfe, 2010). Studies about coaching cultures link individual development to corporate success. A coaching culture can improve overall organisational performance by up-skilling and empowering staff (Bentley, 2012).

Coaching cultures in the housing sector were researched by Bentley (2012). In a case study of three housing groups and an industry regulator, Bentley (2012) noted that there was a coaching culture within all three housing groups, namely; Metropolitan, New Charter and Together housing groups, whereas, the industry regulator TSA (Tenant Services Authority) had a mentoring culture. Bentley (2012) concluded that a coaching culture can be used to support staff to learn, grow and maximise their potential, which can make a significant contribution to the development of employees. It can also improve organisational performance by ensuring that employees have appropriate skills, knowledge and experience, according to Bentley (2012). She also stated that a mentoring culture can support individuals during a period of change. Garvey et al (2009) observed that there is widespread interest in creating coaching cultures but less so in creating a mentoring culture. Issues relating to coaching and mentoring cultures within housing associations are an under-researched area.

Mentoring

Mentoring, akin to coaching, is also used in a variety of situations. Following the review of mentoring case studies, Cox (1999) identified three contexts: (1) mentoring in the education sector, for students and newly qualified teachers; (2) mentoring in the private sector, in business and fast-track management schemes; and (3) mentoring in the voluntary sector, including for disadvantaged groups who are not in a work setting. But, more recently, Allen and Eby (2010) assert that the majority of mentoring research has concentrated on three focal points: mentoring for youths, student–faculty mentoring relationships and mentoring within the workplace. However, in the workplace mentoring literature, individuals in ‘blue-collar-type jobs are rarely investigated’, according to Allen and Eby (2010: p. 408). They note that much of the workplace mentoring literature has concentrated on samples consisting of professional and managerial groups of employees. The focus of this study is workplace mentoring, but neither blue- nor white-collar type employee groups are excluded.

Mentoring definitions have been scrutinised, debated and criticised by scholars (Allen and Eby, 2010). Mentoring can be a life-altering relationship (Ragins and Kram, 2007) primarily when directed towards professional development (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005). Garvey (2004) asserts that mentoring is often relevant ‘when learners are making transitions at key points in their lives’ (p. 8), and mentoring may be associated with induction, career and personal

development, career and personal support, and change. The mentoring definition used in this study is borrowed from Ragins and Kram (2007), as follows:

A relationship that inspires mutual growth, learning and development ... with profound and enduring effects ... [and] has the capacity to transform individuals, groups, organisations and communities (Ragins and Kram, 2007: p. 3).

2.6 Coaching and mentoring in the housing sector

There is some evidence that coaching is used by housing associations. Jarvis et al. (2006) provided a brief analysis of thirty-four organisations that introduced coaching and volunteered to share their experiences with the researchers. There are only two housing associations in this list: the Glasgow Housing Association and the Midland Area Housing Association. Coaching is measured and evaluated in both organisations differently.

The Midland Area Housing Association implemented a five-year business plan 'Route Map to Excellence 2003–2008'. In 2005 the Audit Commission, in their independent report, noted that 'over the past two years, the association has completely overhauled its operations to achieve significant operational and cultural change ... [including] rigorous challenge to leadership and systems to drive improvements ... [B]enchmarking with the private sector has brought

a fresh perspective into the workplace ... [and] has excellent prospects for improvement' (Audit Commission, 2005). Midland AHA is now part of the Midland Heart, formed in 2006 following the merger of Keynote Housing Group (based in Coventry) and Prime Focus Housing Group (based in Birmingham). Midland Heart class themselves as one of the UK's leading housing and community investment organisations on their website (see www.midlandheart.org.uk).

The Glasgow Housing Association was considered to be a special case. The majority of tenants voted in favour of transferring housing stock from Glasgow City Council to the Glasgow Housing Association. In their case study, Kearns and Lawson (2008) argue that the Glasgow stock transfer was unique in four respects: (1) the size of the transfer – over 80,000 dwellings, significantly more than any transfer in the UK; (2) the poor condition of the stock – this included a housing debt of circa £900 million, plus £4 billion of public and private housing investment over 30 years; (3) the two-stage transfer – all stock was transferred from Glasgow City Council to the Glasgow Housing Association in the first instance, and then through a second stage transfer to local communities; and (4) the stock transfer was meant to be the Scottish Executive's flagship programme, hence it was considered to have significant political importance.

The impact of coaching on the above-mentioned merged housing associations was not reported separately by Jarvis et al. (2006). The overall results of all thirty-four organisations presented in the report show an overwhelming support for the effectiveness of coaching. A total of 99 per cent of the respondents believed that coaching could deliver benefits both to individuals (coachees) and to the (sponsoring) organisation, and 96 per cent believed coaching to be an effective way to promote learning in organisations. The political and financial challenges faced by the Glasgow Housing Association, as noted by Kearns and Lawson (2008), and the operational and cultural change in the Midland Area Housing Association, reported by the Audit Commission (2005), indicate that housing associations can benefit from coaching. In these particular cases, one housing association that had chosen coaching had an ambitious agenda for organisational excellence, while the other one was faced with complex organisational and political challenges. Both organisations had experienced transformational changes, which in one case had resulted from a merger. It is not clear how far these circumstances might be true of other housing associations utilising coaching.

There is some indication that coaching can be used for the training and development of housing officials. In an exploratory research paper, Ward and Preece (2012) assert that housing leaders have experienced a transition from working in the public sector to working in the third sector. They explored the training and development of housing sector leaders using case study methodology. The study

was based in the north-east of England and the participants were the senior managers – from heads of department to the chief executive officer – of an organisation that had gone through a restructure in 2010, where the training policy was driven by the organisational restructuring. The organisation had a specific training budget and encouraged employees to enhance their qualifications through accredited routes. Some participants referred to the importance of coaching, according to Ward and Preece (2012), especially the fact that senior managers had the flexibility to choose coaching as part of their development.

Mentoring in the housing sector is not a new phenomenon. Since October 2005 the Housing Diversity Network (HDN) has been providing mentoring in the housing sector. The initial mentoring focus of the programme was to address the lack of career opportunities for black and minority ethnic (BME) people within the housing sector. The scope of the mentoring programme has been widened to include all under-represented staff working in the housing sector (HDN website). Along with mentoring, the network also runs a variety of training and consultancy initiatives, and has recently launched a mentoring programme for non-executive board members. The mentoring programme relevant to this study is run under the banner of the Middle Managers Mentoring Programme. As the name suggests, the programme is focused on developing managers by matching them with ‘experienced leaders in the housing sector’ (HDN website), who act as mentors. The HDN runs this mentoring initiative

in conjunction with the Chartered Institute of Housing, and seems to be the only publicly available evidence that suggests that mentoring is used in housing associations to address the developmental needs of under-represented groups. This study attempts to address this gap in the literature.

2.7 Conclusion

The conception and evolution of housing associations is an interesting area. Social values, legislation and economic factors played an important part in the establishment and development of housing associations, but present-day housing associations seem to find themselves in a challenging situation. On the one hand there is pride in showcasing their historical roots, but on the other hand there is pressure to merge with other housing associations to become bigger and to influence the future of housing associations.

A combination of financial pressures – including a reduction in grant funding from the government and a potential loss of rental income from tenants because of changes in legislation – is bringing small housing associations and disparate partners, such as pension funds, together. Business partnerships, strategic alliances and mergers are becoming commonly used vehicles for housing associations to stay competitive in the market.

There is an indication of the existence of a coaching culture in some housing associations. Coaching was successfully used by at least

two housing associations that went through transformational change. In the case of the Glasgow Housing Association, the aim was to transfer stock to local communities, whereas the Midland Affordable Housing Association later merged with another housing group. There is no empirical evidence of mentoring in housing associations other than the HDN mentoring. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the coaching and mentoring literature in the context of housing association mergers and transformational changes.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF COACHING AND MENTORING

3.1 Introduction

In addition to the diversity of coaching and mentoring fields discussed in Chapter 2, the literature also shows that there are different, sometimes contradictory descriptions of these fields. Therefore, I start by discussing how coaching and mentoring are perceived by different scholars and practitioners from within the coaching and mentoring fields in order to explore the existing literature and to highlight the contradictions. Several theories including career development theory, social network theory, human capital theory and adult learning theory from related disciplines – such as economics, psychology, philosophy, leadership and management – that underpin coaching and mentoring fields are also critically evaluated in Section 3.2. Changes in housing associations as a result of a merger or restructure are identified as transformational, in the light of organisational change literature, in Section 3.3. The impact of human factors such as fear, stress and anxiety on the success or failure of organisational changes is also discussed in the same section.

Some scholars, for example, Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) and Grant (2013), have examined the effect of coaching on organisational

change-related stress. The findings of these studies are explored in Section 3.4 to establish the applicability of such findings to transformational changes and housing association mergers. The gaps and inconsistencies in this area of literature are also noted.

Transformational change requires learning, development and reflection on the individual's part to understand the desirability, acceptability and readiness for change. Therefore workplace learning theories such as social learning theory, adult transformational learning theory and adult development theory are also included in this chapter.

Since the aim of this study is to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in the context of housing association mergers and transformational changes, the studies that examine the effectiveness of coaching are evaluated in Section 3.5, and the effectiveness of mentoring is the subject of Section 3.6. During the field research (data collection), I found out that some housing associations are using team coaching as part of transformational change or post-merger team integration, hence literature on team coaching is also included in Section 3.5. The chapter concludes with a summary of gaps in the literature.

3.2. Theoretical base of coaching and mentoring fields

In the previous chapter, I discussed the use of coaching and mentoring in housing associations. Here, I move on to the theoretical

debate about coaching and mentoring. There are various definitions and criteria used by different authors and practitioners to describe and distinguish coaching and mentoring. While collecting data for this study, it became apparent that some participants were not clear about the distinction between coaching and mentoring, and they used the terms loosely. I feel this lack of clarity has to be highlighted in the literature review for two reasons: (1) a clear distinction is vital for coaching and mentoring to become established and theoretically informed fields; and (2) clarity from the respondents' perspective is important for a better understanding of the findings, and to ascertain the impact of coaching or mentoring within housing associations.

Coaching and mentoring are classed as different fields based on theory and practice by some authors (for example, Ehrich et al., 2001; Bresser and Wilson, 2010; Rogers, 2012). Grant and Cavanagh (2004) claim that coaching is theoretically grounded and systematic, while Hezlett and Gibson (2005) argue that mentoring research, theory and practice has a solid foundation. Rogers (2012: p. 1) asserts that 'the terminology of mentoring and coaching in the literature has been confused or remains confusing'. Kram and Isabella (1985) include coaching as one of the mentoring interventions. They argue that mentoring provides career-enhancing functions, such as sponsorship, coaching and facilitating exposure and visibility to help young people establish a role, learn the ropes and prepare for advancement. Meanwhile, Lord et al. (2008: p. 12) acknowledge conceptual differences between coaching and

mentoring, but argue that the 'overall ingredients of mentoring and coaching are reasonably similar'. However, while Bresser and Wilson (2010) agree about the similarities, they highlight 'fundamental differences' between the roles of a coach and a mentor (p. 22). They assert that a mentor has experience in a particular field and imparts specific knowledge, acting as advisor, counsellor, guide, tutor or teacher. In contrast, the coach's role is not to advise but to assist coachees in uncovering their own knowledge and skills and to facilitate coachees in becoming their own advisors. More recently, Rogers (2012) has observed a coaching and mentoring role reversal. She claims:

Academics have tended to position coaching as an activity which aims at performance only, meaning a minor adjustment to behaviour, whereas they have linked mentoring to a transformational learning outcome, where the learner experiences a total change in how they view the world. However, the recent expansion of coaching as a developmental method insists that coaching aims at transformation as a learning outcome, and mentors are simply company advisors or even inexpensive tutors (Rogers, 2012: p. 1).

It appears that in Roger's observation, ultimately the term 'mentoring' has been diluted from a transformational activity to cheap tutoring, whereas 'coaching' has established itself from one of the mentoring

interventions to a developmental method for transformation and learning. Regardless of this shift in perception, both coaching and mentoring seem to have become popular developmental interventions. Because of their increasing popularity, other professions related to coaching and mentoring, such as counselling, training and human resources development, are 'trying to stake out the territory with definitions, rules and practices based on its own particular perspectives and interests' (Clutterbuck, 2008: p. 8). Kram and Isabella (1985) found common attributes between mentoring and peer relationships. They assert that in a hierarchical organisation the individual is likely to have more peers than bosses or mentors. Kram and Isabella (1985: p. 128) identified peer relationships to be in the categories of 'information peer, collegial peer and special peer'. They argue that both mentoring and peer relationships have the potential to support development at successive career stages, and both provide a range of career-enhancing and psychological functions. Garvey (2004: p. 6) asserts that counselling, in addition to coaching and mentoring, assists people to learn and develop; he refers to the phenomenon as 'helping'. Coaching and mentoring 'appear in different guises' according to Lord et al. (2008: p. 9), while Hamlin et al. (2008), in their comparative study, concluded that human resource development and coaching are virtually the same. The above shows that there may be a vested interest in keeping the definitions inconclusive and boundaries blurred in an attempt to cash in on the success of coaching and mentoring.

Coaching and mentoring do not seem to have established a theoretical base yet. This paucity of coaching and mentoring theories has been acknowledged by a number of authors, such as Cavanagh and Grant (2005), Cox (2006), Rogers (2012) and Gloss (2013). The absence of a theoretical base in coaching is related to the lack of critical evaluation of commercially sensitive coaching models, which are 'rigorously guarded', according to Cavanagh and Grant (2005: p. vi). They state:

... good theories [of coaching] are frustratingly hard to come by ... [and] creating good theory is a dialectical process. It involves repeated processes of construction and testing followed by more construction and more testing ... [T]here is a multitude of relatively untested proprietary coaching models in the market place ... which are ultimately supported by little more than anecdotal evidence, personal conviction and blind optimism (Cavanagh and Grant, 2005: pp. vi, vii).

Although lacking a theoretical base of their own, the coaching and mentoring fields have been informed by a broad base of related disciplines with an established theoretical grounding: for instance, adult learning (Cox, 2006), psychodynamics and organisational theory (Orenstein, 2007), psychology and psychotherapy (Rogers, 2012). Grant (2005) suggests that coaching practices are underpinned by four key knowledge domains: the behavioural

sciences; business and economic science; adult education, including workplace learning and development; and philosophy.

In contrast, mentoring has benefitted from other areas. In their analysis, Ehrich et al. (2001) found that mentoring is underpinned by a range of theoretical perspectives. They examined the database of 151 business studies conducted between 1986 and 2000 and found fifty-three articles supported by at least one theoretical perspective. They put these theoretical perspectives into nine categories: economics, developmental theories, the authors' own theory, the selection process of mentoring, theories related to power, leadership/management theory, learning theory, theories related to organisational structure/socialisation, and networks and theories related to interpersonal relationships (Ehrich et al., 2001). Learning and development in these theories involves a change in an individual's knowledge, and in his or her ability to perform a skill or participate in an activity with other individuals. There are variations among these theories about the nature of change, as a result of learning and development. However, transformative change through reflection seems to be the bedrock of adult learning theories, as identified by Mezirow (1991). Reflection is a central process of transformative learning, which 'may result in transformation' (Mezirow, 1991: p. 6). The self-reflection supported by coaching and mentoring can result in 'heightened self-awareness, self-acceptance, increased self-discovery, self-confidence, self-expression, better communication and problem-solving skills' (Griffiths, 2005: p. 57).

The ability to think critically, reflect on ones' own assumptions and to 'change the frame of reference' is considered vital by Gloss (2013: p. 5) for personal learning and growth. Cox (2006) describes this process as 'personal transformation' (p. 197) and asserts that personal transformation usually begins with a disorientating dilemma, and the process includes critical reflection, self-examination, and a reorientation that results in revised action and deep learning. The theory of adult transformational learning is grounded in the concept of individual and personal learning and growth, according to Gloss (2013), and it focuses on changes in the perspectives of individuals (Henderson, 2002). The terms 'transformative learning' and 'transformational learning' are used interchangeably in the literature. Gloss (2013) claims that transformative learning can only occur when individuals have the capacity to be critically self-reflective and to exercise reflective judgement. Self-reflection promotes awareness, clarifies thinking, generates insights, facilitates new learning and promotes individual development (Zachary, 2005). Coaching and mentoring are utilised to enhance reflection (Grant, 2001; Griffiths, 2005).

To summarise this section, coaching and mentoring can mean different things to different people in different fields and practices, based on their own understanding and interpretation. It is not the aim of this study to settle the coaching and mentoring debate, but to report the role of coaching and mentoring within housing association mergers and transformational change. However, by noting how

coaching and mentoring are perceived by different scholars and practitioners from varied milieu, the diversity of these fields is emphasised. In the absence of an established theoretical base, coaching and mentoring studies have benefitted from a range of related disciplines, including adult transformational learning, career development, psychology, psychodynamics, philosophy, leadership and management. Workplace theories relating to social learning, personal and professional development, social capital and organisational change also play a role in the theoretical underpinning of coaching and mentoring.

3.3 Transformational change

Since mergers and acquisitions can readily change the nature and character of the organisations in question, they can be usefully conceived as a form of organisational transformation (Buono and Bowditch, 2003). Changes in housing associations following the merger or restructure seem to have transformational dimensions, and it is therefore important to explore the literature on transformational change. Transformation is described as a 'chameleon-like term' by Tosey and Robinson (2002: p. 20). The term 'transformation' appears to be freely used in the organisational change literature to describe, for instance: a change in the shape, structure and nature of something (Tosey and Robinson, 2002); downsizing and de-layering (Worrall et al., 1998); an infrequent, rapid and large change (Jarrett, 2003); a change in dominant ideologies, cultural systems of meaning

and power relations in an organisation (Pettigrew, 1987); and a revolutionary change, affecting the whole organisation at once (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996).

Tosey and Robinson (2002) observed that in the organisational change literature, the transformation is 'often posed as an imperative, a necessity for survival and the only alternative to corporate oblivion' (p. 3). Transformation is commonly related to organisational change, and organisations are under intense pressure to change, according to Henderson (2002). Housing associations are required to be more efficient, compete for grants and undertake complex regeneration projects for community development (Lam, 2009). Because of these budgetary pressures, Gibb (2011) warns that housing associations seem to be moving into an uncertain future and have 'no option but to significantly redesign their business model' (p. 365). According to Chapman (2002), transformational change is unavoidable in many organisations operating in a turbulent environment.

Transformational change has been linked to the learning systems of organisations. Argyris and Schön (1978) argue that single-loop learning tends to be present when goals, values and frameworks are taken for granted, with the emphasis being on 'techniques and making techniques more efficient'. Double-loop learning, on the other hand, involves questioning the role of the framing and learning systems that underlie actual goals and strategies.

Transformational change as a process of altering behaviours stems predominantly from the fields of psychology and adult education. The transtheoretical model presented by Prochaska et al (1994) consists of distinct cognitive-behavioural indicators. Prochaska et al (1994, p. 25) define the change process as, 'any activity that you initiate to help modify your thinking, feeling or behaviour'. The process can include coping activities, Gestalt techniques, psychodrama and psychotherapeutic interventions.

Transformational learning theory, according to Mezirow (1991) explains how adults interpret life experiences, make meanings, and change a belief, an attitude or an entire perspective. The theory focuses on how habitual expectations influence learning and how reflection transforms them. Therefore, transformational learning can lead to transformational change.

Both the transformational change process and transformational learning theory offer schemes of learning, changing, and growing for people seeking to make meaningful, life-transforming changes. In his comparative analysis, Moore (2005) concluded that 'transformational learning theory appears more integrative of cognitive, emotive, behavioural, and conative facets in the transformative learning process' (p. 407). The difference between transformational change and transformational learning is the focus, according to Henderson (2002), as the former focuses on changing the whole organisation whereas, the latter focuses on changing the perspective of

individuals through the process of critical reflection. So, transformation is a radical shift in thinking, perception and behaviour. Transformational change is the process of altering the basic elements of an organisation's culture and transformational learning is the process through which transformational change happens.

There is a substantial body of literature covering transformational change models, such as Lewin's (1951) three-step change model, Beckhard's (1969) change programme, Kotter's (1996) eight-step model for transformational change, and Latta's (2009) OC³ model of organisational change. Similarities and differences between these change models are presented in table 3.1 below. The recent models have included additional steps to reflect changing organisational structures and to incorporate organisational culture, even though the concepts introduced by Lewin (1951): unfreezing the current situation, changing and refreezing the new status quo seem to form basis of these models.

Table 3.1. Similarities and differences between change models

| Lewin (1951) 3-Step model | Beckhard (1969) Change programme | Kotter (1996) 8-Step change model | Latta (2009) OC ³ model of organisational change |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Unfreezing | Analysing present condition | Sense of urgency Create guiding coalition | Cultural analysis of readiness Shaping vision |
| Changing | Setting goals for future Plan of action | Develop vision and strategy Communicate the vision Empower employees Generate short term wins | Informing change initiatives Reflecting culture in implementation Embodying cultural intent Cultural mediation of implementation |
| Refreezing | Implementing the plan | Improve on the changes Institutionalise new approaches | Moderating outcomes of change Documenting collateral effects |

The drawbacks of the transformational change models are pointed out by some scholars, such as: Burnes (1996), Cinite et al (2009), and D'Ortenzio (2012). These models are based on the assumption that organisations operate under stable conditions and can move from one stable state to another in a planned manner, therefore might not be useful in turbulent business environments. In his critical analysis, D'Ortenzio (2012) asserted that Lewin's model ignores the role of power and politics; and appears too simplistic and mechanistic. For Kotter's model to be successful, all of the eight stages must be worked through in order; skipping even a single step could be problematic; and the model could be seen as a checklist rather than a process, as intended by Kotter.

Anderson and Anderson (2011) in their change process model for leading conscious transformation, suggest that all organisational change requires attention to three central areas: content, people, and process. They argue that being responsive to change is not enough and the companies and their employees must be proactive and prepare for future changes. The content of change is 'what' is going to change, including structure, systems, and products. 'People' refers to the human side of change, while 'process' refers to how the content and people changes will be planned and implemented (Anderson & Anderson 2011).

The first phase of Anderson and Anderson's (2011) model is initiated with the assumption that a consensus exists in the organisation that

there is a need for change. D'Ortenzio (2012) warns that employees might not accept change, if they see no reason for it. Even if the need for change is identified and agreed upon, it is almost impossible to have a homogeneous approach to the process, pace and practical implications of change. The model does not include any form of external intervention. The learning comes from breakthroughs, cross-training and shared best practices from within the organisation. Emotional aspects of change such as anxiety, stress and fear appear to have been overlooked in the rather simplistic assumption of cross-training and shared best practices during a transformational change. The evidence base of Anderson and Anderson's (2011) model is limited to their own observations and experiences and the model does not seem to take into consideration vital human factors, for instance distrust, apathy, fear and anxiety. The change models presented in table 3.1, particularly the latter ones, show more appreciation for human and cultural factors.

Transformational change models do not seem to take into consideration the transformative learning of staff during the process of change in the organisational context. The focal point of these transformational change models appears to be the management of staff rather than the development of staff. Additionally, these models are directed at organisations in need of change but otherwise operating in a stable environment, which is not the case with housing associations. In contrast, some transformational change models focus on transformation through learning. But these models focus on

the learning of students in an educational environment and change in the form of learning (Batson, 2011). These models lack an important element: the workplace context.

Transformational change is extremely difficult (Cinite et al., 2009; Faghihi and Allameh, 2012; Jansson, 2013), and the successful implementation of change is one of the most challenging activities (Kuntz and Gomes, 2012). Approximately 70 per cent of recently implemented change programmes resulted in failure, according to some scholars (Cinite et al., 2009; Jansson, 2013; Kuntz and Gomes, 2012). In their studies of Canadian (Cinite et al., 2009) and Iranian (Faghihi and Allameh, 2012) public-sector organisations, the authors found that the competence and commitment of the change agents and the level of participation in the change process by the employees determined the success or failure of the transformational change.

The link between successful organisational change and the perspectives of employees on the effectiveness and desirability of management actions has been neglected, according to Cinite et al. (2009). They observed that an organisation is not considered ready for change by the employees in cases where the employees are not provided with a vision for change, the reasons behind the change or the expected outcomes and benefits of the transformational change. Jansson (2013), in her critical analysis, challenged the taken-for-granted 'mundane assumptions' (p. 1003) in the organisational

change literature. She argues that certain elements (such as universal patterns and assumptions about resistance to change) particular to one organisation should not be universally applied to all organisational change situations. Readiness for change is an individual-level phenomenon; at an earlier stage of change implementation, positive attitudes towards change are fostered by organisation-wide communication, whereas, at a later stage, these attitudes are drawn out with an individual-level approach (Kuntz and Gomes, 2013). For an organisational change to succeed, individuals need a proper vision and ideas about outcomes, and have to learn and develop new behaviours to comply with change requirements.

Similar to the transformational change failures discussed above, merger failures were the subject of quite a number of studies, including Chatterjee et al. (1992), Weston and Weaver (2001), Weber and Camerer (2003) and Brahma (2003). Nguyen and Kleiner (2003) define merger failure as: lowered productivity, labour unrest, higher absenteeism, loss of shareholder value, and in some cases the dissolution of the partnership. According to William (2005), statistics show that approximately 50 per cent of all mergers and acquisitions fail to achieve the intended results. The potential causes of merger failure include: agency problems, optimism and a conflict of interest between the employees in the two merged firms. The failure rate of merged firms in creating value and meeting their desired financial or strategic objectives is even higher according to recent studies. Marks and Mirvis (2010) point out that roughly 70–75

per cent of corporate partnerships failed, whereas the failure rate as per Christensen et al. (2011) is 80–90 per cent. Cultural incompatibility has been commonly associated with merger failures by a number of scholars, including Buono and Bowditch (2003), Cartwright et al. (2007) and Marks and Mirvis (2010). To date, there is no empirical evidence about the dissolution rate of housing association mergers.

Human factors, such as acceptance of and readiness for change at the individual level, conflict of interest and cultural incompatibility, are the key attributes of the success or failure of a merger or transformational change, according to the above-mentioned studies. Kiefer (2002) argues that emotions help individuals to adapt to difficult situations and drive behaviours, and they constitute the construction of the individual and social meaning of the change process. The human factors that might have an impact on the success or failure of mergers are noted by Mirc (2013) as being psychological, cultural and managerial. Seo and Hill (2005) identify six theories that give an insight into the reasons for mergers and acquisitions failures: anxiety theory, social identity theory, organisational justice theory, role conflict theory, job characteristic theory and acculturation theory. They argue that large-scale organisational change as a result of a merger or acquisition can be a 'significant source of anxiety' (Ibid.: p. 424). The anxiety is likely to be caused by the uncertainty and anticipated negative impact on the individual's career. Marks and Mirvis (1997) warn that a lack of

communication from senior executives will amplify stress and anxiety. In a recent study, Grant (2013) also observed stress and anxiety during an organisational change.

In sum, transformational change and mergers seem to give rise to anxiety, perceived uncertainty and stress. These human factors play a role in the success or failure of a transformational change or merger. In the next section, studies discussing the use of coaching and mentoring to deal with human factors in organisational change contexts are evaluated.

3.4 Organisational change-related stress and the impact of coaching

In her study of the merger between two higher education institutions, Arthur (2010) asserted that mergers represent a complex change. Lam (2010) acknowledges resistance to change because of fear or uncertainty and complexity, especially with the loss of a job arising from mergers between organisations. He suggests that change management should include counselling, support and training. Kiefer (2002) describes organisational changes, especially mergers as 'emotive events', in which emotions emerge from change processes and are inseparably linked with organisational action (p. 39). In her analysis of the merger and organisational change literature, Kiefer put (negative) emotions into three groups: (1) stress, fear, anxiety and insecurity because of the uncertainty; (2) anger and loss of trust following staff redundancies; and (3) resistance to change, which

Kiefer (2002: p. 41) classed as 'irrational emotions' due to a lack of understanding of the implications of change. She warns against the stereotypical negativity attached to emotions during change and argues that people can experience a range of positive and negative emotions. The positive emotions noted by Kiefer (2002) include: curiosity, enthusiasm, pride, security, trust and hope. But the emphasis in the organisational change literature appears to be on negative emotions, and stress in particular (Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005; Dahl, 2011; Grant, 2013).

There is a small but growing body of knowledge that examines the effect of workplace coaching on stress. Describing the impact of organisational change, restructuring and mergers on employees, Grant (2013: p. 5) noted:

Organisational changes typically create stress for employees and managers as they re-calibrate their working practices in response to a shifting and turbulent corporate landscape whilst simultaneously striving to achieve their designated organisational goal.

In their randomised controlled study of Australian public health workers, Grant et al. (2009) found that coaching helps increase self-confidence and personal insight, which helps participants to deal with organisational change. Their findings indicate that coaching enhances goal attainment, increases resilience and workplace well-being and reduces depression and stress.

Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) conducted a quasi-experimental study about the impact of workplace coaching on stress in the UK finance sector. They used the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS). Both the control and coaching groups reported similar levels of depression, stress and anxiety at the baseline test. Their findings were inconclusive after coaching, as the level of depression, stress and anxiety did not decrease significantly more in the coaching group compared with the control group. But in a follow-on qualitative study of the UK finance sector and the Scandinavian telecommunications sector, Gyllensten and Palmer (2006) found that coaching indirectly helps to reduce workplace stress. They reported that coaching helps participants by reducing role ambiguity, improving confidence and enhancing assertiveness. All these factors indirectly reduce workplace stress. Rather interestingly, Gyllensten and Palmer (2006) noted that some participants found coaching to be a cause of stress. Some participants found coaching to be a 'waste of time', 'unproductive' and causing stress by 'focusing on the problems' (p. 94). Arthur (2010) asserts that individuals have different feelings and they respond in different ways to change. Nevertheless, Gyllensten and Palmer (2006) suggest that organisations that are planning major changes might benefit from coaching to help employees through the period of change.

However, the recent study by Grant (2013), to which I referred above, was inconclusive. He conducted an international study of executives and senior and middle managers who were working for a global

company. A coaching programme was designed to equip the participants to effectively lead their organisations and staff through a period of substantial organisational change. The participants received additional support from internal mentors throughout the coaching programme. The findings show that the coaching significantly increased the participants' goal attainment, solution-focused thinking and readiness for change. Participation in the programme also significantly reduced depression. However, the study did not find any significant differences between pre-coaching and post-coaching scores for stress, anxiety or workplace satisfaction. In contrast, the qualitative part of the same study indicated that coaching can be beneficial in times of organisational change. The similarities between the studies by Gyllensten and Palmer (2005; 2006) and Grant (2013), which were conducted in different contexts, are noteworthy. The quantitative parts of these studies are inconclusive, whereas the qualitative parts indicate the usefulness of coaching during an organisational change.

In sum, the role of workplace coaching in managing stress caused by organisational changes seems to be drawing the attention of some scholars. However, the studies discussed in this section were conducted in an international context, and the variations in the findings of the quantitative and qualitative parts of the studies are notable, which highlight the need for further research in this area.

3.5 Effectiveness of coaching

The effectiveness of coaching is an ongoing theme of debate in the field of personal and workplace coaching. Wales (2003) asserts that coaching at work would lead to enhanced confidence, enabling the coachee to deal effectively with issues both at work and at home. However, as noted in Chapter 2, the focus of this study is on workplace coaching, hence only studies relating to the effectiveness of coaching in the workplace context are discussed here. Additionally, team coaching appears to play an important part in housing association mergers and transformational change, and is one of the areas highlighted in the data I gathered. Therefore, studies exploring the effectiveness of team coaching are also evaluated in this section.

A number of claims about the effectiveness of coaching are identified by Blackman (2007). She suggests that some of these claims are supported by evidence, whereas others made by the coaching industry lack empirical evidence. The claims about the effectiveness of coaching, along with the empirical evidence, are laid out in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Claims made about coaching adapted from Blackman (2007).

| Claim | Supported by Research | Empirical Studies |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| Helps to achieve goals | Yes | Smither et al. (2003) |
| Increases skill levels | Yes | Wales (2003) |
| Modifies behaviours | Yes | Graham et al. (1993); Wales (2003); Wasylyshyn (2003); Wasylyshyn et al. (2006) |
| Improves/establishes work–life balance | Yes | Gegner (1997) |
| Improves effectiveness of organisation or team | Yes | Olivero et al. (1997); Wales (2003) |
| Improves/advances career development | Yes | Wales (2003) |
| Improves self-awareness | Yes | Wales (2003) |
| Increases confidence | Yes | Wales (2003) |
| Helps to develop relationships | Yes | Graham et al. (1993) |
| Increases job satisfaction | Yes | Olivero et al. (1997) |
| Benefits the organisation | Yes | Olivero et al. (1997) |
| Increases productivity | Yes | Olivero et al. (1997) |
| Can be used as a support mechanism for other training programmes | Yes | Wales (2003) |

| | | |
|---|-----|----------------------|
| Establishes better communication | Yes | Graham et al. (1993) |
| Improves psychological and social competencies | No | |
| Creates improvements in interpersonal dynamics | No | |
| Improves ability to adapt to change more effectively | No | |
| Achieves a higher level of motivation | No | |
| Improves ability to deal with stressful situations more effectively | No | |

Out of the nineteen claims made by the coaching industry, no empirical evidence is afforded to support the last five claims listed in Table 3.1. The following five claims (highlighted in Table 3.1) are supported by one empirical study by Wales (2003): (1) increases skill levels, (2) improves/advances career development, (3) improves self-awareness, (4) increases confidence, and (5) can be used as a support mechanism for other training programmes. However, I note certain limitations in the study by Wales (2003), which seem to have been overlooked by Blackman (2007). These limitations, which are not acknowledged by Wales, include: (1) she reported on her own coaching, (2) the data collected is self-reported, (3) the study was intended to justify a lucrative 416 hours of coaching, and (4) there is

little resemblance between the coaching remit, the research objectives and the research findings. Wales (2003) coached the head of sales and marketing and fifteen managers, soon after the restructure of a major UK clearing bank. The data was collected through a self-reporting questionnaire sent to the managers, and a phenomenological approach for data analysis was used. Wales was tasked with coaching the managers, and in her words 'the brief was to provide coaching and support the managers during transition, encourage the acquisition of a new paradigm of management skills, develop effective teams and assist the managers in developing behaviours and strategies to deal more effectively with their boss' (Wales, 2003: p. 276). Every manager had received one hour's coaching every fortnight for over a year (twenty-six hours of coaching per manager) when the study was conducted. Therefore, in my opinion the findings should be viewed as tentative. So, essentially, ten out of the nineteen claims about the effectiveness of coaching have no or questionable empirical support.

Some scholars, such as Ellinger et al. (2003), Luecke and Ibarra (2004), Heslin et al. (2009) and Robinson-Walker (2012), note that coaching has been linked to performance management. Ellinger et al. (2003) argued that coaching had traditionally been perceived as a remedy for poor performance and as an approach that linked individual effectiveness with organisational performance. Some would argue that deeply held beliefs and behaviours inhibit performance (Toit, 2007), and that performance deficiencies should

be addressed by remedial action using performance coaching (Luecke and Ibarra, 2004; Heslin et al., 2009). Grant and Cavanagh (2004) described the focus of performance coaching on the processes by which the coachee can set goals, overcome obstacles, and evaluate and monitor his or her own performance. However, Peterson (2009) argued this to be an ad hoc and reactive approach to coaching, which is aimed at accomplishing the line manager's or the organisation's goals, as opposed to those of the coachee.

In a recent study, Robinson-Walker (2012) noted that most health care and nurse leaders in the United States still viewed coaching as a code for 'an intervention for poor performance' (p. 12). Studies by Luecke and Ibarra (2004) and Heslin et al. (2009) indicate a link between underperformance and coaching. Luecke and Ibarra (2004: p. xi) describe coaching as the 'bi-product of performance appraisal'. Smither and London (2009) noted that performance appraisal, where an employee's performance is usually evaluated once a year, has been replaced by performance management, where performance is evaluated on an ongoing basis. They suggest that coaching forms part of performance management in terms of setting and aligning goals and developing employees. In contrast, the term 'performance management' is used by Peterson (2009) to refer to a means of dealing with underperformance. He uses the term 'developmental coaching' for what London and Smithers (2009) called performance management. The terms 'performance management' and 'performance coaching' seem to be used to monitor performance as

well as to deal with underperformance. So the confusion about coaching and mentoring terminology, noted earlier in Section 3.2, also extends to different forms of coaching.

The effectiveness of team coaching is explored by some scholars, such as Hackman and Wageman (2005), Kozlowski et al. (2009) and Haug (2011). The theory of dynamic team leadership by Kozlowski et al. (2009) states that repeated interactions allow team members to support one another, build trust, and generate a shared mental model of team processes. But to achieve optimal levels of performance, Morgeson et al. (2010) point out that teams ought to have adequate skills and capabilities. In their model of team coaching, Hackman and Wageman (2005) suggest that coaching interventions that focus on team effort will facilitate team effectiveness more than interventions that focus on each member's interpersonal relationships. In contrast, in her empirical study Haug (2011) found that within the team agenda there are hidden agendas specific to the individual team members. 'Each of the team members unconsciously followed an individual objective from the very beginning, even though they consciously shared one mutual team objective' (Haug, 2011: p. 96). She warns that team dynamics can lead to ineffective and destructive behaviour. Haug complemented her team coaching with one-to-one coaching sessions and observed that one-to-one sessions contribute in building trust between the coach and the coachee. That trusting atmosphere is important for discussing issues 'that would not have been mentioned in official

team meetings' (Haug, 2011: p. 93). Therefore, team coaching may enhance team effectiveness, but only within the constraint that without one-to-one coaching, individual aims and relationships may remain hidden.

3.6 Effectiveness of mentoring

Mentoring is a developing phenomenon and mentoring arrangements can be found in many aspects of life including the voluntary, public and not-for-profit sectors (Garvey and Alred, 2000). A growing body of academic and practitioner literature supports the 'popular perception [that] mentoring offers considerable value to individuals and organizations' according to Hezlett and Gibson (2005: p. 446). They conducted a thorough review of past theories, research and practices on mentoring through the lens of human resources development, and noted that recent research and theory-building efforts highlight the potential importance of the role of learning in mentoring relationships. Hezlett and Gibson (2005) assert that it is important for human resources departments to integrate mentoring with other organisational initiatives to ensure the strategic alignment of programmes and practices. Mentoring is widely used in the not-for-profit sector in the UK, including teaching, nursing, social work (Oliver and Aggleton, 2002) and local government (Lord et al., 2008). As the focus of this study is specific to mentoring in mergers and transformational change within the workplace context, other

mentoring studies, such as youth mentoring and student–faculty mentoring are not explored in this chapter.

Mentoring is ‘more readily available as an antidote to stress than previously considered’ (Kram and Hall, 1989: p. 493). Mentoring relationships, according to Kram and Hall (1989), are perceived as more desirable during times of workplace stress resulting from corporate downsizing. Siegel (2000) asserts that during mergers and other changes, organisations use fewer resources ‘while expecting employees to assume more responsibilities and wider ranges of tasks’ (p. 243). In a study of the merger between two accountancy firms, Siegel (2000) concluded that peer relationships strengthen personal adjustment during periods of stress due to merger and restructuring. He suggests that peer relationships do not remove stress but do mitigate it. Siegel (2000) further asserts that mentoring in a changing organisational environment provides opportunities for professional growth, and should be provided for all career groups.

In their empirical study, Chen and Krauskopf (2013) conclude that in mentoring, the mentors have a dual role of providing professional and social support in non-profit mergers. They highlight the role of mentoring in bridging different network ties in the merged organisations. Chen and Krauskopf (2013) argue that mentoring can act as a bridge to integrate formal workflow and problem-solving networks with informal networks of friendship and socioemotional support. They suggest that ‘matching employees across prior

organisational affiliations in the mentoring programmes will increase employees' comfort with seeking, and their likelihood of receiving, valuable support from their mentors' (p. 341).

Traditional mentoring relationships involve a mentor and a protégé who are bound together by close ties, engaging in an exchange that involves both career-related and psychosocial resources (Baugh and Fagenson-Eland, 2005). In an exploratory study of two service companies that were going through a merger, Baugh and Fagenson-Eland (2005) found that the protégés who were mentored internally received more career and psychological support from their mentors. However, they suggest that external mentoring can lead to more independence and greater career self-efficacy, which is important in changing organisational circumstances such as mergers.

Dymock (1999) found that in a structured mentoring programme, mentors benefit from improved self-organisation and networking opportunities. He conducted a case study of a major Australian company, which utilises mentoring as part of its leadership training for potential supervisors. The course was in-house, part-time, over ten months. The benefits of this programme for mentees included 'a broader understanding of the company's policies and place in the business world, an appreciation of how management principles might apply in practice, increased knowledge specific to their work areas; and less tangible benefits such as improved self-organisation, and opportunities for networking' (p. 316). In their empirical study

Thurston et al. (2012) note that mentoring programmes offer leaders hope for influencing the characteristics of individual employees in a way that can be beneficial to both the employee and the organisation. They found that mentoring had a direct and statistically significant impact on employees' contribution to their organisation's success.

Mentoring relationships provide a context for the transfer of learning, but Bokeno and Gantt (2000) assert that conventional mentoring is also a way of reinforcing organisational traditions, politics and culturally appropriate behaviour:

Conventional mentoring seeks sameness in terms of both fidelity with and reproduction of extant organisational culture. The purpose of [the] relationship is for development along stipulated paths for the achievement of stipulated outcomes. The learning outcomes here can only be those of adaptation, error prevention or correction, or reduction of deviation: single loop processes (p. 249).

In contrast, a mentoring relationship in which the mentor and the mentee construct an organisational reality together and 'the answers and actions emerge from the exploration' is described as double-loop learning by Bokeno and Gantt (2000). In this mentoring relationship, the purpose of questioning is the process of 'the asking, [with the] exploration and mutuality of relationship implied rather than the closure or finality of the answer' (p. 250). Bokeno and Gantt

presented a basic mentoring relationship and in that context they rightfully argued that by using double-loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978) organisational learning would significantly improve.

It appears that Bokeno and Gantt (2000) did not take into consideration the multiplicity of mentoring relationships. However, in a recent study Patel et al. (2011) identified five mentoring models, applied in the mentoring of trainee surgeons. These models are: (1) apprenticeship mentoring, (2) competency mentoring, (3) team mentoring, (4) contract mentoring, and (5) pseudo-mentoring. These models seem to cover the early career stages of trainee surgeons. Patel et al. (2011) argued that in a rapidly changing environment of modern surgery, traditional mentoring relationships are insufficient to improve patient care.

Traditional mentoring relationships no longer work, according to Kram and Higgins (2012). They proposed a network model of mentoring, which involves a group (as opposed to a one-to-one) relationship; the mentor and the mentee are co-learners (unlike mentors guiding mentees) and the mentoring relationship extends beyond the organisational boundary (it is both inside and outside the organisation). The network model of mentoring is expected to yield overlap in enhanced performance and leadership capacity at both individual and organisational levels (Kram and Higgins, 2012). Additionally, the individual outcomes can include learning, self-awareness and social skills, while the organisation can benefit from

retention, organisational learning and innovation. Kram was described by Chandler (2011) as the maven (expert) of mentoring, who laid its foundations and continues to influence the field. In their proposed model Kram and Higgins (2012) seem to acknowledge the fact that for mentoring to stay relevant in modern times, it has to change and adapt.

To summarise, some studies show a positive outcome for mentoring in organisational change situations, such as mergers. Siegel (2000), however, has pointed out that merger- and organisational change-related stress and anxiety cannot be removed by mentoring or peer relationships. Mentoring relationships are the focus of some studies that question the relevance and effectiveness of traditional mentoring programmes. Multiple mentoring models currently exist and cross-organisational mentoring relationships are proposed by Kram and Higgins (2012). The exploration of mentoring arrangements within housing associations will contribute to the ongoing debate in these areas.

3.7 Conclusion

The focus of my research is on the role of coaching and mentoring during transformational changes, with a specific empirical focus on mergers between housing associations. Confusion about coaching and mentoring terminology is highlighted by many scholars and practitioners, and some of them suggest that a lack of clear

distinction benefits related disciplines such as counselling and training. It is not clear from the literature how coaches and mentors (or providers of these services) perceive and distinguish between the coaching and mentoring fields. The extent to which perceptions about coaching and mentoring influence the choice of potential coachees about their development is not clear either. With reference to the negative connotations attached to coaching (for instance, as a remedy for poor performance), I think that understanding the perceptions of potential coachees will serve a useful purpose. By addressing these gaps, this study can inform theory and practice in these areas.

Organisational change is known for the negative consequences it has for employees, including uncertainty, fear and stress. Coaching enhances personal insight and self-confidence, which may enable staff to deal effectively with stress. Mentoring strengthens the relationship between the mentor and the protégé. Coaching and mentoring interventions provide psychological support to cope with the stress and anxiety created by the merger or transformational change. However, the empirical evidence from quantitative studies conducted thus far regarding the effectiveness of coaching to overcome stress and anxiety is inconclusive. The case for using coaching and mentoring to address the effects of transformational change and mergers is as yet unproven.

Transformational change models applicable in the workplace context focus on the management rather than the development of staff. Besides, transformational change concentrates on changing the whole organisation while transformational learning invokes reflection to change the perspective of individuals. Although there are some transformational change models that do include coaching and mentoring for learning and development, these are set in the education sector (regarding the learning and development of students), hence there is a lack of focus on the workplace context.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, the aim of this study is to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in relation to transformational changes, with particular reference to housing association mergers in the UK. This chapter outlines and explains the methodological choices and the research design process for this study based on the research purposes and research question. The discussion begins by explaining the philosophical standpoint behind the study in terms of a research ontology, epistemology and methodology. Some of the advantages and pitfalls of the chosen research methodology are considered and reflected upon. Details are provided on the research logistics, including the timetable for the primary fieldwork and the number of participants and meetings with them. The discussion moves on to describe the qualitative approach adopted, before deliberating on the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of this study. The chapter ends with a consideration of research ethics and rigour in the research methodology.

This chapter describes the research paradigm and research strategy adopted for this study. I discuss different versions of grounded theory and my approach to collecting and analysing data. I describe the interview process and selection criteria of the participants. I

acknowledge my previous experience, discuss the audit trail and reflexivity used to explore and acknowledge potential bias. I also discuss rigour in grounded theory and the credibility and transferability of my findings. I examine ethical concerns in relation to the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the data collected. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

4.2 Philosophical approach

An account of my interest in the topic is presented in the introductory chapter of this thesis, which provided a sense of my worldview, or ontological perspective. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) note that the research paradigm influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted. According to Jones et al. (2006: p. 9):

[A] paradigm is rather consistently referred to as a set of interconnected or related assumptions or beliefs.

For this study, the constructivist research paradigm was selected. Within that paradigm, constructivist grounded theory was chosen as the methodology for analysing data collected through semi-structured interviews. My research approach is based on the belief that reality is constructed by, and between people, and represents individual perspectives, which are not objective. This means that multiple realities are constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest (Krauss, 2005).

Ontology and epistemology

The ontological and epistemological premises of researchers constitute the boundaries for them as to how they see the world and act in it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). I outline my ontological and epistemological assumptions below to demonstrate the premise from which this research emerged and to expose the nature of the knowledge produced by the resulting methodology used in this research. My assumptions are:

- I embarked on this study as a knower and my ontological and epistemological position influences this study
- I am part of the research endeavour and not an objective reporter
- As a coach, mentor and former housing official, I share a similar subject position to some of my participants. However, whilst I might share some experiences with the research participants, as individuals we attach different meaning and interpretations to our experiences in the world
- The perceptions presented in this study reflect a construction of reality created in collaboration with the research participants at that particular historical moment
- Another researcher conducting this research (collecting, interpreting and analysing data) may produce different results.

My research is thus informed by the constructivist paradigm, which assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (the researcher and the participants co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures: these include the development of a substantive theory, the use of theoretical sampling techniques, systematic data analysis and the presentation of a theory.

In contrast, in the positivist paradigm the object of study is independent of researchers, knowledge is discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements of phenomena and facts are established by taking apart a phenomenon to examine its component parts, according to Krauss (2005, p. 759). It is plausible that my research objectives could be achieved by using either the constructivist or positivist research paradigms. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2005: p.10) argue that the phenomenon is 'not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency'. In my study, the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers and transformational changes is not experimentally examined. I explain my research strategy in the next section.

4.3 Research strategy

I have used constructivist grounded theory methodology for my research. Corbin and Straus (2008) describe that one of the most important reasons for choosing this methodology is the desire of the

researcher to step beyond the unknown and to enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspectives and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge (p. 16). My research methodology is determined by the research aim, which is to explore the role of coaching and mentoring. This methodology allowed me to explore and make sense of the inner experiences and presumptions of the participants in their 'natural settings' (Charmaz, 2003: p. 251), leading to rich understandings of the phenomenon. The contribution to knowledge and practice is grounded in the experiences of the participants.

4.4 Grounded theory

Grounded theory was initially presented by Glaser and Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). Since its inception grounded theory has gone through different phases of development. There are three commonly narrated strands of grounded theory: the Glaserian or classic version, the Straussian version and the constructivist version developed by Charmaz. The grounded theory approach advocates developing a new theory consisting of interrelated concepts, rather than testing existing theories. Grounded theory aims to explain phenomena and generate theory. Jones and Alony (2011) assert that grounded theory is detailed, rigorous and systematic, and also permits flexibility and freedom. Following the introduction of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967, both authors, Glaser and Strauss, took a different stance in the early

1990s, whereas Charmaz presented her version in 2000. These three versions are discussed below.

Glaser (1992) and his subsequent co-author (Glaser and Holton, 2004) advocate 'classic' grounded theory, also termed Glaserian grounded theory. Devadas et al. (2011: p. 348) argued that based on its philosophical roots, Glaserian grounded theory relates to a critical realist ontology and a modified objectivist epistemology; it methodologically discovers theory through verifying it using sequential researches. Glaser rejects symbolic interaction, in which the researcher attempts to determine the symbolic meaning that artefacts, gestures and words have for individuals as they interact with one another. All data is constantly compared to generate concepts. As the theory emerges from data rather than from extant research, an extensive review of the literature is regarded as unnecessary, and even inappropriate.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) developed a different perspective on grounded theory methodology, also sometimes described as the Straussian version. Devadas et al. (2011: p. 349) argued that based on its philosophical routes, the Straussian version relates to a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology. They recognised the interactive nature of the inquirer and the participants, and placed it in a constructivist paradigm of inquiry. Strauss and Corbin identified four key areas for evaluating grounded theory research: (1) judgments about the validity, reliability and credibility of the data; (2)

judgments about the theory itself; (3) decisions regarding the adequacy of the research process through which the theory is being generated, elaborated or tested; and (4) conclusions about the empirical grounding of the research. Strauss and Corbin (1998) assert that concepts are grounded in data. Since concepts are the building blocks of theory, they signify the 'empirical grounding of a study' (p. 269). They argue that the criteria mentioned above are 'essential to evaluating the analytic logic used by the researcher' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: p. 269). The rigid procedural techniques of the Straussian approach are questioned by Glaser (1992), and Glaser and Holton (2004). Although Strauss and Corbin rejected being labelled as post-positivists (Devadas et al., 2011), their data analysis approach was considered to be close to a positivist methodology, because in order to examine the quality of grounded theory, verification and prediction are thought to be essential criteria.

Charmaz, a student of Strauss, developed grounded theory further. She described her approach to grounded theory as 'constructivist' (Charmaz, 2000; 2006). Grounded theory methods are principles and practices, not prescriptions or packages, according to Charmaz (2006: p. 9). She rejected the notion that theory would 'emerge' from the data in a way that was independent of the researcher. Theorists take a reflective stance toward the research process and products and consider *how* their theories evolve, which involves reflecting on the way that both researchers and research participants interpret meaning and actions (Charmaz 2006: p. 131). A constructivist

grounded theory distinguishes between the real and the true. This approach does not seek single, universal and lasting truth, but it remains realist, as it addresses human realities and assumes the existence of the real world, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003: p. 272). Charmaz argued that theories are not discovered but are constructed from the interactions between the researcher, the research participants and the research process. Thus the constructed theory is an interpretation of the studied world and not an objective reporting of it.

Dey (1999) states that there are as many interpretations of grounded theory as there are grounded theorists. In addition to the work of Charmaz (2000, 2006) some authors, such as Dey (1999), Bryant (2002), Clarke (2005), Mills et al (2006) and Birks and Mills (2011) have added to the constructivist grounded theory literature. Their work has also informed my thinking, for example; Bryant's notion of re-grounding grounded theory, in which he gives an assessment of grounded theory from systems and ethnographic perspective; Clarke's addition of 'situational analysis' to the grounded theory; and, Mills et al's (2006) assertion that 'grounded theory methodology is evolving to account for a range of ontological and epistemological underpinnings' (p.8). However, this study remains underpinned by Charmaz's framework, because I see myself as a co-constructor of data and analysis.

By adopting a constructivist grounded theory methodology, I felt I was able to gather and analyse data inductively. One of the strengths of constructivist grounded theory methodology is the constant comparison with previously collected data. This process forced me to constantly reflect on the whole research process. Mills et al (2006) assert that constructivist grounded theory can be distinguished from other qualitative methodologies by (a) the nature of the relationship between research participants and the researcher and (b) an explication of what can be known. The next section elaborates on the process of adapting the grounded theory method to produce a grounded theory approach used for this study.

4.4.1 Grounded Theory Approach

I was aware of the recent developments in the coaching and mentoring literature, as I embarked on this study straight after earning my Masters degree in coaching and mentoring. I thought it was important to have a good understanding of the current knowledge in the field of housing associations, which meant undertaking a literature review before collecting data. This approach is inappropriate according to Glaser (1992), as I might have been unduly influenced by it, whereas Charmaz (2003) considers this to be valuable in articulating the research problem.

Charmaz (2012) suggests that the comparative methods should be used at all levels of data analysis, including comparing data with data, data with codes and codes with codes. The analysis of data

and emerging ideas throughout the enquiry enables the researchers to integrate and streamline data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2012). Whereas, Glaser (2012) is critical of Charmaz's approach of a constant comparative process and warns about the impact of researchers' bias. He suggests that grounded theory is about concepts and not accurate descriptions. Glaser's version of grounded theory maintains an objective perspective in which the researchers do not add their own interpretation to the data. I do not agree with this perspective as in my view the phenomena of the role of coaching and mentoring cannot be objectively analysed.

My pursuit of constant comparison was obstructed on some occasions because of the logistical issues. Since the data was collected soon after the housing association mergers, the availability of the research participants, especially housing officials, was an issue and I had to schedule the interview slots accordingly. As a result of this, sometimes I collected the next set of data before analysing the previously collected one. Charmaz (2003) asserts that constructivist grounded theory emphasises an inter-subjective relationship between the knower and the known and the meaning are co-constructed. The researcher and the subjects 'frame that interaction and confer meaning upon it' (Charmaz, 2003: p.523). Glaser (2012) is critical of the co-construction of understanding and calls it an unwanted intrusion of the interviewer and 'an effort to dignify the data' (p.29). Charmaz (2003) recognises the subjective position of the researcher and the prior knowledge and bias they

bring to the research. I share this epistemological position and did not want to distance myself from the research participants and data. Therefore, I selected constructivist grounded theory, as it is more compatible with my epistemological standpoint.

4.4.2 Criticism of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory in general and constructivist grounded theory in particular have been criticised. Thomas and James (2006) dispute grounded theory's status as a theory, and the assertion that it can be discovered; they contest its claim to be consistent with the tenets of qualitative inquiry. They assert that grounded theory elevates a certain kind of thinking while it demotes and eschews other kinds of thinking and understanding. Ironically, different versions of grounded theory are also criticised by proponents of grounded theory.

In this study, I have not only acknowledged my bias, but also reflected upon its potential impact in the reflexivity section of this chapter. An audit trail has been incorporated to explore, acknowledge and overcome researcher bias. Glaser further claimed that the constructivist position taken by Charmaz is 'totally irrelevant to grounded theory methodology' (Glaser, 2012: p. 29). He argued that Charmaz's constructivist position has a structurally specific source: in-depth interviews with patients having chronic illness, where interviews are based on a developed, over-time relationship in which 'private thoughts and feelings' can be expressed and their meanings probed. There is a 'subjective immersion' of the researcher

in their illnesses, hence the tendency to produce a description of intense interaction, in contrast to producing an abstraction or conceptualisation of it, which feels 'external' (p. 34). However, despite its criticism, constructivist grounded theory is considered to be the most appropriate approach for this study, as it provides an effective means of answering my research question. Table 4.1 highlights the links (with section numbers in brackets) of the constructivist grounded theory approach to my study.

Table 4.1: Overview of constructivist grounded theory as per Charmaz (2006), adapted from Rossi (2010).

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Philosophical stance | Interpretive: Assumes emergent, multiple realities and provisional truth (Section 4.2). |
| Purpose | Understanding: Calls for understanding of the studied phenomenon; the aim is to show the complexities of particular worlds, views and actions (Section 4.1). |
| Role of researcher | Researcher an integral component of the study: data and analysis created from shared experiences and relationship with participants (Section 4.9). |
| Logic of inquiry | Conceptualise the studied phenomenon to understand it in abstract terms. Articulate theoretical claims pertaining to scope, depth, power and relevance. Acknowledge subjectivity in theorising, hence the role of negotiation dialogue and understanding (Section 4.4). |
| Guidelines/ procedures | <p>Flexible: analytic directions arise from how researchers interact with and interpret their data, not from external prescriptions.</p> <p>Initial and theoretical sampling.</p> <p>Three levels of analysis:</p> <p>Level 1 – Descriptive, the basis for abstract interpretation.</p> <p>Level 2 – Conceptual ordering, category formation.</p> |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| | <p>Level 3 – Theorising, conceiving concepts.</p> <p>Does not adhere to the notion of locating a single process or core category (although this is not excluded).</p> <p>Types of coding (two or more):</p> <p>Initial coding – provisional, comparative, grounded in the data.</p> <p>Focused coding – directed, selective and conceptual.</p> <p>Axial coding – the process of relating categories to their subcategories.</p> <p>Theoretical coding – follows codes selected during focused coding, specifies possible relationships between categories; may preclude the need for axial coding.</p> <p>Comparative methods – process of comparing different pieces of data for similarities or differences.</p> <p>Memo writing – written records of analysis.</p> <p>(Sections 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)</p> |
| <p>Product of inquiry</p> | <p>Theory is constructed, constitutes an emergent interpretation (Chapter 6).</p> |

4.5 Pilot interview

I conducted a pilot interview with the initial purpose of refining my research questions, but it turned out to be much more than that. The pilot interview had a far-reaching impact on my research methodology. The participant was the chief executive of a housing association that had gone through a merger. The housing association was considered to be failing by the then regulator, the Housing Corporation, but the new chief executive, whom I interviewed, managed to turn it around into a multi-award-winning housing association. The housing association used executive coaching as part of its staff development. So the participant was an informed individual and had significant experience in my areas of research, namely coaching, mentoring and housing association mergers. The questions for the pilot interview were kept open-ended, which enabled me to probe for clarity without influencing the answers. Listening to the digital recording of the pilot interview along with my notes enabled me to refine the research questions, which are presented in Appendix 7. While describing the impact of the merger on staff morale, the participant became very animated and raised his voice a little. Conversely, the answers to the regulatory aspects of managing the merger process were brief and mechanistic. In my interpretation, human factors were important for housing association mergers, and my revised interview questions reflected that.

The decision to use a grounded theory methodology for this study was not made at the outset of the research. Initially I started with a comparative case study of two housing associations. Both housing associations had gone through the merger process. One housing association has an embedded coaching culture. All senior managers were sponsored by the housing association to acquire a postgraduate qualification in coaching and mentoring. These managers acted as internal coaches and mentors for their junior colleagues. In contrast, the other housing association did not use coaching, but hired external consultants to deal with staffing issues. My initial proposal was to compare the management of the merger process in both of these housing associations. However, during the course of the pilot interview, the research participant spoke very strongly about the importance of coaching and mentoring interventions in some housing associations.

The choice of a grounded theory methodology was only made after struggling through the conundrum of how to effectively use a comparative case study methodology. After reflecting on the pilot interview, it dawned on me that going ahead with my initial proposal of a comparative case study would leave some very fertile issues untouched. Clearly the practitioners were not only already aware of these issues; there was almost a sense of anticipation that these grounded issues should be explored. That said, it became apparent to me that grounded theory, and specifically constructivist grounded theory methodology was a justifiable fit for the aim and objectives of

this study. On further reflection, I could envision the opening of new doors, new analytical pathways and new depths of data that could be effectively explored using constructivist grounded theory.

I decided to change the research methodology from comparative case study to grounded theory for two main reasons:

(1) To strengthen my study by capturing some of the areas identified in the pilot interview, such as HDN mentoring, tenant mentoring and team coaching. For example, one housing association in the proposed comparative case study did not use any form of coaching or mentoring and the other one used executive coaching and peer mentoring only. Therefore some forms of coaching and mentoring utilised in the housing association sector would have remained unexplored, if I was to go along with the initial plan. The adoption of the grounded theory methodology enabled me to explore different forms of coaching and mentoring rather than only focusing on the interventions used in one housing association.

(2) To avoid the ethics in practice dilemma, because of my previous involvement at a senior level in the housing associations in which I was proposing to undertake the research.

Constructivist grounded theory methodology employs a systematic set of procedures where outcomes are grounded in participant's real world practice and represent the complex nature of participants'

experiences. Therefore, by changing my research methodology from case study to constructivist grounded theory, I believed that the findings would offer insight, understanding and practical guidance to housing officials and coaching and mentoring practitioners, as the findings are grounded in data.

4.6. Research methods (semi-structured interviews)

The research methods used by qualitative researchers can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena (Silverman, 2011: p. 22). The participants have problems to solve, goals to pursue and actions to perform, and they hold assumptions, ideas and feelings about all these concerns (Charmaz, 2006: p. 33). The interview is probably the 'most widely employed method' in qualitative research (Bryman, 2004: p. 319). Choosing data collection methods that yield rich data is an important element of the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). I used semi-structured interviews as a primary method of data collection.

4.6.1 Interview process

All interviews were conducted over the telephone, except two, where Skype was used. As the participants were spread across England and Scotland, this mode of data collection was deemed feasible and appropriate. Telephone interviews, according to Novick (2008), are 'often depicted as a less attractive alternative to face-to-face interviewing' (p. 391). The importance of face-to-face interviews

cannot be ignored, especially considering potential data loss in the absence of visual cues. But in my view, this can work both ways, that is, the participant's answers might be influenced by the facial expressions of the researcher. Conducting telephone interviews helped me to build a quick rapport with the participants and I was able to make notes during the course of the interview. The interview transcripts provided rich textual data for this study. The participant information sheet and consent form (shown in Appendixes 1 and 2) were emailed to the participants before the interview. At the start of the interview, the participants were asked whether they had had a chance to read both documents. All participants ticked the box on the consent form confirming that they agreed for the interview to be audio recorded. But, as a courtesy, an explicit permission was sought before switching the audio recorder on.

I explained in some detail, if asked by participants, my own professional background, which includes holding a master's degree in coaching and mentoring, being a fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and having professional experience as a chartered accountant and educator, as well as extensive auditing and consultancy experience in the not-for-profit sector. This certainly informed my own interest in this study, but beyond that set the stage from which the interview participant might perceive me not only a research student but also a multi-disciplinary practitioner. While it is only a supposition on my part as to what role the research participants perceived me as having, my own impression was that I

was considered as a professional peer both by the coaches and the housing executives; for example, the phrase 'you know' was freely used by these two groups. In the first interview with the front-line officer, I became immediately aware of a feeling of inferiority on his part, which was evident in the respectful manner I was addressed. The insecurity and vagueness was manifest in the first couple of answers. I swiftly responded to this uneven balance of power by speaking to the participant in the local accent and in jargon-free language. I also used a more reassuring tone to depict the relevance and importance of the participant's contribution. This approach seemed to work, so the interviews with other front-line officers were conducted in the same manner. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured fashion. Instead of me presupposing the important topics that would be raised or addressed in the interview, scope was allowed for the interviewee to bring to the fore the matters they viewed as relevant and important.

4.6.2. Participant information

This section provides information about the study's participants and how access was negotiated. The study is focused on housing associations that have gone through a merger or any other form of business partnership that has resulted in changes to the group structures of those housing associations. Through a desktop review of the regulatory body, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and its predecessors, and the social housing magazine *Inside*

Housing, I identified all the housing associations that had gone through a merger in England since January 2011. At the time of this analysis, twelve mergers had gone through. Emails to the chief executives or senior directors of these housing associations were sent, inviting them to take part in the study. Five housing executives from five different housing associations volunteered to take part. These housing associations are part of three different housing groups across England.

The participants for this study were selected purposively. They were seen as competent reporters, whose views were central to the analysis. The selection of research participants is important but may be constrained by 'what is practicable' (Saunders, 2012: p. 35). I was not able to include one important potential participant group, namely middle to senior managers. In the pilot interview, the participant discussed the internal political sensitivity around restructuring and how that affected the role of middle to senior managers. This assertion was confirmed by other executives. As the housing associations had gone through the mergers after January 2011, senior executives did not allow me access to this group. I was informed that due to post-merger restructuring, the roles of this particular group were being reassessed. Some managerial positions had been abolished or their job specifications altered. So some managers were reapplying for jobs under the new structure and some were considering their future elsewhere. The exclusion of the experiences and presumptions of such an important group signifies

the need for further research in this area; it is hard to stipulate the impact on findings, had that group been included. A holistic perspective covering all employee groups could not be presented here, but I concur with Saunders (2012: p. 37) that being flexible with the research design and being able to compromise to a limited extent is a better alternative to being obdurate about the ideal method when not being able to collect data due to access being denied. So, in addition to the pilot interview, thirteen further participants were selected from three groups: (1) executive coaches, (2) senior housing executives, and (3) housing officers.

Five executive coaches, two male and three female, with experience of both for-profit and not-for-profit sectors participated in this study. These coaches were identified via a considerable search of housing- and coaching-related websites. All the coaches were well known within the coaching and mentoring industry and endorsed by their high-profile clients. They had experience of providing coaching, mentoring, training or transformational change programmes in the housing sector in England and Scotland. Their experience of the for-profit sector was considered valuable, as they were able to draw on their experience of both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors.

Five senior housing executives, two male and three female, with experience of housing association mergers participated in this study. Three of these housing executives were chief executives, and two were senior directors in housing associations that have gone through

a merger since January 2011. Two of these executives had experienced two housing association mergers, one between January 2006 and December 2010 and the other after January 2011.

Three male housing officers, two at officer level and one assistant manager participated in this study. They were referred to as front-line officers, as their roles involved face-to-face contact with tenants. All the officers had experienced two housing association mergers, one between January 2006 and December 2010 and the other after January 2011. All three housing officers were employed by the same housing group. The contact details of the housing officers were obtained from a managerial-level gatekeeper. There was a risk that the housing officers might be in a vulnerable position, having less power and authority, and might be coerced into taking part by the management. To mitigate this risk, I contacted the housing officers on their mobile phones to check if they were willing to participate in my study. Again, participants were assured that all data would be confidential and anonymised. This would be achieved by codifying the participants and their responses, and by anonymising the housing association itself by not including details of the housing group that the said housing association is part of, or the location of subsidiaries and offices. Because of the unique characteristics of housing association mergers, I am unable to provide any more detailed information, since it would compromise this anonymity. The participant details are presented below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Participant details

| Categories | Gender | Professional background | Coaching and mentoring experience |
|------------|--------------------|--|--|
| Coaches | 3 female 2 male | accountancy human resources management training housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 coaches provided accredited vocational training • 3 coaches provided transformational change services • All coaches provided coaching and mentoring services |
| Executives | 3 female 2 male | 3 chief executives 2 senior directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 executives had housing experience • 2 executives had gone through at least two mergers • 1 executive had recently joined a housing group from the for-profit sector • 2 executives acted as mentors • 1 executive had a coaching qualification |
| Officers | 3 male | 2 officers 1 assistant manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All officers had experienced two mergers • All officers received mentoring |

All participants were amenable to participating in the research; they were made aware of the research programme from the outset. All

participants were interviewed individually. Participant information sheets clearly describing the research aims were provided before the interview. None of the participants were offered financial compensation. The right of participants to withdraw from the study without needing to provide any reason was included in the consent form. None of the participants withdrew from the study.

4.7 Data analysis procedures

The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Recordings were downloaded as individual files and transcribed by a professional transcription service. I checked the accuracy of the transcripts by listening to the recording and reading the transcripts simultaneously. I listened to the recordings several times to familiarise myself with the data before starting the coding process. Computer-assisted analysis of qualitative data (CAQDAS) software was used to manage the qualitative data. CAQDAS is becoming an essential tool for social researchers, according to Rambaree (2007). It can be used to maintain an audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 318) suggest six elements that comprise an audit trail for qualitative researchers. Table 4.3 below includes these elements and demonstrates how I used NVIVO for a clear audit trail.

Table 4.3 Audit Trail adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985: 318)

| Audit trail element | NVIVO evidence |
|---|--|
| Raw data | Transcripts and audio recordings of the interviews |
| Data reduction and analysis products | Scanned field notes, memos and diagrams of emerging concepts |
| Data reconstruction and synthesis products | Creation of nodes, folders and initial analysis |
| Process notes | Data analysis, grouping of themes, draft framework |
| Materials relating to intentions and dispositions | Reflective notes within memos |
| Instrument development | Revised questionnaire after the pilot interview. |

This process is compatible with the constructivist grounded theory approach, as it helps to move away from particular statements to more abstract interpretations of the interview data (Charmaz, 2006). The digital recording was used to avoid any data loss. Listening to the interview recordings before the data analysis provided an early indication of the codes and themes.

The data was analysed with theoretical sensitivity grounded in the literature review of Chapters 2 and 3, and my world view and assumptions as shared in Chapter 1 and this chapter. It is difficult to discuss the data analysis in a sequential order because of the iterative and nonlinear nature of the constant comparison. Charmaz

(2006) proposed that the researcher must move back and forth between data analysis and data collection. I continually returned to the data, and the words of the participants, using previous data and analysis to influence the future collection and analysis of data. In line with grounded theory, the processes of data collection, memo writing and analysis occurred in an iterative and interwoven manner. However, the coding process was underpinned by the initial, focused and theoretical categories identified by Charmaz (2006), as shown in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Coding process

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Initial coding practices | Data dependent with some reflexive techniques. |
| Focused coding | Continuous with previous phase. Focusing on emerging codes within the data, comparing data with data. Identification of conceptual categories. |
| Theoretical coding with reflexivity | Refinement of main categories. Development of core category. |

4.7.1 Initial coding

The first stage of analysis within each phase commenced as soon as the data was collected. At this stage, the data was in its original form, as described by participants. I tried to retain the language and

metaphors used by the participants to maintain the richness of data and to study how they 'construct meaning and actions in specific situations' (Charmaz, 2006: p. 131). Initial coding may take place word by word, line by line or incident by incident, depending on the nature of the data (Charmaz, 2006). I started with a line-by-line approach, but the data tended to suit an incident-by-incident approach, an example of which is shown in Appendix 4. Throughout the initial coding, a data to data comparison approach was used. Recurrent codes within the same transcript or across transcripts were identified. A thorough examination of the data enabled me to remain open to the data and observe divergence within it.

4.7.2 Focused coding

The second stage of analysis was a continuation of the initial coding. Focused coding is a selective process used to organise, condense and integrate data according to the most significant and frequent initial codes (Charmaz, 2006). Each transcript was carefully worked through and texts were divided up into meaning units, which were discrete phrases or sentences. All meaning units from the initial coding were then categorised into focused codes to illustrate the condensed themes across the data. The decision as to which categories to apply was aided by asking what each focus code might indicate and then comparing all the initial codes. The main categories within each phase were underpinned by these focused codes and influenced through the use of memos, which enabled abstract

thinking. This helped me to decide which category would be appropriate for the grouping of focused codes. The main categories and focused codes from Stage 1 were compared with Stage 2 and subsequently compared with Stage 3 as part of the constant comparative method (see Appendix 8).

4.7.3 Final development

Theoretical coding specifies the relationships between the categories developed during the focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). My theoretical coding was informed by the body of theories and literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, the world view and assumptions described in this chapter, and the experiences of participants that will be shared in Chapters 5 to 7.

4.8 Audit trail

As a chartered accountant with many years' experience of providing audit services, I was meticulous about the audit trail of this study. The audit trail includes the researcher's journal, audio recordings and transcriptions of participant interviews, drawings of initial conceptual maps, and memos (Appendix 9). I kept all previous draft work, which shows how the study progressed. Additionally, there are two A4-sized diaries of eighty sheets each, where initial ideas were noted and different diagrams sketched, showing the first drafts of the conceptual framework. A smartphone audio-recording application was used to record thoughts and ideas as they emerged, which were

transferred into paper diaries when convenient and practicable. The audio recordings were then deleted to free up space on the smartphone.

Memo writing is an important element of constructivist grounded theory. Birks and Mills (2011: p. 40) described memos as 'records of thoughts, feelings, insights and ideas in relation to the research project'. They advocate that memos should be used:

*... [to] map activities in support of maintaining the audit trail
... [for] planned activities, unforeseen circumstances and
changes in direction ... [and as a] rationale for decisions
made and responses to various contingencies.*

There are no set ways to write memos, according to Charmaz (2006). I wrote memos at the first available opportunity after each interview. Memoing is an effective tool that can be used to enhance the research experience (Birks et al., 2008). The most important contribution that is made by memoing is that it initiates and maintains productivity in the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). For me, these memos served various purposes, including: (1) to provide an audit trail to record how the study progressed; (2) to highlight potential issues during data collection; (3) to create a point of reflection to improve the interview process; (4) to challenge my taken-for-granted ideas and strengthen the remainder of the data collection; (5) to reduce subjectivity and personal bias during data analysis; and (6) to assist in identifying similarities and connections in the data at an

early stage. This process helped me to form initial categories, refine conceptual categories and advance theoretical concepts. Specific titles were used to identify memo contents. The memos provided a space for comparing data to data, data to codes, codes to codes, codes to categories, and categories to concepts (Charmaz, 2006). Through the use of memos, I was able to immerse myself in the data, explore the meanings that this data held, maintain continuity and sustain momentum in the conduct of my research (Birks et al., 2008). This process enabled me to compare data, to explore ideas about the codes, and to direct further data gathering, as described by Charmaz (2006: p. 12). Appendix 5 shows the full list of memos, and Appendix 6 contains part of a memo as an example. The memo below outlines my thoughts during the period of conducting interviews:

This interview with Lydia (pseudonym) has highlighted a number of potential areas for further exploration. Lydia was brought in to turn the failing housing group around. The group is now an award-winning one and Lydia puts it down to the coaching programme she commissioned. Interesting that the board approved a massive budget for staff development. I thought they might have gone for slashing the staff budget. I understand the logic, though. If you are at rock bottom, you have to do something radical. Some of the key areas she discussed included: staff development, motives for housing association mergers, the integration of staff from the

acquired housing association, the role of coaching and mentoring within the housing sector, and how tenants can be mentored to find jobs and to deal with bullying. It was scary to note that she would confront and challenge unpleasant people on her walkabouts. I still remember the horror when a druggie threatened to stab one of my previous colleagues with an infected needle. It will be interesting to know what other participants will have to say.

I think it was a good idea to do some research about the company beforehand, but it is surprising that company websites are not kept up to date.

In summary, the memos helped me to record the chronological development of ideas and insights. The process forced me to stop and engage with different categories, and it provided a venue for reflection, exploration and discovery around the ideas I had 'seen, sensed, heard and coded' (Charmaz, 2006: p. 82). The screenshots illustrating the memos and a sample excerpt are included in Appendixes 5 and 6. The memos generated in this study were organised and stored in NVIVO®, allowing them to stay permanently linked to the data from which they emerged.

4.9 Role of the researcher (reflexivity)

Being a coach and mentor, reflexivity has become second nature to me. The memos and diaries proved to be very helpful in providing a point of reference for my reflective practice. Kanyangale and Pearse (2012) trace the roots of reflexivity to anthropology. They assert that reflexivity, as a method, emerged in response to the critique of ethnocentrism prevalent in ethnography. Kanyangale and Pearse (2012) claim that reflexivity can contribute to making more knowledgeable claims and improving research practice. In the context of grounded theory, they define reflexivity as 'a methodical process of on-going questioning of the doing of research and also learning about self as a researcher, research participants, others, and the research context which illuminates meaning about personal, theoretical, ethical and epistemological aspects of the research process' (Kanyangale and Pearse, 2012: p. 192). My own professional background made me feel that I was treading on very familiar ground when conducting the interviews with all the participant groups. This was especially the case when the participant executives talked about the financial pressures and logistical problems associated with making staff available to attend staff development sessions; it was equally the case when the coaches talked about the role of executives in promoting a developmental culture in their housing associations. But my task was only to be a researcher: to collect data and faithfully present the findings. Therefore, even though I was aware of the issues the participants were talking about,

I did not share my own observations with the participants. Consequently, the focus was on exploring their experiences.

Charmaz (2006) asserts that constructivist grounded theorists take a reflective stance towards *how* their theories evolve. In constructivist grounded theory, the researcher is not only an inherent part of data collection but also a co-creator of the theory, hence neutrality and detachment in relation to data collection, analysis and interpretation are impossible, according to Rambaree (2007). Reflecting on the researcher's role in an honest and informative way is important (Willig, 2008: p. 18), as it enables research to be insightful and transparent (Haynes, 2012: p. 72).

Although I am an outsider to the housing associations from which the participants were selected, I still consider myself 'an insider' of the housing sector, as I have previously held executive and non-executive positions within large housing associations. My experience, knowledge, preferences and background might have bearing on: the way I framed my research aims; selection of participants; the interview schedule; the nature of relationships with participants in the course of data collection; data analysis and the research findings. So, given the inevitability of subjectivity, it would be unrealistic to accept otherwise. However, I took steps to minimise the element of bias. I asked open-ended questions in interviews to avoid expressing my own opinions to the participants. In addition, through careful documentation at each stage of the analysis using NVIVO I ensured

that my findings reflect the views of participants and not my own perceptions.

Jones and Alony (2011) argue that rigour can be enhanced by acknowledging researcher bias. Acknowledging and reflecting upon the researcher's influence on the research process has become embedded in debates about the nature of knowledge (Haynes, 2012). It is difficult to interpret data without imposing pre-existing ideas and preconceptions, especially when creating a grounded theory. I was consciously very careful not to influence participants, and have recorded personal research notes as part of the audit trail to review my own thought process in order to minimise researcher bias.

There were ample opportunities during the course of each interview to share my own knowledge and experience with the research participants. But I chose to stay neutral, allowing the participants to speak freely rather than confirming or challenging their views. I refrained from putting words in their mouth. During the interviews, when the participants paused to think about certain words or phrases, I provided that space. I was careful not to contaminate the data and wanted it to be as the participants wished to present it. What researchers bring to the data, 'influences what they see within it' according to Charmaz (2006: p. 15). I generally do not allow prejudice to impair my decision-making. Having said that, I do believe my prior knowledge of the housing sector and coaching and

mentoring practices to be a valuable data source. I would argue that by including my prior knowledge and experience, the study would be strengthened, as long as I continuously reflect on my role as a researcher. Obtaining ethical approval provided a further opportunity to reflect on my research methodology, which is explained in the next section.

4.10 Research ethics

Ethical approval for this study was obtained in compliance with the University Code of Practice Involving Human Participants. There are two major dimensions of ethics in qualitative research, according to Guillemín and Gillam (2004): 'procedural ethics' and 'ethics in practice'. They define 'procedural ethics' as ethics committee approval, and 'ethics in practice' as ethical issues arising during the research. As far as the procedural ethics is concerned, the study was guided by the ethical principles on research with human participants set out by Oxford Brookes University (*Faculty of Business Research Degree Handbook, Academic Year 2012/13*). Ethical considerations raised by this study were related to obtaining informed consent and maintaining participant confidentiality. Maintaining participants' confidentiality is often a major ethical concern because of the nature of the research and the type of questions the participants are asked (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007: p. 621). However, confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms in the research reporting

and by not including specific contextual details that could have revealed the identity of the participant.

For this study, there was an overlap between the procedural and practical ethics, however. Gaining access to the housing associations I was previously involved in would have been very easy. These housing associations met the research criteria and I had good working relationships with the gatekeepers. However, I ended up revising my research strategy, as at the procedural level, the Research Ethics Committee raised concerns that my affiliation with executive directors might have an impact on 'ethics in practice'. Consequently, I selected different housing associations, as I was mindful of the ethical issues for qualitative studies that involve human participants. In constructivist grounded theory, the understandings are created from shared experiences and relationships with participants at a practical level, and it would be unethical to coerce participants.

4.11 Rigour in grounded theory

Since my research is informed by the constructivist paradigm, the positivist criteria of validity and reliability associated with rigour is not relevant. In qualitative research, the researcher is 'less concerned with reliability' (Willig, 2008: p. 16), and validity and reliability are replaced with terms such as '*credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability*' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: p. 35). Lincoln and Guba (1985: p. 314) introduce a framework to develop the

trustworthiness of qualitative studies, using these four terms. They define *credibility* as 'carrying out the study in a way that enhances the believability of the findings and taking steps to demonstrate credibility to [an] external reader. For *transferability*, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the researcher should provide a rich, detailed description of the study setting, to enable the readers to judge the applicability of findings. *Dependability* can be achieved through maintaining an audit trail. The *confirmability*, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) involves providing a methodological self-critical account of how the research was conducted. I have demonstrated my understanding of the rigour for this study in this section, and my compliance with rigour was evidenced by memo writing, keeping an audit trail, constant reflexivity and my intent to present the findings faithfully. In their conclusion, Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that trustworthiness in qualitative studies is always negotiable and open-ended, not a final proof whereby readers are compelled to accept an account (p. 329). Both contextual uniqueness and the significance of the aspects of the social world being studied impact the transferability of qualitative studies (Bryman, 2004: p. 273). There is general agreement that social research studies should be carried out rigorously (Rambaree, 2007). In constructivist grounded theory, rigour encompasses four elements including credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness (Charmaz, 2006). Beck (1993) proposed credibility, auditability and fittingness as three main standards of rigour that are common to qualitative methods in

general rather than any specific research methodology. She states that credibility relates to 'how vivid and faithful the description of the phenomenon is' (Beck, 1993: p. 264). Auditability is demonstrated when another researcher is able to follow the audit or decision trail of all the decisions made by the researcher at every stage of the data analysis, whereas fittingness, according to Beck (1993: p. 64), means 'propositions generated from the research fit into a context other than the one from which they were generated'. In this study, the participants led the inquiry process, even to the extent that the research methodology was changed to a constructivist grounded theory approach as a result of the pilot interview. I articulated my own views and insights during the data analysis phase, but I managed my own potential subjectivity and bias by writing memos and reflecting on the answers provided by the participants. By listening to the taped interviews, I incorporated the actual words spoken by the participants into initial data coding and the resultant theory. The literature relating to the categories that emerged from the theory is discussed in more detail in next three chapters. The evidence kept to enhance the creditability of this study clearly delineates the process from the initial proposal to the final thesis. This includes the initial research proposal, the revised research proposal, an interview schedule, audio recordings, annotated transcripts, diagrams of themes as they emerged, and the final thesis.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the rationale for using constructivist grounded theory. The selection of the participants, and their recruitment and characteristics were also documented. It is not the goal of this research to infer a generalisation or to express representativeness with regard to all housing association mergers. The aim of this study is to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers. A constructivist grounded theory legitimises the experience of participants as a source of knowledge. It facilitates the development of theory directly interpreted from the words expressed by coaches and housing officials themselves; it recognises the diversity of the researcher and the participant's experience and takes the organisational context into consideration.

The ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this research are congruent with the research aims, design and methods. A qualitative approach emphasises understanding rather than prediction, and also emphasises the importance of meanings, processes and context. Constructivist grounded theory, incorporating housing association mergers, was found to be the most appropriate strategy of inquiry for this study. It presented a method that enabled the phenomenon of study, which was the exploration of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers and transformational changes. In this study, as is consistent with constructivist grounded theory, it was assumed that reality was co-created by the research

participants and myself as researcher; that I was a part of the world I studied and the data I collected.

CHAPTER 5

MENTORING IN HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Three main themes: mentoring, coaching and using coaching to embed training are discussed as part of data analysis. These themes are discussed in separate chapters, as this arrangement fits in better with the research objectives. The mentoring programmes used by the housing associations under study are presented in this chapter. Coaching is the subject of Chapter 6, and using coaching to embed training is discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Contrary to the paucity of literature on mentoring in housing associations noted in Chapters 2 and 3, this study found that mentoring appears to be frequently used in some housing associations. Initial codes generated during the study are shown in appendix 10. These codes were reduced at the constant comparative analysis stage, from which four different types of mentoring relationships emerged. These are presented below in Figure 5.1 and are as follows: HDN mentoring, executive mentoring, peer mentoring and tenant mentoring.

In the HDN mentoring programme, middle to senior managers from under-represented groups within a housing association are mentored by senior executives from another housing association. Learning and development of both the mentor and the mentee is enhanced by

sharing knowledge and reflecting on the effectiveness of different tools and techniques used during the mentoring process. This programme does not cater for the developmental needs of senior housing executives responsible for initiating and managing change, even though it develops middle to senior managers who have responsibility for implementing change in their departments.

In executive mentoring, senior housing officials receive mentoring from external coaches. These coaches share their knowledge and experience which is accumulated from the public and private sectors. This type of mentoring relationship provides an out-of-sector perspective for the housing executives which can be helpful whilst evaluating strategic options.

Peer mentoring in the housing associations seems to focus on streamlining the front-line services following the merger. In this mentoring arrangement, best practices at operational level are shared with staff from the recently merged housing association.

The mentoring arrangements mentioned so far, are aimed at the development of housing officials. Induction, peer and out-of-sector mentoring do contribute to the effective and efficient management of housing association mergers. However, in some cases, housing associations train and mentor their tenants, who are not the employees of the housing association. The aim of mentoring tenants into employment is to help them learn a trade and to improve their employability. Tenant mentoring helps in tackling unemployment

within the social housing sector, and contributes to the transformation of the neighbourhoods that the housing associations serve.

All these mentoring relationships are thoroughly discussed in this chapter. The diversity and complexity of mentoring initiatives in the housing associations under study is demonstrated in Figure 5.2, which will be presented later in Section 5.5. The focus codes that underpin the mentoring themes are constructed from the perceptions and experiences of coaches, housing executives and front-line officers. These codes are shown in Figure 5.1 below.

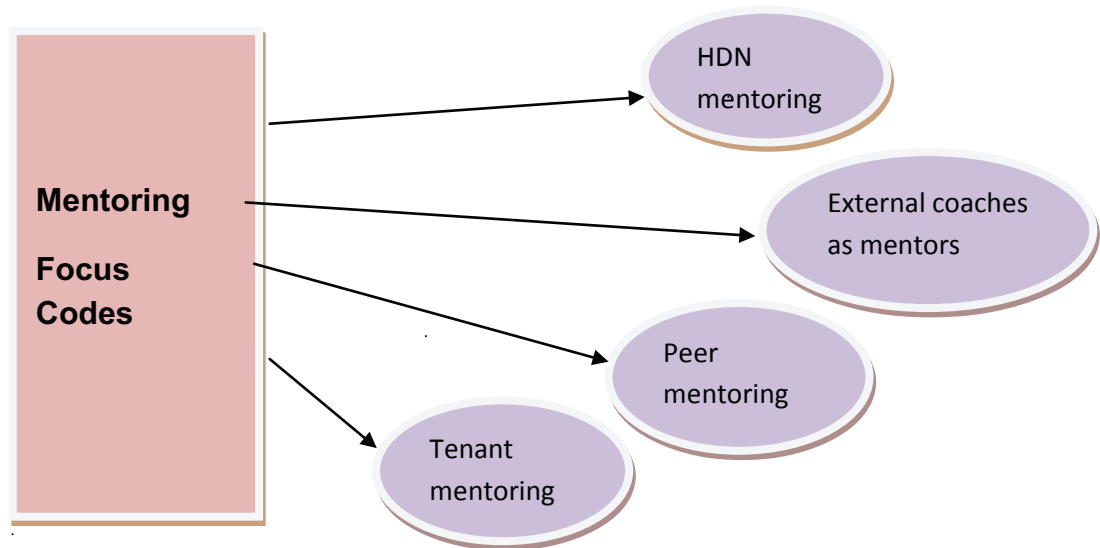


Figure 5.1: Focus codes

5.2 HDN mentoring programme

The HDN started providing mentoring within housing associations in 2005. At that time, housing associations were going through their fourth wave of development, according to Gulliver et al. (2011). Mergers between housing associations were entering into a phase

where different housing groups had started merging to form bigger housing groups; for instance, the merger of the Circle 33 Housing Group and the Anglia Housing Group in 2005. However, the HDN mentoring programmes did not initially focus on housing association mergers or transformational change. The mentoring was to address the under-representation of BME groups in housing association management. This study did not find a shift in the focus of the mentoring programme to incorporate mergers or transformational changes.

HDN mentoring could also have been called 'mentoring for under-represented managers' in the housing associations, but I decided to call this mentoring relationship HDN mentoring, because this is how the participants referred to it.

It becomes evident from the data that the HDN plays a crucial part in promoting and facilitating mentoring in the housing sector. All the housing executives who took part in this study informed me that they were aware of the work of the HDN. The network is fairly broad, and over one hundred housing associations across England are members of the network. The housing associations of all the participant housing executives and officers were members of the HDN. Some housing associations joined the HDN 'to raise their profile' (Executive C) and some for 'networking opportunities' (Executive P). All the participant housing executives talked about the mentoring programme offered by the HDN, but none of the officers

mentioned it. In my observation, the officers did not seem to be aware of the HDN mentoring programme.

Since the HDN is commonly associated with housing association mentoring, different aspects of the HDN mentoring programme are evaluated in this section. The network provides dedicated support, which includes initial training, templates for how to structure mentoring sessions, ongoing support for the mentors and the mentees during the mentorship period, and award ceremonies to recognise the successful completion of the mentoring programmes. Executive B, who was an HDN mentor, explained the process of becoming a mentor for the HDN in these words:

When you first apply [you have to] demonstrate experience, provide details of [a] range of skills and experience in any particular area that you are perhaps expert in, so they [the HDN] could then match your skills and qualities with people who wanted to be mentored (Executive B).

Housing executives are required to have skills and experience in a particular area before applying to become mentors. A database of potential mentors and mentees is maintained by the HDN. By introducing mentors with certain specialities to their potential mentees, who aspire to develop those specialities, the HDN plays the role of a matchmaker. But sometimes the specific requirements of the mentees cannot be matched from within the pool of existing mentors. In these cases, the potential mentors are contacted through

their professional networks and invited to offer mentoring services. For example, Executive D was contacted by the Chartered Institute of Housing to provide mentoring.

I certainly have done mentoring of people from other organisations, sponsored by the Chartered Institute of Housing, but this tends to be more on request (Executive D).

Testimonials on the HDN website describe the benefits of the mentoring arrangement, which include gaining: an independent sounding board; objective feedback; personal development; reinforced knowledge; the building of confidence; and a broadening of housing knowledge (see www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk). These are presumed to be transferable skills for both the mentor and the mentee. Both the executives who provide mentoring for the HDN, Executive B and Executive D, informed me that they benefitted from the mentoring programme in terms of their own personal development. The mentors shared their wisdom, tools and techniques with the mentees; subsequently, they received feedback from the mentees about the usefulness of these tools and techniques in different organisational settings. Learning taken from the evaluation and reflection was incorporated in the next round of mentoring.

... as we got to the second-last [mentoring session], we did a recap on ... these are all the things we have done across the sessions ... these were the things that we discussed, these

were the tools and techniques. So, looking at real case studies, for example, where in a difficult situation, I tried that, that technique worked for me, that did not work for me, I wouldn't use this one again (Executive B).

Reflection on the effectiveness of different tools and techniques not only enhances the mentee's learning but also inspires mentors to reflect on their own practice. This indicates that both mentors and mentees benefit from the HDN mentoring programmes.

Executive C mentioned that senior executives were encouraged by their housing association to become HDN mentors and provide mentoring outside their own housing association.

Three of my management team members are mentors through the HDN, and one of them got nominated for best mentor, actually, so it is very good. That is something we encourage people to take up. The [mentoring] programme that has been put forward [by the HDN] is for people [mentees] outside of [names own housing association].

This shows that the housing associations encourage staff to be involved in external mentoring. In my own observation from working within the housing sector some housing groups use internal mentoring too. In these cases, as part of the professional development of managers (potential mentees), an executive is allocated as a mentor, with the mentee's agreement. Usually, the

mentor would be an executive from another housing association within the same housing group, or an executive from a different department of the same housing association, but never the line manager of the mentee.

In the HDN mentoring programme, the appointment of mentors varies depending upon the developmental aspirations of the potential mentor and the expertise sought by the potential mentee. The mentees are described as 'leaders of tomorrow' on the HDN website. The request to seek mentoring is approved by their housing associations, as these managers are viewed as having high potential for promotion. Both executives who acted as mentors for the HDN programme informed me that the mentees were middle managers, aspiring to become senior executives. The mentees were invited to share their experiences of the HDN mentoring programme at the annual award ceremonies.

Housing Diversity Network have an event, a yearly event, where they have some external speakers. [Last year] some speakers who were mentees spoke about how they benefitted from the programme (Executive B).

The HDN mentoring programme seems to support experimentation and learning from the success and failure of different tools and techniques. McKimm et al. (2007: p. 5) note that learning and experimentation in a mentoring relationship occurs through 'analysis, examination, re-examination, and reflection on practice, situations,

problems, mistakes and successes of both the mentor and the mentee'. Mentoring provides continued professional development and mutual growth for both the mentor and the mentee, as suggested by a number of authors, such as Oliver and Aggleton (2002), Hezlett and Gibson (2005) and Ragins and Kram (2007). Even though, the mentor holds the experience, knowledge and skills that the mentee needs, desires, and aspires to master; the mentoring relationship develops congruently, as described by Jacobson et al. (2012), and both the mentor and the mentee seem to benefit from this learning experience.

One of the significant features of the HDN mentoring programme is that the mentor and the mentee are both from the housing sector but from different housing associations. Such an arrangement seems ideal to help mentees in dealing with workplace problems they may not want to share with their own managers (Dymock, 1999). In spite of this, Hatmaker et al. (2011) argue that organisational and task-based knowledge is tacit, grounded in the experience of more senior co-workers, supervisors and upper-level managers, and ties should be developed to access this information. This is not the case with HDN mentoring, as the mentor and the mentee are not co-workers. However, Baugh and Fagenson-Eland (2005) argue that nothing in the definition of mentoring suggests that the mentor and the mentee must be employed in the same organisation.

The HDN mentoring programme could be classed as contract mentoring. Patel et al. (2011) describe contract mentoring as 'formal mentoring that was created for a specific purpose within a set timeframe' (p. 419). Additionally, the HDN mentoring programme appears to have elements of competency mentoring. In competency mentoring, according to Patel et al. (2011), 'the mentor demonstrates and aids the mentee to achieve a set of competencies' (p. 419). Demonstrating how to perform surgery to a trainee surgeon (mentee) could be a crucial part of mentoring, as Patel et al's (2011) study was about the mentorship of newly qualified surgeons, but it does not seem appropriate in housing association mentoring. There was no evidence of any form of demonstration of skills as part of HDN mentoring. The mentors do certainly aid the mentee by sharing their experiences and wisdom, and facilitating reflection.

Clutterbuck, in his blog (12.04.2012) describes cross-organisational mentoring in which a small number of mentoring programmes are facilitated by a consortium of organisations for their employees. He asserts that some public sector organisations such as local authorities, health trusts, police and fire services have formed consortia to share resources. This study adds a sector-specific dimension of mentoring arrangements in which managers from under-represented groups received mentoring from senior executives of other housing associations. This study is not methodologically positioned to infer generalisation, but the large membership, as noted

earlier indicates that HDN mentoring might be widely used in the housing associations.

In summation, the HDN mentoring programme is focused on developing future leaders. Senior housing executives act as mentors, not mentees. The HDN mentoring programme does not have a mechanism in place to facilitate the mentoring of senior executives. The housing sector is significantly changing (Ward et al., 2010), and housing associations are increasingly becoming large and complex organisations. Senior housing executives who are leading their housing associations through a merger or transformational change might benefit from being mentored through this process. The HDN mentoring programme develops managers to implement change in their departments (but only if they belong to an under-represented group). It does not seem to help senior executives to initiate and manage organisational change. This gap is being filled by external coaches, who act as mentors to senior housing executives. This arrangement is discussed in the next section.

5.3. External coaches acting as mentors

Some participant senior housing executives were receiving mentoring from external coaches. One of the emerging themes was 'the development and growth of senior managers'. However, the mentoring agenda, according to the coaches, was not about the personal or professional development of the housing executives in readiness for the next promotion, but about dealing with the

challenges at hand. The underlying purpose of mentoring varied from identifying strategic direction, learning from the private sector or gaining an external perspective. This section reflects the experiences and observations of external coaches acting as mentors.

It comes across from one of the coach's accounts that some senior housing executives are struggling to find a strategic direction in the wake of organisational challenges.

There is a bit about, in these challenging times, how do you help senior management actually have a vision within an organisation? (Coach A).

The external coaches, who are the mentors in this arrangement, have broader experience, which includes working in and providing mentoring for different sectors, including the for-profit sector and entrepreneurship. This experience seems to have appealed to the senior executives in choosing their mentors. The coaches explained that they were approached by senior housing executives because *'we also work in [the] private sector, so we know [how the private sector works]'* (Coach C).

It is interesting to note that housing executives are looking to the private sector with a view to understanding how organisational change is managed as a result of a merger or restructure. This out-of-sector perspective enables housing executives to address some of their own issues effectively. In some cases the quest for innovation

and entrepreneurship seems to be the motive behind the choice of mentor, as one of the participants explained:

Well, the reason that people may approach us [for mentoring] is because we have managed businesses as well (Coach E).

Other reasons included the 'nurturing skills of the mentors' and the 'objectivity' they could offer, according to Coach E.

Newly appointed or promoted senior housing executives can benefit from the nurturing skills of the mentors by developing ideas for revenue generation. At the same time, experienced housing executives wishing to launch new initiatives would find the nurturing skills and objectivity of the mentors useful. External coaches provide not only a safe environment to explore fresh ideas but also an objective viewpoint about the workability and feasibility of any such ideas. Furthermore, they can help the senior executives in nurturing those ideas.

According to the participant executive coaches, some senior housing executives received mentoring while they were in the process of managing major changes in their organisations.

I have mentored an MD [managing director] ... that was with one of the bigger housing associations, when they were going through a lot of change (Coach A).

The change mentioned in the above quote included a large-scale internal restructure of different departments within a large housing

association. As noted in Chapter 2, change is the order of the day for housing associations. However, surprisingly, the data for this study does not show any evidence of peer mentoring at the executive level to deal with organisational change. Additionally, the mentoring programme facilitated by the HDN does not include merger- or transformational change-related mentoring for senior executives. The managers who do receive HDN mentoring are not in a position to initiate organisation-wide change through their personal and professional development as a direct result of the mentoring. This is because they hold operational rather than strategic positions in the organisational hierarchy. Therefore they are only responsible for implementing changes in their own departments.

Cases of executives seeking mentoring from external coaches for their nurturing and entrepreneurial skills, as described by the participants, could be interpreted in a number of ways: (1) the executives could be considering incorporating some of the practices adopted by the private sector; (2) it could be seen as a skills deficit in the areas of entrepreneurship and change management among the current mentors within the housing sector; or (3) it could possibly be due to the commercial sensitivity and confidentiality necessitated by the complex organisational change within the housing sector.

The scope of this out-of-sector mentoring seems to be more wide-ranging than traditional mentor–protégé relationships. This type of mentoring provides additional confidentiality for commercially

sensitive issues, and also provides the mentees with an opportunity to benefit from the mentors' experience in exploring innovative entrepreneurial initiatives.

Executive mentoring discussed in this section is an example of out-of-sector mentoring, which is not uncommon according to Jacobson et al. (2012), because such an arrangement would benefit senior housing executives looking for innovative ideas to manage change. The challenge for public-sector leaders is to be brave, competent and passionate if they want to foster innovation and entrepreneurship (Bóo, 2008). Mentoring can help in managing and coping with the pace of change (Garvey, 2004; Bamford, 2011).

To take up the challenge of being innovative and brave, as noted by Bóo (2008), housing executives have to explore and identify opportunities to save costs and generate additional income in their housing associations. The mentoring relationship needs to be based on openness and trust (Dymock, 1999), which might be hard to achieve if both the mentor and mentee were senior executives in different housing associations, because of commercial sensitivity.

Findings of this study add to the growing body of mentoring literature. Reduction in grant funding demands that housing executives identify innovative ways to manage the finances of their housing associations, for example launching new income generating initiatives such as 'for profit arms of the housing associations' or cost saving initiatives for instance mergers or reorganisations. The

sensitive nature of such financial and commercial interests of the housing associations would not allow a peer mentoring relationship based on openness and trust. The out of sector mentoring service offered by executive coaches can help housing executives in their strategic decision making.

5.4. Peer mentoring as part of post-merger staff induction

Peer mentoring in the housing associations was initially coded under job shadowing, buddy system and peer mentoring, as shown in appendix 10. These codes were later on collapsed into the 'peer mentoring' focus code because of the similar nature of these activities. In addition to peer mentoring, housing associations involved in this study also used induction mentoring as part of the post-merger staff induction programmes. As the housing association mergers resulted in some sort of restructure, one of the aims of this induction mentoring was to familiarise staff with the new organisational structure.

We had induction; you put a couple of days aside and obviously, because you are new, you get to be introduced to all the people working in different departments and find out exactly what is going on in every department (Officer B).

The induction mentoring helps staff in understanding the roles and responsibilities of their colleagues working in different departments. The housing associations use this opportunity to make staff aware of

the culture, vision and strategic objectives of the housing group. The executives described the mentoring programme as a mechanism to welcome new arrivals into the housing group and share the strategic vision with them, right from the beginning.

We have a structured induction programme, where [staff from the merged housing association] come in, they meet the staff, they have a number of different presentations about the key parts of the organisation and then [have a] meeting [with] the various teams. So they spend a little bit of time with each of the teams just to see what they all do, to get to know people (Executive P).

The structured nature of the induction mentoring highlights the importance of teamwork in housing associations. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of different teams through presentations and then meeting and spending time with colleagues from different teams should enhance team cohesion. Through the induction programme, the executives of this study wished the colleagues from the merged housing associations to feel welcomed to the new housing group. This induction programme was clearly beneficial for the employees and the housing groups. There was an opportunity to get to know colleagues from other departments so there was a sense of belonging after a tiresome change period, according to the officers. Officer B mentioned job security as a reason for concern and uncertainty during the course of the merger.

We were concerned ... it [the change] was daunting ... you could see on peoples' faces ... managers were saying business as usual, but we knew it wasn't business as usual ... it was frustrating, actually (Officer B).

However, after the merger, the new housing group offered mentoring to help the officers settle in.

When I came over here, there was a programme, a mentoring programme, and a checklist as well, that each mentor has to go through ... quite a lot of interesting stuff in there ... stuff like [the] company's vision, what [the] company can offer, stuff like that (Officer A).

Officer A said that mentoring helped them settle in.

I'm happy we've come over, definitely, because there was uncertainty at first, you know, the job security and things like that, but after coming over and settling in now within the company things are a lot, looking a lot more brighter and better (Officer A).

Human factors such as stress and anxiety arising from uncertainty and concerns about job security during the course of a housing association merger appear to have been allayed as a result of the induction mentoring, as indicated by the following comments from participant executives and officers.

It is important for us to see the smooth transition ... we managed our processes very smoothly (Executive P).

We have gone through an induction programme, yeah, to help us settle into the new offices, meet with the staff, just learn a bit more about what the company's vision was, and obviously systems, some of the systems are fairly new to us (Officer A).

The friendly welcome and a structured programme gave the impression that the hectic change period was coming to an end, and ultimately resulted in reduced fear and insecurity. The programmes also provided positive vibes in the form of the strategic direction of the housing group. This study suggests that induction mentoring plays a crucial role in helping staff settle in after the housing association merger or restructure.

In addition to the induction mentoring, the housing associations offered peer mentoring for the new staff after the merger or restructure. This peer mentoring was comparatively less formal, longer term and only available to the non-managerial staff. The arrangement was referred to as the 'buddy system' or 'job shadowing' by the senior housing executives and officers.

So we were spending a lot of time with mentors, a buddy kind of system, yeah? (Officer A)

The time spent with the mentors in this buddy system was aimed at helping them learn the ropes. The buddy system appeared to be focused on operational aspects and the 'working processes' of the job, according to Officer A. The officers spent time finding out about the roles of their colleagues in other departments, to appreciate and learn how different teams were working in collaboration.

You really learn the process; you shadow the housing officer, the income officer, to see what they do (Officer B).

As part of the peer mentoring, the mentors demonstrated their working practices, record-keeping requirements and their interaction with the tenants.

Obviously we had to get a lot of knowledge from these guys, you know, in terms of housing inspections and so on (Officer A).

It is important to clarify the distinction that participants of this study who received peer mentoring were not newly appointed, but they were new to the merged housing group. Allocating time with the preceptor and welcoming new members of staff through supportive and friendly interactions was also part of the induction process.

Two modes of peer mentoring, following the merger of housing associations, emerged from the data. In the case of a housing association joining the housing group, the processes and procedures of the group prevailed. Officials working in the housing group peer-

mentored their colleagues from the newly merged housing association. In the case of a 'merger of equals', where two housing groups merged to form a bigger group, the better-quality procedures were adopted. Senior executives participating in the study were quite open about the inconsistency in the quality of the processes and procedures among different housing associations and groups.

One part of the organisation [one housing group] is much more forward in terms of its processes, and its procedures are much more in line with the regulators, ... [whereas the other housing group] tended to be somewhat less concerned about the constitution and the regulation. So a lot of the systems that have been on one side of the organisation have been implemented in the other side (Executive A).

Implementing the 'better-quality' procedures of one housing group in the newly merged other group caused some disquiet and resistance. According to Executive A, *'the affected staff started to say "we are being taken over ... we are being told what to do" ... but the fact of the matter is the systems were better, and you have to go with what is best'*.

This indicates that peer mentoring in the merger of two housing groups might be more challenging than in a housing association merging with a group. This distinction, in my view, is important because of the potential staffing issues such as tension and conflict

during peer mentoring following the merger between the two housing groups.

Induction mentoring serves an important purpose in effective integration, according to some authors such as Garvey (2004), Dymock (1999) and Thurston et al. (2012). Describing the induction process, Fox et al. (2005) conclude that induction for new staff members includes the provision of adequate guidance and assistance through buddying with a preceptor. In line with the findings of Dymock (1999), induction mentoring appears to provide mentees with a broader understanding of the housing association's policies and corporate vision. In an empirical study Thurston et al. (2012) noted that mentoring programmes offered leaders a way to influence the characteristics of individual employees in a way that can be beneficial to both the employee and the organisation. The housing associations seemed to use induction mentoring to portray corporate vision to the employees after the merger.

Patel et al. (2011: p. 419) describe the induction programme for trainee surgeons as an example of pseudo-mentoring: mentoring in 'appearance only', which focused on specific tasks for a short period of time. It is true in the case of housing associations that the induction mentoring was generally for two weeks, but it was not in appearance only. This was aimed at helping merged staff to settle into the new (in the case of a housing association merging with a housing group) or changed (two or more previously independent

housing groups merging to form a bigger housing group) housing group.

Peer mentoring has been discussed by some authors, like Siegel (2000), Fox et al. (2005) and Patel et al. (2011) in the context of newly appointed staff. Kram and Isabella, (1985); Siegel, (2000); and Hatmaker et al., (2011) found the formal or informal peer relationship useful, whereas, Patel et al. (2011) described peer mentoring as pseudo-mentoring in their model. However, according to Hatmaker et al. (2011) job shadowing or peer mentoring is helpful in understanding and adapting to the new ways of working following the merger. It can enhance enculturation and embeddedness within the organisation. The peer mentoring used in the housing associations, had an element of 'competency mentoring' (Patel et al., 2011), as the mentors demonstrated to their colleagues how they were doing their job. In contrast to Siegel's (2000) findings, mentoring in housing associations seem to help in dealing with organisational change-related uncertainty, stress and anxiety.

This study adds to two different aspects of the mentoring literature, from the housing association perspective. Firstly, peer mentoring is not only deemed relevant for newly appointed staff, but some housing associations use it after the merger as well. Secondly, in a merger situation, peer mentoring can be seen by the participants negatively or positively, depending on the relative position of their employer. In the case of a small housing association merging with a

large group, peer mentoring is valued by staff according to the data collected for this study. Whereas, in a merger of equals, the employees receiving peer mentoring to learn new procedures after the merger might show antipathy towards it. This study adds to the peer mentoring literature, the element of apprehension among peers in the merger of equals and its adverse impact on the post-merger peer mentoring relationships.

5.5. Mentoring tenants into employment

Housing association mergers and transformational changes are linked to the provision of better-quality, cost-effective and efficient services for tenants. Housing executives are acutely aware of their responsibility to the tenants. Their priorities included: local involvement and providing neighbourhood solutions (Executive E), making a difference to the tenants' lives (Executive C), and addressing the housing needs of tenants (Executive B). In one case, the commitment was clearly matched with tangible actions. Executive P reiterated the pledge:

Everything we do is ploughed back into the very neighbourhood that we serve and the homes that we serve and the tenants we serve (Executive P).

As part of their transforming neighbourhoods initiative, the housing association mentored tenants into employment. Some of the properties owned and managed by this housing association are

situated in the top ten most deprived areas in the UK. There is high unemployment and the neighbourhoods are cluttered with antisocial issues, including loan sharks, drugs and gun-related crimes. In an effort to transform the neighbourhoods, the housing association has already introduced different initiatives to improve its housing estates. These initiatives include police surgeries in local housing offices and joint walkabouts of the estates, in which tenant groups and housing officials go round and meet tenants on their doorsteps. The housing association is now using mentoring to help their unemployed tenants. The initiative was led by a manager who had the support of the board of directors of the housing association. The participant executive described the initiative as follows:

The manager has taken real steps to get people into employment, people who have been long-term unemployed. [He] provides them with a job, [and] mentors them into that job to keep them going, to make sure that they get properly trained (Executive P).

As part of this initiative, tenants in long-term unemployment were offered on-the-job training and mentoring to equip them with employability skills. When the manager felt that these tenants were fully trained, then they were supported with their job application and mentored for the interview process. Describing the outcome of the mentoring programme, the executive said:

We've now sustained full-time permanent employment for nineteen individuals (Executive P).

Mentoring tenants into employment offered corporate rewards for the housing association. Additionally, the mentees become ambassadors of the housing association.

Mentoring tenants into employment is an example of apprenticeship mentoring. Patel et al. (2011: p. 419) explained that in apprenticeship mentoring, 'the mentee learns by observing and emulating mentor's skills'. But clearly the unemployed tenants would not have been in a position to secure jobs by merely observing and emulating their mentor's skills. The mentor demonstrated and aided the mentees in learning and practising their skills to achieve a set of competencies, which is described by Patel et al. (2011) as competency mentoring. So a programme for mentoring tenants into employment is a combination of apprenticeship mentoring and competency mentoring, according to the classification of Patel et al. (2011).

Mentoring tenants into employment seems to illustrate Oliver and Aggleton's (2002) contention that the apprenticeship model of mentoring incorporates 'watching and emulating experienced professionals in the workplace' (p. 33). The recognition of mentoring manager's work at high profile award ceremonies can enhance the sense of achievement and motivation of the recipient and have considerable value both for the mentor (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005) and the housing association.

Learning and development in the housing associations through mentoring adds to the work of Oliver and Aggleton (2002) and Lord et al. (2008), who note that mentoring is widely used in the local government and not-for-profit sectors in the UK. HDN mentoring and senior executives' mentoring by external coaches are examples of transformative learning. The double-loop learning (Argyris, 1987) addresses personal assumptions, challenges beliefs (Henderson, 2002) and improves practice through ongoing critical reflection. Conversely, tenant, peer and induction mentoring focused on passing on skills and showing the ropes. According to Argyris and Schön (1978), where the emphasis is on techniques and making techniques more efficient, it is single-loop learning. This leads to development but not the transformation.

I am aware of different initiatives used by housing associations to engage with and help their tenants. I had not come across mentoring tenants into employment before; perhaps this initiative is not widespread. Nevertheless, this finding contributes to the mentoring literature as well as informing housing officials, some of whom, like myself, might not have heard about it before.

The analysis in this chapter has illustrated different mentoring programmes used within housing associations. Mentoring is also utilised in housing associations for the learning and development of tenants, as well as for housing officials, such as front-line officers, managers and senior executives. Furthermore, after the merger,

housing associations use induction mentoring to address any stress or anxiety.

Due to the diverse range of developmental needs of mentees and mentors from the housing sector, a single mentorship model would not be appropriate. To accommodate most, if not all, variables would make any such model too complex, and its universal application questionable. Significant variations regarding the classification and delivery of mentoring programmes across the sector are shown in Figure 5.2.

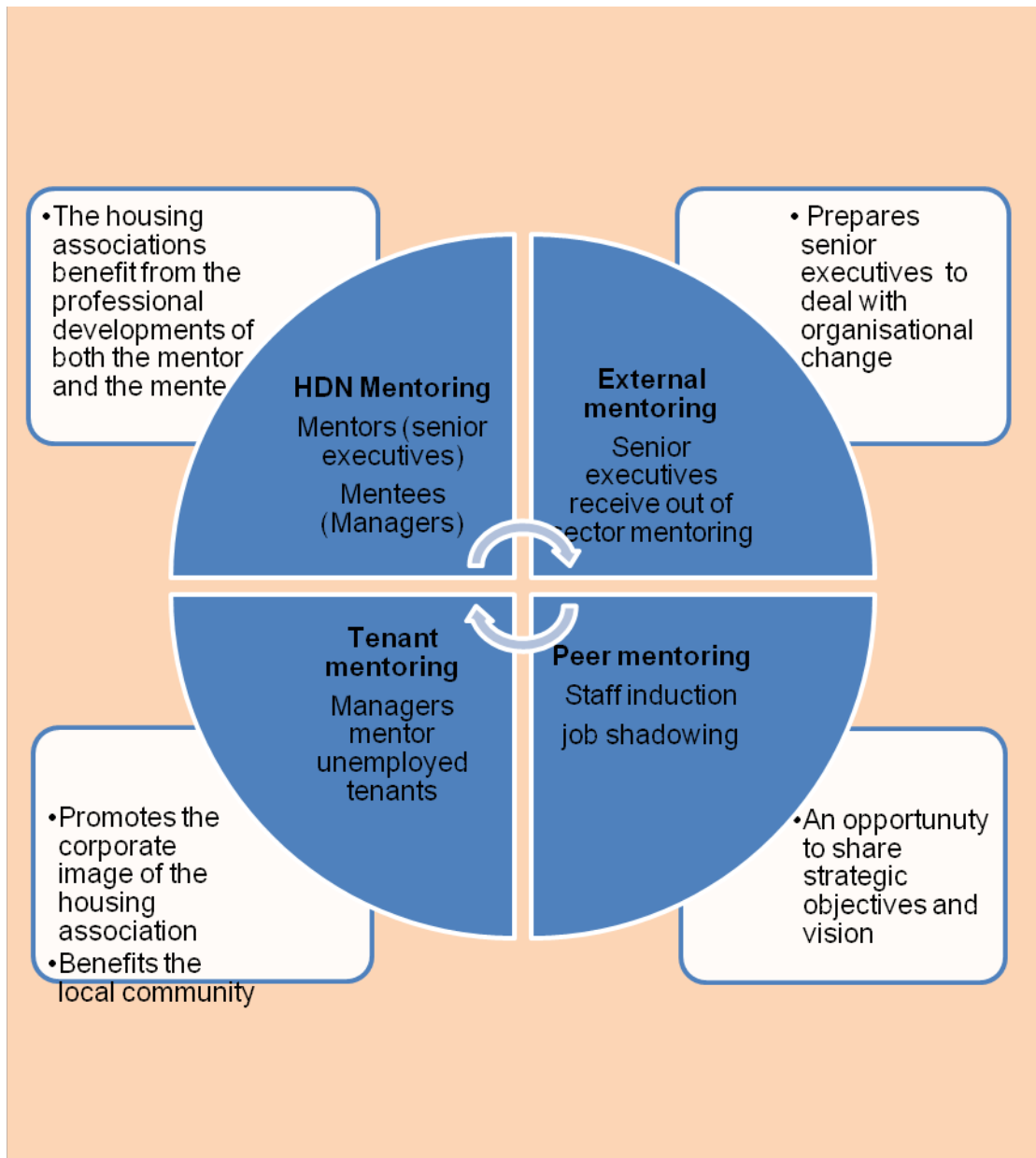


Figure 5.2: Mentoring in housing associations

A common feature of the four mentoring programmes illustrated in Figure 5.2 is that they all enhance the learning and development of both the mentors and the mentees. Cox (1999: p. ii) classed mentoring as a 'burgeoning activity' occurring in various organisational settings. A report by McKimm et al. (2007) discusses the mentoring schemes used in different professional settings, such

as medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and education. This study adds to the body of mentoring literature from the merger and transformational change aspect of the housing association sector.

Before summarising the merits of these mentoring initiatives individually, the complexity of interlinking various programmes is discussed here. Each programme has its unique features, so it is not right to bundle them together. However, by interlinking common features, some meaningful conclusions can be reached to inform mentoring practice, the transformational change and mentoring literature, and transformative learning theory.

5.6 Summary

In the HDN mentoring and induction and peer mentoring, both the mentor and the mentee are serving housing officials but the nature of the mentoring relationship is different. The HDN provides a platform for housing managers to learn from the best in the housing sector. Thus the housing sector benefits from the community of competent practitioners. The programme helps in the personal and professional development of both the mentor and the mentee. In contrast, the induction and peer mentoring help the housing associations to manage post-merger stress, and provide an opportunity for mentees to familiarise themselves with how different departments and teams work. Senior housing executives use induction mentoring to reinforce the strategic objectives of the housing association. Peer mentoring,

in contrast, is focused on how to perform day-to-day activities. The peer mentoring helps new colleagues to ease into the job, and hence reduces the learning curve for housing officers. It provides much-needed solace and friendship under the new structure. But in the case of a merger of equals, peer mentoring can create tension among colleagues from different housing groups when the processes and procedures are streamlined after the merger, because staff members learning the processes and procedures from their peers might resent it.

In the arrangement where external coaches provide mentoring for senior housing executives, this helps in bringing out-of-sector experience to solve housing-related strategic issues by incorporating and adapting ideas from the for-profit sector. This further enhances confidentiality, which might be critical in having a competitive advantage. Hence, housing executives receive mentoring to find innovative solutions to the issues faced by their housing associations. External coaches provided mentoring to some of the senior executives to help them effectively manage organisational change, or to rediscover a strategic vision and perspective in a rapidly changing housing sector. The advantages of this out-of-sector mentoring include innovative ideas, entrepreneurial acumen and reflective space. However, this mentoring is most suitable for senior executives who are taking their housing associations through organisational change. As the housing sector-related experience of external coaches might not be up to date, there appears to be a gap

in this as well as the HDN mentoring programme for senior executives seeking mentoring. There was no evidence of peer mentoring for senior executives according to the data collected for this study.

In mentoring their tenants, housing associations show their care for the communities they serve. This has a positive impact on social housing neighbourhoods. Housing associations are appraised for such initiatives locally and nationally. Such praise and recognition helps in raising the profile of the housing associations. These initiatives could help in attracting additional grant funding for additional mentorship opportunities, which would ultimately lead to a reduction in unemployment-related crimes. Mentoring tenants into employment is an example of how housing associations are connecting with and helping their tenants. It must be noted that mentoring tenants into employment is not commonly used by housing associations. As the manager responsible for running this initiative received an award at a national ceremony, this indicates that some other housing associations are using similar initiatives to help their local communities.

Mentoring programmes in the housing associations of this study are different from the five mentoring models presented by Patel et al. (2011). Despite the fact that both the surgeons and housing officials work in the not-for-profit sector, these mentoring models are not replicable in the housing sector. Trainee surgeons have similar

professional qualifications at the time of mentoring, whereas mentees within the housing sector cover a diverse range from unemployed tenants to senior executives. This study did not find any evidence of team mentoring in housing associations. The contract mentoring, however, had two strands: sector specific and out of sector. I have argued that all mentoring programmes benefit housing associations; however, two mentoring programmes, (1) out-of-sector contract mentoring and (2) induction and peer mentoring, are specifically used to deal with housing association mergers and organisational restructuring.

CHAPTER 6

COACHING IN HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 I discussed the use of mentoring in housing associations to manage change, to ensure the swift integration of staff after the merger, and to enhance the employability of their tenants. In this chapter, I consider the role of coaching in housing associations. In the previous chapter it was argued that all forms of mentoring interventions in this study are used in a positive context to develop the mentees. Conversely, coaching seems to have a more mixed use in the housing sector. This chapter is informed by data from the participant coaches and housing executives, as none of the participant officers had received any form of coaching. All officers had received mentoring, which was discussed in the previous chapter. The focus codes of performance coaching, developmental coaching and team coaching are discussed here, along with the potential role of coaching after the merger.

Some housing associations use coaching to improve the performance of their under-performing managers and executives. Coaching in these housing associations appears to have negative connotations, as the recipients are seen as lacking certain skills and capabilities. The context in which coaching is used to prod housing

officials as part of their performance management is discussed in the section on performance coaching in this chapter.

Developmental coaching is utilised in some housing associations to develop talented staff members. This study found that first-time chief executives, as well as some experienced executives who were implementing transformational changes in housing associations for the first time, received coaching for confidence building and to determine the future direction of their housing associations. Coaching for the confidence building of senior executives is discussed under developmental coaching as well.

The findings show that some housing associations are using team coaching to enhance team cohesion and to cultivate innovative ideas. There was no indication of team mentoring in the housing associations involved in this study, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Team coaching is used in some housing associations to bring different teams together to deal with emotionally charged situations after the merger.

The participant housing executives have plans to include coaching as part of staff development initiatives. My data collection started soon after some of the housing associations had merged, so their human resources policies were still being streamlined. However, the executives anticipated that coaching would form part of their staff development strategy. Similarly, the coaches expected coaching to play an important role in the development of housing association

executives. The potential future of coaching in housing associations is evaluated in this chapter.

6.2 Coaching for underperforming directors

The 'coaching for underperformance' focus code is derived from 'performance coaching', 'coaching for performance management' and 'coaching to improve performance' initial codes. This research showed that some housing associations view coaching as a cure to improve the performance of the members of staff who are falling short of their organisational targets. In these housing associations, there seems to be a stigma attached to coaching. Rather unsurprisingly, staff working in these housing associations did not want to receive coaching. As one of the senior housing executives said:

It is not often a member of staff would come forward and say, 'I want some coaching' (Executive B).

It emerges from the data that within two out of the five housing associations of this study, coaching is viewed negatively. This might not be representative of all housing associations, but the fact that two separate housing associations, which operate in different parts of the UK, attach negative connotations to coaching, shows that this topic is worthy of further exploration. Executive D described the process of organising coaching as follows:

Normally the conversations had been prompted in the first place because there had been an issue ... where some kind of deficit had been identified by me, you know, and then we put coaching in place (Executive D).

In this housing association, a performance deficit noted by line managers and senior executives seemed to initiate conversations that result in the underperforming manager or executive receiving coaching. However, coaching for underperformance appears to be distinct from other forms of coaching in housing associations. How coaching as well as mentoring are perceived and understood by housing executives and external coaches, is further discussed in Section 6.6. The underperformance of housing officials initiates external coaching; however, as the following quote from Executive B indicates, this form of coaching is not commissioned as a first resort.

It is more to the line management responsibility in discussion perhaps with directors that they get to a stage where they were thinking maybe some external help might encourage that person ... to improve their performance (Executive B).

In these cases, the issues affecting the senior manager's performance are discussed, and a plan of action for improvement is agreed between the underperforming senior managers or directors and their line managers. As noted earlier, the accounts of the participants confirm that the housing officers did not receive any coaching, so all forms of coaching, including performance

management or corrective coaching discussed in this section, were focused at managers and directors. The coaches were hired by the line managers in the housing association, who held very senior positions such as senior director or chief executive.

You know, I personally went to [hire a] coach for a couple of them – we are talking about directors here ... that was mainly to address particular issues [helping their subordinates through a change], mainly about how they can improve their performance (Executive D).

In such housing associations, where coaching is used or perceived as a corrective mechanism, housing officials will not come forward to request coaching for personal development. Because of this stigma, some executives explained why they never received any coaching themselves.

I don't think I have ever worked with people that have seen it [coaching] as important enough (Executive A).

I didn't receive any coaching ... it is just something that never came up for me (Executive B).

In the housing associations where coaching is linked with poor performance, the executives seem to opt for training, as opposed to coaching for their leadership development.

I have had quite extensive training; I have been on various leadership programmes and things. So I think [in my case] it

has been more on a training angle, whereas some people might have gone for coaching and mentoring (Executive B).

Some authors, such as Ellinger et al. (2003), Toit (2007), Peterson (2009) and Robinson-Walker (2012) believe that there is a link between coaching and poor performance. The findings of this study add to this body of literature, as some housing executives hire coaches to improve the performance of their subordinates. Peterson (2009: p. 127) classed coaching for underperformance or not meeting important expectations, as 'performance management' and differentiated it from developmental coaching, which according to him is 'forward looking'. Bachkirova (2011: p. 1) started the introduction of her book with this sentence: 'coaches often say that their coaching is developmental, but when asked what they mean by this, the answers are always very different.' She observed that in some cases, descriptions of developmental coaching are 'practically indistinguishable from any other type of coaching' (p. 1). Developmental coaching is discussed in the next section.

In agreement with the findings of Robinson-Walker (2012) that most health care and nurse leaders in the United States still view coaching as a code for an intervention for poor performance, this study indicates that some housing associations in the UK have the same view.

In summation, within some housing associations, coaching is viewed as an external intervention to help underperforming managers and

executives. The examples of underperformance provided by the participants related to staffing issues, inadequate staff management and the inability to provide leadership during organisational change. The use of coaching to deal with performance deficit by some housing associations seems to portray coaching as an off-putting prospect for housing officials who might wish to receive coaching for their professional development. For their leadership development, executives chose training and mentoring. Two housing executives (Executives B and D), who perceived coaching as a 'corrective mechanism' for their underperforming colleagues, found mentoring useful for their own leadership development.

In the existing coaching and mentoring literatures, there is no relationship between performance coaching and mentoring. Whereas, in this study, data suggests that in some housing associations, performance coaching and mentoring might be inversely related. This potential relationship has to be explored in future studies to inform coaching and mentoring practitioners. Additionally, the use of coaching to deal with under-performing senior executives appears to have been overlooked by scholars in the UK. This study addresses the gap by making a small contribution to this strand of literature.

6.3 Developmental coaching

In this section different characteristics of developmental coaching within housing associations are presented. The emerging theme,

'developmental coaching' is made up of different initial codes, including 'executive coaching', 'senior management coaching', 'strategy coaching', 'confidence coaching' and 'one to one coaching' as shown in appendix 10. Coaching in some housing associations is used for various developmental purposes, such as to enhance leadership potential, to improve financial or entrepreneurial skills or to boost the confidence of newly appointed housing executives. Some housing associations utilised coaching to polish the leadership potential of aspiring managers. According to Coach C, housing associations identified managers for coaching based on their past performance and potential for development.

Some people had the coaching because they had been identified by the organisation, through knowing them over the past few years, as a real potential (Coach C).

Coaching in this context focused on releasing the full potential of housing officials. Some housing associations used coaching to exploit the potential to generate income, save costs and introduce additional services for the tenants from the cost savings or additional revenue. In one case, the financial management skills and confidence acquired through coaching led to the launch of a housing association's commercial arm:

So, one organisation that we have done that work with at the moment has just set up a commercial arm (Coach C).

New processes and procedures were developed and implemented across the merged housing groups, or as part of a transformational change, to develop new and efficient ways of doing business. Coaching was seen as an enabler of new ways of working.

*Where the coaching is successful, it is about establishing a different way of working, [a] different way of thinking for the organisation, and part of it very quickly becomes: how does it [the new way of working] go through the organisation?
(Coach E)*

Housing associations are shifting their financial models to incorporate income-generating initiatives. There is an emphasis on cost reductions and the swift implementation of new working practices after the merger. Senior executives provide leadership to implement change and establish efficient procedures in their housing associations. Executive D explained that in her housing association, performance and developmental coaching were used to address organisational needs.

We have our external coaches, which we bring in, depending on the need; as I said, it could be performance coaching, it could be development coaching, it really depends on what the situation is (Executive D).

In the housing associations where coaching was seen positively as a developmental intervention, it formed part of staff development

programmes, along with mentoring and training options. Hence some housing executives did experience receiving coaching as part of their professional development.

We have some management development programmes and we have sessions on coaching (Executive C).

In some cases the chief executives of the housing associations received coaching for confidence building. The factors necessitating confidence coaching varied, however. One participant, who was appointed as chief executive of a large housing association for the first time, described the situation as follows:

When I got this job, the first chief executive job, you don't get a rule book; you don't get anyone telling you what to do. I came in here, just rolled up my sleeves and got on with it (Participant identity withheld).

The first chief executive job of a large housing association can be daunting. However, in the case of some housing associations, the coaches acted as sounding boards and provided a safe reflective environment for first-time chief executives.

I'm a coach; I'm here to support and challenge them [executives] in a confidential way. So I think they just have that safe space to speak to me about what's working and what's not (Coach B).

Coaching was used to help some executives in determining the future direction of their housing association after the merger. All the merged housing groups of this study introduced a new group name and logo after the merger. The previous housing association names and logos were also kept and installed alongside the new group name and logo on the group websites and correspondence. So after the merger each housing association had two identities: the acquired group identity and their individual pre-merger identity. This process was called having an 'identity within an identity' by Executive C. In some cases senior housing executives received confidence coaching in creating a new organisational culture and a new group identity. These steps indicate that coaching is used for post-merger acculturation in housing associations. Coach C offered confidence coaching to empower the chief executives to deal with organisational identity and culture at the post-merger stage.

I coached the new chief executive in considering, defining what type of chief executive he wanted to be, what type of culture he wanted creating in the new organisation (Coach C).

Added confidence from coaching can help the executives in moving the organisation forward and exercising leadership. The data suggests that coaching was used by some chief executives for confidence building, either by newly appointed chief executives or by existing chief executives, to help them introduce a new organisational

culture following a merger. Some housing associations are incorporating coaching to develop leadership talent and to implement efficient working practices and procedures, which can be the start of a coaching culture in their respective housing associations. The accounts of participant coaches and some housing executives show that some housing associations are utilising coaching to develop their talented managers. Robinson-Walker (2012) used the term 'diamonds in the rough' (p. 12) to describe such talent. There seems to be an indication of coaching culture in some housing associations where coaching is arranged to cater for the developmental needs of housing officials. The coaching culture, according to Boyce and Hernez-Broome (2011), can be used to create a competitive advantage. This could indicate that housing associations are becoming financially (Lam, 2009) and procedurally efficient.

Boyce and Hernez-Broome (2011) assert that coaching practices are evolving to address the needs of the changing nature of leadership and organisations. Leadership skills can be enhanced by coaching (Trenner, 2013): some housing associations are incorporating coaching to develop leadership talent, especially for newly appointed first time senior executives. Fischer and Beimers (2009) noted that the cliché of it being 'lonely at the top' (p. 507) could be no more relevant than it was among executives in the non-profit sector.

The use of confidence coaching to implement new organisational culture or to introduce new post-merger identity seems to be

consistent with social identity theory in mergers (Seo and Hill, 2005), as after the mergers all the participant housing associations were inaugurated with new group identities and logos. Tajfel (1972) defined social identity as 'the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups, together with some emotional and value significance to him of group membership' (p. 292). By creating a new group identity after the merger of housing associations while keeping the pre-merger housing association identities, the senior executives showed their support for the importance of emotional belonging for individuals.

This section illustrates that coaching was used by the housing associations under study to address the diverse developmental needs of housing executives. This included the first time appointment of chief executives, the selection of potential merger partners, the creation of a coaching culture and the introduction of a new group identity.

6.4 Team coaching

Team coaching in this study refers to arrangements where the whole team in the housing association received coaching together. Team coaching themes grounded in conversations with the participants included: (1) team coaching to challenge poor performance, (2) coaching for stagnated teams, and (3) coaching for effective teamwork. All the participant coaches had provided team coaching in housing associations and explicated different aspects of team

coaching at length. Nonetheless, only one housing executive used team coaching for her housing association, which is discussed below.

The said housing association participates in a 'Best Companies to Work for' initiative, in which independent workplace engagement specialists compile employee opinions and identify areas where companies can improve. As part of the Best Company's survey all staff members were subject to 360 degree feedback. The managers were rated by the teams they managed. This exercise provided the senior executives with an opportunity to assess the developmental needs of the managers.

We are able to say how our management here is regarded by staff across the organisation through the Best Company's survey (Executive P).

The executive believed that face-to-face communication with these managers was important. The managers were provided with thinking space; they were invited to reflect on their own practice and were challenged when they were not seen as boosting the mood of their colleagues. Feedback from staff members was used as an opportunity to reinforce the organisation's vision and to make the managers aware of the need for improvement.

I am crystal clear with people, in a nice way, in a respectful way, but I'll tell them straight; you know if something is

acceptable or not acceptable. I'll tell them straight, rather than being nice and not giving them the right message. They need to know the situation, so that they can do something to improve (Executive P).

The housing association did not leave the managers to their own devices for improvement, but brought in a well-known coach to accomplish a management development programme.

We brought [names a well-known coach] in, to do a full management development programme initially. And that was because we found that some managers were afraid to challenge poor behaviour from their seniors; that came through our Best Company survey, so we acted on that (Executive P).

The management development programme included elements of one-to-one coaching to address specific issues, coaching for team integration and confidence coaching for junior managers.

The coach did a lot of work with the teams and individuals to upscale them and make them feel more confident about what they could offer, and how they could respectfully challenge poor performance and poor attitude among the colleagues and the seniors (Executive P).

Since coaching in this housing association was initiated following feedback from colleagues, specific behavioural issues were explored

during one-to-one coaching, rather than during team coaching sessions.

Team coaching was used to facilitate innovative ideas among teams in some housing associations. A lack of innovative ideas was identified as a potential problem for housing associations going through difficult times, according to some of the coaches. One coach responsible for providing team coaching described the issues in these words:

There was something ... the bigger part, I think, was cultural and it was about an organisation, a well-established organisation that had done things in a similar way for many years; they didn't really challenge themselves. When we profiled, the organisation was primarily fearsome. You haven't got a lot of people who are coming out with new ideas, who are driving things forward. Actually, the biggest contributing factors were the leadership and the culture in the organisation (Coach B).

This indicates that even well-established housing associations, by just maintaining the status quo, can find themselves in a problematic situation. Coaching in these circumstances can help housing officials to challenge their routine working practices and ingrain innovation. According to the participant coaches, team coaching was used in housing associations to develop fresh ideas and to embed an innovative organisational culture.

Team coaching was tailored for the developmental needs of different management levels. The developmental needs depended on organisational objectives, an individual's leadership style, and his or her position in the organisation and level of self-awareness.

I am working with the executive team in a housing association, team coaching, so we are coaching the whole executive team (Coach A).

I work with the executive team on an individual basis ... improving their leadership to meet the [needs of the] whole organisation and their teams. Then I work with the other managers looking at their leadership, anything from self-awareness of their role as leaders and managers, including how they lead their teams (Coach B).

Team coaching was used to improve joint accountability and responsibility. Providing an example of team coaching in a housing association, Coach A explained the remit:

You have got the CEO and the executive team, so there is a lot about helping them to work more effectively as a team. I am looking at challenges they have got, growing a business, managing in a changing environment. [They] worked well together but didn't have joint accountability. We have done two [coaching] workshops with them now, so there has been quite significant change in the way they operate as a team,

much more collective objectives, and the whole team embracing the accountability.

But in the changing environment of housing associations, skills and capability have to be complemented with joint accountability, according to Coach A. The participant coaches noted that the logistics of team coaching contributed to team integration, as the coachees were spending more time together than before. This proximity aided the elimination of communication barriers.

They know more about each other [now]. One of the spin-offs from all of this has been [that] because they get together for their workshops, as they are all getting coaching, they are talking to each other (Coach B).

As part of the team coaching process, according to the coaches, the team members reflected on their practice as members of multiple teams. The thinking space supported reflection and joint accountability, and cohesiveness could be improved by utilising team coaching after housing association mergers. In this section, I have argued that team coaching is instrumental in bringing dispersed teams together. Team coaching in due course results in the joint exploration of innovative ideas, and enhances team integration. I will now discuss how too much closeness could be counterproductive for housing associations.

In some cases the coaches noted that too much closeness was a hindrance to teamwork in housing associations. Staff members were oversensitive to each other's emotional state and did not want to say anything to hurt someone's feelings at the post-merger stage. Being responsive to the feelings and emotions of colleagues in a supportive way could be important to enhance collegiality and improve working relationships, but in some situations the coaches observed that this was leading to too much cosiness, which got in the way of creativity.

They got on as a team quite well but they weren't particularly good at challenging each other, and you know that's a creative side of confrontation (Coach A).

Team coaching was seen as having a positive impact on the management team of the recently merged housing groups. Coaches noticed that senior managers initially did not want to hurt the feelings of their colleagues by challenging each other shortly after the housing group merger. But coaching gave the managers self-belief, which was evident in the way they conducted themselves.

[They were] more prepared to confront each other to have healthy discussion, not just nice and cosy, and build that relationship, that trust, by actually talking about the difficult things ... be[ing] prepared to be vulnerable with their colleagues (Coach A).

The coaches noted that understanding and sharing vulnerabilities was more important and productive for team members than shielding and suppressing emotions. Team coaching provided that safe space and confidence to discuss and positively use emotions.

Definitely a greater confidence, that is probably the biggest thing; they are more confident in what it is that they are there to do as leaders and managers (Coach B).

The confidence appeared to have augmented self-belief, which was seen by the coaches as an important gateway for innovative ideas and new breakthroughs.

With this confidence comes more of an ability to try new things, to challenge themselves, to challenge each other. They think it's okay to have new ideas now, to try things (Coach B).

The coaches noted significant change in the attitude of teams, evidenced by their team ethics.

They are talking about emotions and feelings where I don't think they came up at all before ... they have actually sometimes briefed their teams together (Coach A).

Team coaching helped the members of multiple teams in understanding and appreciating that in some cases different teams in the housing associations had conflicting priorities at the operational level. So coaching was used to highlight the mismatch between

operational and strategic objectives. During the course of the team coaching, the coaches observed a change in the organisational focus by some managers.

Teams are actually behaving and saying things differently than they did at the beginning. One of the very cynical people who saw himself leading his professional team is now talking about 'this is my first team, my second team is my professional team,' so complete change of attitude and much more awareness of the challenges that they've got as a team (Coach A).

Team coaching also brought senior managers from different housing departments together, in the sense of looking at strategic issues from each other's perspective.

So there is a bit of clarity of purpose, and there is much more of a sense of organisation. As they worked very dispersed before and didn't know what the other parts were necessarily doing, they didn't really care, to be quite honest (Coach B).

Some of the data in this chapter comes from the views of coaches on the outcomes of their own coaching, so there might be an issue of bias, such as self-promotion and an opportunity to brag about their coaching skills. The coaches explained how they observed changes in the behaviours and working practices of participants from different teams.

So there have been quite significant changes in the way they operate as a team ... the way they operate in meetings, there is acceptance from teams. They are actually behaving and saying things differently than they did at the beginning ... they are doing joint presentations (Coach A).

In the case of the housing associations in this study, only the behavioural imperfections of the senior management team were observed by their juniors, and reported in the form of 360 degree feedback. These behavioural deficiencies were rectified through external intervention, in the form of coaching. A lack of innovation, leading to stagnation within the housing associations, was an issue. This shows that housing associations might benefit from coaching interventions. Senior managers from different teams within housing associations met during the course of coaching, which led them to work more cohesively. The self-belief from coaching resulted in healthy confrontation between team members and the confidence to challenge each other and to discuss innovative ideas and new breakthroughs.

To achieve optimal levels of performance, teams ought to have the necessary skills and capability (Morgeson et al., 2010). Team coaching can create meaningful and lasting change for individual team members, the team as a whole, and the organisation that the team serves, according to Anderson et al. (2008). A combination of one-to-one and team coaching was argued for by Haug (2011), as it

helps in building trust between the coach and the coachee. Team coaching was tailored to meet the specific requirements of the housing association, which included improved performance, lasting change and creating a friendly and trusting environment for the team members.

Team coaching workshops provided an opportunity for managers to reflect on their own practice. Mulgan and Albury (2003) found that an overwhelming proportion of senior managers' time was spent on dealing with day-to-day issues, and they had very little space to think about alternative ways of delivering the service. In this context, team coaching in the housing associations under study provided thinking space.

Seo and Hill (2005) state that joint accountability enhances team integration and can reduce post-merger anxiety. The data for this study supports this assertion. Team coaching helped senior executives to recognise the importance of joint accountability. Senior executives reviewed strategic challenges from each other's perspective. In some cases they prepared and delivered joint presentations and team briefs.

The theory of dynamic team leadership by Kozlowski et al. (2009) stated that repeated interactions allow team members to support one another, build trust, and generate a shared mental model of team processes. However, they did not take the emotional revolution into consideration. As noted above, dealing with emotions was an

important part of team coaching in the housing associations after the merger. Participants in team coaching described a number of emotions, such as 'preparing to be vulnerable' and 'talking about emotions and feelings'. This illustrates Kiefer's (2002) identification of a range of emotions resulting from mergers, such as frailty and vulnerability.

6.5 Role of coaching after mergers

All the participant executives said that the human resources departments and learning and development teams in their respective housing associations were considering including coaching as part of the staff development plan. The housing associations were in the process of streamlining their policies and procedures after the merger:

We are currently in the process of pulling together, how coaching has been provided to staff in both former organisations [before the merger]. And then we'll decide the best way for us to provide that for the new group (Executive B).

What we're doing here at the moment is developing our people strategy. I believe through our people strategy now going forward, we will have much more of an emphasis on coaching (Executive C).

To what extent coaching is incorporated into leadership programmes and to what degree housing associations benefit from these leadership programmes should be the subject of future research.

The participants identified several areas where coaching could potentially be beneficial for housing associations after a merger.

I think it could be a number of things ... developing staff, helping staff to be able to change ... new ways of working, as people have been designated to what the new posts are going to be, or people starting in new posts; it could be around working relationships, it could be dealing with change, it could be about developing them into the role or assisting them to make other choices (Executive B).

The potential contribution described above is in anticipation of the successful implementation of new staff development policies of which coaching would be an integral part. The scope for using coaching in housing associations after a merger is fairly broad, and can include areas of staff development, managing change, post-merger restructuring and exit coaching. However, in my study there was very little evidence of coaching prior to the merger, although the housing associations did arrange training events in readiness for the merger. Executive B made a reference to the leadership development programme in his housing association, and said:

There is an expectation that the quality of staff that we have would be able to deal with it [the merger]. However, having said that, ... we've done a collective training day, if you like. In terms of that being delivered in practice, the expectation is that the calibre of the people that we have will be able to do that (Executive B).

In the housing sector, the executives in this study were expected to show leadership while dealing with the housing association mergers. There were references to the leadership programmes the executives had attended. In some cases, coaching did form part of the leadership programmes, but as noted in Section 6.2 above, some executives who attended those leadership programmes did not receive any coaching themselves. One coach concluded as follows:

[T]he leaders have to have experienced it, because if they just heard about it, as a general rule they won't get it (laughs). You know, they get the theory of it, but just the impact that it can have, they don't get it until they experience it (Coach B).

In my own experience of housing association mergers, the mergers are not entirely handled by the executives of the housing associations. There are external consultants who are employed to explore the options and to advise the executives and the board about the possibility of a merger. There are financial due diligence reports about the viability of the potential merger and the risk profile of the

potential merger partners. Even to handle the merger process, external consultants, advisors and negotiators are hired to help the leadership team. However, the human side of the mergers is managed by the housing executives themselves. It was noted in the literature review that the success and failure of a merger depends on the successful integration of staff. So if the leadership development programmes equip the senior executives to deal with the mergers, it is imperative to examine the leadership development programmes in contexts other than just the merger. In the next chapter, organisation-wide developmental programmes are discussed along with the circumstances in which the housing associations used these programmes. Table 6.1 below shows different forms of coaching and mentoring used during the housing association mergers.

Table 6.1: Coaching and mentoring in the housing association mergers

| Stage of merger | Coaching and mentoring at different stages of merger |
|---------------------|---|
| Before merger | One-to-one coaching/executive mentoring for senior housing executives: to help housing executives make strategic decisions about potential merger partners. (Coach A, Coach E) |
| At pre-merger stage | Training for managers and directors: to prepare them for dealing with staff enquiries and uncertainties, having an open-door policy and listening to the concerns of staff members. (Executive B, Executive E) |
| During the merger | Communication and ongoing consultation with staff; road shows for staff and tenants; group chief executives attending different forums and answering questions raised by different stakeholders, such as tenant groups, neighbourhood teams and local boards. (Executive A, Executive C, Executive E) |
| Post-merger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence coaching for senior housing executives: to introduce new group identity. (Coach A, Coach C, Coach D) • Developmental coaching: to launch income generation initiatives. (Coach C, Executive A, Executive E) • Team coaching for managers: for swift post-merger integration. (Coach, A, Coach B) |

Housing executives seem to envision the potential benefits of embedding coaching within leadership development programmes after the merger. These benefits include, working relationships in the post-merger context, helping housing officials settle into the new roles, and in some cases exit coaching as well. This aspiration seems to be congruent with the existing literature. Boyce and Hernez-Broome (2011) argued that integrating coaching with leadership development would provide leaders with the required developmental experiences to incorporate coaching approaches into their leadership styles. With reference to public health professionals, Risley and Cooper (2011) suggested that adding coaching to professional development would enhance the capabilities of the existing and emerging workforce. Whereas, Anderson et al (2008) believe that coaching, in essence, is translating insights into meaningful actions. Housing associations appear to be committed about including coaching as part of their staff development policies.

This section has discussed potential areas of interest from the housing officials' perspective, where coaching is expected to be used when post-merger staff development policies are implemented. This might help executive coaches in devising their practices in accordance with the housing association requirements.

6.6 Indistinctiveness of coaching and mentoring

A prominent theme within the interviews for this study was the confusion about what was coaching and what was mentoring. This was not a specifically prompted line of questioning, but it emerged naturally during discussions. It was clear that several participants had different interpretations of coaching and mentoring. For example, Coach A described coaching and mentoring as being just labels:

I think that coaching and mentoring are labels ... people's understanding of it can be different; certainly I think they use a similar set of skills and the boundaries can overlap (Coach A).

Unsurprisingly, none of the participant coaches described themselves exclusively as a coach or a mentor, but as a coach and mentor. On reflection, this might have given the impression to the potential users of these services that they are similar, if not the same. Interestingly, the executives who were responsible for hiring coaches and mentors did not always have a clear distinction between coaching and mentoring either. In one housing association, both coaching and mentoring were utilised, but the executive noted the lack of clarity regarding the use of these terms.

We don't have anything formal in place that separates out coaching and mentoring (Executive C).

The coaches were aware that coaching as a concept is not fully understood by some of the housing associations. One coach, with many years' experience of working in the housing sector at board level, classed coaching as a new concept:

I would say coaching is a new concept, a young concept.

What I've observed is that there is limited understanding of the coaching, in terms of the public and social housing sector (Coach D).

This finding is therefore interesting on several levels. It adds the view from the housing association perspective to the ongoing debate and does give rise to a number of questions, such as: (1) If the origins of business coaching were traced to the 1980s (Zeus and Skiffington, 2005), then why is coaching still a new concept within the housing sector? (2) are the coaching and mentoring labels (as they come across in the data) exploited by the professionals? (3) Would housing associations benefit from a clear distinction between coaching and mentoring? (4) How would the advocates of coaching and mentoring fields perceive these findings?

In my view, the answers to some of these questions can be found in Section 6.2 of this chapter. This study does not provide any clear indication about why coaching is still a new concept in the housing association sector. It is evident that the connection between poor performance and coaching portrays coaching in an unfavourable light. Negativity attached to performance coaching along with a lack

of clarity between coaching and mentoring might lead to coaching being provided under the banner of mentoring. So in some housing associations, coaching might be provided in the name of mentoring. Furthermore, this assertion could explain the popularity of mentoring in the housing sector, which was noted in Chapter 5. I would argue that a clear distinction between coaching and mentoring might not have a noticeable impact on housing associations, as the required developmental interventions might still be available, albeit in the name of mentoring. But for coaching and mentoring to establish themselves as separate professions, to capitalise on their past success for marketing and branding, and to develop theoretical bases, a clear distinction between coaching and mentoring is of colossal importance.

6.7 Summary

In this chapter I discussed the role of coaching in housing associations. Coaching was seen as a new and young concept in the housing sector, which is evident from the descriptions of the participants in the study. Coaching in the housing sector appears to have different meanings to the executives who have received it and to those who have not. On the one hand, coaching is seen as an important developmental intervention used to enhance leadership skills, but on the other hand, it is exercised as a management tool to castigate underperforming senior managers. Because of these conflicting perceptions and practices, some participants favoured

mentoring or training instead of coaching for their professional development. But the situation was reversed for team coaching. In the previous chapter, it was pointed out that there was no evidence of team mentoring in housing associations according to this study. But this chapter highlighted that team coaching is used in merged housing associations to serve a variety of objectives, such as to generate innovative ideas, to upscale teams and to view the strategic objective of the housing associations from each other's perspective.

Interestingly, sometimes team coaching was used to bring different teams together to achieve organisational objectives, but at other times the role of team coaching was to overcome the togetherness and closeness, which was seen as restraining innovation in the housing associations. I would argue that the underlying objective of all forms of team coaching was to achieve the strategic objectives of the housing associations. The objectives in this study were to improve performance, generate additional revenue and uphold the 'Best Company' image of the housing associations. Team coaching enhanced joint accountability, shared the responsibility and provided a venue to discuss and explore fresh ideas.

All the executives acknowledged that their learning and development teams or human resources departments were considering coaching and mentoring to be part of the staff development strategy. This might eradicate some of the confusion about the definitions of coaching and mentoring as identified above.

By providing an analysis of the experiences and perceptions of the participants, this study provides some clarity about how coaching and mentoring interventions are used by merged housing associations. The use of coaching to embed training in the housing associations is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

USING COACHING TO EMBED TRAINING

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss how coaching is used in some housing associations to embed training. I also draw on the experiences and observations of coaches, who used a combination of teaching, training, mentoring and coaching to facilitate transformational changes in some housing associations. The study found that in certain cases poor transitional practices in the housing associations can lead to merger failures. Failures or partial failures of housing association mergers as observed by senior housing officials are also discussed in this chapter.

The coaches who were tasked to provide training and vocational qualifications found that some housing officials were promoted to the managerial roles based on their experience. These managers did not have formal leadership and management qualifications. The training included elements of teaching, assessment and development of managerial skills such as delegation and time management. This study found that coaching helped in embedding training in the housing associations.

Transformational change programmes were specially designed for the transformation of housing associations and were labelled by the coaches as: 'transformational change package', 'consultancy support

package' and 'turnaround package'. The main purpose of these programmes was to implement an organisation-wide change. Because of the similar nature of these programmes, and to avoid any confusion, these programmes are all referred to as 'transformational change programmes' for consistency throughout this chapter.

Poor transitional practices can delay post-merger integration or even lead to merger failures. However, merger failures in housing associations are not covered in the literature. This study found that some housing association mergers do fail. In one case, a housing association de-merged from the housing group, and in another case, the merger was seen as a partial failure, as the stated objectives of the merger were not achieved. The experiences of the housing executives in dealing with the mergers and de-mergers are also evaluated in this chapter.

7.2 How coaching is used to embed training

The training programmes were tailored to the specific requirements of the housing associations. In some cases the executives attached a requirement for the accreditation of the programmes or the inclusion of vocational elements. Coaching was used to embed training; confidence building and problem solving of the housing officials participating in these programmes. Coaching was also used to provide self-belief to the housing officials who were required to submit course work assignments as part of the programme. In two

out of three programmes discussed in this study, a vocational qualification for junior managers formed part of the programme.

[The chief executive] wanted the coach to have experience of working with [academic] qualifications, wanted the ILM [Institute of Leadership Management] programme to be accredited, but very much wanted it to be tailored to the organisation (Coach B).

Some managers who received vocational qualifications as part of this programme did not have any formal management qualifications or professional development experience, according to the participant coaches. These managers had been promoted to managerial-level jobs on the strength of their experience and long service. The course was aimed at improving staff development and achieving the specific learning outcomes required for the vocational qualification award.

I think that [it] would be fair to say people in leadership management positions may have come up through the ranks, so to speak, so perhaps started as workers. They had little if any formal development and certainly, you know, the thought of any academic development terrified them (Coach B).

The training leading to vocational and educational qualifications was organisation specific, and the staff members were encouraged to include real work-related issues as part of the problem-solving exercises. The Institute of Leadership Management (ILM) course

covered leadership theory, whereas real-life work examples provided a practical context, as the course was tailored for the housing association.

The ILM course has a theoretical underpinning but it has very much been put into a practical sort of language and context and it is tailored completely to that organisation (Coach B).

The coaches thought that rather than talking about abstract concepts, the participants might find it easier to follow if real issues were used.

We wanted to make it real and put that into practice, really (Coach C).

The vocational qualification seemed to be a combined effort to tackle issues faced by the managers, with the added bonus of an accredited qualification in the end.

All of the examples used are their own; they are bringing in some of their own problems, you know what I mean. It is completely tailored but it ticks all the boxes to get the accreditation (Coach B).

Since the recipients of the vocational qualification had never received continued professional development before, they lacked confidence. The coaches noted that some participants did not feel confident about writing coursework assignments and attempting the exams, so

coaching interventions were used to boost their self-belief and confidence.

So another reason for coaching: the coaching was to build confidence in themselves and in their ability to actually do things, like write assignments and pass exams (Coach B).

This was a fascinating situation because staff had been appointed or promoted to managerial positions on the strength of their experience and capability of doing the job. But the requirement to attend the ILM accredited course comes across as an exercise to authenticate their experience and capability.

They saw ... the ILM course as academic (Coach B).

The course design facilitated the transfer of training into practical use at work, and at the same time encouraged participants to make practical issues part of the training programme. The coaches noted that the housing association staff found coaching helpful regardless of their educational background.

Coaching is helping, because they are using it to test [their] ideas (Coach B).

The accreditation element of the ILM leadership qualification appears to have provided the managers with an opportunity to develop their academic skills. The course design and delivery acted as a platform to discuss and find solutions to work-related problems. This could have cemented the importance of attending that course. For some

coachees this was the first time they had received coaching in any context. In these cases the inclusion of coaching as part of the feedback and support mechanism for the coursework would have acted as an introduction to these developmental interventions.

7.3. Coaching journey through the eyes of a coach

The participant coach provided some insight into how coaching was used by the housing associations to embed training. The coach was commenting on the training journey of middle to senior managers. The managers were part way through the programme. The coach observed an element of resistance and resentment about the programme:

Particularly, the middle to senior middle managers ... this is not something that most of them were wanting to do (Coach B).

As part of the programme, the managers were required to accomplish an academic qualification, attend workshops and receive coaching. The coach thought that the onerous nature of the programme, coupled with a lack of understanding about coaching instigated resistance. The coach observed how the middle to senior managers were feeling and noted their reactions as follows:

Coaching particularly, just, what on earth is this? One-to-one discussions about myself and what I am doing? This was just

absolutely crazy. Even if they get supervision, this coaching thing was just seen as: why would I do that? (Coach B).

The coach got over the initial resistance, as the structure and delivery of the programme encouraged the managers to bring their work-related issues to the coaching sessions and workshops and get support.

[They] are looking for different approaches and techniques that they can use in their management and leadership role, and it is just the combination of the coaching along with having this input through workshops (Coach B).

The coach acknowledged that the resistance was not fully eradicated, and in some cases it had turned into light-hearted banter.

Some are still very resistant to do it. You know, some are still [saying] 'all this management rubbish' (laughs). They still got some of that, laughing at themselves, thinking of them as being, you know, leaders and managers (Coach B).

Another reason that the managers were not fully embracing change could be habitual. The resistance to change as observed by Coach B in the same programme will now be discussed in more detail.

Most of these managers started as front-line assistants and officers, who are normally the first point of contact for existing and potential tenants in their roles such as housing officers, tenancy support assistants, property maintenance officers, homeless prevention

assistants and community liaison officers. The coach noted that they had been comfortable in those roles. Sometimes they did not fully appreciate their role as managers, and reverted to being operational. This hands-on practice of serving tenants meant that they struggled with time management, prioritisation and delegation.

They are used to being so operational, so hands-on, that those are things they don't necessarily need to do in their leadership role; it can still be a challenge to prioritise that. So for them it's not about their resistance (Coach B).

The struggle to fully embrace the managerial role was noted by another coach as well. The coach pointed out that the managers grappled with the dilemma of whether they were there to provide managerial support and leadership to their teams or a service to their tenants.

Obviously, under pressure people move to the type, so ... we are holding their feet a bit to the fire (Coach A).

Hence, coaching appears appropriate for reinforcing leadership skills.

Nevertheless, Coach B observed that most of the managers were getting used to their new roles; they were more confident. The coaches talked about a nod of approval and a sense of appreciation.

[B]ut more and more, they are really taking on the role, talking about what you're doing and appreciating what they are doing (Coach B).

The vocational qualification, along with coaching, was seen as confidence boosting. The managers were able to comprehend new ways of working, and they were acknowledging it in their coaching sessions.

The majority of people in their coaching sessions are saying: I get this, I can see why we have to do this; and I think they can articulate the difference that all this is making to them, particularly in terms of their confidence as managers (Coach B).

The coach believed that the success of the programme was down to supplementing coaching with academic learning and facilitation in the workshops.

So to just have had that [coaching] without the context of the leadership programme and without what looked like embedding the learning, sort of safe enough to have the conversations, I don't think we would have got the results that we have (Coach B).

Since the coaches were part way through the programmes, they were able to comment on the effect of the coaching programme on the managers themselves and the teams they manage. One of the coaches laughingly said, '*so it should all work well*'. The coaches were able to share the cascade effect of the programme.

What we're doing in some of the coaching is talking about the role of a leader and a manager in [the] support and development of staff. So it had already started because of what the managers were doing, but it has gone to another level because their staff are starting on the development journey as well (Coach B).

Kyndt et al. (2012) argued that just offering training opportunities to staff is not in itself sufficient without support for learning also being offered. The design and delivery of the vocational programmes in the housing associations seem to be using coaching to provide additional support. Coaching was used to underpin theoretical elements of leadership and management courses as well as helping housing officials in finding solutions to the work-related problems. Clarke (2013) warned that the transfer of training to work situations would be ineffective without taking into consideration the workplace environment. The training programmes discussed in this study appear to be set in the workplace environment. The problems faced by the housing officials in their day to day job formed part of their course work assignments and coaches helped the participants in identifying and overcoming these problems through training and coaching.

There was a notable similarity between the findings of this study and the one conducted by Forde et al. (2013). In an experiential learning programme designed for aspiring head teachers, Forde et al. (2013)

noted that coaches reviewed the draft course work assignments with the candidates before the final versions were submitted. The confidence coaching provided to the housing officials as part of the training programme discussed in this study also included feedback on their draft course work assignments by the coaches.

Managerial skills such as time management and effective delegation can be improved by training and coaching, according to Ehrich et al. (2001). Coaching could be aimed at: reflecting on ones' own assumptions (Zachary, 2005); improving self-confidence (Griffiths, 2005); and developing a heightened self-awareness and self-acceptance (Grant, 2011).

The observations of the coaches in this study indicate that coaching can be used; to help housing officials understand and appreciate their role in the organisation, implement a leadership development programme, overcome initial resistance due to fear of failure or fear of the unknown, as was the case with managers embarking on a management qualification.

7.4 Transformational change programmes

The transformational change programmes in the housing associations in this study all involved an organisation-wide change; a change in the organisational culture and working practices. Coach C described the transformational change programmes as follows:

The transformational programme is about [changing] the culture and in order for that to work, obviously you have to get all of the organisation to buy it, so you have to work across the whole of the organisation (Coach C).

The circumstances for the execution of transformational change programmes were different for each housing association, and the programmes were tailored to cater for the specific transformational needs of the housing associations. In one case, the transformational change programme was introduced after the merger of two housing associations to streamline processes and procedures; in another case it was to overcome financial difficulties in readiness for a potential future merger. These cases are discussed below.

The housing association in the first case was going through an organisation-wide change following a merger. The merger in the first instance was initiated to make potential cost savings.

The organisation had gone through big changes; we had got new leaders in the organisation, a mix from the top of the management team down to sort of first-time junior managers. It was around managing change and managing people (Coach C).

The introduction and implementation of new working processes was the main objective of this programme. This included the preparation of detailed procedures, and training to accustom staff to these new

procedures and to ensure that these procedures were accepted by the whole organisation. People management, according to Coach C, included systems training for officers and confidence coaching for managers to enable them to handle the change efficiently.

In another case, the transformational change programme was introduced by a housing association that was going through financial difficulty due to a lack of leadership, according to Coach B. The housing association wanted to be an attractive target for future housing association mergers, and in the observation of Coach B, the transformational change was initiated by the interim chief executive.

The chief executive was invited to leave and an interim chief executive came up with a very different approach, and immediately saw that one of the main challenges for the organisation was the leadership in the organisation (Coach B).

The coaches had to win over the support of staff and cater for the developmental needs of staff working at all levels. The transformational change programmes in the housing associations mentioned above were brought about to develop all layers of management within the organisation. The individual elements of the programmes were designed to the specific developmental needs of each managerial group. The key features of these programmes were vocational qualifications, coaching and mentoring for junior to middle managers, and one-to-one coaching for executives.

[The chief executive] commissioned a leadership programme for his executive team [that is, his directors] and himself, and also a leadership programme for the wider management group (Coach B).

The transformational change programmes were tailored to the specific requirements of the housing associations, so certain features were different. The experiences and observations of coaches demonstrated that the transformational change programmes were instigated by the new chief executives. The former chief executives to some extent were considered accountable for the financial difficulty, which was seen as one of the reasons for change. So these chief executives were either removed as part of the restructure or were invited to leave where the housing association board did not want a restructure. It comes across rather tellingly that the outgoing chief executives in these cases did not envision organisation-wide change, even though it was clearly needed:

This was a failing organisation ... the senior team was the poor one (Coach E).

This organisation ... was an organisation that was in trouble in a number of ways ... financially in trouble; trouble may be too strong a word ... [but] if they didn't do something pretty fast to cut some costs or to make some efficiencies, and also think of ways to generate some revenue, they were going to be in some trouble (Coach B).

The common features that led the housing associations to such a state that organisation-wide transformation was inevitable, in the view of the participant coaches, included:

- The outgoing chief executive had been in the post for a long period.
- The housing associations were under financial pressure.
- A new chief executive initiated the transformational change programme.
- The organisation was subject to a radical restructure.
- All levels of management participated in the programme.

Generally, a long-serving chief executive can be seen as a safe pair of hands, providing stability to housing associations. But it is important to keep up with the pace of rapid changes in the housing sector. The outgoing chief executives did not adapt their policies and practices in the wake of startling challenges faced by their housing associations. Importantly, the deficient and reactive management approach intensified the financial pressure.

*[They] had done things in a similar way for many years
(Coach B).*

Under the present coalition government all housing associations have to contend with a reduction in grant funding. The Spending Review 2013 presented by the chancellor, George Osborne, in June

2013 has further intensified the financial pressure by announcing significant financial cuts in the not-for-profit sector, including housing associations. The chancellor's spending review came after the data collection for this study, but the housing executives at the time of the data collection in 2012 were proactively identifying potential savings within their housing associations. They were also actively exploring income-generating opportunities to create additional revenues. In contrast, in the housing associations where transformational change was introduced, in the observation of the participant coaches, the outgoing chief executives had not effectively responded to the changing circumstances.

The transformational change programmes were initiated by the incoming chief executives. In one of the housing associations in this study the interim chief executive brought a trusted comrade with him:

He [the interim chief executive] came in with a guy who he was used to working with, who is a project manager. So he was looking at the systems side of things, shaking things up, making the organisation more efficient (Coach B).

Leadership style comes across as the common denominator in the cases discussed here, as the [outgoing] chief executives seemed to have put their housing associations into financial or operational difficulties. In a constantly evolving organisational environment such as housing associations, the leadership skills of executives and managers ought to be regularly developed. It is not surprising that

one of the first tasks of the incoming chief executives was to commission organisation-wide programmes of leadership development.

7.5. Challenges in implementing transformational change

The challenges for housing executives to maintain the financial viability of housing associations, to offer a lean and cost-effective structure in the wake of funding cuts and at the same time make money available for large-scale staff development projects, adds to the financial challenge for housing associations. The housing executives who participated in this study did not introduce organisation-wide transformational change programmes in their housing associations. However, they were aware of transformational change programmes being used in some housing associations. Executive E, for example, described these programmes as follows:

There are a few [transformational change programmes], where part and parcel of it is [an] integrated, personal development plan. [These programmes] are more sophisticated and look into the issues and everything (Executive E).

However, there was an air of caution regarding organisation-wide programmes. Executive D, for instance, drew my attention to the need to balance the training and development needs of staff with ensuring the provision of a consistent high-quality service to tenants.

Since the transformational change programmes are normally delivered during working hours, that would mean providing a skeleton service structure for tenants while staff are on training courses, which was seen as a challenge.

You have normal basic day-to-day things, which I think are incredibly important (Executive D).

Executive E touched on broader challenges, including practical issues in implementing organisation-wide programmes:

I am talking about the ideal and the reality ... [of a] business environment ... you know, time pressure; and you have got budgetary pressures, competency and skills pressures. You know, to tie all that, you need (laughs) too much resources and staff commitment to do that. Because people don't understand what coaching is. You and I are talking about [a] bigger map ... how you get them to support the staff and colleagues and [provide support] among themselves (Executive E).

However, the coaches seemed to be aware of the financial and resource pressures faced by the housing associations. Managing a transformational change programme for all the management and leadership teams was a real balancing act for the coaches. The coaches wanted to provide as much help and support as required by the coachees, but they had to make a decision about face-to-face

contact time versus other modes of support. In one case, one-to-one coaching for the executive team and vocational qualification workshops for junior to middle managers were delivered face-to-face, whereas additional coaching support was provided via Skype. Coach B described the predicament as follows:

There were so many of them and it was on a limited budget. They needed one-to-one support, they were not confident ... this was all new, so ... how ... what is [the] priority? So we felt, I mean when we talked about it, we felt the priority was actually to maximise the time that they had with the coach. So the only way we could do this, given that they are all over [names a geographical area], we decided to Skype. So you can imagine, [for the coachees] this was all new as well (Coach B).

Regardless of the challenges discussed above, the transformational change programmes were successfully delivered, according to the coaches. In the case of a restructure of a housing association, discussed earlier, Coach E reported:

Those people are now very, very successful senior managers in the organisation, which is an extremely high-performing organisation (Coach E).

In the other case, where the chief executive was invited to leave because of ineffective leadership and poor financial performance, the

coach reported interim results, as the eighteen-month transformational change programme was still ongoing.

Oh, it turned out for the better, most definitely. You know, the books balanced and are going in the right direction. The organisation is working together far more as an organisation (Coach B).

Since these observations of the coaches are self-reported, because of the element of potential bias, such as self-promotion, no firm conclusions can be drawn. The challenges in implementing organisation-wide transformational changes in the housing associations include: the cost of commissioning these programmes while housing associations are facing a reduction in grant funding; the time commitments of staff, when housing associations are using mergers and restructures to become leaner and cost effective; and a lack of understanding about coaching and mentoring among housing officials. This study found that coaches are aware of these challenges; they make efficient use of information technology by using Skype instead of face-to-face contact for geographically dispersed teams and offer tailor-made and flexible transformational change programmes to minimise disruption to the housing associations.

The transformational change programmes discussed in this chapter did not show individual growth in isolation or without making a mark on the housing association itself. Therefore, the transformational

change programmes within the housing associations appear to have attributes of both transformational change and transformative learning.

The literature appears to be silent about transformational change within housing associations in the UK. Furthermore, existing transformational change models do not include the impact of coaching and mentoring in facilitating change. Anderson and Anderson's (2011) change process model is based on the assumption that employees have a dialogue among themselves and identify 'a new way of being, working and relating to meet the needs of the future state' (p. 46), the leaders trust this wake-up call for change and the whole organisation embarks onto a journey of personal and collective discovery process which leads to inventing a new way of being and operating in the organisation. However, the data collected for this study clearly indicates that coaching, mentoring, teaching and training were used as vehicles for the transformative learning of housing executives and managers, which led to transformational changes in the housing associations.

7.6 Merger failures in the housing associations

Merger failures in the housing sector are rarely heard of. This study found that housing association mergers do sometimes result in partial or full failure, due to poor transitional practices. It is important to identify the factors involved in merger failures in order to understand the role of coaching in supporting mergers. In one case,

a housing association, which I shall call the Aujo housing association, was part of a housing group, which I shall call the Vovita housing group. The Aujo housing association left the Vovita housing group to merge with another housing group, which I shall call the Yazzer housing group. But eventually the Aujo housing association de-merged from the Yazzer housing group and re-merged with the Vovita housing group, which it had left in the first place. One of the participants (the chief executive of the Vovita housing group, identity withheld) who played a key role in the re-merger, described the situation as having 'a set of unusual characteristics'. According to the participant, the Aujo housing association 'did not enjoy the experience' of being merged with the Yazzer housing group. The participant described the reasons for discontent:

[T]hey, for a number of reasons, weren't happy ... didn't like the experience of joining a new group ... they joined, you know, in return for promises about development and maintaining their status as an independent organisation, all of those sorts of things, and ended up being disappointed in what was being delivered against that (Executive).

The chief executive, in an effort to 'put right what was seen by one side of the equation as a mistake', offered cash to the Yazzer housing group to buy back the Aujo housing association, but the cash offer was refused.

*It turned out that actually cash wasn't really a driving factor
... they wanted a swap, a stock swap (Executive).*

The chief executive saw that the demand was in concordance with their strategy and offered a stock segment in exchange.

From our perspective we wanted it [the stock segment] to be out; that was our strategy to narrow our focus to our core mission, if you see what I mean (Executive).

Commenting on the transaction, the chief executive said:

[A] problem child they needed to re-home (laughs) and did not want to lose value (Executive).

This was an example of a housing association merger failure, although it eventually had a happy ending, as neither of the parties involved lost value, and the arrangement fitted in with the strategic objectives of both the Vovita and Yazzer housing groups. Nevertheless, this saga did put staff through merger-related stress and anxiety twice: once when they merged with the Yazzer housing group and again when they left the group and re-merged with the Vovita housing group.

In another case, a housing association merger resulted in partial failure. The participant senior executive (identity withheld) talked about a small housing association that had joined a large housing group for better governance and technical and financial support a few

years ago. However, some of the promises made by the group did not materialise:

[L]ater on it transpired that they [a small housing association] did not get what they wanted, because when you become part of [a] bigger organisation, bigger organisations might have other priorities, so it depends, you know (Executive).

But in this case, the housing association was not in a position to de-merge because:

... even though their experience might be mixed about being part of a group, they have integrated so much in terms of functions and systems, [that a de-merger] would have been really difficult, even if they wanted to get out of that, you know, both politically and tactically (Executive).

The de-merger of a housing association from the group clearly shows that housing association mergers do fail as well. But the only visible failures are the ones where one housing association leaves the group after joining it. There was no mechanism for me to analyse partial failures. In my view a housing association merger is a partial failure if at least one housing association fails to achieve the intended results after the merger but cannot de-merge because of logistical problems.

Marks and Mirvis (2010) in their meta analysis found the failure rate of corporate mergers to be roughly 70–75 per cent. Having a shared

identity helps with the acculturation process according to Seo and Hill (2005), but if the employees lose their social identity as a result of the merger, this makes the acceptance and post-merger integration harder for the affected staff.

The failure rate of housing association mergers, according to this study is comparatively very low. The swift integration of systems and processes after the merger of housing associations might have an impact on the low failure rate, or in other words, the high success rate of housing association mergers. This study found that housing associations use induction mentoring, peer mentoring and team coaching to specifically manage the human resources issues after the merger or restructure.

Another symbolic yet emotionally powerful strategy used in housing association mergers is the creation of a new group identity for all the merged housing associations within a group. In all the housing association mergers that formed part of this study, a new group name and a new group logo was adopted by the housing associations following the merger. Yet, at the same time, the names and logos of the housing associations before the merger were also kept and appeared side by side with the new housing group name and logo. By maintaining the existing identity of all staff by keeping their housing association names and logos, it was ensured that their social identity was not lost, while at the same time, a new group identity was introduced. This 'dual identity' or 'an identity within an

identity', as discussed in Chapter 6, might have contributed to the success of housing association mergers. These findings indicate that the success of housing association mergers could be linked to the swift transition and effective management of human factors.

7.7 Summary

In the housing association sector, supplementing academic and vocational programmes with coaching helped embed training in practice. Coaching was used to develop managerial skills, such as problem solving, time management and delegation. Coaching raised awareness, acceptance and readiness for change, which could be useful in quashing anecdotal perceptions such as 'management rubbish' or 'another gimmick'.

The transformational change programmes discussed in this chapter, brought together different developmental interventions, such as training, mentoring and coaching. The versatility and experience of external coaches required for the delivery and facilitation of these transformational change programmes was also emphasised. These programmes were commissioned by the incoming chief executives to incorporate organisation-wide changes.

The trigger for change in the housing associations did not emerge from within. It appears that the outgoing leaders did not respond to the organisational-level changes necessitated by external factors, such as a reduction in grant funding. The departure of the chief

executive and the appointment of a new chief executive signalled that some radical changes were needed: the new chief executives were the ones who commissioned transformational change programmes.

The financial challenges faced by the housing associations were intensified by a lack of visionary leadership. The chief executives of these housing associations did not possess the leadership skills required to steer their organisation out of financial difficulties. These financial challenges resulted from a reduction in grant funding across the housing sector. Instead of closing the funding gap by either making efficiency savings or by identifying new opportunities to generate revenues, these chief executives did not respond to the changes and were eventually replaced.

The incoming chief executives addressed the urgency of the situation by commissioning external coaches to deliver organisation-wide development. The developmental interventions were multifaceted in nature. Training, mentoring or coaching, either individually or in combination suited the improvement needs and aspirations of different employee groups. These transformational change programmes were, according to this study, spread over a twelve to eighteen-month period. The longer time frame seems to have helped the housing associations in managing their day-to-day business activities and making staff available to attend the programme with minimal disruption.

Poor transitional practices, delays in post-merger integration, disparity between pre-merger promises and post-merger commitment, infrequent employee consultation about post-merger restructuring and inattention to the merger-related stress and anxiety can influence the success or failure of housing association mergers. Not all housing association mergers result in success stories; some mergers only partially succeed. A partial success is where some, but not all, of the intended objectives of the merger are achieved, or the promises made by the housing group are not fulfilled after the merger. The partially failed mergers can turn into marriages of convenience, in which neither party is able to get out of the relationship because of the level of integration in the systems and procedures of the merged housing group. Partially failed mergers are not obvious to external observers.

There is evidence to suggest that some housing association mergers end up in failure, in which case the previously merged housing associations de-merge. The de-merger is caused by a mismatch in pre-merger expectations and post-merger disappointments.

The success rate of housing association mergers might be linked to executive mentoring and one-to-one coaching (to prepare for the merger), induction and peer mentoring (for swift post-merger integration) and confidence coaching (to create a new group identity and acculturation after the merger).

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in relation to transformational changes, with particular reference to housing association mergers. in the UK, which are a relatively common phenomenon. This is the first study to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers. The findings of this study indicate that coaching and mentoring play a crucial role in managing transformational changes when housing associations merge. These findings are discussed in detail in Section 8.2. There was evidence that a combination of coaching, mentoring and training is used in transformational change programmes. Different forms of coaching and mentoring used in housing association mergers are presented in a time line model of the merger process (Figure 8.1) in Section 8.3.

In Section 8.4 I reflect on my research in terms of the use of constructivist grounded theory and what was learnt from it. I present my personal reflections on the process of doing the research, the challenges faced, the opportunities afforded and my personal learning as a coach and a mentor. The strengths of the thesis, such as the knowledge and experience of the participants, are discussed in Section 8.5. The limitations, including my own potential bias, the

selection of officer-level participants, and the omission of a potential participant group, namely middle to senior managers, form part of Section 8.6. The chapter ends with a direction for areas of future research.

8.2 Research findings

Coaching and mentoring play an important role in the initiation, execution and management of housing association mergers and transformational changes. Coaching and mentoring can have an impact on the success or failure of a housing association merger. One possible explanation for the high success rate of housing association mergers found by this study is the degree of staff and systems integration at the post-merger stage. Coaching and mentoring are used to ensure smooth post-merger staff integration. Confidence coaching can help in creating a new shared identity for the merging housing associations.

Empirically grounded knowledge about the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers has not previously been published. By reading, considering, contemplating and applying the information and knowledge generated from this research, coaching and mentoring practitioners could tailor their services to the needs of housing associations. Additionally, housing executives would be better able to plan future housing association mergers.

One-to-one executive coaching or executive mentoring were used by the chief executives of housing associations to explore viable alternatives, potential merger partners and the impact of the merger on tenants. During the merger process in some cases, an open-door policy was observed by the participant housing executives to respond to employee concerns. Induction and peer mentoring were used to ensure a smooth transition, and team coaching was used to improve post-merger integration.

The success of a merger, according to previous research, has been attributed to: the management of human resources (Marks, 1997); employee behaviour (Cartwright and Cooper, 1993); corporate communication (Hubbard, 2001); socialisation (Leroy, 2002); effective cultural leadership (Bligh, 2006); likeness of systems and structures (Jemison and Sitkin, 1986); post-merger integration (Bauer et al., 2013); and capability of managing successful IT integration (Yetton et al., 2013). My study shows that mentoring (peer and induction) and coaching (team coaching) used in housing associations have a positive impact on post-merger integration.

The importance of cultural differences and the distinctiveness of the social identities of employee groups pose a potential threat to the success of a merger, according to studies by Cartwright and Schoenberg (2006), and Marks and Mirvis (2010). Organisational identity has been positively related to the willingness of employees to cooperate at the post-merger stage, by some scholars such as

Dutton and Dukerich (1991), Terry (2001), Van Dick (2004), and Ullrich and Van Dick (2007). Employee cooperation is a major factor influencing the success of a merger, according to Birkinshaw et al. (2000). This study adds to the literature the concept of an 'identity within an identity', in which the pre-merger identity of each housing association is preserved and presented along with a newly created shared identity at the post-merger stage.

Post-merger integration, according to some authors such as Buono and Bowditch (2003), Puranam et al. (2009) and Bauer et al. (2013), can be the decisive success factor of a merger. According to Buono and Bowditch (2003) the first hundred days following the merger offer a window of opportunity in which employees are more susceptible to change. Bauer et al. (2013), after reviewing the findings of a number of studies, concluded that there is empirical evidence for either a positive, negative, or non-significant relationship between the speed of integration and merger performance. My study found that induction mentoring, peer mentoring and team coaching were used for post-merger integration. The transformational change programmes that were used in housing associations were of twelve to eighteen months' duration. The merger failure and partial merger failure examples provided by housing executives showed that the level of post-merger integration dictated whether the failure would result in a de-merger or in the merged housing associations staying together. The housing association that ended up de-merging in one of the case studies focused on a specific segment of the market and so was kept

separate after the merger, rather than integrating it with the mainstream housing provision of the rest of the housing group. So it is possible that a greater focus on post-merger integration could reduce merger failures in the housing association sector.

8.2.1 Branding of coaching and mentoring services

Branding of coaching and mentoring services in the housing association sector lacks clarity. The distinction between coaching and mentoring according to this study is vague. Two executive coaches and two housing executives categorically said that housing managers and some senior executives did not know what coaching was. On the other hand mentoring appears to be widely used and understood because of the growth of HDN registered housing associations. HDN mentoring programmes in housing associations are designed to help in the personal and professional development of both the mentor and the mentee.

Executive coaches also appeared to blur the boundaries between coaching and mentoring. They described themselves as 'business coach' or 'executive coach' in their profiles. Under the areas of specialism, they mentioned change management, leadership support, organisational development and mentoring. However, in housing associations where both coaching and mentoring are used and the same person acts as both coach and mentor, the distinction between the terms 'coaching' and 'mentoring' seems unclear.

The housing executives responsible for commissioning coaching and mentoring services for their housing associations did not always differentiate between coaching and mentoring.

Even though coaching and mentoring are classed as different fields by scholars such as Ehrich et al. (2001), Grant and Cavanagh (2004), Hezlett and Gibson (2005), Bresser and Wilson (2010), and Rogers (2012), the overlap between coaching and mentoring in the housing association sector adds to this vagueness. For coaching and mentoring to establish as separate professions and to develop theoretical bases, the terms 'coaching' and 'mentoring' need to be clearly defined and understood.

One of the recommendations from this research is to standardise 'coaching' and 'mentoring' contracts, with clearly defined terms in consultation with different coaching and mentoring professional bodies such as The Association of Coaching, The European Mentoring and Coaching Council and The International Coach Federation.

Another recommendation is to set clear guidelines about the codes of ethics for coaches and mentors. To avoid any misrepresentation, coaching and mentoring services should be clearly advertised. The contract must explicitly illustrate whether coaching, mentoring, or a combination of coaching and mentoring is to be used.

8.2.2 To cherish or to hush: Attitudes towards coaching and mentoring

Housing officials viewed coaching very differently based on their own understanding, perception and how coaching was used in their housing association. Coaching is cherished as a positive staff development aid in some housing associations. Senior executives openly advocate a coaching culture in their housing associations and lead by example by commissioning coaching for themselves and their management teams. At the same time, in some housing associations coaching is used to improve underperforming managers and executives. In these housing associations coaching is viewed negatively and the recipient as an under-performer. So, coaching in these housing associations is hushed; the coachees do not want others to know that they are receiving coaching, as they would be seen as failing housing officials.

Interestingly, in the housing associations where coaching was hushed because of its perceived negativity, external mentoring was cherished and actively promoted. In these cases housing executives received mentoring to find innovative solutions to the issues faced by their housing associations. External mentoring was utilised in some cases to help senior housing executives to manage organisational change effectively or to rediscover a strategic vision and perspective in the rapidly changing housing sector. The advantages of this out-of-sector mentoring include gaining innovative ideas, entrepreneurial

acumen and reflective space. However, executive mentoring appears to be most suitable for senior executives who are taking their housing associations through organisational change.

The importance of coaching for development has been highlighted by some authors, such as Caplan (2003), Grant (2005), Clutterbuck (2008), Bresser and Wilson (2010), Risley and Cooper (2011), and Grant (2013). My study revealed that one-to-one coaching in housing associations was used to: develop staff with the potential for progression; boost the confidence of first-time chief executives of housing associations; help senior executives in effectively managing a change process; and introduce a new housing group identity. These different forms of developmental coaching used in housing associations add to the growing body of knowledge in this area.

In addition to the lack of clarity about coaching and mentoring discussed in the previous section, this study also revealed that some housing executives did not distinguish between developmental and performance coaching. In these cases coaching was synonymous with a remedy for underperformance, and senior executives did not wish to be seen to be receiving coaching.

Studies by Ellinger et al. (2003), Toit (2007), and Robinson-Walker (2012) have referred to the use of coaching to manage underperformance as 'performance coaching'. Findings of this study also contribute to this strand of literature on coaching, because some

housing associations were using coaching to deal with the poor performance of their senior executives.

All participant housing executives confirmed that coaching and mentoring would form part of the post-merger staff development policies. A longitudinal study addressing the potential relationship between the developmental coaching, performance coaching and executive mentoring would inform coaching and mentoring practice. Such study would show the extent to which senior executives honour their commitment of staff development. In addition, the success of coaching and mentoring is best captured in a longitudinal study.

8.2.3. Managing emotional sensitivity in team coaching

Mergers and transformational changes intensify emotional sensitivity among housing officials that affects individuals in different ways. This study found that team coaching was used to deal with contrasting emotional situations which resulted from the housing association mergers. In one housing association merger, the housing officials were observed by coaches as suppressing their emotions, sticking together with their pre-merger colleagues and not fully embracing the post-merger team structure. Whereas, in a different housing association merger, the housing officials seemed to be oversensitive and avoiding full and frank discussions on thorny issues such as post-merger team structures and budgetary allocations.

Team coaching was used to overcome these different situations that resulted from emotional sensitivity. In one housing association, team coaching was used to bring different team members together, to enable them to see things from each other's perspective and to work together as a team. Whereas in the other housing association, the team coaching was used to encourage healthy confrontation and challenge, as emotional sensitivity was seen as restraining innovation.

Team coaching in the merged housing associations facilitated repeated interactions among housing officials. Repeated interactions are crucial elements of Kozlowski et al.'s (2009) theory of dynamic team leadership. However, these interactions are hard to accomplish soon after the merger, because it is common for housing associations from different cities, counties and even regions to merge. It takes time to move to a central post-merger group head office because of the logistics, the contractual obligations such as leases, and the amount of time taken to establish a new organisational structure.

Team coaching can bring senior managers from different housing associations into physical proximity, enabling face-to-face meetings with their counterparts when attending team coaching sessions. This helps in discussing some issues face-to-face rather than over the phone or via email. Therefore, team coaching sessions can provide repeated interactions for geographically dispersed teams.

Furthermore, members of multiple teams can be coached together to enhance joint accountability and cohesiveness by being provided with reflective space in a supported environment.

Team coaching enhances team effectiveness (Hackman and Wageman, 2005), empowers teams to generate results (Evered and Selman, 1989), and adopts appropriate approach for creating lasting change (Anderson et al., 2008). My study adds the elements of emotional sensitivity and joint accountability to the team coaching literature. Team coaching can be used to mollify emotionally charged situations as well as to kindle difficult conversations among team members after a merger.

On a practical level, the diverse range of human emotions following the merger needs to be recognised by the housing officials. The issues underlying emotional sensitivity should be explored and addressed in a compassionate and supportive environment by professional coaches.

8.2.4. Post-merger integration minimises merger failures

Merger failures in the housing association sector have not been empirically examined. This study found evidence of some merger failures. One housing executive reported a merger as a partial failure, whereas another executive experienced a full merger failure. Partial failure was described as one in which the promises made by the housing group about investment in the merging housing association's

assets were not delivered in full. However, because of the integration of systems and processes, it was not logistically possible for the housing association to de-merge despite the disappointment. In another case, the operations and systems of the merged housing association were kept separate from the rest of the housing group. At a later stage, the housing association de-merged from the group which was seen as a merger failure by the participant housing executive. The principal difference between a partial and a full merger failure in these two cases was the level of post-merger integration.

Housing associations use different forms of coaching and mentoring to enhance post-merger integration, including induction mentoring, peer mentoring and team coaching. Induction mentoring has rarely been mentioned in the context of the not-for-profit sector in the UK. In the light of the different interpretations of coaching and mentoring discussed earlier, it is plausible to assume that the term 'new staff induction' was referred to as 'induction mentoring' by the participants. However, the structure and delivery of induction programmes shows the elements of embedded mentoring in the post-merger induction.

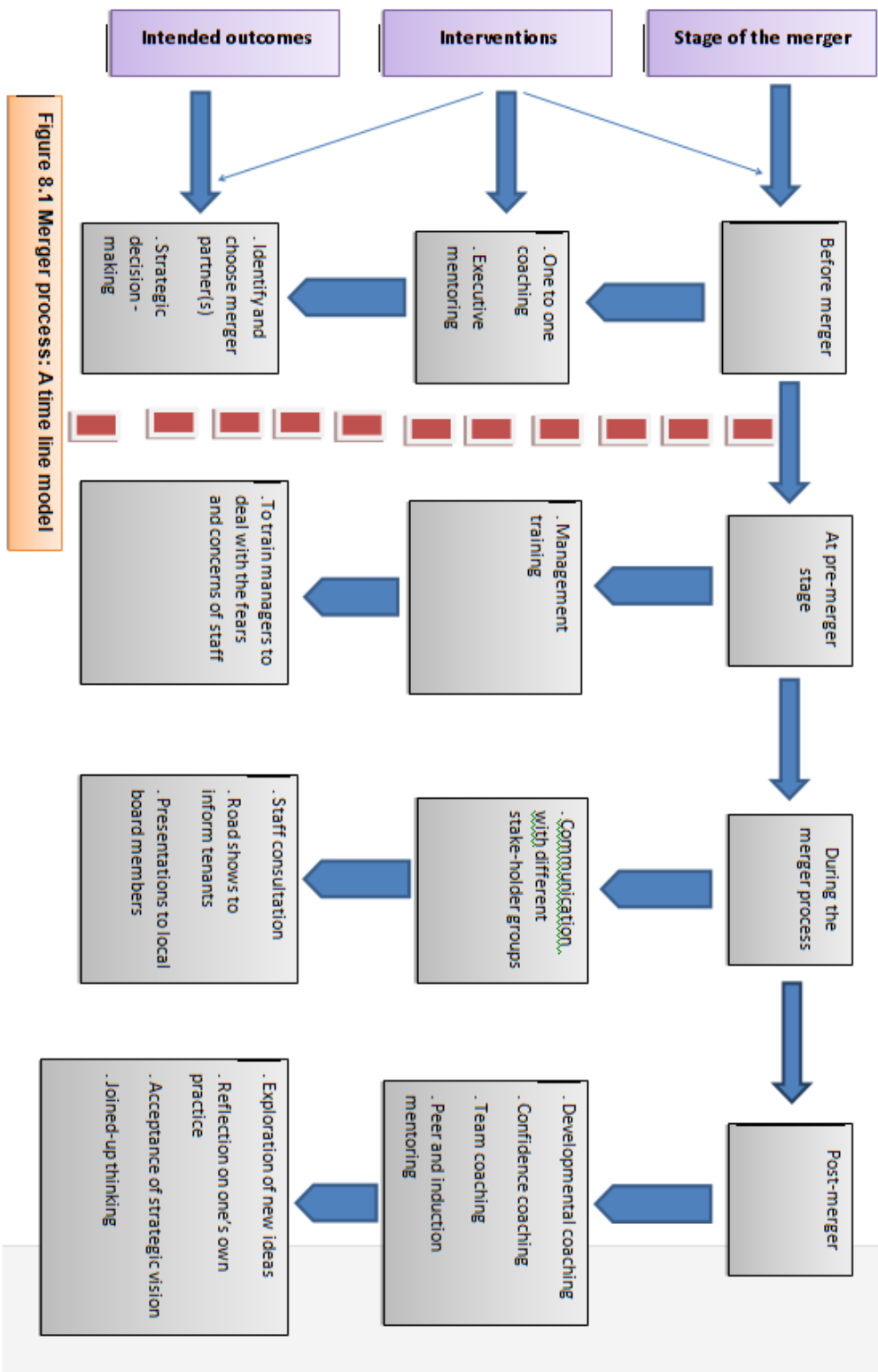
Peer mentoring was also referred to as 'job shadowing' and 'buddy systems' by the housing officials. Peer mentoring might ease merger related stress and anxiety or it might aggravate it. The nature of business combination as a result of the merger seems to determine the impact of peer mentoring. Housing officers take solace

from learning the processes and procedures from their new colleagues, in the case of a housing association joining a group. Therefore peer mentoring can enhance post-merger integration. Peer mentoring in the merger of equals can be challenging and have an adverse affect on integration. Deep-rooted stress and anxiety experienced by housing officers during the merger can intensify when they have to learn and adapt to the processes and procedures of the other housing group, which they joined on equal terms.

Fletcher and Barrett (2004) and Portner (2005), argue about the importance of embedded induction and mentoring programmes for new teachers in the United States. This study shows that embedding mentoring in the induction programmes can enhance post-merger integration. Mergers in the housing association sector do fail but senior housing executives can keep the failure rate relatively low through post-merger integration and by managing the expectation gap of staff in the case of merger of equals.

8.3 Theoretical framework

In this section I present my theoretical framework in the form of a time line model of merger process. This model is divided into four stages: before merger (merger considered but partners not identified); pre-merger (immediately before a planned merger); during merger and post-merger. The model consists of: different forms of coaching and mentoring discussed in chapters 5 – 7; timing and intended outcomes of these interventions.



Before Merger Stage

Before entering a merger agreement, senior housing executives have to make strategic decisions about the future of their housing association. The right choice of merger partner is extremely important. The incentives and promises have to be assessed by taking into consideration the history, reputation and motives of the potential merger partners. Based on the commercial sensitivity, peer coaching or mentoring are not appropriate at a strategic level. Housing executives trust the independence and professionalism of external coaches. Coaches can offer one-to-one coaching or executive mentoring to the senior executives to enable them to make informed and impartial decisions. Coaches act as sounding boards, cultural auditors and critical friends for senior housing executives seeking potential merger partners.

The decision to merge affects the lives or livelihoods of a variety of stakeholders, including: existing and potential tenants, staff, suppliers, sub-contractors and other neighbourhood agencies. So, a clear and transparent merger decision is vitally important. Finding the right merger partner can take a long time. One housing group was searching for a partner for over two years before entering a merger agreement.

Pre-merger Stage

The pre-merger stage is distinct from the 'before merger' stage. The pre-merger stage in this model starts after the formal merger agreement has been reached. At this stage, the decision is communicated to all staff members via intranet announcements, staff newsletters and at employee road shows. Both housing associations / housing groups carry on serving their tenants as normal but start planning the logistics of the merger. To understand the operational practices of the merger partners, reciprocal site visits are arranged. In some cases, exchange staff secondments are also organised to enhance a smooth transition.

The model reflects the findings of this study, according to which coaching or mentoring are not used at the pre-merger stage of the merger. Human resources departments offer some training for managers to enable them to deal with the fears and concerns of staff members.

During the merger Stage

The 'during the merger' stage is the most chaotic, as at this stage reality hits home. The executives manage a transformational change whilst trying to keep the disruption to tenant services to a minimum. Senior housing executives convene meetings with tenant groups to explain the decision and to reassure them about the quality and consistency of tenant services. At the same time, the executives

have to deal with staff morale and convince them 'it is business as usual'. Staff morale is lowest at this stage of the merger according to the data. Some experienced staff members who do not want to go through the uncertainty, take early retirement or change jobs. New staff members are not recruited as post-merger organisational structures are not finalised at this stage. Some staff members go on stress-related sick leave.

Senior executives engage in staff consultation in an effort to allay their fears and uncertainties. The open door communication policy may have negative impacts too. The executives encourage staff 'to ask questions, even though they might not have the answers to them'. If the questions are not answered in a satisfactory manner, the concerned staff members sometimes conclude that 'management has something to hide'. They may see the staff consultation and engagement exercise as sham.

Senior executives understand the stress and uncertainty experienced by staff members, but they maintain that some of the questions relate to the post-merger restructure which will be finalised at a later stage in consultation with the merger partners. Therefore, even the executives may not know the answers to those questions. This can lead to all sorts of interpretations and rumours. In addition, the nature and frequency of questions can change on a daily basis depending on what staff members hear from each other and who they choose to believe. Senior executives have to concentrate on the merger

process and cannot engage in staff consultation on a daily basis. The unanswered questions and the inherent uncertainty add to the mistrust between staff and senior executives. Coaching or mentoring during the merger process stage are not used as per this study for the following reasons: (a) staff availability: fewer, over-worked, stressed staff members are responsible for delivering day-to-day services to tenants, hence cannot be made available to attend coaching or mentoring sessions (b) the element of mistrust discussed earlier (c) the focus of the management is to deliver the merger within a set timescale, so staff development at this stage is not a priority (d) coaching or mentoring might not provide the answers sought by staff members.

Post- merger Stage

Coaching and mentoring in various forms are used by the housing associations at the post-merger stage. One-to-one coaching and executive mentoring for the development of first time directors following the post-merger restructure; confidence coaching for senior executives wishing to implement a new organisational culture; team coaching to foster joined-up thinking and to manage emotional sensitivity; induction mentoring to infuse housing group values; peer mentoring to support staff through the changeover and a combination of coaching and mentoring interventions as part of transformational change programmes.

This time line model provides the practitioners (coaches and housing officials) with evidence on which to base their services and provides researchers with an opportunity to develop a formal theory. This model enables coaches to reflect on their own practice, how coaching and mentoring are used in housing association sector mergers and how the time line model can be integrated into their coaching and mentoring services.

8.4 Personal reflections

This section provides a reflection on the learning experience of conducting the research, and indicates how, with the benefit of hindsight, it could have been strengthened. In my previous executive and non-executive roles, I observed housing association mergers and restructures. I found the magnitude and frequency of changes in the housing association sector very fascinating. I embarked on this research journey with an open and curious mind, but at the same time with some preconception about my area of research. As an accountant, I would think mergers to be a business decision, driven by the organisations' strategic vision. The 'cost' of providing coaching and mentoring would have to justify the 'value' it adds to the housing association. As a coach and a mentor, I thought I understood the importance of human factors and the stress and anxiety caused by the mergers. However, on reflection, I realise that I underestimated the intensity of human emotions at play during the merger process. On the one hand the emotional sensitivity brought employees closer

together, but on the other hand the commissioning of coaching and mentoring by the senior management was seen with mistrust and called a 'management gimmick'. This has been an active learning experience, which has profoundly influenced my knowledge and attitudes towards the emotional aspects of mergers.

Drawing on a constructivist grounded theory approach, it was possible for new insights to develop as my research progressed and my understanding of the role of coaching and mentoring in relation to transformational changes in the housing association sector steadily deepened. The findings could then potentially benefit future professionals such as coaches, mentors and housing officials by offering knowledge or a theoretical framework. Conducting fourteen semi-structured interviews was a worthwhile exercise that generated interesting findings, which could be applicable to housing association mergers and transformations. Different presumptions about coaching and mentoring highlighted the challenge for professional coaching and mentoring bodies to promote and market their respective fields.

I found this research journey to be full of opportunities: to review the existing literature; to enhance my own development through acquiring new knowledge or applying my existing knowledge and experience in a different context; to inform practice by describing the experiences of my fellow travellers (the participants); to highlight areas for the further exploration for other researchers; and, not least,

to chart my journey through this process with the production of my doctoral thesis.

This study served as my introduction to constructivist grounded theory, so I took the opportunity to understand the various methods and components of grounded theory but found it hard to envisage the whole research process. I was all right moving from codes through to memos but was not clear about the development of the theoretical framework. The memos helped in my understanding of the coding process; in fact, coding occurred naturally as it emerged from the data. Charmaz (2006) suggests that if the memos are written carefully, they serve as the step prior to writing the theory. I found the constant comparison and the iterative process more challenging than I thought.

The constructivist grounded theory methodology used in this study offered a path to a rich understanding and explanation of the experiences and presumptions about the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers.

8.5 Strengths of the thesis

There were various strengths of the thesis. All the participants had many years of experience in their respective fields and their interviews were grounded in their experience of coaching, mentoring, training and housing sector mergers and transformational changes. The housing executives who participated in this study were the chief executives or senior directors of housing associations across England. The participant front-line officers had experienced more than one housing association merger. The external coaches had varied professional backgrounds such as accountancy, human resources management, training, leadership development and housing. As coaches, they had many years of experience in the housing and not-for-profit sectors in England and Scotland. Constructivist grounded theory methods were used to conceptualise the entire thesis, as recommended by Charmaz (2006). The rich mix of the participants' experiences and the time frame of the study helped in understanding the integrated analysis of all three participant groups, undertaken in a holistic sense, rather than looking at the representation of each group in isolation from the others.

My study has contributed to theory development in several research streams in the fields of coaching, mentoring, housing and mergers. First, I have contributed to the coaching and mentoring literature by adding the housing associations' perspective. Secondly, I have presented a time line model of merger process. Thirdly, my study has

highlighted the emotional aspect of post-merger team coaching. Finally, I have added to the post-merger integration literature.

8.6 Limitations of the thesis

Several limitations were reflected upon within this study. The first was my own knowledge and experience of the housing association sector and the coaching and mentoring profession. There is a potential bias to the accuracy of the findings, as I had prior experience that had the potential to bias the outcomes.

Not being able to interview middle to senior managers in the housing associations can be seen as a weakness. At the time of data collection, the housing associations were in the process of post-merger internal restructuring, and middle to senior managers were reapplying for jobs under the new structure. The senior housing executive did not allow me access to middle to senior managers. This staff group might have held differing perceptions and experiences and contrasting opinions as compared to the groups that did participate.

The process adopted for the recruitment of front-line officers had weaknesses. It proved difficult to contact the front-line officers directly, as their contact details were not provided on housing association websites. This reflects the nature of employment structures in housing associations. So the contact details of the front-line officers were obtained through a managerial-level gatekeeper.

Although this method of recruitment was pragmatic, it might have allowed the gatekeeper to use his judgement about the suitability of potential participants.

I only interviewed 14 participants who may not be representative of the sector as a whole.

This study took place in the housing association sector, so the results of this study are not necessarily transferable, and this may be perceived as a limitation. However, one of the aims of this study was to present a theoretical framework (presented in Figure 8.1), which might act as a platform to enable further testing across different not-for-profit sectors. The results from this study might enable a comparison of findings with other public-sector organisations to build a formal theory.

8.7 Future research

This thesis set out to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in housing association mergers and transformational changes. This study found that induction mentoring, peer mentoring and team coaching were interventions used for the smooth post-merger integration of housing associations. There was an element of expectation that senior housing executives should be able to handle the merger process as part of their job; however, managers received some training at the pre-merger stage. Coaching and mentoring were

found to play a crucial role in the transformation of housing associations.

For the future, this research offers a potential springboard for numerous possible research paths, which might help coaching and mentoring to establish their theoretical bases and add to merger theories. These research opportunities have been flagged up throughout this chapter, but I will summarise them here:

- The experiences and presumptions of middle to senior managers are missing from this study. Perhaps a comparative study that does include this specific group would add to the transformational change model presented in this study.
- All the housing executives affirmed that coaching and mentoring would form part of their future leadership development programmes. Further longitudinal studies would throw more light on the impact of this inclusion on the future direction of housing association mergers.
- This study found that one housing association merger failed despite its dual identity, whereas another one was seen as a partial failure by the housing executive and only survived because of systems and processes integration. One recommendation for the future, therefore, would be a detailed analysis of housing association mergers where de-mergers were averted by post-merger integration.

For coaching and mentoring practitioners, this study might act as a wake-up call. The inconsistency in the use of the terms 'mentoring' and 'coaching' in housing associations was noted. The need to distinguish developmental and performance coaching was also identified. For coaching and mentoring to establish themselves as separate fields, an awareness campaign to clarify the concepts of potential coachees and mentees is recommended.

Coaching and mentoring contribute to the learning, development and post-merger integration of housing officials. Integration can keep the merged housing association together, thus reducing merger failures in housing associations.

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Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

Study title

The role of coaching and mentoring in transformational change, focusing on housing association mergers

Participant Invitation

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.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of coaching on post-merger staff integration. The background to this research is that over half of mergers and acquisitions fail to achieve their intended financial or strategic objectives. Problems in integrating staff from the merging organisations contribute to merger failures. There has been little or no research into the impact of coaching on post-merger staff integration; this study aims to address this gap in knowledge.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You were chosen to take part in this study because either you or a colleague indicated that you would be interested in helping to explore the impact of coaching on post-merger staff integration. There will be six participants in total. As you have experienced post-merger staff integration, I am interested in your views and opinions regarding the role coaching can play in such circumstances.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you do decide to participate in this research, you will be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview. The participant part of this research (your part) will be to make yourself available for a semi-structured interview. The interview will be approximately two hours in length. It will be conducted between June– August 2012 and will take place at a location which is convenient for you. The interview will

take place in an office environment or in a public place and will not take place in participants' homes.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Immediate benefits to participants do not extend beyond the opportunity for reflection and insight for future merger and acquisition processes. However, there are significant potential benefits for theory and practice. This study would contribute to the body of knowledge within the fields of mergers and acquisitions, and the impact of coaching on human aspects at the post-merger stage.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about any individual who takes part in this study will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Confidentiality will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material by de-identifying the participants. The data will be stored in a secure repository. 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 paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project. Due to the small sample size absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed, but will be maintained within the scope of the law.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you wish to take part in this study please email or call me using the contact details below.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will form part of my thesis for the Doctorate of Coaching and Mentoring. The thesis will be available from Oxford Brookes library. A summary of the research findings will be available on request.

My supervisory team consists of:

Dr Linet Arthur, Director of Studies, Senior Lecturer Tel. 01865 488533 larthur@brookes.ac.uk Harcourt Hill Campus Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Oxford Brookes University OX2 9AT

Dr Juliette Koning, Senior Lecturer Tel. 01865 485613 j.koning@brookes.ac.uk Faculty of Business, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus OX 33 1HX

Data Protection

Any laptops or memory sticks used in field research will be securely code encrypted so that they comply with the Data Protection Act in the UK and will be kept in a secure place. All data will be transferred to Oxford Brookes University for safe storage for 10 years after the conclusion of this research.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting the research as a part-time student at the Business School, Wheatley Campus of Oxford Brookes University. I am self-funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

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

Contact for Further Information

My email is 10043432@brookes.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, then please contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Muhammad Tahir Rafique
DCM Student
Contact No. 07931 878 541
Date: 21 June 2012

Appendix 2: CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: The role of coaching and mentoring in transformational change, focusing on housing association mergers

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Muhammad Tahir Rafique Principal Investigator DCAM Doctoral Student, Faculty of Business, Business School, Oxford Brookes University Wheatley Campus Wheatley Oxford OX33 1HX Email: 10043432@brookes.ac.uk Phone: 07931 878 541

Please initial box

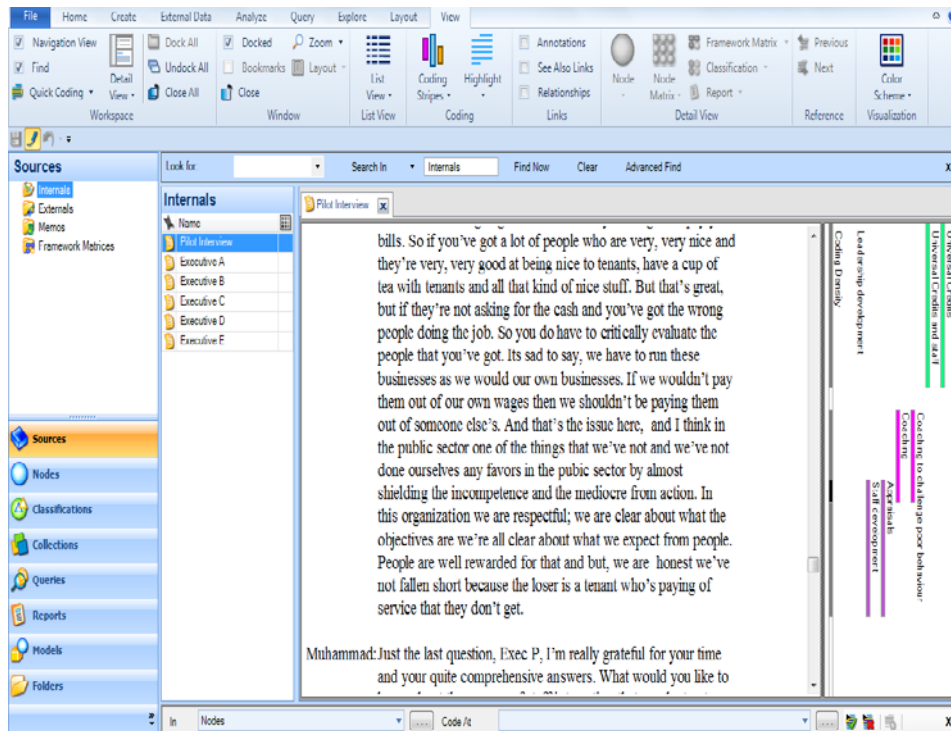
- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I agree to take part in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes No |
| 4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Name of Participant | Date | Signature |

| | | |
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| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Name of Researcher | Date | Signature |

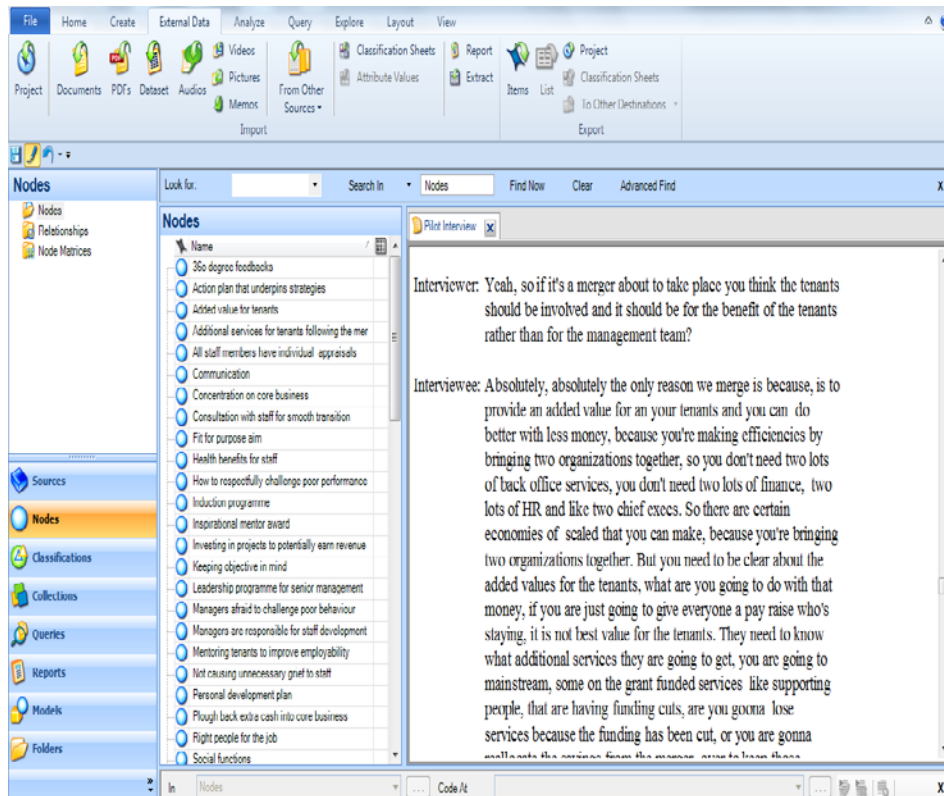
Appendix 3: Coaching process

Demonstrating the process of coding using coding strips. The coloured strips on the right show different codes.



Appendix 4: Line by line coding

Line by line coding, shows the initial free coding stage of grounded theory generation



Appendix 5: List of memos

The screenshot displays a software application window with a menu bar (File, Home, Create, External Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, View) and a toolbar. A left sidebar contains navigation options: Internals, Externals, Memos, Framework Matrices, Sources, Nodes, Classifications, Collections, Queries, Reports, Models, and Folders. The main area shows a search for 'Memos' with a table of results.

| Name | Nodes | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|
| Memo 1 Interview with Executive P | 0 | 0 | 05/03/2013 12:27 | M R | 05/03/2013 13:12 | M R |
| Memo 2 Interview with executive A | 0 | 0 | 05/03/2013 13:14 | M R | 05/03/2013 14:07 | M R |
| Memo 3 Interview with executive B | 0 | 0 | 05/03/2013 14:08 | M R | 05/03/2013 14:45 | M R |
| Memo 4 Interview with executive C | 0 | 0 | 05/03/2013 14:46 | M R | 05/03/2013 17:36 | M R |
| Memo 5 Interview with executive D | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:54 | M R | 11/03/2013 11:54 | M R |
| Memo 6 Interview with executive E | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:55 | M R | 11/03/2013 14:13 | M R |
| Memo 7 Interview with officer A | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:55 | M R | 13/03/2013 11:56 | M R |
| Memo 8 Interview with officer B | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:55 | M R | 13/03/2013 13:10 | M R |
| Memo 9 Interview with officer C | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:56 | M R | 13/03/2013 15:11 | M R |
| Memo 10 Interview with coach A | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:56 | M R | 11/03/2013 10:56 | M R |
| Memo 11 Interview with coach B | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:57 | M R | 11/03/2013 10:57 | M R |
| Memo 12 Interview with coach C | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:57 | M R | 11/03/2013 10:57 | M R |
| Memo 13 Interview with coach D | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:58 | M R | 11/03/2013 10:58 | M R |
| Memo 14 Interview with coach 14 | 0 | 0 | 11/03/2013 10:58 | M R | 11/03/2013 10:58 | M R |

The detailed view shows the text of 'Memo 7 Interview with officer A':

Officer A came across as quite an interesting person, because of his involvement in the union. He was very critical of his previous employer; lack of communication; making false promises; not listening to the concerns raised by the tenants via front line staff.... He described in detail how uncertain situation at work brought the colleagues together. Rather surprisingly only a couple of them used the help line. I am wondering whether asking for help is considered as a weakness?

Appendix 6: Memo Sample

The screenshot shows a software interface with a menu bar (File, Home, Create, External Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, View) and a toolbar. The main workspace is divided into a 'Sources' sidebar on the left, a search bar at the top, a table of memos, and a large text area displaying the content of a memo.

Sources

- Internals
- Externals
- Memos
- Framework Matrices

Search

Look for: Search In: Memos Find Now Clear Advanced Find X

Memos

| Name | Nodes | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|
| Memo 1 Interview with Executive P | 0 | 0 | 05/03/2013 12:27 | M.R | 05/03/2013 13:12 | M.R |
| Memo 2 Interview with executive A | 0 | 0 | 05/03/2013 13:14 | M.R | 05/03/2013 14:07 | M.R |
| Memo 3 Interview with executive B | 0 | 0 | 05/03/2013 14:08 | M.R | 05/03/2013 14:45 | M.R |
| Memo 4 Interview with executive C | 0 | 0 | 05/03/2013 14:46 | M.R | 05/03/2013 17:36 | M.R |

Memo 2 Interview with executive A

The executive A is relatively new to the housing sector, recently joined the housing group from a profit making company. Not much information about executive A on the housing group's website. Surprisingly I could not find any information about executive A's employment history, so I thought I might struggle to build a rapport. But, what a breath of fresh air, she came across as someone who is not bothered too much about political correctness. She drew my attention to the language (positive) used by the housing groups going through merger. She suggested that language might be a good point to reflect on!

I can't help but think that she has doubts about the leadership skills of some housing professionals, especially those with little or no exposure to the profit making sector. However, her answer to the question about 'would coaching help to overcome this leadership deficit' was not very clear, perhaps because she has not received any formal coaching herself and did not want to speculate.

There appear to be some recurring themes between executive P and executive A, specially pressure to merger, importance of communication with the affected

Footer

In Nodes Code At X

Appendix 7: Interview questions

Interview Questions for Housing Executives:

What is your role in the organisation?

Have you received any coaching / mentoring?

Have you had any involvement in providing or facilitating coaching or mentoring for employees?

What has been your experience of the merger?

'What is the role of coaching in housing association mergers'

Sub-questions:

1. What were the key features of the recent merger of your housing association?

1.1. What qualities did you seek in a merger partner?

1.2. What initiated the merger?

1.3. Do you think the merger was successful?

2. How was the period leading up to the merger managed?

2.1. How was the news of the merger communicated to staff?

2.2. Was there any formal / informal consultation with affected staff?

2.3. How did you feel at the pre-merger stage?

2.4. Did you observe any anxiety among staff at pre-merger stage?

2.5. What mechanisms did you use to manage the pre-merger anxiety?

3. What interventions before, during and after merger were used to help staff?

3.1. Did affected staff or their representatives ask for specific help or support?

- 3.2. What help / support was offered to staff during the merger?
- 3.3. Did the nature / scope/ intensity of this help / support change at any given stage of the merger process?
- 3.4. Was this help / support offered across the board or to a selected group of employees?

4. What type of coaching / mentoring was provided?

- 4.1. Did the organisation use coaching / mentoring / consultancy / training in relation to the merger?
- 4.2. If so, for what purpose? Counselling, development, retention of staff?
- 4.3. Was the person tasked with coaching / mentoring / consultancy internal or external to the organisation?
- 4.4. What key criteria did you seek in that person?

5. How was the post-merger stage managed?

- 5.1. What were the key challenges at post merger stage?
- 5.2. What interventions did you use to overcome these challenges?

Interview Questions for non managerial employees in Housing Associations :

What is your role in the organisation?

Have you received any coaching / mentoring?

Have you had any involvement in providing or facilitating coaching for other employees?

What has been your experience of the merger?

'What is the role of coaching in housing association mergers'

The following sub-questions have also emerged:

1. What were the key features of the recent merger of your housing association?

1.1. What qualities do you think management was seeking in a merger partner?

1.2. What do you think initiated the merger?

1.3. Do you think the merger was successful?

2. How was the period leading up to the merger managed?

2.1. How did you find out about the merger?

2.2. Was there any formal / informal consultation with affected staff?

2.3. How did you feel at the pre-merger stage?

2.4. What mechanisms did you use to cope with the situation?

3. What interventions before, during and after merger were used to help staff

3.1. Did you or your representatives ask for specific help or support?

3.2. What help / support was offered to staff during the merger?

3.3. Did the nature / scope/ intensity of this help / support change at any given stage of the merger process?

3.4. Was this help / support offered across the board or to a selected group of employees?

4. What type of coaching was provided?

4.1. Did the organisation use coaching/consultancy/training?

4.2. If so, for what purpose? Counselling, development, retention of staff?

4.3. Was the person tasked with coaching/consultancy, internal or external to the organisation?

4.4. What key qualities do you think are important in that person?

5. How was the post-merger stage managed?

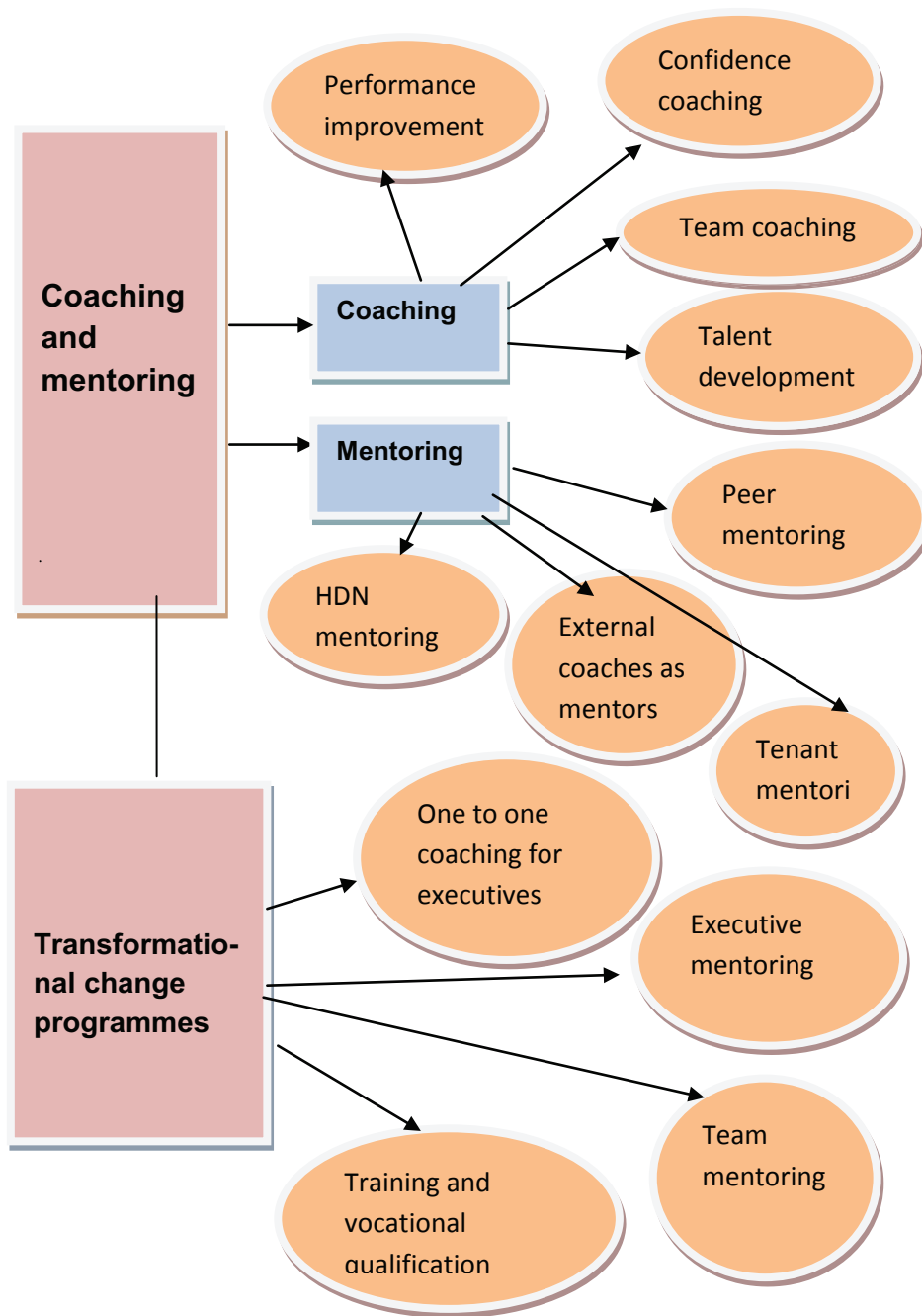
5.1. What main issues did you face at the post-merger stage?

5.2. What did management do to deal with these issues?

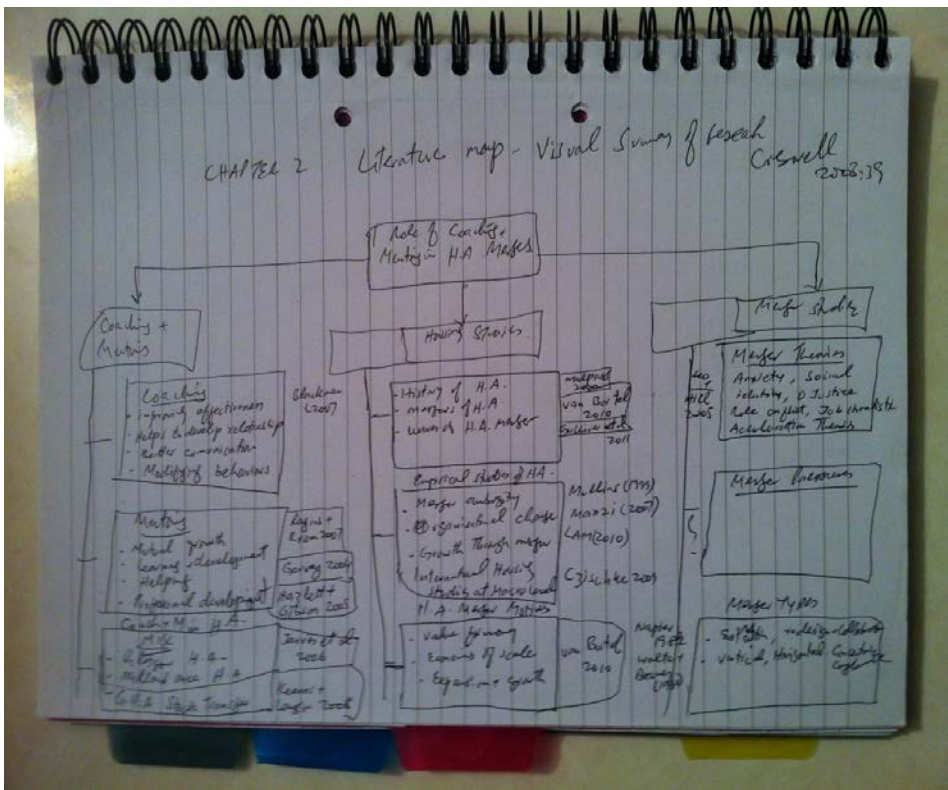
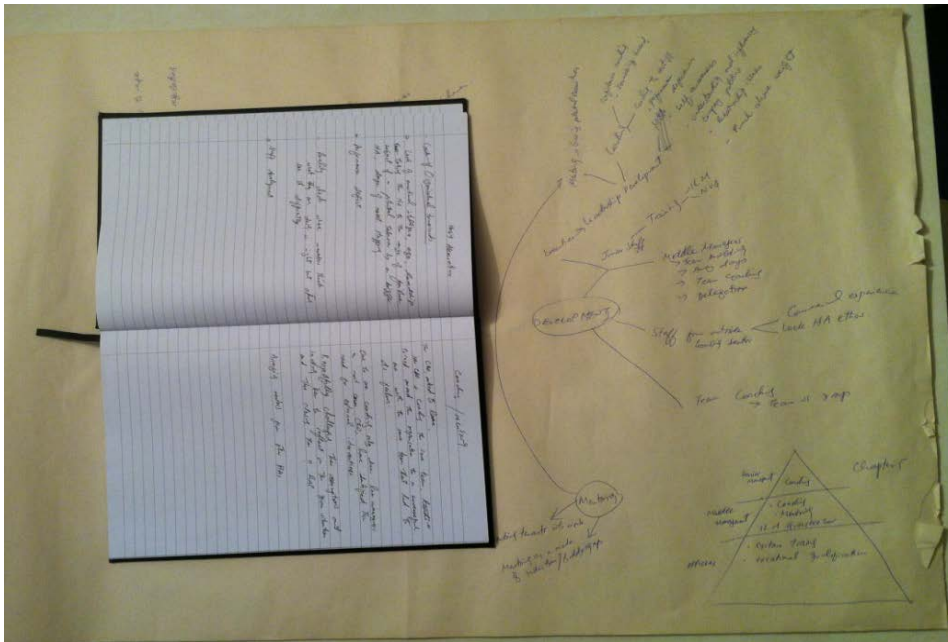
Interview Questions for External Coaches specialising in Housing Association Coaching :

1. Please explain your role in relation to coaching before, during or after a Housing Association merger.
2. How were your clients selected? (Did they volunteer or were they encouraged to undertake coaching? If the latter, could they choose from a range of coaches or not?)
3. At what level were your clients working? (eg, senior management, middle management, non-managerial staff)
4. What were the aims of the coaching?
5. How long did each session last? How many sessions did each client have? How long did the coaching continue overall?
6. What kind of issues did clients raise in relation to the merger? Were there any critical incidents which influenced their views?
7. Did these issues change during the course of the merger?
8. What was the impact of coaching on the individual clients (as far as you could judge)?
9. What was the impact of coaching on the merger (as far as you could judge)?

Appendix 8: Categories of focused codes



Appendix 9: Initial drawings and conceptual maps



Appendix 10: Themes and sub-themes

Theme: Mentoring

| Theoretical code | Sub-themes | Initial coding | Participant's words |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
| Executive mentoring | Mentoring for senior management team | Development and growth of senior managers | Leadership development Range of skills Growing business Change management |
| Induction mentoring | Post-merger mentoring for swift integration | Support for staff after the merger | Engender advice Influencing Build rapport Learning about the company vision Reassurance Common targets Corporate plan |
| Peer mentoring | Job shadowing and learning new systems | Buddy system for officers | Helping Relationship building Communication Belonging Settling in Systems training Learning new policies and procedures |

Theme: Coaching

| Theoretical code | Focused coding | Initial coding | Participant's words |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| One-to-one coaching | Coaching to explore new ideas | Coaching interventions as seen by participants | adopting new methods Creativity Have a vision Sounding board Make an impact Confidence building Improving performance |
| Team coaching | Coaching helps individuals to work as effective team members | Coaching used to foster trust, facilitate behavioural change and for team building. | Adapt Networking Team activity Joint operations Challenging Giving feedback Self awareness Supporting each other |