Using an Integrated Approach to Developing Leadership Capability in an Organisational Setting: The role of one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching

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by

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Acknowledgements

From a personal reflection of this research journey, the study modules looked like a smooth sail until the thesis stage which proved to be more challenging. The first dilemma was deciding the research topic. Then came the long delay in getting the organisation's approval for the study. Challenges from the job, family and the ministry were constantly knocking at my door. At some point in time, I saw myself losing steam and motivation. This thesis was one of the toughest assignments I have encountered as an adult because it pushed me out of my comfort zone into an area I thought I was unable to tackle. As I come to the end of this study, I can surely say it was not an easy road, but it was worth the effort. This thesis is the beginning of another journey into the world of researching professionals.

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Abstract

This thesis focused on the use of an integrated approach to leadership development, with special emphasis on the role of executive coaching (one-to-one coaching, and group coaching). I chose the topic for study due to its growing importance and utilisation in the corporate setting and higher education research. The demarcating lines between higher education and corporate education are getting thinner and thinner. Collaboration has bridged the gap between the two, while corporate universities and corporate academies are now offering some of the courses offered by higher education. Leadership development, in both the corporate world and higher education, share many commonalities; including coaching and mentoring. One can say that corporate learning has become the higher education for practitioners, as is being evidenced by the rise in the establishment of corporate universities and corporate academies. Corporate learning is an active area of investment for corporate organisations as corporate learning helps the organisations to improve and retain their leaders and professionals.

This study used a phenomenological approach to capture the experience of those undertaking such development. This study aims at exploring participants' interaction with the world of leadership development through executive coaching, and the meaning they developed from that experience. The results offered some insight into the pros and cons of one-to-one executive coaching, and group executive coaching, and factors to consider when deploying either of these methods.

The study also provided suggestions on how to improve the practice of executive coaching. It suggests measures that can be implemented to enhance learning for practitioners. It also suggests how one can leverage the concept of executive coaching in developing the organisation's leaders. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge about executive coaching and leadership development, especially in a corporate setting and Higher education setting. This study concludes by calling for collaboration between institutions of higher education, the corporate community, and coaching practitioners, to create awareness, raise the standard and create a pragmatic and enduring legacy for executive coaching field.

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for any other award or credit at this or any institution of higher education. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis is wholly original, and all material or writing published or written by others and contained herein has been duly referenced and credited.

Signature: **Dickson Ikechukwu M. Ojukwu**

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Abbreviations and Glossary

- AC = Association of Coaching
- ACC = Associate Certified Coach
- CIPD = Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- EdD = Doctor of Education
- GCG = Group Coaching Participants
- GE = General Electric
- GM = General Manager
- GROW = Goal, Reality, Options Way forward
- HiPo =High Potential
- HRD = Human Resources Department
- ICF = International Coach Federation
- ICT = Information and Communication Technology
- IDP = Individual Development Plan
- ILP = Individual Leadership Plan
- L&D = Learning, and Development
- MCC = Master Certified Coach
- ME = Middle East
- OCG = One-to-one Executive Coaching Participant
- PCC = Professional Certified Coach
- ROI = Return on Investment
- TO = The Organisation
- UNESCO = The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- VP = Vice President
- WABC = Worldwide Association of Business Coaches

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This study was conducted in an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) organisation in the Middle East with over 13,000 full-time employees (FTE) and over 8,000 part-time employees. At the time of this study, this organisation was going through a reorganisation and transformation journey to position itself better as a leading regional and global player in its industry. For an organisation that has a massive demand from the investors to deliver its promises and take on the storm of competition from the market, it was imperative that something was done to ensure that leaders were functioning at their best. The telecom industry is experiencing slow growth due to saturation of the market, and the organisation at the centre of this research was in a period of declining growth rate from 2010 -2014. It was exigent and expedient for the organisation to adopt a strategy to address the imbalance. The reasons for the slowing growth include the decline in mobile data revenue due to a fall in data prices. Cannibalisation of voice services by data services has been an issue of concern for operators. Apart from combating the slow growth, the tight regulations in the country did not help matters, especially the crackdown and deportation of illegal immigrant workers contributed to the reduction of subscriber numbers which impacted the profit margins. The nationalisation of jobs shaped an obligation for the organisation to create more jobs, reappraise the current leadership and talents in the organisation to ensure it was aligned to the nationalisation drive. The national development programme - Vision 2020 and Vision 2030 of the country placed the organisation at the forefront of driving the new agenda. One of the key elements of the 2020 and 2030 is technology -the smart cities, internet of things (IoT), machine learning, cloud computing, 5G and digitisation of public and private services. Being the largest single provider of ICT products and services, the organisation found itself in the position where it must act, and it became necessary for the organisation to rethink the way it does business in a bid to respond to the new challenge. The first step in this change was reorganisation and transformation of the business.

The reorganisation and transformation journey began with engaging the services of business re-engineering consultants – for this study referred to as Global Consulting Group (GCG). Their role was to analyse the current state of the business and make recommendations for improvement. One of the recommendations contained in the consultancy report was the need to improve leadership capability within the organisation. The reorganisation and transformation journey included the restructuring of the business and mapping of the right leaders into the right leadership roles. In response to the leadership capability improvement need, the leadership development programme within the organisation was reviewed and redesigned. It was called the Top-1000 programme. The redesign of the leadership development programme involved a significant shift in pedagogy from a traditional classroom-based approach to an integrated approach. For this study, the term traditional classroom approach refers to classroom face-to-face learning facilitated by an instructor, while an integrated approach refers to a blend of classroom training, online reading, group assignments, SharePoint interactions, and executive coaching sessions. This study, as outlined in section 3.2, explores the impact of executive coaching on the leadership development journey.

As part of the strategy to improve leadership performance in the organisation, it was agreed by the leadership of the organisation that the new programme would be delivered to all the organisation's leaders; numbering about 1180 at the beginning of the design stage.

There has not been any research conducted in this area within this organisation since its inception. When I had the opportunity as a practitioner-researcher student to conduct the research for my thesis, I saw it as a rare opportunity to contribute to improving the executive coaching practice in this organisation. It also availed me the chance to contribute to the existing body of knowledge about executive coaching, especially in the Middle East region. Currently, there appears to be a limited empirical study on executive coaching in the Middle East region. My study is intended to explore the lived experience of the participants who received executive coaching and how that has impacted their leadership development and performance as leaders. The target audience of this study were the participants of the Top-1000 programme.

The reason was that they were the only stakeholders that had the privilege to go through all the stages of the programme. The classroom facilitators did not go through the executive coaching session. The coaches did not go through the classroom session. The subordinates and superiors of the participants did not have the opportunity to go through the classroom or the executive coaching sessions. I could have looked at others to obtain their views, perspectives, suggestions, and recommendation however the focus of the study was kept to those undertaking the training in order to keep the study manageable while generating sufficient data to provide useful insights. I chose to focus on the experiences and insights of the participants to explore their perspectives.

The only set of people that participated in all the stages of leadership development programme are the participants, and this placed them at the most suitable position to share the end-to-end experience of the entire programme with executive coaching as the focus.

Due to the importance of effective leadership for the organisation's development and the significant resources invested in this new programme, it is essential to conduct a rigorous and robust study of the project. I saw the topic as a valuable and relevant focus for my doctoral thesis. I was particularly keen to explore the lived experience of leaders taking part in executive coaching component of this new programme, and their perceptions of whether it has impacted their leadership development and performance on the job.

At the beginning of this EdD doctoral study, I was faced with the challenge and dilemma of making the right choice of the area to conduct my research. Not just a topic to fulfil the requirement for the thesis stage of the EdD programme, but something valuable to contribute to improving continuous higher education in the organisation through the executive coaching practice and making a contribution to the existing body of knowledge about executive coaching in an organisational setting in Middle East region.

For this study, I adopted the UNESCO definition of higher education as used by Songkaeo & Yeoong (2016);

"From a pragmatic point of view, we define as higher education all types of education (academic, professional, technical, artistic, pedagogical, long distance learning, etc.) provided by universities, technological institutes, teacher training colleges, etc., which are normally intended for students having completed a secondary education, and whose educational objective is the acquisition of a title, a grade, certificate, or diploma of higher education" (UNESCO, 1998).

The Top-1000 leadership programme fell under Higher education definition. The demarcating line between corporate learning and formal education is fading (Bonk, Kim & Zeng, 2005) as mentioned in section 1.3.

1.2 The Research Site

The research site is the headquarters of the organisation. The organisation has its headquarter in the capital city of the country. About seventy per cent of its employees and ninety per cent of the leaders work in the headquarter. Most of the departments have their main office in the headquarters and regional offices in the main regions of the country. Each building has office spaces and meeting rooms. Most of the executive coaching took place in the meeting room, with the remainder being conducted in the participants' private offices.

The Learning and Development Function:

The Learning and Development (L&D) function sits in the headquarters. It is the function responsible for identifying and meeting the learning needs of the leaders and their employees. It also designs, develops, delivers and evaluates the learning solutions. The L&D, and Career Management functions work collaboratively to provide leadership development in the organisation. The executive coaching sessions of the Top-1000 programme took place at the headquarters, while the classroom sessions held in venues (mainly hotels and event centres) outside the headquarters.

From the L&D periodic reports, the organisation was facing the challenge of budget constraints in meeting all its annual training and development needs.

From the employees' side came the challenge of having a tight work schedule. This tight schedule makes them sometimes too busy to leave their jobs temporarily to pursue traditional classroom-based programmes. According to Medland and Stern (2009), coaching is complementary to the classroom method in delivering leadership development programmes. Coaching helps to translate learning into action (Medland and Stern, 2009; Collins, 2012).

In the organisation, leaders have participated in traditional classroom developmental programmes/courses in the past. However, there are still concerns about the contribution of traditional classroom programme in developing the skills and behaviours of the leaders after the course. This same view was reported by the GCG who conducted the transformation and reorganisation exercise for the organisation.

One of the outcomes of the GCG report was the performance of the leadership as reported in the organisational health index (OHI) survey. The OHI survey provides detailed findings on how an organisation performs in nine areas of organisational performance. They include direction, coordination and control, innovation, motivation, environment and values, capability, external orientation, accountability, and leadership. The detailed reports are grouped into four. They included:

 i. the hard measures for the soft issues that impact performance;
 ii. the benchmark of the organisation's health with that of other organisations;
 iii. identifying and prioritising areas of improvement and the recommended interventions;
 iv. tracking progress and proactively identifying challenges (Franciska, & Welly, 2013; McKinsey & Company, n.d.).

According to the report, "The OHI score of the VPs and GMs were in the 1st and 2nd Quartile, while the Directors, Section Managers (SMs) were in the 4th quartile" (Top-1000 Design documents, 2015. p.4). These scores imply that the leadership indices are below expectation in some of the leadership levels.

GCG traced one of the major causes of low leadership development to an inadequate training and development strategy stating the following:

"Diagnosed the L&D function and found a significant delivery, offering and effectiveness gap' (Top-1000 Design document (2015, p.2).

The report recommended a change in the leadership training delivery approach, emphasising the need for an integrated approach that would involve reinforcement of classroom learning through the inclusion of executive coaching in the design.

The Top-1000 Programme:

As a result of the GCG's recommendations, the organisation embarked on a leadership development programme as an intervention for improving the organisation's leadership development. It was an eighteen-month programme comprising of four modules: leading self, leading others, leading business, and leading change. External leadership development facilitators from private providers delivered the leadership development programme. It comprised of two days in-class training for each module and participants spend three to four months back on the job, accessing online learning materials, and other learning activities before their next module.

During the period between modules, the executive coaching sessions took place. With regards to the executive coaching element of the integrated programme, two approaches were used for different levels of management: one-to-one coaching, and group coaching (see chapter 2 for further details). Full-time internal coaches delivered the one-to-one coaching while the group coaching was delivered by private providers as discussed in section 1.2. Three levels of leaders involved in this programme include the General Managers, Directors, and Section Managers (in the order of hierarchy - top to down). The General Managers (GMs) were provided with one-to-one coaching, while the Directors and the Section Managers participated in group coaching. The decision on who gets one-to-one coaching and who gets group coaching was based on seniority, cost, and the headcount size of these levels of leaders. In seniority, the Directors (n=300) report to the GMs (n=80) and the Section Managers (n=800) report to the Directors. In addition to this reason was the number of full-time internal coaches. There were five full-time internal coaches at the beginning of the programme employed to coach the CEO, Vice Presidents, General Managers, and High Potential employees.

They were considered the pioneers of executive coaching in the organisation. This number was insufficient to provide one-to-one executive coaching to all the participants within the timeline designed for this programme. These internal coaches conducted the executive coaching of the GMs, while qualified private external coaches were contracted to conduct the group executive coaching for the Directors and Section Managers.

All the employees of the organisation at the time of the study were males. The numbers associated with each type of coaching can be seen in Table 1.1

Table 1.1 Top-1000 Programme Structure

Levels (In Seniority order)	Headcount	Type of coaching
General Managers (GMs	80	One-to-One Coaching
Directors	300	Group Coaching
Section Managers	800	Group Coaching

1.3 Research Problem

In my twenty-two years of work experience in eight organisations in the Middle East and Africa (MEA), classroom training is acknowledged as an essential component to improving managers' skill and performance (Medland and Stern, 2009; Elnaga & Imran, 2013; Mozael, 2015; Sadekar, 2016; Mwangi, 2017). One of the characteristics of the classroom approach is the cost-intensive nature and the high demand for employee's time.

In this study, I explored the general overview of the Top-1000 programme, with particular attention to coaching (one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching). The decision to focus on coaching was because of the level of investment involved and to explore how leadership development through coaching affected the organisation's mission and performance. It is one of the most significant and resource-intensive changes that was implemented by the organisation.

The Top-1000 was first introduced in the organisation in 2014. This study provided an opportunity to explore participants' perspectives of executive coaching as a leadership development tool and its impact on the organisational leadership capacity building and performance.

My intention in conducting this research was to explore the participants' experience of receiving executive coaching in the organisation. In the process of exploring the experiences shared by the participants, the study will touch some aspects of exposition, evaluations, and interpretation.

1.4 Researcher Role

My role in the organisation is that of an Advisor - Human Resource (HR) and Learning and Development (L&D). This role entails recommending and designing best-practice HR and L&D solutions. In the Top-1000 leadership development programme, my role was participating as part of the initial design team who also managed the programme progress - nominating and scheduling participants, working with the facilitators (instructors) to ensure they followed the agreed content and design. I was neither a teacher nor a coach to any of the participants on the programme. I had no authoritative power over the participants, and I did not appraise them in any way. There was no power difference between me as the researcher and the participants in the research. Potential participants that were personally known to me were not included in the study. As an insider researcher, I have a balancing role of protecting the organisation (to ensure that I followed the due process and no loss of confidential business information) and ensuring that my knowledge of the organisation does not affect the rigour of the research. This balancing role was achieved by keeping a reflective journal of the process followed and reflecting to ensure that it is based on validated academic rigour not prior-knowledge of mine.

1.5 Executive Coaching and Middle East Culture

The meaning of culture is described by many authors (Berger, 2000). Of particular resonance is the description by Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) – how a group of people solve problems and reconcile their differences. The way of life of a particular group. Culture exists in various forms and scope. National culture impacts organisational culture (Hofstede, 1991). In the Middle East (ME) region, the business environment and organisational culture are shaped predominantly by the national culture and Islamic values and culture (Metcalfe, 2006).

Despite the high dependence for expatriate workers by the various organisations in ME region, the national and local culture still dominates the organisational culture (Abouzeid, 2008). This dominance is attributed to the tendency for the nationals of these ME countries to occupy senior roles in organisations (Dodds, & Grajfoner, 2018). In many occasions like the case of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, it is part of the nationalisation programme.

Hofstede's social-cultural framework provides a basis for analysing organisational and national cultures. The Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions framework is a framework used to analyse the culture across countries and to discern the distinctiveness across diverse cultures. It was created in 1980 by Dutch management researcher Geert Hofstede. Though Hofstede's framework does not explicitly cover all national cultures, it provides valuable insight into the culture of a nation (Dodds, & Grajfoner, 2018). In the target organisation of my research, the culture is a reflection of the country's culture – High Power distance (95) and low Individualism and collectivism (25). People tend to respect those in authority as the society looks up to the leader as the custodian of power. This power distance may affect the way the subjects express their views about the organisation's matters. They are mindful about how the leader may react to their view. It is a very high collectivism society where people expect to achieve more through others – high dependency. The decision making to a large extent is arrived at based on how you are connected. People expect their relations and managers to do things for them and in their favour. Those who may not be connected are sometimes left on their own to their detriment.

Many issues of concerns have been raised about the framework, and there are ongoing debates as to whether the concerns have been addressed. In various cases, Hofstede claims that some of the concerns are not valid, while others are already addressed (Hofstede, 2002). Some researchers who raised concerns are of the view that Hofstede is closed-minded regarding addressing the concerns raised (McSweeney, 2002: Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). Some of the concerns include that raised by McSweeney (2002) - the assumptions that Hofstede has uncovered the secrets of national cultures, and that there are four main dimensions of culture which can be hierarchically ordered. The claim that the acceptance level of his framework implies that the paradigm shift has occurred. Also, in contention are, Hofstede's claim of corroboration of Feud's theory, the claim of the positive relationship between masculinity and antagonistic industrial relations, and not recognising the earlier research on national culture published by other researchers. Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy's (2009) raised a concern about Hofstede's model for its oversimplified cultural differences, inconsistency between the categories, and lacks empirical evidence from an educational perspective.

McSweeney summarised the claim by Hofstede as fallacious assumptions, excessive, unbalanced, and lacking a convincing evaluation of the findings. Despite Hofstede's defence of his model, his model is described as problematic, ecological fallacy, the conflation and uni-level analysis as flawed and incomplete (McSweeney, 2013, 2002). McSweeney recommends that Hofstede should embrace dialogue and intellectual conversation concerning the model rather than the evasive attitude towards the critiques of his model. It is recommended that Hofstede's model be treated more critically rather than accepting it without judgement (Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). Despite that Williams (2002) did not completely agree with McSweeney's critique, he perceives Hofstede's model as an insightful and useful academic tool but recognised McSweeney's critique as a caution for readers to be aware that the model is not infallible. In summary, the ongoing debate on Hofstede's model points out to its significance in the academic setting, the need to view the claims with caution, and exigency for further study in the area of national culture.

I concur with Trompenaars's (1994) view that Hofstede's model may not be perfect but should be seen as contributing to the field of management and all stakeholders should continue the intellectual conversation as they find ways of harnessing the differences rather plotting the differences.

Coaching can be said to have its strong root to the Western world; however, the practice of coaching differs in different cultures (Rosinski, 2003), and can be detrimental in some cultural settings (Hofstede, 1993). While coaching may present a challenge in a diverse culture, the cultural differences are seen by some as an opportunity to leverage the richness of diversity of culture while coaching. The opportunity can be in the form of learning other cultures and increasing coaching's applicability and validity (Rosinski & Abbot, 2006; Donnison, 2008; Rosinski, 2010).

Research work on executive coaching and national culture of the ME region shows a high level of power-distance and low in Individualism. This research outcome has a far-reaching implication on the coach-coachee relationship. The difference in power-distance can affect openness and an increase in expectation for the coach to take a leading role in the discussion and provide more advice and recommendations. The low level of individualism reflects the importance of family and relationships. It manifests in the form of the need to save face and fear of failure (Dodds, & Grajfoner, 2018). In some of the ME countries, the influence of the western colonial legacy has created a hybrid of local-traditional leadership styles in many of the organisations (Passmore, 2013). Preferential treatment and personal connection (known in the Arab world as 'wasta') influence the managers' decision-making process (Cunnigham, Sarayrah & Sarayrah, 1994; Passmore, 2013). To be successful as a coach in the ME region, the coach needs to take note of the impact of connection in the business environment.

The low level of individualism (need for work-life balance, and transferring the learning from coaching to the family setting) and high level of power-distance (need for trust, paternalistic view of leadership) was evident in the interview of participants in my study.

Apart from culture, other factors shape the identity and behaviours of the individual. The role of the coach is to understand the individual irrespective of what shapes their whole person, being sensitive to the culture, and adapting appropriately (Peterson, 2007; Dodds, & Grajfoner, 2018).

1.6 Top-1000 Executive Coaching process

The provision of group executive coaching was used across various departments for cross-pollination of ideas. The average group size for a coaching session was between five and fifteen. Each phase of the coaching has over fifty group coaching sessions. They met four times (phases) during the programme: between one classroom module and the next classroom module (about three months), and also after the last module. For each phase of coaching, there were more than fifty sessions of coaching. The coaching sessions aimed to enable the participants to implement what they learnt in the classroom by developing and implement an action plan. The classroom learning involved the input of the coaching session. A typical coaching session lasted for about three hours. The topics were generic according to the content of the module, but the coaching need was specific to the participant. However, each participant has to apply the learning to his specific needs and thereby inform his action plan. Each coaching session concluded with an action-plan indicating what the participant is going to implement before the next coaching session (which is about three months). The following coaching session reviewed the action plan to identify progress made and address any possible challenges.

The steps for the one-to-one executive coaching were similar to that of group coaching. The differences were that in one-to-one, coaching is between the coach and a participant, the coaching time is between 60-90 minutes, and the participants are all GMs, while the Directors and Section Managers experienced group coaching.

1.7 Plan of the thesis

In chapter one, the background context of the research has been presented. The background discussed the need for the organisation to investigate its current leadership development approach and explore the use of executive coaching. The chapter also clarified the role of the researcher – a practitioner-researcher who had no authority or power of influence over the participants.

In chapter two various pieces of literature were reviewed, and the challenges of leadership development in the organisations discussed. The chapter examines the types of coaching practice in a corporate setting including, peer coaching, team coaching, cross-organisation coaching, line manager coaching or hierarchical coaching, and executive coaching. It explored how executive coaching works using the internal or external coach model. It also discussed the requirements to become an executive coach. Theoretical and practical models of executive coaching were discussed. The chapter delved into the challenges of executive coaching. It explored the stages, merits, and demerits of one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching. The chapter ends with an acknowledgement of the gap in knowledge.

Chapter three explored the aim of the research, the research questions, features of the research design (epistemology, methodology, selection of participants, data collection process, ethical consideration of the research, and data analysis).

Chapter four presented and discussed the research findings. These include interview, transcription, coding, categorisation, and theme analysis - the analysis of the 241 codes, eleven categories, and five themes. Chapter five discusses the review of the research aim, research questions, and how the findings have addressed these two areas. Emerging insight and implications to practice were discussed.

The chapter ends with the strengths and limitations of the study, a recommendation for further research, concluding remarks and references.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The field of leadership development has been dominated by classroom face-to-face learning (Blackman, 2010; Al Shamsi, Dixon, Hossan, & Papanastassiou, 2015) until recently. The trend started shifting towards other non- classroom methods of leadership development. Such methods include coaching, mentoring, e-learning, on-the-job training, exchange programmes, mass open online courses (MOOCs), and community of practice (Dubois-Maahs, 2013). Recently, the organisation had introduced executive coaching and community of practice (referred to in this organisation as Special Interest Group - SIG). These new introductions support the other existing methods (traditional classroom programmes, on-the-job training, e-learning, and exchange programmes). The use of mass open online courses (MOOCs) and mentoring are yet to be adopted by the organisation.

Studies on leadership and management identified coaching as a tool or process used by managers to correct the deficiencies in employees' job performance (Witherspoon, & White,1996; Feldman & Lankau, 2005, Webb, 2006; Koortzen & Oosthuizen 2010; Kim, Egan & Moon, 2014; Ellinger & Kim, 2014). Researchers perceive coaching as a means of improving the performance of executives (Feldman and Lankau, 2005; Chandler, Roebuck, Swan & Brock, 2011; Ward, 2014; HCI, 2016). In the 1990s, coaching was seen as a tool for changing the behaviour of middle and senior level leaders. In the same period, the failure rate of corporate executives was estimated as 50%, and the reason for the failure was attributed to poor leadership competencies rather than poor technical competencies (Feldman and Lankau, 2005). The need to develop new leaders, prepare them for higher challenges, and equip them on how to cope with change, made many organisations start engaging the services of coaching practitioners (Greco, 2001; Niemes, 2002; Feldman & Lankau, 2005). In this study, the organisation introduced coaching for the reason of developing leaders, improving their performance as leaders, and preparing them for higher challenges, rather than as a means to correct poor performance on the job.

Various types of coaching exist in business organisations today. However, no type is superior to the other; instead, some are best suited to certain types of needs. Executive coaching is one of such coaching types used in organisational settings and is the focus of this study. The field of executive coaching is highly unregulated (Medland and Stern, 2009; Lane, Stelter & Stout-Rostron, 2010; Collins, 2012; Ciporen, 2015). Studies show the various models being deployed in executive coaching practice in business.

For this study, one-to-one executive coaching is defined according to Kilburg (2000, p.67) as,

"helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction, and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement".

Group executive coaching for this study is defined as,

"a facilitated group process led by a skilled professional coach and created with the intention of maximising the combined energy, experience, and wisdom of the individual who chooses to join in order to achieve organisational objectives or individual goals" (Cockerham, 2011, p. 1).

From the two definitions above, we have some commonalities and differences. The commonalities (in my study) include, the participants of the two types of coaching are holders of managerial authorities and responsibilities. Professional coaches handled the coaching. The purpose of each of the coaching types was to achieve either individual or organisational goals. The difference between the two types was the nature of the interaction. In the one-to-one coaching, the interaction was between the coach and the coachee, while in group coaching, one coach is facilitating the coaching sessions of a group of coachees.

The growing challenge of managing businesses has propelled organisations to start exploring new ways of developing their leadership capacity. From the traditional leadership development approaches like classroom training, to a more integrated approach that blends, executive coaching, SharePoint interactions, stretched assignments, e-learning, mentoring, communities of practice, management games, case studies, and exchange programmes. Schuneman (2018) compared Coaching, Mentoring, and Training (traditional classroom). See Tables 2.1 and 2.2 for comparisons. The significant difference is that coaching takes the form of a formal approach to performance and behaviour improvement and requires an expert in coaching. Mentoring is informal and requires the total person improvement, and the mentor needs to be experienced and knowledgeable (a role model). Training is also formal mainly used for upskilling and requires a subject matter expert.

Many organisations irrespective of their size perceive leadership development as a competitive advantage, and as such, they are investing substantially towards this purpose (Boaden, 2006; Blackman, 2010; Al Shamsi, Dixon, Hossan, & Papanastassiou, 2015; Megheirkouni, 2016). It is one thing to invest in people development, but it is another thing to ensure that the investment is in the right direction. According to Megheirkouni (2016), a significant determinant of the success of people development is making the right choice of, the content, activities, approach, method of delivery, and evaluation method of the development programmes. The success of people development programmes is a subject of debate for many scholars.

Megheirkouni (2016), reviewed various research studies on leadership development methods and found the use of the following to be universal; 360-degree feedback, networking, mentoring, coaching, action learning, job assignment, and job rotation. The review showed that it is not the case of 'one size fits all.' It further revealed that the choice of method used, and the transferability of the method depends on the context, organisation's culture, strategy, type of need, and location.

In the view of Allen & Hartman (2008), each approach to leadership development comes with benefits and drawbacks, and each has an impact on leaders' performance. Authors in the leadership and management domain opine that successful leadership programmes should have the elements of coaching, reflection, feedback, goal setting, follow-up and structured progress review (Blackman, 2010; Goldman, Wesner & Karnchanomai, 2013; Megheirkouni, 2016). The Top-1000 programme has all the elements mentioned by the authors. Each coaching session starts with goal setting or goal review, and a structured progress review on the action points agreed in the previous session. The coach uses various coaching techniques to get the best out of the coachee, especially the use of questioning, and listening skill. The coaching process helps both the coach and the coachee to maintain focus, and track progress.

Beard and Wilson (2013) pointed out that coaching enhances classroom learning. Coaching provides an opportunity for the coachee and the coach to discuss feedback on the coachee's job performance. It is targeted at the specific needs of the coachee. Though coaching can be used in isolation in developing leaders, however in an integrated approach, the coaching sessions are journeys linked together to the classroom learning for continuity in learning and performance. It links classroom learning to actual practice. For the classroom setting, participants learn immediately from the facilitator and may ask questions to clear areas of doubts (Beard and Wilson, 2013). In the Top-1000 programme, the participants were exposed to the various leadership topics in the classroom and based on the learning; they developed a learning action-plan. The action-plan is related to their leadership behaviour or their leadership role on the job.

The action plan becomes the input to the executive coaching sessions. The coach and coachee build their coaching discussions around the learning action plan.

Table 2.1: Comparing Coaching, Mentoring and Training

Comparison	Coaching	Mentoring	Training
Emphasis Is on	Performance or behavior transformation	Career, behavior or all-around personal development oriented	Skill training, upgrading skills or skill advancement
Time Horizon	Short Term	Long Term	Variable – depending on purpose of training
Type	Formal and task oriented and task or performance driven	Informal and relationship oriented and development driven	Formal and usually structured with measurable learning outcomes
Facilitator Skill Requirements	Expert in the field	High knowledge and experience in the field	Expert in the field, high knowledge level and practical applications experience

Schuneman, (2018), http://www.invistaperforms.org/sorting-coaching-vs-mentoring-vs-training/

Table 2.2. When to use Coaching, Mentoring, and Training

Coaching is used when...	Mentoring is used when...	Training is used when...
You are seeking to develop an employee(s) in specific competencies using a performance management tool and involving the immediate manager.	You are seeking to develop new leaders or develop a talent pool as part of succession planning.	You want to provide ongoing employee training and development that supports succession planning by increasing the availability of experienced and capable employees to assume a more senior role as they become available.
You have one or a number of talented employees who are not meeting expectations.	You seek to develop your diverse employees to remove barriers that hinder their success.	You want to provide training that can be used to "up-skill" or "multi-skill" your employees. Up-skilling involves extending an employee's knowledge of an existing skill, providing more experts within a subject area. Multi-skilling is the process of training employees in new or related work areas to increase their usability within the organization.
Your company is introducing a new system or program and employees need to become more proficient.	You seek to more completely develop your employees in ways that are additional to the acquisition of specific skills/competencies.	You want to invest in the development of your employees and provide career pathways within your organization, rather than having them seek next-level opportunities elsewhere.
You have a small group of individuals (3 to 6) that are in need of increased competency in specific areas.	You seek to retain and pass on your internal expertise and experience residing in your baby boomer employees for future generations.	You want to increase efficiency and productivity in completing daily work tasks. Trainings like LEAN can also help your organization achieve greater consistency in process adherence, making it easier to project outcomes and better meet organizational goals and targets.

– Schuneman (2018), http://www.invistaperforms.org/sorting-coaching-vs-mentoring-vs-training/.

In practice, the differentiating line between coaching and mentoring can be thin. It may be useful from the beginning for organisations to have a clear definition of what coaching, and mentoring mean.

In the example of Schuneman (2018), a good comparison is made concerning emphasis, time horizon, type, and facilitator skill requirement. However, in practice, the coach is not always an expert in the field of the coachee's need. It is required for the coach to be an expert in coaching techniques and practice (trained or certified). Coaches have the option to specialise in some areas of coaching (for example, life coaching, executive coaching, spiritual coaching, financial coaching, sports coaching, etc.). Each of these coaching areas starts with laying the foundation of coaching competencies (Auerbach, 2012). A growing number of individuals and organisations are adopting the use of coaching not only by professional coaches but also by managers, organisation leaders, and professionals (ICF & PWC, 2016).

2.3 Types of Coaching used in an organisation setting

This study focused on executive coaching. However, it may be useful to explore other types of coaching that are being used in organisational settings, and how these other coaching types differ from executive coaching.

2.3.1 Line Manager Coaching or Hierarchical Coaching

Line Manager coaching is conducted by a manager who has the task of coaching their employees as part of their role. ICF recommends that the line manager-coach should have compatible learning style and shared values with their coachees. They should possess coaching and learning traits, have an acceptable reputation, and complementary personality traits necessary for employee-manager dynamics to succeed (ICF & PWC, 2016). According to CIPD, coaching by line managers was rated as one of the top used active learning and development tools in the UK. It was also found to be the least in decline, and the top leadership and development method to grow in the next two years (CIPD, 2015).

The advantages of Line Managers as coaches include; better knowledge of the organisation's culture and operational modalities, less expensive than other methods, readily available, they provide models for other managers so they can coach other employees of the organisation, interaction is straightforward, and gathering and giving of feedback is natural (Carter, 2005; CIPD 2015; ICF & PWC, 2016).

Executive coaching will likely flourish more in the organisation if the practice and awareness level is raised. One of the ways to raise the practice and awareness level is by adopting the coaching practice at the managerial levels. It may include adding coaching as part of the roles of the managers. Currently, in the organisation, managers are going through coaching training. The reason behind this new move is to equip them with coaching skills so that they can use it in managing their teams. The advantage of using managers as coaches has been mentioned in the previous paragraph. The downside, however, is that the coachee may not be willing to open up due to familiarity with the manager (Schalk & Landeta, 2017). The manager may not see other perspectives due to familiarity with the coachee. One of the ways to guard against the downside is to develop clear coaching guidelines and continuously creating coaching awareness. Line Manager coaching was not chosen for the Top-1000 programme because this is the first time coaching was being introduced in the organisation. It requires leaders to have an experience on how coaching works (awareness), and go through formal training before they can practice as line manager coaches.

2.3.2 Peer Coaching

Peer coaching occurs when people on the same level in the organisation ladder exchange coaching between each other. This type of coaching has the possibility of enhancing open and free sharing of knowledge, ideas, and experiences, and can improve objective feedback. Other purposes of peer coaching include reflecting on practice, introducing new skills and techniques, solving work-related problems, and improving performance (WhyDev, 2012; Maier, 2014). It is trust-based, confidential, supportive, reciprocal, encourages mutual exchange. Peer coaching requires listening, reflection, rephrasing, and questioning (WhyDev, 2012).

What makes peer coaching a useful leadership development tool is the notion that individuals use their resources to create the needed solutions. The coaching partners explore new possibilities. The coaching environment is dependable and dynamic. The feedback is viewed as being useful because it is delivered in a non-threatening way (Maier, 2014).

A phenomenological study by Goldman, Wesner & Karnchanomai (2013) revealed that reciprocal peer coaching provided developmental, functional, and emotional value. The study centred on the impact of peer coaching on implementing an individual leadership plan (ILP). The findings showed a positive experience on both the ILP and the impact of peer coaching for all the participants.

Peer coaching is more likely to flourish in an organisation where coaching has been in use, and the beneficiaries understand coaching concepts and are conversant with the coaching process and techniques. In this organisation, coaching is still a new concept, and the leaders are yet to grasp how coaching works. They are yet to acquire the skills required to embark on coaching. Peer coaching is more likely to thrive if introduced at the maturity stage (see Table 2.3) of the coaching in the organisation.

Table 2.3 Recommendations for stakeholders in the different phases of the coaching relationship

	Coach	**Coachee**	**Organisation**
Pre-formation	Provide the organisation with information to enable them to put the coach forward as a possible match with the coachee, based on the parameters being put forward by the decision-maker. Ensure the coach's own needs are met and that the coach can approach the coachee with 'unconditional positive regard' (Rogers, 1961).	Give consideration to what may be the goals of coaching. Give consideration to what sort of coach might be most helpful in achieving these goals; Similarity vs difference; challenging vs empathetic; whether the coach's background is important; is a particular coaching approach required?	Ensure clarity of why coachee is being put forward for coaching. Provide information to the coachee on what to expect of the coaching process. Clarify the definition of coaching and how it differs from mentoring and therapy. Discuss some agreed coaching aims and be clear that the coachee is free to discuss any other issues with the coach confidentially. Discuss what sort of coach might be most helpful in achieving the agreed goals. Agree what will be brought back to the organisation as feedback.
Formations	Plan opening questions carefully so as to get responses from potential coachee(s) on the type of coaching they seek and the relationship they want.	Provide potential coaches with information about your coaching requirements. Ask questions to help clarify their approach and to uncover elements of their style to allow a choice to be made.	No intervention required during the formation process. Approval of the chosen match may be necessary.

Transitions	Ensure that contracting is carried out clearly. Follow a checklist of mandatory items, one of which must be confidential, and another may be scheduling (and cancellation) of appointments. Have a less rigid discussion of ways of working that will enable the coachee to get the most from their coaching programme. Try to uncover any 'elephants in the room' - issues that are obstacles or inhibitors in the coachee's environment.	Update the coach on any developments since the matching session. Be as open and honest with the coach as possible. Their confidential handling of the sessions is assured, and the maximum outcome will result from as candid a relationship as possible. Agree with the coach what will be fed back to the organisation.	Agree feedback with the coach and coachee.
Maturity	Provide a safe, open environment for the coachee to enjoy. Act in a professional manner for each session. Be mindful of the relationship and the boundaries that must exist between coach and coachee. Be clear whether you are happy for the coachee to contact you between sessions.	Treat the coach with respect in terms of turning up to sessions on time and if cancellations are necessary, give suitable notice. Be open and honest with the coach and do not be afraid to use silence to find deep reflexive answers.	Agree feedback with the coach and coachee. Agree term of coaching (if not already agreed). Respect the coach's professional code of practice.

Endings	Make a suitable time for the review of the programme (this may be done at interim stages too). Decide whether further contact with the coachee will be offered. Prepare a report for the organisation.	Work with the coach to set out what actions are to be taken and how these will be carried out, what support is required and what obstacles are to be overcome. Celebrate your progress!	Carry out a final review with coach and coachee. There may also be a separate review with the coachee based on the outcomes of the coaching and in the context of the original referral.

Source: Collins (2012, p. 309-310).

2.3.3 Team coaching

Team coaching involves a coach administering coaching to a team with a mutual goal. This type of coaching enhances learning from the experience of each member of the team. However, it has its drawbacks as many team members may not feel free to discuss some confidential topics within a team setting. It is also difficult to manage especially if the team size is large -more than twelve (Britton, 2010). Carr and Peters (2013) identified six components of team coaching. The six components identified by Carr & Peter (2013) align with the eight steps listed by Farmer (2015). The eight includes understanding the context of the organisation, meeting with the key stakeholders, developing the proposal to meet the need identified with the stakeholders, meeting the coachees, conducting the first coaching meeting, continuing with the coaching plan, ongoing meeting with stakeholders, and final review. Team coaching is not the same as Group coaching.

Many authors interchange the two terms. Group coaching should be differentiated from team coaching. As Thornton (2016, p.11) puts it, "all teams are groups, but not all groups are teams".

The major difference between team coaching and group coaching is in the goal and focus. While group coaching focuses on common topics which may not be the same goal for the group members, team coaching focuses on a shared goal and team interest. In team coaching the coachees belong to the same team but in a group coaching the coachees may come from different teams (Brown & Grant, 2010; Collins, Eisner, & O'Rourke, 2013).

In the Top-1000 programme, the participants come from different departments and different job functions. The group executive coaching was conducted for leaders in the same leadership level. For example, the Directors had a group executive coaching of Directors only, and the Section Manager had group executive coaching of Section Managers only. Group executive coaching was chosen because it is most suited for leaders coming from various functional roles. It is also more cost effective. Team coaching would have been more suitable if they were all from the same departments or team with common goals.

2.3.4 Cross-organisation coaching

Cross-organisation coaching involves two or more organisations engaging in collaborative coaching with each other (ICF & PWC, 2016). It usually involves peers of the two organisations. According to Beattie et al. (2014), the success of this type of coaching is enhanced when the correct choice of coaching method is made by the coaching stakeholders to match the coaching need. Cross-organisational coaching enhances the benchmarking of practices (Beattie et al., 2014). Empirical evidence of the benefit of this type of coaching includes an opportunity for sharing best practices, access to broader experiences, availability of networking opportunities, opportunity to apply knowledge and skill in a new setting, an opportunity to share new ideas to a partner as a sounding board (Beattie et al., 2014).

An example of a success story of cross-organisational coaching is the case study shared by Beattie et al. (2014) involving Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) in collaboration with three local companies.

The participating organisations were in different industries, and this eliminated any unhealthy competition. While the three organisations belonged to different sectors, they had a common goal to develop middle managers who were crucial in the delivering of the company strategy. Each organisation was going through transformational change.

The programme was a product of the collaborative effort of human resources development academics, and practitioners from the participating organisations. Their main task was making the business cases, and getting the buy-in of the top leadership of their organisations. The process involved matching the managers of one organisation with that of another organisation. The details of how data were collected or analysed were not disclosed; thus caution should be exercised regarding the use of the findings. The findings from the study indicated positive results in the commitment to the initiative, and a useful value added in the matching process of complementary job roles and objectives. The critical success factor of the initiative was in the shared values of the participating organisations. Some of the challenges of the initiative were the willingness of the participating organisations to share information freely, and the process of matching the needs and the objectives. Another challenge that characterises this type of coaching is the inter-rivalry competition among partnering organisation in the same area of business and the same geographical location. However, this was avoided by choosing businesses in different sectors (Beattie et al., 2014). According to the authors, the senior management of the partnering organisations required each other's buy-in and assurance of confidentiality of information shared in this partnership.

The Top-1000 programme is the first time the organisation conducted a leadership development programme that involves the use of executive coaching. Also, the concept of coaching is new to the organisation. The current coaching programme gives the organisation a good basis to take their coaching to another level. That next level could include cross-organisation coaching.

Cross-organisation coaching requires collaboration with a benchmark organisation (organisation of a like-mind) who are willing to embark on cross-organisation coaching. The government of the country has a majority share in the organisation.

The ownership status presents an opportunity for the organisation and other government-owned organisations to embark on cross-organisation coaching with each other – sharing their success stories.

2.3.5 Executive Coaching

The workplace is becoming increasingly complex resulting from globalisation, increased demand in consumer preferences, rapid changes in technology, regulatory requirements, increasing performance expectations from business owners, and stiff competition. These complexities place a demand on the leaders of organisations to embark on leadership development (Maltbia et al., 2014). Organisations globally in the past two decades spent an estimate of $2 billion on coaching, of which $1billion was spent on executive coaching (Goldman, Wesner & Karnchanomai, 2013;). Executive coaching has emerged as one of the five top means of responding to the challenges of the increased complexity in managing organisation (WanVeer & Ruthman, 2008). It is difficult to state the exact number of practising coaches globally. However International Coach Federation (ICF), estimated the number to have increased to 53,300 in 2015 from 48,000 in 2012 (ICF & PWC, 2012). Out of the 48,000, coaches in 2012, 57% (n=27,360) were involved in executive coaching in businesses or organisations (Maltbia et al., 2014). According to ICF & PWC (2016), trends in talent management have prompted many organisations to start developing an enduring coaching culture. ICF further acknowledges that previously, executive coaching was restricted to senior leadership roles, provided by professional coaches, but now, it is not only widely used in all levels of leadership in the entire organisation but also practised by many managers of organisations.

Some of the factors that gave rise to the growth of executive coaching include: the change in performance management system with emphasis on continuous feedback; the transfer of some of the roles of human resources function to line managers; and moving away of managers from controlling mindset to inclusion, and participatory management styles (ICF & PWC, 2016).

These trends drive managers to use coaching-based approaches, competencies, and skills to drive engagement with their teams and colleagues in the workplace. ICF & PWC (2016) identified various reasons why executive coaching has become very prominent as a leadership development tool in many organisations. These reasons include its ability to: increase productivity; increase work quality; improve employees' job satisfaction; improve teamwork and relationship among the employees and their managers; increase employee engagement; provide better management of work time; drive faster onboarding; and improve decision making.

Before the emergence of executive coaching, traditional classroom leadership development dominated the leadership space in organisations. As earlier mentioned, the recent development of executive coaching had marked it as the engine that translates learning into action (Medland and Stern, 2009; Reinhold, Patterson & Hegel, 2015). Medland and Stern (2009) noted that in the past two and half decades, executive coaching has grown significantly in both breadth and depth in the organisational performance setting. The adjective 'executive' originates from the notion that this type of coaching was used for the leadership or management level. This notion makes it different from other types of coaching like line manager coaching. In line manager coaching the coach has a control authority over the coachee, which in some cases may prevent the coachee from coming forth with some topics for coaching discussion. However, in executive coaching (also in peer coaching, team coaching, and cross-organisation coaching), the internal professional coaches or external professional coaches do not have controlling authority over their clients, and this creates enabling environment for the coach and the coachee to interact freely (Medland and Stern, 2009).

Various authors view the definition and meaning of executive coaching from several lenses depending on the role they ascribe to executive coaching. Collins (2012) views executive coaching as a work-based development tool for the development of attributes, skills or competencies. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011), view executive coaching as a Socratic-based dialogue between a coach and client facilitated through mainly open-ended questioning. Bozer, Sarros, and Santora (2014) viewed executive coaching as a one-to-one intervention between a professional coach and a coachee.

For Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh (2014), it is a developmental process for building a better leadership ability. One fundamental commonality in the various views of executive coaching is the notion that it is organisation-based, conducted mainly on a one-to-one basis, and it is meant to improve the way leaders, and managers perform their roles.

For this study, I adopted the following definition of executive coaching as
> "a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction, and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement" (Kilburg, 2000, p. 67).

Executive coaching was adopted by the organisation of my study based on the recommendation of the external consultants – GCG, as the most suitable coaching that aligns with the leadership needs of the organisation. What makes it unique is the notion that it is dedicated to leaders, facilitated by professional coaches, and fits better into the organisation's context. In line with best-practice, performing organisation start their coaching journey with executive coaching for their leaders. Some of the global and international organisations that adopt the practice of executive coaching include Citibank, Proctor & Gamble, Northern Telecoms, American Express, AT&T, GE, IBM, NYNEX Corporation, and Motorola (Smith, 1993; Olivero et al., 1997; Sherman & Freas, 2004; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; McGregor, 2009).

2.3.5.1 Operational Modalities of Executive Coaching

Executive coaching can be provided by internal full-time practitioner coaches or external practitioner coaches (Correia et al., 2016; HCI, 2016; ICF & PWC, 2016; Schalk & Landeta, 2017). Both internal and external practitioner coaches are expected to be qualified (certified and experienced).

Currently, there is no globally unified qualification, accreditation or requirements for anyone practising as an executive coach, which poses a challenge of regulating the standards and practice of the coaching. Organisations globally, regionally, and nationally are making an effort to regulate coaching practice (Lane, Stelter & Stout-Rostron, 2010; ICF & PWC, 2012; Correia et al., 2016). The challenge posed by regulation made the three major bodies regulating coaching to form an alliance in 2012 called Global Coaching and Mentoring Alliance. The three bodies are the International Coach Federation (ICF), European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), and the Association of Coaching (AC) (Lane, Stelter, & Stout-Rostron, 2010). Other bodies regulating coaching include The Coaching Psychology Forum (CPF), Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA), International Association of coaches, World Association of Business Coaches, and the International Coaching Community. These organisations certify a person to become a qualified coach (including a qualified executive coach).

2.3.5.2 Internal Full-time Executive Coaches

Internal full-time executive coaches are those practising coaching and who have full-time employment in the organisation with a coaching role as their primary task (Carter, 2005). They do not manage employees, and they can coach anyone in the organisation. They are not likely to suffer from the challenges caused by familiarities as in the case of the line manager-coach. They are likely to be more objective in their role and unbiased in their views. Another advantage is that they are familiar with the culture of the organisation. However, they may not have the credibility and wealth of experience that comes with external practitioner coaches. They may also be caught up by internal organisational politics that may affect the objectivity of their services (Carter, 2005: Sherpa Coaching, 2014; Schalk & Landeta, 2017).

With the introduction of the Top-1000 programme (involving over one thousand leaders), these number of internal coaches were considered as not being enough to coach all the Top-1000 participants.

The perceived shortage of coaches informed the decision to dedicate the internal coaches to the GM and external coaches employed to take care of the Directors and Section Managers. Choosing the coaching option that is best suitable for an organisation is a crucial responsibility of the custodians of people management strategy. The factors that determine the direction to go in the coaching choice include, the maturity stage of the organisation with regards to coaching (see table 2.3), the need of the organisation, number of beneficiaries of the executive coaching, budget, and purpose for adopting coaching by the organisation.

2.3.5.3 External Practitioner Executive Coaches

According to various authors (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Bozer Sarros, & Santora, 2014), external practitioner executive coaches are mostly professional coaches who are trained and certified (but sometimes self-acclaimed). They mostly come with a wealth of experience of coaching many organisations and with a large clientele base. They usually enter into a formal contract with the organisation and its executives to help the executives achieve some agreed business goals or personal development objectives. Such contracts will include the scope of the coaching relationship, roles and responsibilities of the coach, the roles of the executive, the roles of the organisation, coaching deliverables, timeframe, and cost implications (Blackman, 2010; Goldman, Wesner & Karnchanomai, 2013). What forms the scope of the contract depends on the business need of the executive and the organisation. These needs may be to implement the new business goal, expecting a change in attitude, introduction of a new culture, change in business goal or strategy, building capacity for future business need, or developing new skills (Blackman, 2010; Goldman, Wesner & Karnchanomai, 2013).

The advantages of external executive coaching include the notion that it does not require additional internal assignments for the coaches thereby allowing them to focus on their job (unlike the full-time internal coach who may have other tasks in addition to their coaching task). However, the external coaches are not easily entangled with the internal politics of the client organisation because they are external to the system.

The coaches have better credibility due to exposure and experience in multiple organisations and clients (Schalk & Landeta, 2017). External coaches are more likely to command respect and more likely to keep confidentiality. They are usually not familiar with the coachees, which enhances their chances of being unbiased, and that enhances the chances of the coachees being open to the coaching journey. There are also some disadvantages as identified by Carter (2005) namely; external coaches may struggle with understanding the organisation culture; they may be expensive; their skills may not be easily transferable to the organisation; and it may be difficult to verify their qualification due to lack of central accreditation body (Carter, 2005; Schalk & Landeta, 2017).

CIPD (2015) suggests that a higher proportion of internal executive coaching is used in large UK companies, and external coaching is more dominant is smaller UK companies (possibly due to cost reasons). Various authors are in favour of internal executive coaches (Carter, 2005, CIPD 2015), while other authors recommend external coaches (CIPD, 2005; Gray & Goregaokar, 2007; Moen & Fecrici, 2012).

In the organisation, coaching is considered a new adoption. With over 13,000 full-time employees of which 1,180 are in leadership roles, it is understandable the initial introduction of executive coaching was applied only to leaders. The decision on what strategy to adopt towards coaching was a crucial one. It was crucial because of many factors including, budget reasons, awareness of coaching, cascading the new practice, getting buying-in, and benchmarking. It is not yet known how the leadership of the organisation want to take the coaching forward. One of the steps currently being implemented is the training of leaders in coaching skills. It is hoped that this will enable the leaders to apply coaching skills in leading their teams.

The process of executive coaching (see Figure 2.1) involves the analysis of coaching need by the coach. The coaching contract is developed between the coach and the coachee. Coaching data is collected by the coach, and the coaching goals are set together by the coach and the coachee. The coach conducts the coaching, writes the report, and evaluates the result of the coaching.

The first part of the coaching ends, and the coach enters into a long-term post-coaching development with the executive or the organisation, and coaching continues (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011; Maltbia et al., 2014). Because of the nature of most executive leadership roles, most executives prefer coaches who have listening skills, offer support and encouragement, and have an understanding of the coachee's needs (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011; de Haan, Duckworth, Birch, & Jones, 2013).

Figure 2.1: The Process of Executive Coaching
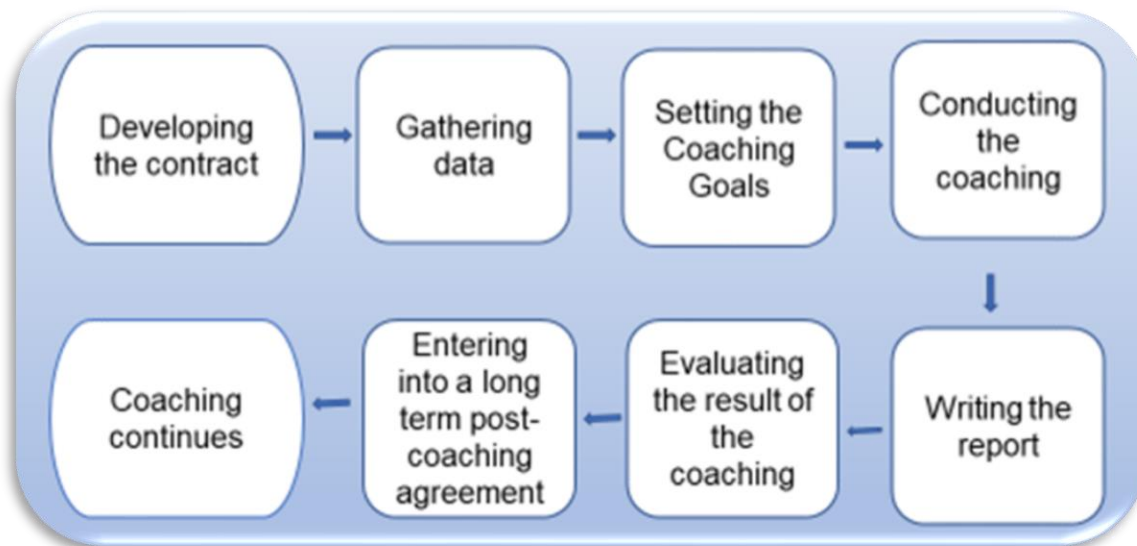
-Source: (adapted from Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011; Maltbia et al., 2014).

The process of executive coaching follows the framework described by Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) and Maltbia et al. (2014). However, the stages are not always discrete. Some of the processes can be conducted at different periods of the coaching journey. The Top-1000 programme coaching utilised this model. The variation was that after the first coaching session, the long-term coaching was carried out according to the needs especially for the GMs and the HiPo leaders. Another variation was that the first stage (developing the contract) and the second stage (gathering data) was completed collectively for the cohorts.

For example, the process of evaluating the result of coaching may happen before the end of the coaching journey. Some of the processes happen once, and others happen more than once. For example, developing contract, gathering and setting coaching goals, entering into a long-term coaching agreement may happen once, while conducting coaching, and writing coaching report may happen more than once until the coaching goal is achieved. The framework is to provide a structure for the coaching rather than a rule that must be followed religiously. It is essential that the coaching process is standardised in an organisation to help in facilitating the process of comparing two coaching experiences. It also helps the organisation to know where to apply improvement if need be.

2.4 Qualification and Competencies for Executive Coaching

Every profession is guided by their training, qualifications, standards, licensing and ethics. Coaching as a profession is still in its journey to maturity and as such remains highly unregulated (Medland and Stern, 2009; Ciporen, 2015). As executive coaching is becoming more and more popular, many organisations and professional bodies are increasingly concerned about the need for regulation and licensing. Hope started rising in the 1990s and 2000s when professional coaching bodies started emerging (EMCC emerged in 1992, ICF emerged in 1994, Worldwide Association of Business Coaches in 2002, Association of Coaching in 2003). However, there is still a disparity in the exact level and field of education, training, or experience required for anyone to become a coach (Ciporen, 2015). The lack of universal licensing or credentialing makes it difficult to define who is a qualified executive coach (Maltibia et al., 2014; Ciporen, 2015). Ciporen (2015) identified top executive coaching bodies in research and training. These include, the Association for Management Education and Development created in 1993, Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC) started in 2002, World Business and Executive Coach Summit started in 2009, the Association of Corporate Executive Coaches formed in 2009, and the Association of Corporate and Executive Coaching Supervision (Sherpa Coaching, 2014). These bodies are responsible for accrediting coaches including executive coaches.

In considering executive coaching professionalisation, the following are considered by authors; academic background, training and certification, attributes, and experience. Educational background is identified as a factor that affects the coach's effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2014).

The academic background of psychology was identified as suitable for executive coaching effectiveness due to their understanding of human behaviours (Bono et al., 2009; Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2014). However, while many professional coaches agree that academic background affects credibility, only a few have their training in psychology (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Sherpa Coaching, 2017). Coaches come from a diverse academic background including human resources, law, teaching, and sports (Ciporen, 2015).

Executive coaching remains an under-regulated discipline, but organisations (especially in the US and UK) have started offering certification for those who want to become executive coaches. ICF, EMCC, WABC are identified by Maltbia et al. (2014) as three main bodies offering certification in executive coaching. According to Maltbia et al., these bodies require evidence of the following competencies; professional and ethical framework, establishing the coaching contract, establishing trust, coaching presence, active listening, questioning skill, communicating directly, awareness creation, action designing, goal setting, and managing progress. The eleven listed by Maltbia et al. (2014) are the ICF competencies. While EMCC has eight competencies, WABC has fifteen. These three sets of competencies from ICF, EMCC and WABC are similar with core themes centring on understanding the client, contracting, establishing trust, commitment to self-development, setting goals and evaluating progress. These professional coaching organisations offer certification at various levels, ICF has three levels (Associate Certified Coach-ACC, Professional Certified Coach -PCC, and Master Certified Coach -MCC), EMCC has four levels (Foundation, Practitioner, Senior Practitioner, and Master Practitioner), and WABC has two levels (Certified Business Coach/Master, and Registered Corporate Coach (Maltbia et al., 2014).

Executive coaching practitioners, scholars, organisations and clients often express concern about what makes a person a qualified coach (ICF & PWC, 2012; Correia et al., 2016). To ensure the organisation employs only the services of a qualified coach, selecting qualified executive coach credential is a prerequisite. The coaches that carried out the one-to-one coaching in the Top-1000 programme were selected and recruited after meeting the criteria for a qualified, experienced executive coach. Their selection process included meeting the qualification of at least one of these coaching regulatory bodies.

Many authors discussed the attributes of an executive coach. They include, credibility (Bozer, Sarros & Santora, 2014;), good life management skills, inspiring and providing focus for the client, acting as feedback to the client, offering 'tough love', encouraging learning throughout the coaching journey, and promoting sense of achievement and accountability (Narayanasamy and Penney, 2014). Other attributes identified include a genuine interest in the client, confidentiality, emotional intelligence, good coaching skill, and flexibility (Joo, 2005; Collins, 2012). Furthermore, Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) include listening, reflection, self-awareness, coaching skills, challenge, coaching ethics, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and support. An interesting viewpoint is that of Wasylyshyn (2003) who took the hybrid perspective of combining educational training in psychology, coaching experience, understanding of the business, professionalism, integrity, objectivity, confidentiality, listening skill, and intelligence. Another perspective of looking at the characteristics required of an executive coach is one that which combines attitude, behaviours and experience. Augustijnen, Schnitzer & Van Esbroeck (2011, p.159) summarised the requirements (Table 2.4). These attributes are helpful for those responsible for recruiting executive coaches. In the selection of the Top-1000 coaches, these attributes were considered.

Table 2.4: Characteristics of the coach

Attitude	Behaviour	Experience
Openness	Confronting	Business world
Respect	Giving feedback	Coaching
Empathy	Non-pedantic	
Commitment	Mirroring	
Being present	Listening	
Honest	Stimulating problem-	
Sounding Board	solving behaviour	
Non-	Helpful and giving	
judgemental	psychological support	
Self-disclosure	Using techniques	
Role model		

Source – Augustijnen, Schnitzer & Van Esbroeck, 2011, p.159.

2.5 One-to-One Executive Coaching

Most executive coaching interventions take the form of one-to-one. From the definitions of many authors, executive coaching is seen primarily from the perspective of one-to-one setting (Frisch, 2001; Ennis et al., 2003; Ennis et al., 2004; Stern, 2004, Beattie et al., 2014; Megheirkouni, 2016) except for group coaching which is a process involving a coach and coachees. In practice, many of the team and group coaching sessions have an element of the coach working with the members on a one-to-one basis. Various factors influence how much learning can be transferred to a real work setting. They include the availability of an enabling environment, the commitment of the coachee, the support of the manager, and the opportunity to practice and receive helpful feedback (Williams, 2008; Saleh, 2011). One-to-one executive coaching provides this opportunity for feedback.

One-to-one executive coaching applies the stages of the executive coaching process. These stages include; contracting, building relationships, assessment, getting feedback and reflection, setting goals (action planning), implementation, and evaluation (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Baron & Morin, 2010; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011).

During the contracting stage, the coach and the organisation agree on the coaching scope, objectives, cost, timelines, deliverables, and evaluation criteria. In the stage of building the relationship, the coach connects with the various stakeholders, establishes expectations, agrees on roles and responsibilities, and garners support for the coaching contract. The stakeholders can come from the coachee's line manager or sponsor, human resources department (HRD), or senior management. The coach at this stage connects to the coaching, development, and growth needs of the coachee. It is a period of trust building (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010).

The assessment stage entails the coach gathering information about the executive. The information includes their strengths and development areas, and their actual performance compared to the expected performance. This assessment can be done through face-to-face interview, a 360-degree assessment tool or other authentic assessment tools. The assessment will reveal areas of need for the executive which becomes the focus and the primary input into developing the individual development plan (IDP) of the executive. IDP constitutes the primary reference for the executive coaching journey (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010).

The feedback stage is the time to revisit the agreed objectives, and an opportunity for the coach to brief the executive of the outcome of the assessment, and how the executive can leverage the result in working on their development. The venue for this coaching session is recommended to be outside the executives work environment as this prepares the executive for readiness to accept the assessment result. It is time to review the actual performance against the agreed objectives and the attributes of the executives. The role of the coach at this stage is to guide the executive to reflect and internalise the feedback (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010).

The goal setting (action planning) stage focuses on the attributes or behaviours that impact upon the business outcome. It is the stage to set goals that bridge the gap in the executive's current performance against the planned goals. It will include reviewing the executive's strengths with their performance objectives, development areas, development interventions, the needed support, the type of coaching required, and the timelines (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010). The key stakeholders (the executive, the executive's line manager (and sometimes HRD) are meant to agree with the plan for implementation. The coach has to help the coachee set a SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) goal. It is advisable to set small attainable goals than setting unattainable audacious goals.

The implementation stage (also called the action learning stage) involves the implementation of the agreed actions in the goal setting stage. The coach meets with the executive periodically (weekly, fortnightly, monthly or even quarterly) to guide the learning process and review progress made. It is vital to ensure there is clarity as to what success will look like, and timelines for the review of the progress (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011; Goldman, Wesner & Karnchanomai, 2013).

The last stage - the evaluation stage is the time to assess the impact of the coaching both to the executive and the organisation. It is the period to establish what worked, and what did not work, what improved, and what still needs to improve, what follow-up actions are needed to address the unresolved needs (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010). If the initial coaching goal is not clear, it will be difficult to ascertain at the end whether the coaching was successful. In the Top-1000 executive coaching, these stages of executive coaching were planned and implemented. However, these stages are not always exclusive. Sometimes more than one stage can take place in a coaching session. A stage may also occur more than once in the coaching cycle. For example, the setting of goal may occur at various stages of the executive coaching journey.

2.5.2 Merits and Demerits of One-to-One Executive Coaching

One of the merits of one-to-one executive coaching is that recipients have an individualised and personalised session (Blackman, 2010). Recipients of one-to-one coaching feel a sense of a safe environment in which there is sufficient trust to voice any concerns (Blackman, 2010). Blackman opined that one-to-one coaching helps in further development and maintaining change. The fear of confidentiality is minimised or eliminated with one-to-one coaching as the session is only between the coach and the coachee (Horner, 2002). Ward (2014) itemised the merits of one-to-one executive coaching as follows; it gives the coachee the opportunity for reflection. It eases the challenge to conclude the coaching decisions. It is better designed for developing individual action plans. It allows one to complete any unfinished work. It creates the opportunity for privacy and improves the coaching collaboration between the coach and the coachee. De Meuse et al. (2009) in a meta-analysis of executive coaching empirical studies shows a favourable outcome of executive coaching towards return on investment (ROI). Apart from Blackman (2010) and Ward (2014) who had an improvement in privacy and confidentiality, all other mentioned authors approached one-to-one coaching from the perspective that gave rise to various benefits.

Some of the demerits identified by various authors include that one-to-one coaching can be expensive, it deprives the coachee the opportunity to learn from the experience of others, and it may involve trial and error to find the right coach (Olivero et al., 1997; Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010; Mallori, 2015). In the Top-1000 programme, one-to-one executive coaching was implemented based on the reasons mentioned in section 2.3.3. At the GM level, it was viewed that the nature of their roles requires a one-to-one time with the coach. At the Director & Section Managers level (n=1100), it was more cost effective to use the group executive coaching approach. The decision for the use of group executive coaching was also to enable the leaders at that level to benefit from the experience sharing of each other during the coaching sessions.

As the field of executive coaching continues to spread, what was once a one-to-one approach is now growing into diversified options including group coaching (Britton, 2015). Research shows that more than a quarter of the fortune 500 companies in the US, Europe and Australia use group executive coaching as a means of developing their leaders and improving their organisations' performance (Brown & Grant, 2010; Moen & Federici 2012; Ward, 2014). Most organisational coaching takes the one-to-one format (Beattie et al., 2014; Bozer, Sarros & Santora, 2014; Ciporen, 2015). Group coaching is a relatively new trend in the past two decades. Group executive coaching entails coaching of a group of executives by an executive coach. Thornton (2016) describes,

> "The power of group learning has its origin in our origin as creatures
> who survived by cooperating in a group" (Thornton, 2016, p.24).

Group executive coaching involves executives from various functions and levels in an organisation. It entails facilitating a coaching session for diverse executives who are in a coaching session with each executive working on their coaching journey.

2.6.1 Why Group Executive Coaching?

While executive coaching in a one-to-one setting can be challenging for both the coach and the coachee, executive coaching in a group setting can even be more challenging for all involved. Before one can make a case for group coaching, it will be valuable to explore the aim of coaching in a group setting. Kets de Vries (2014, p.88) compared it as follows,

> "Working in groups can be like navigating a way through a field of icebergs: much of the danger lies hidden below the surface. The iceberg is a very appropriate metaphor as it helps people visualise the overt and covert interpersonal dynamics that affect group work".

For group executive coaching to be successful, the coach has to create a safe environment that will enable each coachee to express their views and share their experiences freely. The safe space enables coachees to be authentic (Kets de Vries, 2014). How the coach does this is dependent on the coach's style, experience and skill in managing group dynamics. Two dynamics occur during the group coaching session - the experience of the person whose case is being discussed, and the experiences brought into the room by the group (Kets de Vries, 2014).

Some of the psychodynamic processes taking place during a group executive coaching session as listed by Kets de Vries (2014) and Ward (2014) They include; group coaching providing an environment for a liberating experience as one participant's opening up motivates the others. Listening to one participant's story may make others realise they are not alone in their struggle and creates coping strategies. Group coaching enhances the chances of coachees seeing other perspectives and alternative solutions. It provides an opportunity for learning from indirect sources-learning by observing and listening to others. The process of learning from one another can help the participating coachees to identify and amend false thoughts arising from self-perception. Group executive coaching creates a unique community of leaders having the same experience. It also creates an opportunity to disseminate information on how humans (executives) function. It provides the challenge that brings out the best in the coachees. In the Top-1000 programme as mentioned earlier, the decision to use executive coaching is mentioned in section 1.2.

2.6.2 Group Executive Coaching process

Authors including Korotov (2007), Florent-Treacy (2009) Kets de Vries, (2014), and Ward (2014) postulated a model of a time-based process flow for group coaching that covers the beginning to the end of the group coaching journey (see Figure 2.2). The process involves the following stages:

Hygiene and Safety - the coach, prepares the ground psychologically and administratively for the coachees to thrive. This preparation involves laying the foundation for the coaching process, describing basic assumptions, ground rules, timings and duration, roles and responsibility, and concerns. It also involves an exploration of how the coaching process will be conducted throughout the coaching journey.

The Icebreaking stage - involves the coach administering an exercise that will prepare the coachees to be in the moment for the coaching journey. It is designed to shake off some of the apprehensions, inhibitions, and nervousness that characterise people meeting for the first time in a group. They may neither know each other nor be close to each other before coming into the coaching session. Icebreaking helps coachees to be themselves, and be fully present in the coaching session.

The Transitional Space - is created by the coach to enable the participants to have a free and open environment to discuss matters they have not been able to discuss before the group coaching session. It is a space of freedom, trust, and permission to discuss matters identified in the ground rules. Once this transitional space begins, the atmosphere most likely becomes that of trust, confidentiality, and self-reflection. At this point, the coach does not need to struggle to persuade the coachees to open up, to be forthcoming with their views, and sharing freely. Life narratives and storytelling play an essential role in this stage.

During the Coaching and Feedback stage, the coach starts working through the coaching needs of each coachee. The other members of the group offer insights, feedbacks, challenging, and asking questions for clarity, to buttress a point, or sharing a perspective to support or contrast a view. The coaching session involves establishing the need of the coachee, why that is important, a commitment to the next action, how success will be measured, and when the next meeting will take place.

As Kets de Vries, (2014, p. 83) puts it,

> "An effective coach explores with clients (in a non-threatening way) what they do not want to hear and makes them see what they do not want to see, so they can be what they have always known (at least, subliminally) they could be".

The last stage of the process- Action, Commitment and Follow-up is the stage of moving from 'being' to 'doing'. This stage contains the agreed objectives the coachee is committed to working. It must be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). What cannot be measured, will be difficult to confirm when it is achieved. It is advisable for the coach to guide coachees at this stage to make a commitment that is realisable within the timeframe of the next meeting or at least has a milestone that can be measured within the time of the next coaching session. The Top-1000 programme group executive coaching followed this model. What makes this model in Figure 2.2 differ from that of Figure 2.1 is that the first three stages focus on shaping the group process. One of the activities in the Top-1000 programme that is conducted in the ice-breaking stage is paring of participants, followed by the introduction of each participant to the group by a fellow participant. Ice-breaking helps to break barriers, know each other better, and create bonding. The breaking of a barrier is critical to learning in the group executive coaching. It is essential to break barriers because if not done deliberately at the beginning of the group executive coaching journey, some members of the group may be apprehensive during the entire coaching cycle. The Top-1000 programme adopted this model. The hygiene factors include the reminders for the fire alarm and the emergency exit and the break periods. The icebreaking entails candidates pairing and introducing themselves to each other. The transitional space was created by the coach as one core success factor of the session.

Coaching, feedback, follow-up, and action were the continuous parts of the coaching journey. This model fitted well with the entire Top-1000 programme because it helped to re-enforce the lessons learnt in the classroom.

Figure 2.2: Time-based process flow of Group Executive Coaching

| Hygiene and safety | Icebreaker | Transitional space | Coaching and Feedback | Action commitments & Follow-up |
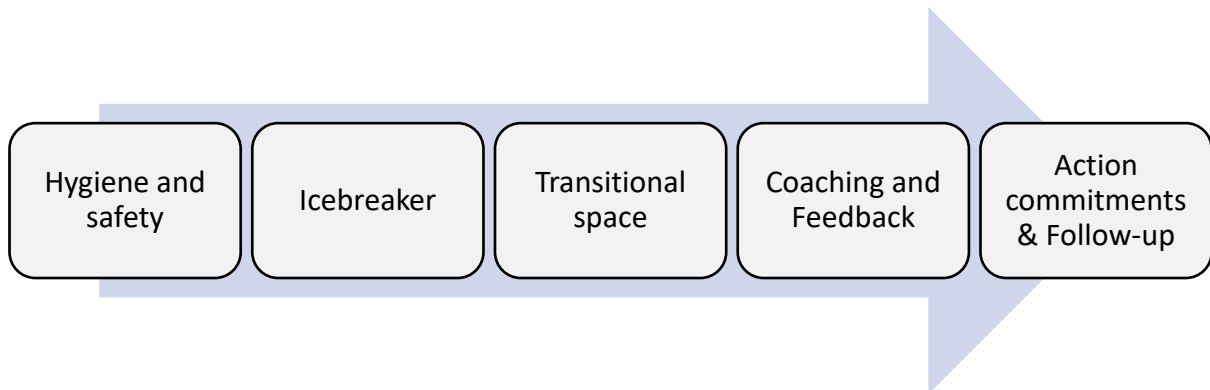
Source- Ward (2014, p.60)

2.6.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Group Executive Coaching

From the submission of various authors (Kets De Vries, 2005; Mallori, 2015; Thornton, 2016), group coaching can be cost-effective and time-saving. Thus, group coaching has a time economy of scale. It can result in smoother, open, honest, engaging, and more focused communication within the group. It makes members of the group more accountable for the overall good of the members. It gives birth to a more in-depth level of speaking and listening. It can lead to the discovery of the complementary role the group members have towards one another. Members of the group find it easier to ask each other for help when the need arises. It makes the group become much more of a team than just a group. The level of trust and mutual respect improves. It helps the group to understand the leadership style, strengths, weaknesses and personality of each member of the group, and helps resolve pending organisational and personal issues. Barriers are broken, and this promotes better conflict resolution. It is easier to generate ideas that can aid the group in solving everyday problems. The opportunity to learn is multiplied by the number of members in the group (Kets De Vries, 2005; Mallori, 2015; Thornton, 2016).

Some of the disadvantages of group coaching occur when the group is too large (Britton, 2010). The ideal size of group coaching differs according to various authors (Britton, 2010; Britton, 2013; Thornton 2016). The range is from two and fifteen. Six to twelve is recommended with seven recommended as ideal size (Britton, 2010). Fifteen is the maximum threshold recommended by ICF (Britton, 2013). The coach providing insufficient attention to the individual group members may hamper the success of group coaching. If the coach is not managing the group interaction well, some vocal members of the group can dominate the session at the expense of the quiet ones. For executives who prefer privacy, group coaching may inhibit their ability to open up in the group session.

For the benefits of group coaching to be maximised, the coach needs to create an enabling environment that will enhance honest and challenging engagement. The group must develop the skill for group discussion and interaction.

The size of the group should be manageably small. The coaching sessions should take place over time and the learning directed by the coachees instead of the coach. The coachees of the group executive coaching of the Top-1000 created a WhatsApp group to exchange information, improve learning, and remove interaction barriers. The number of each group is made up of an average of twelve to enhance the effectiveness of the sessions.

2.7 Theoretical Framework of Executive Coaching

Theoretical frameworks that specifically underpin the field of executive coaching directly are in short supply. Cox et al. (2014) connected the areas of knowledge and theories that drive successful coaching as an adult learning process. The area explored includes coaching process and relationships, coach and client as individuals, and context (see Figure 2.3). According to Cox et al., one field of learning that encapsulates the four areas of coaching knowledge is the field of adult learning and development. This field is driven by three major adult learning theories – andragogy, experiential learning, and transformative learning (Cox et al., 2014; Bachkirova, 2014; Cox, 2012; Knowles et al., 2011).

Andragogy focuses on how adult approach learning. The theory of andragogy postulates that adult learning is self-directed, and adults need to know what they are learning. Adults learn when they have a need and they draw from the wealth of experience. Adult learners are motivated instinctively to learn and are driven by the relevance of the learning and its application in problem-solving.

Experiential learning theory is based on learning by doing - the immediate experiences based on observation and reflection. It is a holistic learning process encompassing feeling, thinking, reflecting, acting). It starts from real experience that activates the feeling, reflection on the feeling, conceptualisation on reflection through thinking, and putting into action the outcome of the thinking process.

Transformative learning theory involves a fundamental shift in our frame of reference and perception that alter our understanding and how we make sense of the world around us and generating a frame of reference that is aligned more to guide actions.

Figure 2.3. Areas of Knowledge Relevant to Coaching
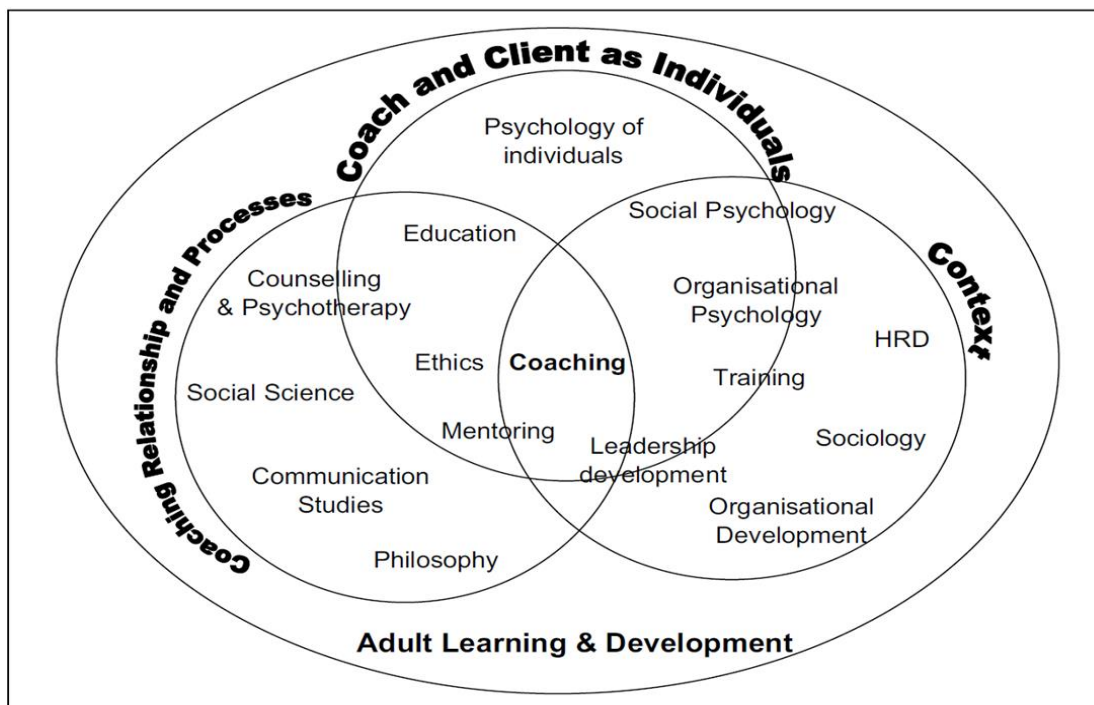
Source: Cox et al. (2014, p.146)

My study aimed to explore the use of coaching as part of an integrated approach to leadership development of leaders (adults). The theory of how adults learn is subject to debate. As coaching practice develops, the question arises about the appropriate theories that support executive coaching. Collins (2012) summarised (Table 2.5) the relevant works completed to date on adult learning and the theoretical concepts underpinning them. It is debatable if learning style is a theory, a model, a concept, or whether the term learning preference is more appropriate (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001; Willingham, Hughes & Dobolyi, 2015).

In my study, I allude to the transformative theory because it is the only theory that recognises the need for the learner to take a critical analysis of their assumption and perspectives and act on the insights that emerge. Transformative learning theory is acknowledged to be the closest theory that fits into the executive coaching concept and practice (Collins 2012; Sammut, 2014) (Table 2.5).

Sammut (2014) acknowledged that adult learning and coaching are closely related to the process and environment of learning. According to Sammut (2014), Jack Mezirow developed this theory in the 70s meant for change management of adults and mindset shift. Mezirow and other authors developed the six core pillars of transformative learning theory applicable to coaching practice as listed by Sammut (2014). Mezirow developed the first three, and other authors added the other three. The six pillars include; experience, critical reflection, dialogue, holistic orientation, awareness of context, and authentic relationships. These six elements are core to executive coaching practice and are either expressly or implicitly applied by executive coaching practitioners (Collins, 2012). Collins credited the theory of transformative learning with advancing the theory of adult learning beyond andragogy by Knowles (1975).

Table 2.5 Theoretical Framework Underpinning Adult Learning and their ideal applicability.

Theory	Main Authors	Ideal Applicability of Theory
Behaviourist theory	Watson (1913), Watson and Rayner (1920), Pavlov (1927), Skinner (1976)	Stages in Human Development especially child Development
Cognitive theory	Piaget (1929), Vygotsky (1978, 1986)	Stages in Human Development
Andragogy	Knowles (1975)	Adult self-directed learning
Experiential learning	Dewey (1938), Kolb and Fry (1975), Kolb (1984)	Learning through reflection. Executive learning
Social learning theory	Bandura (1977)	Participative learning through social activities.
Learning styles	Honey and Mumford (1982, 1992)	When recognising individual's preferences for learning style
Situated learning	Bandura (1977), Lave and Wenger (1991) Reynolds et al. (2002)	Communities of practice, executive learning
Transformative learning	Mezirow (1996), Gray (2006)	Executive coaching
Reflective learning	Argyris (1960), Argyris and Schön (1996)	Learning where social context and experience are acknowledged, e.g. group learning

Source: Collins 2012, p.18 (columns one and two)

When discussing learning theories, one needs to exercise care as these theories are the subjects of continuous debate by researchers. Authors see them as a set of guidelines (Merriam, 2008). Knowles's work was criticised as being linear, descriptive, did not take into consideration the diversity of race, gender and socio-economic groups, and did not consider the context (Irby, Brown, LaraAiecio & Jackson, 2013). Jarvis (2012) criticised the early learning theories for defining learning as the product of a process, instead of seeing learning as a process and a product.

With the growth of corporate universities and corporate academies, the line between workplace learning and higher education is becoming blurred (Taylor & Paton, 2002). Corporate learning is serving the higher education needs of their organisation, and in some cases, they open their services to the public. Gibbs & Knapp (2012) remarked on this;

> "Global corporations are also reaching into areas of teaching and knowledge traditionally held to be the preserve of higher education institutions. In the US there are over 4,000 corporate 'universities' with their associations grounded in an educational climate. Many actively engage in work-based learning, supported by distance learning, to offer first and higher degrees to staff to develop their skills and employability while increasing immediate productivity. In the UK, Lloyds TSB, British Telecom and British Aerospace are good examples (Gibbs & Knapp, 2012, p.6).

The importance of understanding the definition and context of coaching is crucial to its effectiveness. Its primary purpose is to support personal development, of the individual, teams, and the organisation. This understanding applies to both corporate organisation and educational institutions (Segers and Vloeberghs, 2009; Segers et al., 2011; Iordanou, Lech & Barnes, 2016). The impact of coaching is being felt in the education sector as a useful tool for all stakeholders in the sector. It is used in support of students' academic performance improvement, academic staff development, skill improvement, and organisational performance.

In the UK and USA, coaching skill training has been recognised as a requirement for leadership development for leaders in the education sector (Van Nieuwerburgh, 2018).

As Cruz & Rosemond (2017) stated,

"Within the context of higher education, however, the concept of coaching in academia is beginning to take shape in such a way as to belie the stereotype and to serve as a metaphor, model, and set of practices that advance the inter-related fields of professional, faculty, and organizational development" (Cruz & Rosemond, 2017, p. 83).

The rise in the use of coaching in the higher education sector is attributed to the growth in the field of educational development (Iordanou, Lech & Barnes, 2016; Cruz & Rosemond, 2017). One of the areas that coaching is used in the higher education context is in the development of the faculty. It has been used to bridge the gap between classroom experience and emerging research. Faculty members play multiple roles as scholars and professionals, and that requires continuous development through coaching if they must play their role as 'leader coach' (leaders who use coaching skill to get results). Although coaching in higher education may overlap with other types of coaching, it is designed to guide the faculty, staff, and students. It is utilised in the form of one-to-one coaching, peer coaching, and group coaching (Iordanou, Lech & Barnes, 2016; Cruz & Rosemond, 2017).

Empirical studies show that coaching has played a significant role in developing leaders in both corporate and higher education settings (Denton and Hasbrouk 2009; Iordanou, Lech & Barnes, 2016). As the practice of coaching in higher education develops, some practical suggestions have been made for improving the tool in the sector. These suggestions include knowledge transfer and developing internal coaches, monitoring, and providing continuous development opportunities for the internal coaches. Also mentioned are, assigning coaches to doctoral students, designing and delivering basic coaching modules at the undergraduate level, setting a coaching-centred leaning context, and creating a coaching culture. The benefits include improving students' performance, and a better interpersonal relationship in the world of higher education and beyond (Iordanou, Lech & Barnes, 2016; Van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Iordanou).

Some higher educational institutions who are currently deploying coaching in their institution as a learner-centred approach to learning includes Imperial College London; The Open University Business School; Torrens University Australia, Lakeland University, USA, University of Oklahoma, and The Purdue University.

2.9 Gaps in Knowledge

The gaps found in the literature include the trend, that despite the rise in the number of coaching professionals and the growth in the use of coaching in organisational setting, there is limited literature on executive coaching that contains empirical evidence on the outcome of the use of executive coaching in leadership development (Feldman and Lanku, 2005; De Meusea, et al., 2009; Leonard-Cross, 2010; Losch et al., 2016).

Losch et al., (2016) referring to Grant (2013a), stated,

> "in terms of the impact of coaching on organisations, the picture is less clear than what is known about training outcomes. Although an abundance of coaching literature exists, the majority of the published empirical papers consist of contextual or survey-based research, giving useful information about, for instance, the delivery of coaching services rather than about coaching effectiveness" (p.2).

ICF (2012) noted that the headcount of professional coaches rose from 2,100 in 1999 to 47,500 in 2012. Despite this growth, research on executive coaching, and its impact is still at its early stages (Grant et al., 2010). Very few of the studies deal with the outcome of coaching in an organisational setting especially when compared to other forms of leadership development such as training and education (Losch et al., 2016).

In literature where executive coaching is well explored, there seems to be a gap in quantifying and differentiating the specific contribution of executive coaching in leadership and organisational development. In most instances, executive coaching is combined with other interventions (mentoring, and consulting) in tackling leadership development.

This combination creates a challenge in isolating the contribution of executive coaching versus various other interventions. Another gap in literature comes from the fact that there are documentation gaps between the theory and practice. Most of the practitioner models of executive coaching used by various professional coaches are not documented in academic literature and journals. Some of these models are developed and used by practitioners who are not involved in academic research. Some coaching models like CIGAR, POWER, SCORE, VISTA, PESOS, OPERA, ACHIEVE, FUEL, STAR, and 3D are hardly discussed in academic literature but are used and explored by practitioners (Hawkes, 2014). The underlying principles of these models are however similar. The commonality between the models is that they are used in executive coaching. The differences in the models are mainly semantics.

Another gap is the lack of uniformity in the regulation, standardisation, ethics, qualification and licensing of coaches and coaching profession. When one says he/she is an executive coach, there is no universal or global criteria or licensing to validate the claim. There is a lack of uniformity in the use and definition of coaching terms. Some terms are either not clear or are being interchanged while in reality, they mean different things. Some of the examples are the use of the term 'group coaching' and 'team coaching', 'managerial coaching,' 'supervisor coaching' and 'line manager as a coach', 'leadership coaching' and 'executive coaching'. In some instances, some literature assumes by default that executive coaching means face-to-face coaching without taking account other forms of executive coaching like virtual coaching, group coaching, team coaching and peer coaching. Furthermore, most of the pieces of literature on executive coaching are focused on developed economies with the UK, US and Australia having a significant bulk. There is however very little literature focusing on the developing economies like Africa and the Middle East.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the link between the theoretical standpoint and the research method in arriving at the outcome of the research. The chapter expounds on the research strategy and its alignment with the epistemological position that informed the study. It discusses the research methodology and data collection method used to elicit the experiences of the participants in the leadership development programme. It focuses on one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching. The chapter provides the analysis framework and sense-making from the experience of participants, how that informs the decisions, and recommendations from the study in improving practice.

The gaps discovered in the literature review informed the design of the interview questions, the data collection method, and the associated epistemological framework. I will be discussing these in more details later in this chapter.

The chapter discusses the selection and access to the participants for data collection and the ethical considerations. The chapter ends with a discussion of the data collection process through interviews, data transcription, coding, categorisation, themes and thematic analysis.

3.2   Research Aim

This research aimed to explore the participants' experiences of the two types of executive coaching adopted within the leadership development in the organisation's setting with a view to making necessary improvements. Findings can then be used to inform the ensuing development of the programme, and the future leaders that are undertaking it, as well as the organisational strategy for leadership development.

3.2.1 Research Questions

The research questions were directed to four areas;

1. What is the nature of the lived experience of engaging in a one-to-one executive coaching or group executive coaching?

2. From the participants' accounts does there appear to be any differences in experience or outcome between one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching? If so, in what ways do these differences manifest themselves?

3. Are there any aspects of the organisational culture which participants feel have influenced, positively or negatively, their learning and development while undertaking the 'Top-1000 Leadership Programme'?

4. From the participants' perspective, how (if at all) have their leadership and management practices 'on-the-job' developed as a result of one-to-one or group executive coaching?

3.3   Epistemology

This study is descriptive phenomenological research. It is based on constructivism epistemology. Constructivists perceive the world as being socially constructed from data to arrive at views of the phenomenon (Gray, 2013). According to Crotty (1998), there is an interrelationship between the epistemology, theoretical perspective and data collection method adopted by a researcher. The choice of method is influenced by the methodology which in turn is influenced by the theoretical perspective and the epistemology (Gray, 2013). Constructivism had its origin in the work of Vygotsky (1978) and linked to post-modernism ideals. It is an orientation that opposes the view of objectivity. Post-modernist ideology sees truth as not being fixed but rather dynamic according to the individual, needs, ideas, perspective, and experience (Merriam, 2009: McCaffery, 2010; Guevara, 2016).

The constructivism ideals suggest that knowledge is constructed through interactions and experience sharing of perspectives (Merriam, Cafferlla, & Baumgartner, 2007; Guevara, 2016). From my experience in working in the corporate world, leading, and working with various groups and teams, I have observed how individuals construct meanings and reality based on their perspective, experience, and orientation. In some cases, interactions between individuals in the organisation reveal various ways individuals construct meaning and reality from a fixed ideology of truth and reality to a flexible, collaborative, and shared views.

This study explores the executive coaching experience sharing of the Top-1000 participants and the meaning the participants developed concerning their learning interactions. In this case, the meaning emerged from participants' interaction with the world (constructivism) and was not imposed by the researcher or any other external agent. The attention of this study is to explore how individuals perceive, understand and interpret social phenomenon -coaching experience. The importance of having clarity over epistemology, theoretical framework, and methodology has an impact on the quality of the study and the rate of acceptability of the research findings (Collins, 2012).

The nature of this study fits into constructivism because the participants define meaning based on their experience rather than imposed by the researcher or any other source.

3.4 Methodology

This study used a descriptive phenomenological research methodology. Descriptive phenomenology is used in research as a methodology to explore and elicit the individual lived experiences. It is credited to Edmund Husserl as the founder of descriptive phenomenology movement which has gone through various changes. It highlights an effort to get to the root of the matter by describing the phenomenon in the way it gives meaning to the individual experience. Its main aim is to articulate the meaning of the experienced phenomenon by the individual being studied instead of the meaning ascribed by the researcher (Christensen, Welch & Barr, 2017). As the authors put it,

"phenomenological inquiry seeks to articulate the meaning of experienced phenomena, 'to go to the things themselves', rather than measure them. More importantly, there is an element of naivety when describing the things themselves; otherwise, there is the potential for simply asserting what "we" [the researcher] already understood of the experience. The phenomenological inquiry can be considered a source of evidence beyond existing understanding and as such provide deeper more meaningful productive insights" (Christensen, Welch & Barr, 2017, p. 113-114).

The absence of a link between the research method and philosophical underpinnings will affect the quality of the research study (Lopez & Wills, 2004). A phenomenological methodology which explores the subjective views and experience of individuals is best fitted for eliciting executive coaching experience in leadership development. However, there is more than one discipline of phenomenology. The research finding is a function of the choice of the phenomenological approach made. Good knowledge of the philosophical schools of phenomenology will enhance the choice of the researcher and the research quality (Lopez & Wills, 2004). The leading philosophical schools used in sundry qualitative research are interpretative phenomenology and descriptive phenomenology.

Both approaches propagate the importance of the lived experience of the research participant, and they are both guides for conducting qualitative inquiries (Wojnar & Swanson (2007). They, however, have the differentiating characteristics that help the researcher to make appropriate methodological and philosophical research choices.

Wojnar & Swanson (2007) gave a good comparison of the two (see Table 3.1). Descriptive phenomenology places an emphasises on describing universal essences, while interpretative emphasises contextual understanding of the context. In descriptive an individual is seen as the representative of the world in which they live, while in the interpretative, one is viewed as a self-interpretative being. A view that humans share consciousness (descriptive), versus a belief that context -social, environment, political, language are what humans share(interpretative).

A belief that striping one of previous preconceptions and knowledge helps to conduct inquiries free from interferences (descriptive), versus belief that the researcher and the participant co-create meaning and interpretation of phenomenon (interpretative). The descriptive phenomenological school has the assumption that sticking to a set of established scientific guidelines ensures the description of universal essences, while the interpretative phenomenological school has the assumption that contextual criteria the trustworthiness of co-created interpretations. The assumption that the inquiry is free from bias portrays the descriptive phenomenological movement, while the interpretative phenomenological school believes that what gives meaning to the interpretation is the pre-understanding and co-creation of meaning and interpretation by the researcher and the research participant.

Evidence from literature indicates that most studies following the 'descriptive approach' to research are used to illuminate poorly understood aspects of experiences – this is the focus of this study. In contrast, the 'interpretive/hermeneutic approach' is used to examine contextual features of experience about other influences such as culture, gender, employment or wellbeing of people or groups experiencing the phenomenon (Matua, & Van Der Wal, 2015).

According to Ely et al. (2010), the process of coaching is a dynamic and individual experience; as such, there are no two identical coaching experiences. Ely et al. (2010) also disclosed that there is limited research on how to determine this dynamic and ever-changing process (executive coaching) of personal and professional L&D. This study is classified as descriptive phenomenological research because the research is looking for new meaning, better meaning or renewed meaning regarding the impact of executive coaching on leadership development. The research aims to gain the subjective perspective of the subjects more than the views of the researcher.

Descriptive phenomenology is more suited to studies that intend to describe universality in phenomenological structure when the goal of the search is to improve practice.

On the other hand, when the goal is to interpret human experiences concerning context, co-creation of meaning and interpretation by both the researcher and the research participants, interpretative phenomenology is most useful (Lopez & Will, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Describing descriptive phenomenology, Lopez & Will (2004) remark is,

"An assumption specific to Husserl's philosophy was that experience as perceived by human consciousness has value and should be an object of scientific study. Husserl believed that subjective information should be important to scientists seeking to understand human motivation because human actions are influenced by what people perceive to be real. As human beings generally go about the business of daily living without critical reflection on their experiences, Husserl believed that a scientific approach was needed to bring out the essential components of the lived experiences specific to a group of people" (Lopez & Will, 2004, p.727).

I decided for descriptive because my research is meant to explore the rich first-hand experiences of the participants. The choice gave me the ability to use my interest and motivation to drive and complete the study. Also, the flexibility inherent in the interview approach enhanced the chase of the rich data (Creswell, 2014). As a result, adjustments can be made as new insight emerges which helped me to construct new codes and categories as mentioned by Miles et al. (2014). I came into research not as an expert in executive coaching and therefore through reflective journal writing, I consciously stripped myself of any previously held view, pre-conception, mindset, or ideas of mine so that I could explore the phenomenon in its original state and universal sense.

Table 3.1: The Key Distinction Between the Descriptive and interpretive Approach

The Key Distinctions Between the Descriptive and Interpretive Approach	
Descriptive Approach	Interpretive Approach
1. The emphasis is on describing universal essences 2. Viewing a person as one representative of the world in which he or she lives 3. A belief that consciousness is what humans share 4. Self-reflection and conscious "stripping" of previous knowledge help to present an investigator-free description of the phenomenon 5. Adherence to established scientific rigour ensures the description of universal essences or eidetic structures 6. Bracketing ensures that interpretation is free of bias	1. The emphasis is on understanding the phenomena in the context 2. Viewing a person as a self-interpretive being 3. A belief that the contexts of culture, practice, and language are what humans share 4. As pre-reflexive beings, researchers actively co-create interpretations of the phenomenon 5. One needs to establish contextual criteria for trustworthiness of co-created interpretations 6. Understanding and co-creation by the researcher and the participants are what makes interpretations meaningful

Source: (Wojnar & Swanson, (2007, p. 176)

3.4.1 Rationale for use of Phenomenology

The choice of the phenomenological approach was made because it is the best approach that describes how human beings experience a certain phenomenon. There are similarities between descriptive and interpretative approach, but I chose descriptive because the approach attempts to set aside biases and preconceived assumptions about the researcher's experiences, feelings, and responses to a particular situation. The focus is solely on the lived example of the participants without influence from the researcher or another third party. Other qualitative approaches such as grounded theory would have been most suitable if my research aimed to identify and explain the social process with a view of generating theory. Ethnography would be suited for research seeking to explore the collective experience of a community in a cultural setting and its development. That would have required the researcher living with the culture for a reasonable long period to be able to collect the research data.

For data collection, observation, interviews, analysis of artefacts and documents would have been a suitable option for ethnography, while interviews or observation would be ideal for grounded theory. Demy (n.d) made a good comparison of the three -concerning, purpose, data collection, data analysis and outcome (Table 3.2). From the table, to answer my research questions, phenomenology was the most appropriate to use.

Table 3.2: Phenomenology, Ethnography, and Grounded: Comparison of Qualitative Research Approaches

	Ethnography	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory
Purpose	Research process and product[7] Based on anthropology[8] Identify and explain cultural settings[8]	Philosophy and research approach[12] Examines meaning of human experience[13]	Identify and explain social processes[16] Based on symbolic interactionism[17,18]
Data collection	Participant observations and prolonged field work[8] May include conversations, documents, pictures, memos, etc	In-depth individual or group interviews[14]	Participant interviews[19] Sometimes observations[19]
Data analysis	Varied and may include grounded theory[9] Symbols organized into domains Generate taxonomy to identify structures in the culture[9]	Gain sense of whole phenomenon by rereading transcripts and listening to interviews[14] Identify "meaning units"[14] Transform language[14] Synthesize[14]	Open coding: identify units of data and organize into categories and subcategories[16] Axial coding: make connections between and among categories[16] Selective coding: identify central category to explain phenomenon[16]
Outcomes	Rich description of culture and patterns of behavior[9–11] May generate theory[10]	Exhaustive description of meaning[15]	Theory generation[16,20]

Source: Demy's (n.d).

3.5   Design Process

This study is aimed at exploring participants' interaction with the world executive coaching, and the meaning participants develop concerning leadership development resulting from that interaction. Here the meaning is not imposed (subjectivism) but rather emerges from participants' interaction with the world (constructivism). This study is a descriptive phenomenological study (as mentioned earlier), and the data collection strategy that best aligns with this method is an in-depth interview (Lopez & Wills, 2004).

3.5.1 Access to participants and the Organisation's database.

Access, in this research, was gained in three phases. First, I applied for and received permission from the organisation to authorise me to conduct the research on the organisation leadership development programme with a focus on executive coaching. The second access was the approval of the organisation to allow me access to contact its employees requesting them to participate in the study voluntarily.

The third access is the permission from the organisation to allow me access to existing information from their leadership development programme and training database.

3.5.2 Ethical considerations

The reality of conducting any research is the actual need to identify the source of data. With the source of data comes the need to ensure that the data is obtained in an ethically acceptable standard. The standard has to do with protecting the interest of the organisation and the participants, by ensuring that neither incurs any loss or harm. The need to ensure that participation is done both willingly and professionally is of uttermost importance.

Since I planned to conduct the research within the organisation, there were practitioner-researcher challenges and the organisation's specific demands. Some of the challenges include access to sensitive data, access to interview the research participants (leaders), potential bias as an insider researcher, and keeping confidentiality of both the interviewees and the organisation. Apart from these, there was the process of getting permission to utilise the organisation's time, personnel and relevant documentation. I obtained formal organisational consent and ethical approval before embarking on the study. I also obtained ethical approval from the University of Liverpool (Appendix 5).

As a practitioner-researcher, I was able to engage in organisational sensemaking by applying reflexivity in my study and by becoming more aware of both organisational and individual values and interests. Various characteristics of the researcher (perceptions, preconceptions, beliefs, values) can impact the research quality.

This same concern can affect the data collection and interpretation if not deliberately watched (Collins, 2012). One way to guard against the undue influence of the researcher is through reflexivity. I adopted the advice of Morley (1996) as cited by Collins (2012),

"Reflexivity demands a type of emotional literacy on the part of the researcher, who can sensitively engage with the research study while/because s/he is aware of her/his responses, values, beliefs and prejudices". (Morley, 1996, p.139).

Bias can occur in the various stages of the study - research planning, data collection, analysis, and publication phases. Bias was minimised and where possible eliminated through understanding various bias associated with this type of research, maintaining transparency, lucidity, and clarity throughout the research process (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin and Lowden, 2011). Obtaining individual and organisational consent helped to deal with the issue of voluntary participation, but this did not interfere with the rights and desires of individuals to participate or not to participate in the research.

Navab, Koegel, Dowdy & Vernon (2016) view the integration of research and practice as a balancing challenge that can be ameliorated through consistent communication and collaboration with those not invested in the outcome of the research. Navab, Koegel, Dowdy & Vernon (2016) posit that ethical dilemmas concerning the conflicting roles of researchers and practitioners can be resolved in alignment with the ethical principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, integrity, and fidelity and responsibility.

The interview participants were assured that they had the right to accept or reject the request and the right to withdraw from the participation at any time they deem it so. Participants were given seven days to make their decision. As part of the consent, the participant had the right of access to the information they provided and also a right to destroy the information they have given. Their decision had no impact on their job or career since in my role in the organisation (as mentioned earlier in section 1.4), I had no control or influence on the participants. To maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the participants and the organisation their true identities were made anonymous by the use of a pseudonym.

3.5.3   Selection of the Participants

Selection of participants was based on purposive sampling – where the researcher determines the population to include in the sample due to their prior knowledge in the subject and the ability of the participant to address the research questions. The invitation was sent to the purposive sample, and the first four candidates (who met the criteria, i.e. attending all the modules and participating in all the executive coaching sessions of the Top-1000 programme) to respond were selected for the interview. The other few participants who responded later were thanked for their willingness to participate.

In my study, participants were grouped according to levels of leadership – General Managers, Directors, and Section Managers. One of the reasons for the segmentation was the design of the programme (see appendix 7) which has the same framework addressing the same competencies, but the proficiency levels are different according to job level. The proficiency level increases as one move up the ladder of leadership from Section Manager to Director and General Manager. Another factor was the fact that the General Managers (n=80) went through one-to-one coaching while the Directors (n=300), and Section Managers (n=800) participated in group coaching. To qualify for selection, the candidate must have attended all the four classroom modules and the four coaching sessions.

The four sets of individuals who were not considered for the interview were; those who did not attend the programme or those who attended but did not finish the modules or/and the coaching sessions. The third set of leaders who were not considered are those leaders who were in the project team of the programme. Since the success of the programme is part of their annual performance review, there is a likelihood that they may be biased if they were selected for the interview. The other group who were not considered for selection were a few leaders who are close to me who have been with me throughout the EdD journey. I excluded them because they may be biased in giving responses to favour the programme because of their closeness to me. Only two Section managers fall under this category, leaving the rest eligible to participate in the study.

In all, twelve participants (four participants from each leadership level) were selected for the interview. All interviewees were participants of the Top-1000 Programme who participated in the programme from beginning to the end and also took part in all the coaching sessions. There is a growing interest among researchers on how to reach an adequate sample size for qualitative research rather than the adaptive saturation approach. According to Hennink, Kaiser & Marconi (2017), the concept of saturation was initially developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). It is referred to as the point in the data collection process where additional data collection no longer contributes to any new insight or ideas (Hennink, Kaiser & Marconi, 2017). For sampling size, I did not use a saturation approach.

Four main approaches are followed to determine the interview sample size by qualitative researchers – the rule of thumb, numeric guidelines derived from empirical studies, conceptual models, and statistical formulae (Sim, Saunders, Waterfield, & Kingstone, 2018). Each of these approaches has its disputed assumptions. For a phenomenological study, the recommended sample size is between 3 – 12 participants (Dukes, 1984; Ray, 1994; Morse, 1994, 2000; Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006). Despite these divergent views about saturation and sample size, I chose purpose sampling in my study because it is most applicable to the context of this research.

Some authors are of the view that most qualitative researchers do not rely on probability sampling. Instead, purposive sampling is mostly the case (Marshall, 1996; Coyne, 1997; van Rijnsoever, 2017). In purposive sampling, the researcher decides and select the cases that will illuminate the answers to the research questions. The minimum size is not fixed though many authors call for 'the more, the better' because this approach has more chances of not missing important codes (van Rijnsoever, 2017).

It is important to note that some of the participants of the Top-1000 programme were also the participants of the high potential (HiPo) Programme. HiPo is a programme designed and developed for the selection of leaders to fast-track their career. The HiPo programme has similar objectives with Top-1000 in that they are both designed to develop leaders. Both programmes enjoyed the use of executive coaching. The difference is that all HiPo participants partook in one-to-one coaching.

The HiPo participants were involved in one-to-one coaching during their HiPo programme, as well as being involved in group coaching during the Top-1000 programme. Their inclusion in the interview participants provides an important dimension of the experience of both one-on-one and group executive coaching.

3.5.4 Data Collection Method

Based on the nature of research questions and the choice of methodology, interviews were judged as the best method to elicit the lived experience of the participants since it provided the opportunity to express their views in depth.

Based on the research questions, interview questions were developed to elicit the experiences of the participants (see Appendix 1 and 2). The interview questions were sent to participants in advance before the interview session to ensure that the participants familiarised themselves with the interview questions and had sufficient time to reflect upon their learning journey.

A typical interview started with a call, email or text sent 60 minutes before the meeting to confirm that appointment still holds. Each interview session was recorded with the consent of the participant. The participant's consent (Appendix 4 Consent Form) was obtained before the interview session. At the start of each interview session, the purpose of the interview was stated. It was re-emphasised that the interview was voluntary and the participant was free to discontinue the interview at any time or choose not to answer any question if he so wished. Besides, the participants were assured that their identity and that of the organisation would be treated confidentially.

To give the participants that comfort, an effort was made to ensure the candidate's name and the name of his organisation were not mentioned throughout the interview.

The interview started with posing the interview question to the participant and where necessary, a follow-up question to clarify the answer given. In the situation where the voice of the participant was not audible, or I did not understand the participant, a request for clarification is made, thereby activating my 'confident vulnerability' described by Murphy (2017, p.16) in strength strategy coaching as "celebrating and embracing the strengths, needs, and weaknesses of self and others without judgment."

The interview was conducted after the participants had completed the programme (at least six months after the completion of the programme). The reason being, to give individual participants time to reflect on how their leadership and management practice 'on-the-job' developed (or not) as result of the learning from the programme and the specific form of executive coaching they were given. Table 3.3 provides detail of the data collection steps.

Table 3.3 Summary of the steps taken for the data collection

Steps	Tasks
1	Request for participation sent to target audience -purposive sample with a date and time
2	Prospective participants were given up to seven days to respond through the consent form signing
3	Candidates who agreed to participate were sent the interview question 48 hours before the interview date
4	A call, email or text sent 60 minutes before the meeting to confirm that appointment still holds
5	On the interview date, the researcher meets the interviewee at the agreed location (meeting room).
6	The interview is conducted asking the questions in Appendix 1 and 2, and a follow-up question asked where need be.
7	Each interview lasts between 30-60 minutes
8	The interview is recorded with a voice recorder and mini-laptop for a backup
9	The interview recording is transcribed verbatim into texts

3.5.5 Data Analysis

Each of the recorded interviews was captured through the traditional voice recorder. Also, a digital device recording from a tablet as a backup was used to ensure that there was no data loss in case of failure from the other device. The record was transcribed into text. The text was coded using Microsoft Word and Excel, categorised and clustered into themes. The initial coding of the transcribed documents resulted in 241 codes. The codes were grouped into eleven categories. The categories were further clustered under five themes. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach. The coding process was based on keywords, phrases and sentences from the participants' responses. The codes were then sorted into categories focusing on common features. The categories were then grouped into themes based on areas of focus from the candidates' responses. Following the six steps of theming by Braun and Clarke (2006), I started with familiarising myself with the data, generating initial codes, categorising the codes (Flick,2014), searching for themes, reviewing the themes, naming and defining the themes, and writing the reports (see Table 4.2).

The choice of thematic analysis was based on its ability to accommodate flexibility in the choice of the theoretical framework for the research. Thematic analysis has the flexibility of utilising any theoretical or epistemological framework. From its flexible nature, thematic analysis permits robust, sophisticated and comprehensive data description (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.5.5.1 Transcribing

Transcribing is one of the foundational stages of data efficacy. If the foundation of the data is wrong, the integrity of the data is going to be compromised (Smith & Firth, 2011). It is a process of converting recorded sound into texts. Transcribing by its nature appears as a mundane, repetitive job but my transcribing experience showed that it is very demanding and time-consuming. I conducted the transcribing of the first recording. It took an average of three hours to transcribe a half-hour interview. Stuckey (2014) alludes to the long duration of transcribing recorded interviews.

Initially, I tried using the online transcribing resources which proved to be a very long process. One of the reasons for this is that most of the online transcription programs (programmed using western English accent) find it difficult to decode spoken English of the participants who possess a Middle East accent. I finally used the transcription services of teachers/translators who had lived in the Middle East for a long time and had a good understanding of the accent of the region. The transcribed output was later proof-read and validated by myself by listening to the recording as I read the transcript.

Since I conducted the interview, I was in a better position to remember what transpired during the interview session or going back to the interviewee to clarify any unclear speech or text. Validated transcripts were saved in folders with the names (pseudonym) of each interviewee. Transcribing was done verbatim. I referred back to the interviewee for clarity where the interview recording or meaning needed to be more fully understood. As mentioned in section 3.5.5, I used a voice recorder to record the interview and transcribed it verbatim through the services of external transcribers. To maintain confidentiality, the original names of participants (as mentioned in section 3.5.2) were replaced by the pseudonym of Western male names to ensure that the real identity of participants was not revealed.

Transcribing the interviews of this study came with various challenges. Sometimes the pitch of the participant's voice goes too low that one struggles to make sense out of the sound. The challenge of technology malfunction cannot be overemphasised. In some cases, the recording device may malfunction, and the researcher may not know that nothing is being recorded until the interview is completed. To guard against this error, I pre-tested the recording device before the interview. As a back-up, I used two devices (portable recorder and mini-laptop computer) to record every interview so that if one failed, the second would serve as a fall-back.

It is recommended that the transcribing process is performed as soon as possible after the interview (Collins, 2012) in order not to forget the memory of the session while reviewing the transcribed texts. This recommendation was adhered to in my research.

When the transcribing process was completed, the data were reviewed in detail to determine what the data was saying. A coding structure was applied to the identified knowledge area, but I chose to do it manually to ensure my lack of knowledge and experience of using coding software. Also, from the poor experience of my cohorts on using the various software, I was more confident and comfortable with conducting my analysis using Microsoft Excel and Word. Collins (2012) recommends that the coding should be applied uniformly and consistently throughout the entire transcribed data. The aim of coding is for developing a theory or categorisation (Flick, 2014). In this research, I developed the codes for categorisation and subsequent theme analysis.

Coding process involved listing the keywords, phrases and sentences from the participants' responses about the research. The process was consistently continued until there was no more unique information relevant to the research topic. This process was done repeatedly five times to ensure I did not miss any critical comment. At this point, I believed I reached the code-saturation (Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi, 2017; Sim, Saunders, Waterfield, & Kingstone, 2018). This code-saturation point was reached at the point when there was no more relevant data.

Having listed 241 codes from the interview, categories were the next – grouping the codes into areas of common focus. Categorisation is the process of labelling units of data the essence of which is to identify a unit of data as belonging to a general phenomenon (Spiggle, 1994). I applied the general inductive approach - emerging from the response of the participants (Thomas, 2003).

The categories that emerged included; what worked for group executive coaching (Micro – relating to oneself, Meso – relating to their team, Macro -related to the organisation). The next was what did not work with group coaching, and how to improve group coaching. What worked for one-to-one-coaching also featured, what did not work, and how to improve one-to-one executive coaching. The next categories reflected the impact of a coaching culture, and Top-1000 impact. The total categories arrived at was eight. The next stage is to move categories to themes.

Themes are patterns identified across data that impact the description of phenomena associated with the research questions. It can be either inductive (derived from the data as it emerges) or deductive (derived what is already know about the phenomena under study). I applied inductive theme approach as this aligns with the nature of phenomenological research. Theming involves the analysis of data using a thematic analysis approach. It is the product of thematic analysis.

Five themes emerged from the eleven categories of data. The themes were; Positives of Group Coaching, Challenges of Group Coaching, Positives of One-to-one Coaching, Challenges of one-to-one Coaching, and Learning Impact (See Table 4,2).

3.6   Strengths and Limitations of Methodology

The strength of the research is on the choice of research philosophy – descriptive phenomenology. It best suits the aim of the research – a detailed account of the lived experience of the participants. Through an in-depth interview, participants were able to air their view which eventually contributed to the recommendation on improving executive coaching practice.

The limitation of this research design was that the data collected for this study was limited to only the participants – the three levels of leadership (General Manager, Directors, and Section Managers). It did not include other employees, other levels of leaders like the Vice Presidents, Senior Vice Presidents and the Chief Officers. The data collection method is limited to only interviewing. Candidates who may not be very good at expressing themselves may have struggled to share their experience.

The study focused on coaching approach and did not consider other touch points of the Top-1000 programme like Tele-mentoring, Online study, SharePoint interactions and classroom-taught sessions. The other touch points of the programme are recommended areas for further study. The study is limited to the use of executive coaching in leadership development and did not cover the employee entire work-life.

It is also focused on leaders only – the opinion of the other employees of the organisations regarding the changes in their leaders' leadership quality was not considered because the focus of the study is the lived experience of the participants. The methodology is limited to qualitative approach and therefore cannot be triangulated or re-validated by any other approach.

From the data analysis, five themes emerged. I will present and discuss the themes along with their categories in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 – Presentation & Discussion of Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings that emerged out of the data analysis. Twelve participants shared their lived experiences of the executive coaching of the Top-1000 leadership development programme with particular reference to their experience of the entire development journey that spanned about eighteen months. Two members of the team were participants of the company's High Potential (HiPo) employee programme (see Section 3.4.3). Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the participants. For analysis and discussion, I have classified the candidates into OCP (One-to-one coaching participant) and GCP (Group coaching participant). The summary of the categories and themes are shown in Table 4.2 below. The use of Western names is to maintain confidentiality by masking the true identity of the participants who were mostly Arabs.

Table 4.1 Participants' profile summary

Pseudonym	Level of Manager	Type of coaching received
Alex	GM	One-to-one Coaching
Ben	GM	One-to-one Coaching
Bobby	GM	One-to-one Coaching
Dave	Director (Acting GM)	One-to-one Coaching
Mark	Director	Group Coaching & One-to-one Coaching
Dan	Director	Group Coaching
Jimmy	Director	Group Coaching
Stan	Director	Group Coaching & One-to-one Coaching
Oscar	Section Manager	Group Coaching
Fred	Section Manager	Group Coaching
Tom	Section Manager	Group Coaching
Jack	Section Manager	Group Coaching

Table 4.2: Categories & Themes Summary

Themes	Theme 1 – Positives of Group Coaching	Theme 2 – Challenges of Group Coaching	Theme 3 Positives of One-to-one Coaching	Theme 4 – Challenges One-to-one Coaching	Theme 5 – Learning Impact
Categories	Micro – (relating to oneself)	What did not work	What Worked-Individual	What did not work	Impact of Coaching Culture
	Meso – (relating to participants as a team and their teams)	How to improve Group Coaching	What Worked -Team	How to improve One-to-one Coaching	Top-1000 Impact
	Macro – (related to the organisation)				
					241 Codes

As at the time of the commencement of the research, all the participants were males, mainly local nationals, and all the employees of the company were all males.

4.1   Theme 1 – Positives of Group Coaching

This theme contains the various views of the participants in favour of what worked for Group Coaching concerning the concept, process and outcome focusing on the participant, team, and the organisation. A diagrammatic representation of this theme is shown below.
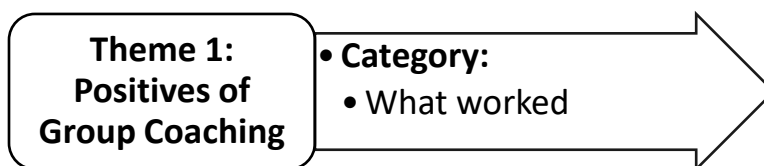
Figure 4.1 Theme 1 – Positives of Group Coaching

What worked for group coaching was segmented into Micro – (relating to oneself), Meso – (relating to participants as a team and their teams), and Macro – (related to the organisation).

4.1.1 Micro:

The first category (Micro) revolved around the individual and how they perceived the positive attributes of group coaching to their development. The most widely held view by the participants was that group coaching impacted them immensely because it helped them to learn from the experiences of each other. This view is echoed by the work of Van Dyke (2014). Van Dyke opined that the major attributes of group coaching include the enabling environment it creates for participants to cross-pollinate ideas, aiding each other's learning and leveraging of the various experiences brought on the table by the participants.

One of the key features of group coaching is the point that it avails the participants the opportunity to hear and learn from each other as they share their experiences and ideas in the group sessions. As one participant stated, *"I learnt more from my colleagues than from the coach"* (Jack, GCP).

Another positive of group coaching mentioned by a few of the participants was that it had helped to call their attention to their way of thinking. As Stan (GCP & OCP) puts it,

> "*So, when he [the coach] opens all these dimensions to stretch your thinking, it makes you think holistically. Then you will see that it is easy to achieve that because you have considered all the aspects. Based on the coach's experience, he starts to ask you to speak more and to solve the issue by yourself.*"

For Fred (GCP),

> *"What was most suitable from the first module we had I can say, is how leaders think… to think positive, it was good for me. I got more ideas".*

For Jimmy (GCP),

> *"The coach has or is going to help you think out of your comfort zone, or out of your current culture".*

In this organisation, the coach-coachee relationship is not that of 'tell' or 'sell' but more of helping to unleash the potential and the greatness residing within the coachee. It is a guide to self-discovery by the coach to enable the coachee to think and develop a workable solution for the expressed coaching need.

Some participants shared various individual views on the benefits of group coaching. Stan (GCP & OCP) stated, "*It helped me on how to achieve my performance*".

For Oscar (GCP),

> "*I have to be a coach for my team, for my employees, for my organisation*".

Other participants viewed group coaching as a means by which the coach used questioning skills to help them come up with solutions (Tom, GCP), a move from blaming others to seeking how to help others (Tom, GCP), positively impacts productivity, improving prioritizing ability, and helped in discovering one's internal voice (Oscar, GCP).

> "*You know some questions would help you identify the right approach, especially in leadership*" (Tom, GCP).

A handful of participants described their experience with positive words like helpful, good experience, very good, keeps you on track, reinforces learning. Other views include, - group coaching positively helped on how to be a coach to their team (Oscar, GCP.

> "*You learned the skill also to be able to coach others*" (Oscar, GCP).

Jimmy (GCP) aptly described it as moving from the dark into the light.

> "*You were shut in the dark before. Moving in your career, you have the competencies each leader has. Once we had the coaching and the Top-1000 programme, we found out that we are practising a lot of things wrong. We were dealing with the team wrongly, setting the objectives in totally different ways*" (Jimmy, GCP).

According to Ket De Vries (2014), the testimonies of over 15,000 participants who went through the group coaching programme at INSEAD global leadership centre indicated massive support for group coaching as one of the best things that happened to their leadership development experience based on their rating and feedback. Group coaching in INSEAD is part of an executive programme involving executives from over the world gather to share their challenges in a group session. Although the researcher did not identify the reason why the programme was so successful, it was, however, the testimonies of the participants and the coaches that rated the programme as very successful. Ket De Vries (2014) pointed out that the coach plays a significant role in the effective facilitation of the group coaching sessions to ensure each member is open and transparent during the group sharing. It starts from having an understanding and a balance in their own lives, having a self-evaluation, and self-reflection.

What I found interesting about the work of Van Dyke (2014) is the suggestion that the selection process impacts the success of the coaching exercise. The selection of participants for the coaching sessions should be by interviews for group fit, and it should be optional for participants to participate. For Van Dyke (2014), how a participant views a group will impact the group's openness and trust. However, in my research, participants of the group coaching were mandated to join the coaching as part of the Top-1000 leadership programme design for all leaders, but the decision to take part in this study was optional. It is, however, good to note that despite the difference in the participation criteria between Van Dyke's study and the coaching of the Top-1000 programme, there was a consensus on the benefits of group coaching.

T

he merits and demerits of group coaching at the individual level, filter into the experience at the team level. Sometimes the experiences of the team are the composite of the individual experiences.

4.1.2 Meso:

The second category revolved around how the participants perceived the positive attributes of group coaching in helping them work better with co-participants while doing their jobs and also lead their team. From the interviews, some participants were of the view that communication and the relationship within their team had improved to such that reflects a more collaborative form of communication. Stan (GCP & OCP) remarked concerning his group executive coaching experience,

> *"In my first year as a leader, I was very aggressive. I go to meetings and sometimes I did not control myself especially when someone provides wrong numbers. My coach gave a technique for me to use. The difference is that the communication itself will be brought by two sides not only one side, and this makes a difference".*

The view of Stan (GCP &OCP) corroborates with the view of Kets De Vries (2005), Britton (2010), and Thornton (2016) on the efficiency of group coaching. Their work showed that one resource (the coach) is used to meet the needs of the group. The authors pointed out the advantages of, engaging communication, the openness of the participants during the sessions, accountability of the participants to the group, and complementary role of group members to one another – holding each other accountable. They mentioned the support the participants get from each other, the discovery and understanding of one another's strengths and personality which improves the trust and the mutual respect in the team. According to the authors, this improves the ability of the group to generate solutions to the needs of the individual team members and the opportunity to learn from each other.

The participants also shared their view on the leader-team relationship from being just directing to being more collaborating and supportive. Mark (GCP & OCP) stated,

> *"One of the things that I used with the team is influencing. When you have the coaching knowledge with influencing, I think you have a good impact on the team. So, I feel how they can improve their performance, how they will make me feel that I am supporting them in a proper way or take care of them instead of bossy manager-employee relationship".*

"We are a better team now" (Fred, GCP)

One of the outcomes of the improvement in communication and leader-team member relationship was the improvement in team performance (Mark, GCP & OCP). Mark's view aligns with that of Van Dyke (2014). From Van Dyke's personal experience and review of related literature referred to some attributes of group coaching; knowing each other better, better open communication, resolving issues within the group, and the introduction of peer coaching to keep each other in check.

Leaders shared their observations. As they became more supportive, their team members turn out to be more engaged, and the improved engagement resulted in improved performance of the team. As Mark puts it,

"*The coaching has helped my team to improve performance*" (GCP).

The whole concept of coaching was new to many of the participants, and as such from the inception of the coaching sessions, many of them were sceptical about its value, not knowing what to expect (Tom, GCP) but later saw the benefits.

"*It was a good opportunity. At first, we were not sure that we would get any benefit from the whole experience especially on the first day" ….' Session after another, we felt more confident, and we ended up understanding what exactly is behind this crazy setup'. …." We now have the initiative to have GM, Directors as coaches or sometimes section managers as coaches, coaching people in their units and other units and so two is paring, and they are learning from each other. The coachee is learning, and the manager is learning. So it is a good development coming this far. It is two years from the start of the programme. It is a good concept. (Tom, GCP).*

"*I know it is just the beginning, it is just a start, and new people are coming, learning about the Organisation, and the culture. I, of course, understand that but am sure it will improve as we go"* (Dan, GCP).

Participants became aware that group coaching created the opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas between them. The exchange of experience if I may add, became the key takeaway for the individual leaders as they left the session with an enlarged repository of knowledge coming from the wealth of experience shared by the entire group.

Some of their remarks stated,

"*Sure, it was helpful, I believe that we learnt from our colleagues more than what we learnt from the coach himself* (Jack, GCP)

"*For the group coaching, I see it from other perspectives. It opens you to others' mind, and maybe you'll find how others think about their problems*" (Mark, GCP & OCP)

"*I reckon that they (participants) need to be exposed to other different experiences across the company on how they deal with problems and issues, and how to start managing people around them and below them*" (Alex, OCP).

An additional benefit was that the group members developed a better rapport with each other than at any point in time in the past, and they now believed that they could call on each other for support. This view was echoed by various participants during the interview but perhaps best expressed by the participants below.

"*So, gradually, I started seeing Directors who previously used to exchange email between each other totally changed, and this time I started seeing them passing by their offices. I started seeing different directors in different offices having meetings and discussing how tasks and actions are supposed to be closed, and the whole thing changed*" (Alex, OCP).

"*Having the group sessions is quite useful because you get to socialise and work more closely with your peers that otherwise you do not see and you do not develop the relationship that helps you afterwards in your everyday work*" (Ben, OCP).

"This is the opportunity to build more relationship, know what's the difficulties the leaders have in their work, to understand each one's position, so group session is very useful especial when the attendees come from different sectors or areas because they'll share more knowledge, and strengthen their relationship with each other" (*Mark, GCP*).

The above views of participants resonate with the views of Mitsch (2015) who opined that one of the advantages of the group members forming beneficial relationships at work.

Collins, Eisner & O'Rourke (2013) in their review of various literature on group coaching pointed out that overall group coaching provides support for the group members and this support leads to behaviour change and the combined learning of the group can give the team a positive result. The authors described other examples of where group coaching have played significant roles.

The responses of various candidates in my study support the findings of existing literature (albeit mostly non-empirical) on the benefits of group coaching. Some of the benefits at the team level include, developing trust and support for the team, developing of the energy level of the team, creating a high-performance team, transferring of coaching skills to the team, and better conflict resolution within the coaching team (Armstrong et al. 2013; Collins, Eisner & O'Rourke, 2013).

As mentioned by the participants (Stan, OCP & GCP; Oscar, GCP; Mark, GCP & OCP; Jack, GCP) benefit of the group coaching is the opportunity created by the coaching sessions for the individual participants to apply learning from the coaching sessions to their teams and while interacting with their fellow leaders (Collins, Eisner & O'Rourke, 2013). As Armstrong et al. (2013) noted, group coaching provides the courage and willingness to try new things, and practice better communication. The transfer of learning from the group coaching sessions by the participants to their team members helps the team to understand each other better (Kets De Vries, 2005; Britton, 2010; Thornton, 2016). Individuals make up the team, and the team make up the organisation. The impact of the group coaching on the team aggregates to the overall impact on the organisation.

4.1.3 Macro:

One of the features of micro, meso and macro, is the point that they are linked together. The individual benefits connect with that of the team, which in turn filters down to the organisation level. From the comments of the participants, it is evident that group coaching has positively impacted the organisation in various ways. These include, process improvement (Stan, GCP & OCP), next level improvement (Bobby, OCP), deployment of coaching practice by the participants (Oscar, GCP), better relationship with the leadership (Mark, GCP; Fred, GCP), development opportunities (Stan, GCP), positive climate (Tom, GCP), helps to improve applied practice (Fred, GCP),and recommendation of coaching in the design of the subsequent leadership development programmes (All Participants, GCP, OCG).

Improved Process:

The following participant testifies to improvement in the way things are done.

"*I can see in the people that they are becoming leaders. Many changes have happened in the process and in the way of achieving some task has been changed. The environment is more open now than before. There is dynamic flexibility in terms of process, policy. So this is what I have seen. (Stan, GCP & OCP).*

Leadership Development Culture:

One participant saw the idea of deploying the leadership development to all the three levels of leaders as a good boost to leadership development culture.

 "*This is for all GMs, all VPs, all directors, and all section managers. Keeping this culture and keeping this information will raise and will move the organisation to the next level*" (Bobby, OCP).

Skill Transfer:

Oscar viewed the coaching experience as an opportunity to transfer the skills learnt to the team.

"*I have to be a coach for my team, for my employees, for my organisation because having the skill is not enough. You have to know how to share the skill and give it to others*" (Oscar, GCP).

Improvement in Upward Relationship:

Mark identified improvement in the relationship amongst leaders as one of the benefits.

> "*For the group, I see the impact is positive because there is more relationship with the top management. I know before some of the top management did not know each other, in the group session you get to introduce yourself. This is the opportunity to build more relationship, know what's the difficulties the leaders have in their work, to understand each one's position*" (Mark, GCP).

Coaching Mindset:

Stan opined that there was a positive relationship between thinking coaching and organisation operating a coaching culture.

> "*When you are in an organisation where there is coaching, you think about the organisation, but when you are in an organisation where there is no coaching, you think about yourself, this is the fact. In coaching organisation, you have an Individual development plan, and you do not have this in an organisation without coaching*" (Stan, GCP & OCP).

Seniority Gap:

For Fred, the gap between the top Management and lower Management was bridged because of executive coaching.

> "*I feel that the organisation has been changed especially here…. We are closer to top management, and this affected me to be more responsible and close to the management*" (Fred, GCP).

Climate and Making a Difference:

Tom described the positive impact of executive coaching as creating a positive climate,

> "*Positive climate, …. So, these are some of the things that we learned on this program*" (Tom, GCP).

Reflection on Learning:

Fred identified that the main difference that the coaching made was the follow-up opportunity and taking responsibility for the lessons learnt in the classroom.

> "*The main difference is that follow -up after training, this is the main difference. It is very important to concentrate, but sometimes you forget what was taught in the class. So, the follow up after the training is good, and that is the main difference. Coaching helps me to look back and try to look at what I had in training. Coaching makes you more responsible for what you have learnt in the class.*". (Fred, GCP)

Coaching helps to actualise learning unlike the usual classroom learning most of which are forgotten within days. According to Reinhold, Patterson & Hegel (2015), coaching is a vehicle to translate learning into practice. The authors referred to a Chinese Confucian philosopher Xunzi (312-230 BC) who stated, "tell me, and I will forget, teach me, and I may remember, involve me, and I learn". This Chinese saying corroborates with Schaefer's (2015) reference to Hermann Ebbinghaus' research in 1885 which revealed that up to 25% of classroom learning is forgotten within six days (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve
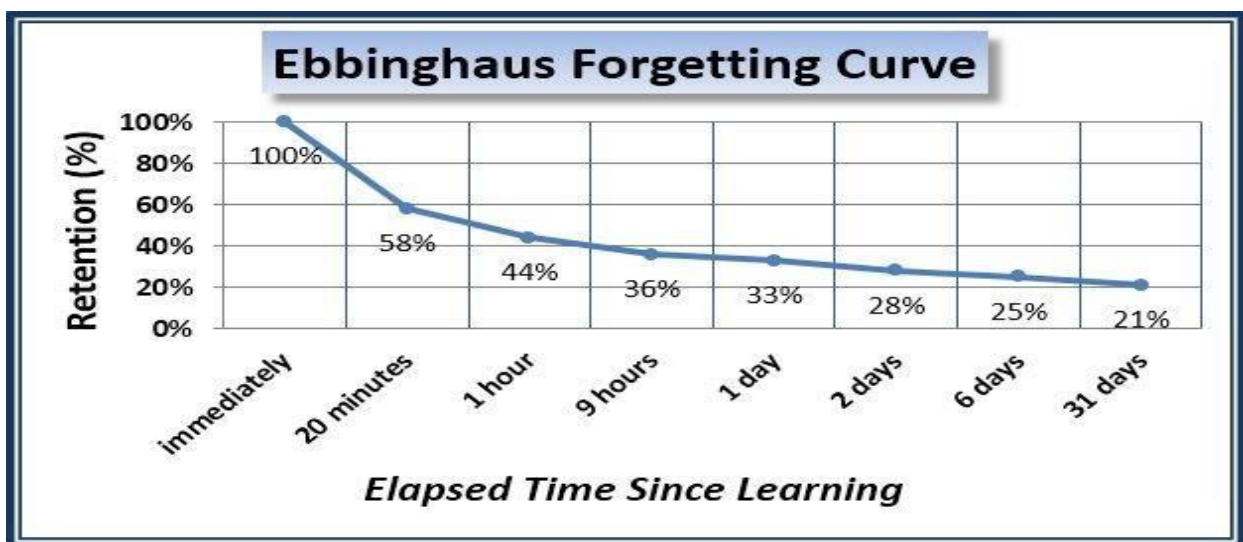
Source: Source: Schaefer, 2015

Ebbinghaus's experiment explored how adults retain learning over time. Various authors (Bartlett, 1932; Bergman and Roediger, 1999: Murre and Dros, 2015) have replicated this experiment, and despite varying conditions of the various experimental process, the experiments showed consistency in results (Murre and Dros, 2015). The forgetting curve is a theory of memory retention based on the notion that lessons learned in training are forgotten in hours, days and weeks.

Reinhold, Patterson & Hegel (2015) echoed the work of Ebbinghaus and recommended coaching as a method of reinforcement (repetition) in the learning retention process,

> "One-to-one or group coaching can provide high-touch support for participants throughout all three stages of the development process, and can be valuable long-term support as well" (p.8).

Reinhold, Patterson & Hegel (2015,) further stated,

> "Listening to speakers and reading information is a passive learning process—and the information is less likely to stick than processes that connect and engage each person through applied practice" (p.5).

Reinhold, Patterson & Hegel (2015) identified coaching as one of the processes that connect and engage a person through applied practice. The role of coaching in actualising learning was reinforced by Reinhold Patterson and Hegel, (2015) and Brown & McCracken (2010). Ambrose et al. (2010) described the link between retention and mastery, and factors that affect both. The authors in their view stated,

> "to develop mastery; students must acquire component skills, practice integrating them, and know when to apply what they have learned" (Ambrose et al., 2010, p.5).

They noted that the learner moves through stages of learning from unconscious incompetence to conscious competence. The process starts with acquiring the relevant skill, practising, applying and mastering (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Elements of Mastery
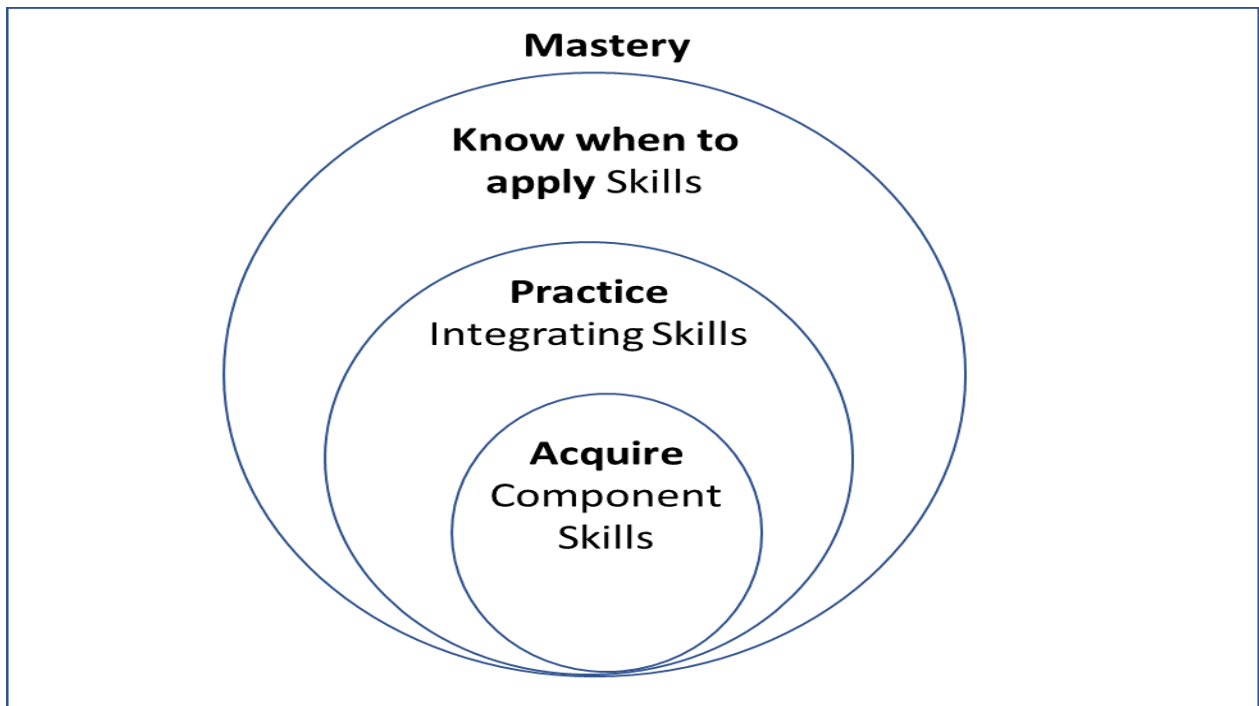
Source: Ambrose et al. (2010, p.96)

One other key area noted by some of the participants about group coaching was the benefits at the organisational level - the improved relationship building among leaders. It was also credited for its role in cultural transformation (Ben, OCP) owing to the notion that as leaders buy-in, they will help their team to buy-in, and in the long run, the organisation is seen buying-in. Ben's (OCP) view supports the work of Barrett (2006) which alludes that coaching plays a vital role in cultural transformation. The author described cultural transformation as positively changing the way things are done in the organisation through the leaders leading the way.

Barrett (2006, p.98) expressed his view from quasi-experimental research on group coaching;

> "Coaching plays a vital part in a cultural transformation program by supporting the leaders and senior executives in living the organisation's values – we call this 'walking the talk'... The best way, and perhaps the only sure way to make this happen is through coaching individuals in the executive team and their direct reports".

Ben (OCP) noted about the Top-1000 coaching,

"*When you try to instil a certain kind of sayings and cultural transformation, working together in a group, can be more effective because you can very easily compare how you behave versus how your colleagues behave and that can be reinforcing the change*".

Ben's view aligns with the literature review study conducted by Collins, Eisner & O'Rourke (2013), it was found out that group intervention appears to be more effective than one-to-one situations in the area of behavioural change which is a crucial element of cultural transformation.

Bobby (OCP) stated,

"*This will let the organisation do better to improve. Moreover, this coaching really improves the organisation to go to the next level, to the next step*".

Stating the macro benefit of group executive coaching, one of the participants remarked,

"*You have to talk the same language with your peers, so you are not isolated. It seems that before you are on an island and your peers are in a different island, meaning you are talking different language completely*" (Jack, GCP).

As a strategy for leadership development, (Jack, GCP) further stated,

"*100%, I strongly recommend coaching as part of leadership development design because it makes a very big difference*".

It was mentioned that group coaching is better for a large population of employees as it is easier to organise the coaching in groups to cover the target population and this makes the coaching exercise more cost-effective at a strategic level (Ben, OCP). Ben stated,

"*given the size of this Organisation almost twenty thousand people, having the group sessions is quite useful because you get to socialise and work more closely with your peers*" (Ben, OCP).

There is limited empirical research on executive coaching in the Middle East region (one-to-one, and group coaching). However, we have views and experiences shared by many authors and coaching experts. Kets De Vries (2005), Britton (2010), and Thornton (2016) itemised the benefits of group coaching at the organisational level to be, improves communication, improves accountability, improves the support system, moving from being a group to becoming a team, improving the capacity of the organisation to solve problems, and an opportunity to learn as an organisation. According to Brown and Grant (2010), group coaching improves systematic awareness at the organisational level, gives rise to knowledge management and transfer, improves the organisation energy level, builds high-performance teams, and improves organisation's result. Collins, Eisner & O'Rourke (2013) agree with the knowledge transfer, and also added an increase in accountability and commitment, and alignment of values, goals and strengths as part of the benefits.

Mitsch (2015) noted that the benefits of group coaching at the organisational level were cost savings, sharing learning, and improvement in problem-solving for the organisation. Armstrong et al. (2013) added that group coaching brings to an organisation, increased creativity, and willingness to try new ways of doing things.

The views of the participants in my study support the research of Ostrowski (2018) who highlighted the benefits of group coaching to include, generating ideas, solving complex problems, feeling of a common bond, exchange of ideas, and providing social support.

The limitation of the literature in this category is that they are more of self-perception, personal experiences, narratives, and literature reviews. An exception to this is the work of Ostrowski (2018) which used qualitative research with a narrative approach of inquiry and analysis. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview of 9 participants. The composition of the participants was from independent entrepreneurs (not from the same organisation) which limits the transferability of findings.

It implies that the focus is not the same. The other concern with the study is that it is only those who met the conditions for selection (minimum of eight weeks of group coaching experience).

In comparison to my study, the selection of participants is based on completing the eighteen-month structured group executive coaching. Another concern is the group distribution of Ostrowski's (2018) study which is limited to four as against over fifty groups for each phase of the coaching covered in my study. Selection of group members from a broader range of group might have made their distinction more apparent. This similarity of Ostrowski's (2018) and my study is in the adoption of a single interview of the participants (instead of a repeated longitudinal interview throughout the group coaching journey) as the means of eliciting their experience.

4.2   Theme 2 – Challenges of Group Coaching

Despite the numerous gains attributed to group coaching by the participants, there appeared to be room for improvement for the current group coaching practice in the company. Amid the benefits of group coaching negatives also existed. A diagrammatic (4.4) representation of this theme is shown below.
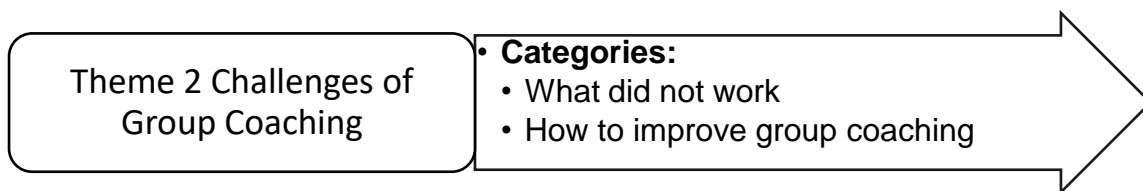
Figure 4.4 Theme 2 – Challenges of Group Coaching

The negative comments about group coaching were more from the individual perspective, and it might be based on their initial expectations from the coaching. This position is understandable as most of the participants were encountering executive coaching for the first time. They might have had different pre-coaching ideas of what role coaching plays in leadership development. Many factors may have been responsible for these views, including facilitator-related factors, non-facilitator-related factors, programme structure, location, personal state of mind, and preconceptions.

Although the individual comments of disgruntled participants are in the minority and should not be taken to be the general view of all participants, I consider it a significant factor that should reflect the true nature of the study and as such should be highlighted as a category.

4.2.1 What did not work

The concerns for the first set of participants about group coaching focused on the negative attitudes of participants towards Group Coaching. Participants voiced phrases such as, 'ticking the box', 'having no value'; 'the venture did not warrant the time invested', and 'the process focused on the negatives'.

In the personal view of one of the participants, he commented:

> *"I did not find it a good three hours investment for myself and the organisation. What I hear from colleagues is that it did not add much value"* *(Dan, GCP).*

The reason for Dan's experience may not be unconnected to the nature of his job and the demands of the job concerning the use of his time. It is evident in his comment,

> "*Okay so you are together about three hours within a very busy day, but in the training when you start it is usually like over the weekend, and you are clear on the training, and then it is easier as you are disconnected from work. In a group coaching session, you are not very disconnected from work that's why if you attended some groups discussion sessions you noticed that some people came with laptops and a lot of them kept their eyes on their phones when someone else is talking trying to check some few emails*" (Dan, GCP).

One participant described the coaching discussion as not being focused on topics of his interest,

> *"It was not focused on the specific topic, and it took 3 – 4 hours. Let's say if we were focusing on time management everyone will share their knowledge and experience"* (Jimmy, GCP).

Stan (GCP & OCP) complained of a lack of openness in the discussion. He criticised the session for the unwillingness of participants to share freely. For him, the session was that of unhealthy competition amongst the participants.

In Stan's words,

> *"In group coaching, you are not only thinking about the coach but also people around you. This will pose a challenge to speak or not speak about something., there are barriers and boundaries while speaking. You cannot be very transparent … If the people around you are more qualified, and they put up a lot of challenges or objections, you will try to compete with them"* (Stan, GCP & OCP).

Dan (GCP) states,

> "*I do not feel comfortable sharing with the group if I want to share the weakness, I have, and usually, people do not like sharing weaknesses in front of groups*" (Dan, GCP).

These views are personal views of the few participants that are not shared in common by all. It should not be considered as the general view of the participants.

Mitsch (2015) referred to this as 'unspoken competition' between group members for a few growth opportunities at the top which may cause them to hesitate in sharing information. This unwillingness to share information was listed as part of the disadvantages of group coaching.

Stan (GCP & OCP) saw time management as being poor in the sessions.

> *"I do not like it because it took so much time". Filling 3-4 pages (of IDP template), I do not like it".* (Stan, GCP & OCP).

The coaching did not add much value to Fred (GCP). His view was that group coaching was only relevant for the sharing of ideas of a generic nature. Another participant observed that the general topic did not add much value to him (Ben, OCP). According to them,

> "*The* **coaching itself didn't add anything much to me, because it was a group.** *First of all, I like one-to-one coaching, so it (group coaching) did not add much to me. It's the same as what I had in training.*" (Fred, GCP).

The comment of Fred varies with some of his earlier comments;

> *"It was simple and short, it all worked well for me",… "when someone has experience on the same subject, they shared the experience they have with others which were very helpful and very good"…. "The group coaching itself, I have had it before, but this one was the most beneficial one for me. Maybe that is why it was good"* (Fred, GCP).

Ben (OCP) stated,

> *"The group structure can be by default as it needs to address a wider set of development needs which not all of them are relevant to all participants and as a result has to be wide enough and broad enough. In some cases, it becomes less valuable because as one, two or three topics that are covered may not apply to me either because it is not a need to me"* (Ben, OCP).

As mentioned in Section 2.1, the group executive coaching selection was cross-functional. Participants were selected from various departments for cross-pollination of ideas. However, participants at the same leadership level (section Managers are all together) are meant to be in the same groups. Since the topics were generic according to the outcome of the module, in some cases, a participant may or may not have a severe need of the topic under discussion.

Dave (OCP) pointed an accusing finger to the coach for not being transparent, and his perception was that the coach lacked competence. He saw the group coaching as misuse and waste of time because participants are reluctant to give deep insight into their discussions. He put it thus,

> *"I have a couple of coaches and not one, the first coach that I had… I believe that he was not transparent, so being transparent and being relevant to me is one of the things. Maybe because of his beliefs, I think there is a lack of transparency and lack of competency. ….. Group coaching is a waste because you are reluctant to give deep insight, but in one-to-one, there's more intimacy"* (Dave, OCP).

In the case of Dave, he might have encountered more than one coach in the four modules. It is possible. Sometimes the coaches can change in the course of the coaching journey. In considering the negative experiences of Dave, it will be noted that he had earlier expressed the positive experience of group executive coaching during the interview.

> "*when it is a group it becomes very close because we are in the same department. So I can relate to it. For example, if coaching happens with the group with technical stuff happening, e.g. if its communication then I need the coach on how to deal with the communication*" (Dave, OCP).

These negatives comments should not be taken as his only view of group executive coaching. It is part of responding to the interview question asking about what did not work for him. Few things may not work for him, but it does not mean that nothing worked for him or that what did not work for him is more than what worked for him.

Dave may not have attended group coaching, but the participants of the programme share their experiences with other leaders. They compare notes with colleagues in the same department or while interacting with others from other departments.

Tom (GCP) was of the view that concentration in the group sessions was not fully realised due to participants being distracted by the use of their phone handsets.

> "*In group coaching the participants will not be 100% engaged not all of them. Maybe you will find one or two or three maximum are engaged and are proactive and the others are observing, and they try to get it passed*" (Tom, GCP).

Oscar (GCP) complained of the weird nature of the stillness exercise – an exercise used by the coaches to get the participants to concentrate and be in the moment in the coaching session. It was administered by the coach at the beginning of the group coaching to maximise participants' concentration. It involves taking a deep breath in and out with eyes closed, and it lasts for a few minutes.

To ensure standardised experience by all participants of the Top-1000, the designers of the programme provided a guideline to be followed by all facilitators. It includes stillness exercise and putting the cell phones on silent mode. (See Appendix 8).

Oscar stated,

> *"Honestly with us, it was like, it is called stillness exercise, where you have to breathe and stay silent for a minute. It works individually, but within a group of people, I do not know. It looks weird; it looks funny. Everybody would laugh like for ten seconds"* (Oscar, GCP).

Alex (OCP) expressed his disdain about group coaching describing it as being more of training and lessons than coaching. He further opined that in the group coaching sessions, participants were over-sensitive when they were talking, possibly because they felt uneasy to talk in the presence of their work colleagues. He remarked,

> "*Basically, it looked like I will say lessons rather than coaching. Not to be unfair, I have benefited a lot, yet to me, it was training and lessons more than coaching. When it comes to group coaching, you become a little bit sensitive talking about your personal issues and also your relationship with others*" (Alex, OCP).

Mitsch (2015) highlighted that some participants in group coaching sessions might not give their best contribution to the group coaching process and they can withhold sharing some vital information to gain competitive advantage. Ket De Vries (2014) summed up some the demerits of group coaching as 'cloud issues' which can include jealousy within the group, unresolved issued within the group, fear of submersion or being abandoned, rivalry, shame, or guilt. The importance of the role of the coach in group coaching was highlighted by some authors adding that for coaches to be effective in driving group coaching, they need to be adequately trained in managing group dynamics (Armstrong et al., 2013; Ket De Vries, 2014).

Britton (2010) focusing on the examples from the field of coaching, referred to the experience of Lynda Monk (Certified Professional Career Coach) sharing her view as one of the voices from the field of practising coaches.

Monk identified hesitance of the coaching clients to participate in group coaching to be traceable to the fear of not knowing what to expect, as one of the challenges she encountered conducting group coaching (Britton, 2010). According to Lynda Monk, many participants thought it was another form of classroom learning where the teacher is the expert, and the learners are the novice. In her words, Lynda Monk stated,

>"Many people I have spoken with are hesitant to participate in the group (fear, not sure what to expect) and they want one-to-one personal coaching instead" (Britton, 2010, p.219).

One of the challenges of group coaching in a corporate setting as opined by one participant was the notion that there are other demands on the time of the participants especially coming from work pressure which constitutes a distraction to the participants.

Dan (GCP) put it this way,

>"In theory, it should work, but seriously it did not work…. In theory yes it was very useful but when it actually happened it wasn't that much, at least for me" "*in the group training you are just leaving a meeting going into another meeting called group session then you are thinking about the other business you got to attend to and the five hundred unopened emails*" (Dan, GCP).

Even when the participants attend the coaching sessions, some participants noticed that it was sessions of guided discussions where participants were reluctant to discuss weaknesses (Dan, GCP). Dan further stated,

>"*Usually people do not like sharing weaknesses in front of groups*" (Dan, GCP).

For Dan, the application of learning to practice did not always work. He further opined that it is right in theory; however, the implementation needs improvement. In his words, Dan stated,

> "*In theory, it should work, but seriously it did not work. In theory, you gather six people and start asking questions and giving a chance to everyone to answer that question, and you should learn from that. In our session, we were six, and you heard the other five opinions and experiences and how training changed their behaviour or how they deal with their team*" (Dan, GCP).

The lack of trust was seen by Stan (GCP & OCP) as the reason why participants are reluctant to share their views. He corroborated this by saying,

> "*They (fellow participants) don't trust you very well with your vision or target*" (Stan, GCP & OCP).

As mentioned earlier this is the comparative view shared by Stan as he has other opposing views already shared on the same topic.

For Mark (GCP & OCP), the reason it did not work for him was lack of time in coaching his team. In his view, he is being coached in order to coach his team. Mark remarked,

> "*The bad part is only when you need more time in coaching your team, or someone else. You need time*" (Mark GCP).

Jack (GCP) ascribed the reason why group coaching was not working to the notion that some departments are yet to imbibe the benefits of the group coaching which includes effective communication and the new way of leading. Jack (GCP).

> "*Some sectors outside my sectors are not at the same level, am just thinking maybe the reason is that the management did not give the same space that they gave to us*" (Jack, GCP).

Despite the positive testimonies of group coaching, the effect on participants and their perception is not always the same experience for all.

From the research work of Ostrowski (2018), some of the participants neither experienced meaningful change nor experienced real learning. In words of one of the participants. "It is just not my cup of tea" (Ostrowski 2018, p.162). Bachikrova, Artur & Reading (2015) alluded to coaching not working all the time, especially in the area of work-life balance, retention, and interpersonal skill. In Bachikrova's study, about five per cent (n=7) of the respondents thought that coaching did not work.

The research of Bachikrova, Artur & Reading (2015) used a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) focusing on coaching and mentoring. There was no clear indication in the study of separating the impact of coaching from mentoring, and impact of coaching from other factors. In this type of study, without a control group, it is difficult to claim that the changes that occurred are as a result of the coaching and not other factors. Between my research and that of Bachikrova, Artur & Reading (2015), there seems to be the commonality that coaching has immense benefits to clients and also has instances where it did not work. Overall there is an indication that the instances when coaching worked outnumbered instances when it did not work. The concerns expressed about group coaching are not irredeemable. Some measures can be put in place to improve the practice.

4.2.2 How to Improve Group Coaching

Dan (GCP) shared the role of social media in conducting group coaching sessions. He criticised the current physical face-to-face process and would have preferred virtual group coaching. In his words, Dan stated,

> "*You can do it digitally for example. You have like a virtual group where there is a discussion that goes on for maybe three days and people discussing online just like what we have in a WhatsApp group for example*" (Dan, GCP).

Although one participant voiced this view, I consider this a significant insight in that if implemented, it may have an enormous impact on the structure and cost of running executive coaching in the organisation. It also supports the digitisation drive by the organisation.

As an ICT organisation, fostering the use of technology in meeting the needs of internal and external customers put the organisation at the forefront of national digitisation vision.

Some participants opined that group coaching would work better for generic topics.

"*As I told you group coaching would work for the values that you want everybody to apply or to adhere to*" *(*Oscar, GCP);

"*So, the group coaching I feel it's better for strategic discussion or something generic*" (Mark, GCP & OCP);

"*For example, a subject about how to make employees adapt to the company values. So, this is a good subject for group coaching because it is common; it is general*" (Tom, GCP).

Stan (GCP & OCP) recommended group coaching as the first stage in the coaching process to be followed by one-to-one coaching. Ben (OCP) was particular about group coaching being tailored to the specific needs of the individual participants, not something generic – not a case of one size fits all. He was of the view that benefits are enhanced when the coaches are committed.

"*It is good to have group coaching not just for the coaching objective but to help the people to understand how they can utilise coaching. Then after that, I would suggest we do not continue with the group coaching, but rather continue with one-to-one coaching*" (Stan, GCP & OCP).

Ben (OCP) suggested taking into consideration the experiences the participants bring into the session. He stated,

"*It has to be done in a way that really takes into account the differences in each person, and it is not something you roll out across just to tick boxes, but you have to have the coaches that look at needs of each and address them as opposed to more generic organisational need*" (Ben, OCP).

Tom (GCP) re-echoing Ben's view, also suggested that the organisers of group coaching should pay attention to the experiences of the participants who are not on the same level of leadership. In Tom's opinion, there was no point giving a participant coaching in an area that is either far below or far above his level. He was of the view that coaching sessions should be separated according to the participant's level of work experience, their type of function, and their kind of job specialisation. However, he said that diversity in experience becomes an advantage when participants need to learn from the experience of others.

Tom stated,

> "One thing I wish is that the people behind this program pay attention to is the different experiences amongst the managers because we have different levels in segmentations if you try to break down the teams of managers in terms of experience. Let's say, in terms of specialisation and different specific units. You will have different programs for each, so this is the thing" (Tom, GCP).

Mark (GCP & OCP) added a dimension to the experience sharing by pointing out that mixing the participants from various departments would enrich the experience better. In his opinion,

> "group session is very useful especial when the attendees come from different sectors or areas because they will share more knowledge, and strengthen their relationship with each other" (Mark, GCP & OCP).

Some participants agreed that group coaching is better used for leaders in the level of Directors and Section Managers due to the shortage of coaches to cover these number of leaders (over 800). In their words,

> "I would really recommend having one-to-one coaching, and they could have at least twice group coaching in a year, but when it comes to directors and below, I would say that it is the opposite" (Alex, OCP).

> "But if you go to Section manager or team leader, Director, maybe the group (coaching) is good for them" (Bobby, OCP).

> "For the group coaching, I believe the directors and below will be more effective" (Jack, GCP).

Jack (GCP) pointed out that the employees below Section Managers should be included in the group coaching agenda as he viewed this category of employees as being the ones that need the group coaching the most. He suggested that this should be included in a policy. Currently, there is no plan covering the coaching need of employees below Section Managers.

> "*The coaching for the employee himself is important because they are the ones that need the coach more*" (Jack, GCP).

Oscar (GCP) suggested that group coaching should be well structured, well managed and should be facilitated by specially trained coaching professionals.

> "*Yes, I think it is very helpful and valuable especially when it is facilitated by professionals. If it was driven properly, it could be so helpful. …. It just needs to be well structured, well managed, and well facilitated*" (Oscar, GCP).

Ostrowski (2018) made important suggestions based on the outcome of his research. These include, group coaches should familiarise themselves on literature and studies on group dynamics to arm themselves with the necessary skills for managing group dynamics. The author also suggested that those involved in coaching education should endeavour to enlarge the coaching curriculum to incorporate associated resources that will improve the understanding of the group coaching concept. Group coaches should make a conscious effort to help their clients with reflection and sense-making of their learning over time. These measures can serve as solutions to the concerns mentioned by the participants in this study. A limitation with Ostrowski's (2018) recommendation is that it did not state how success should be measured. The suggestions provided did not indicate the primary source of his suggestions on whether it was a personal opinion, the opinion of the coaches or that of the other group coaching stakeholders.

Other authors made useful suggestions to improve group coaching based on personal views and experiences. These suggestions include; the use of trained coaches to facilitate group coaching, restricting the size of the group to an average of six members, careful selection of team members to ensure fit, precise definition and understanding of group coaching, and standardization of requirement to qualify and practise as a group coach (Armstrong et al., 2013; Van Dyke, 2014; Aas & Vavik, 2015).

4.3   Theme 3 – Positives of One-to-one coaching

Theme 3 Positives of One-to-one coaching

- **Category:**
- What worked
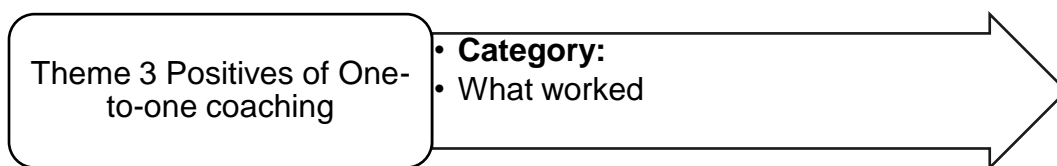
Figure 4.5 Theme 3 – Positives of One-to-one coaching

One commonality noticed amongst the participants of the one-to-one and group coaching, is that most of the participants seem to have shared and learnt from each other on how each of these types of coaching worked. It is not surprising to see that they offered suggestions and personal perspectives for both types of coaching despite the type of coaching they attended during the Top-1000 programme.

4.3.1 What worked – Individual

Coaching stretches thinking, according to (Stan, GCP & OCP). He further opined that there are trust and confidence in one-to-one coaching. He expressed the view that one-to-one created an atmosphere for freedom of expression including the opportunity to discuss weaknesses.

"*Anytime you are with the coach; you try to accomplish a high level of trust and confidence. You can talk about your weakness in a very clear and very easy way". "Without coaching, you get the tool you can use in order to practice, but with the coach no, he is trying to understand exactly your objectives. He is trying to help you to structure your thinking*" (Stan, GCP & OCP).

Stan (GCP & OCP) further stated,

> "*One-to-One – when you come back from the programme you prepare an IDP (Individual development plan) and get support from your direct manager. That helps you a lot…. The situation when one-to-one coaching is going to be very important is when the organisation is going to do a mindset change. It can be the culture or the mindset, people or process, or whatsoever. In order not to have resistance, you need to have the coaching to support the people – GM and above are to accept the change by themselves and cascade it to the people*" (Stan, GCP & OCP).

Fred (GCP) who had previous experience in one-to-one coaching stated,

> "*One-to-one, I personally feel more relaxed, comfortable than the group coaching. …. On my side, I prefer one-to-one coaching because it makes me to concentrate more, ask more questions and to have more ideas*" (Fred (GCP).

Ben (OCP) preferred one-to-one coaching for its convenience. He commented,

> "*If there are specific needs identified for certain leaders that have to be addressed, then one-to-one can be less confrontational. Otherwise, if you have to open up in front of your colleagues, some may view it as a weakness. They remain closed; as a result, you do not properly address the issue. In this case, one-to-one is better to have a safer environment…. Then you can address those weaknesses. So, in terms of the actual development, and results, maybe, the one-to-one will be better, but in terms of the secondary benefits of creating the relationship with your peers, the group would be better*" (Ben, OCP).

One participant was of the view that the one-to-one process helps to improve performance.

> "*Usually if you have coaching sessions planned throughout the year, every month it will push you to improve or develop. Even when you do not have work to do, sometimes you think, what are the problems that I have right now, and how can I improve*" (Tom, GCP).

Tom (GCP) further opined that concentration in the coaching session is maximised.

He stated,

"*One-to-one coaching, all your senses will be awakened, and you will try to keep up with your coach, and you will try to remember. It is kind of having a full load, or you will be working full throttle in one-to-one coaching*". "*Face-to-face (one-to-one) coaching if it is planned on a monthly basis or a regular basis, let's say every two weeks, it will help let's say 100% in making you reach your goals within a shorter time. So, I believe in one-to-one because you have to show progress from a session to another session because you have to have something to present to the table*". "*Every month it will push you to improve*" (Tom, GCP).

Jack (GCP) speaking on the focus, privacy, and freedom as the benefits of one-to-one coaching stated,

"*For a one-to-one, I really recommend it since it concerns issues or needs maybe you cannot say in front of others, at the same time you need some focus on some issues you want to talk to your coach. You want a time that nobody will interrupt you when you are talking because you have a contract between your coach and you. So, it will be very secure, and there will be trust rather than telling a group of people whom you do not trust (Jack, GCP).*

Alex (OCP) appreciated the positive aspects of one-to-one coaching. He stated,

"*It helped me to think in a different way*". "*It is not I win; you lose. It is not you win, I lose. It is win-win*". "*The good thing about the one-to-one coaching is that each time that you meet your coach, it gives you a boost. It raises your bar. It injects you with energy*". "*You do not have any issue of revealing your secrets and issues*". "*It picks up your brain, and you start thinking differently and start implementing or trying to implement what you have learnt in a different way*" (Alex, OCP).

Dave (OCP) recounted the unique experience for him as he described it thus;

> *"It was like a wake-up alert for me to set up again my compass and select the direction I want to go. I think since we started the coaching, everything has changed for me personally and at work", "My vision was a little bit hidden. However, with the coaching, I clarified my vision, and I got objectives that I have to fulfil". "I can boldly say I have milked them…. It is like a mirror to me. I see myself on the other side. Usually, I see myself from within, but now I see myself from outside. Accepting to have feedback in a positive manner". (Dave OCP).*

4.3.2 What worked – Team:

Bobby (OCP), wanted the coaching programme to continue.
> "*Top-1000 program, one of the greatest opportunity to the company leaders to understand, to have new knowledge, and to start implementing this knowledge with the support of the coach. We really need to have this program continue*" (Bobby, OCP).

The view expressed by the participant corroborates the position of Collins (2012) on one-to-one coaching. Collins (2012) identified one-to-one coaching as a process of translating learning into action through trust. Collins views one-to-one as being most suited to deal with the challenges of an individual leader. She is of the view that it creates the enabling environment for the participant to maximise the coaching opportunity. She listed the attributes that the coachees consider helpful to the process of coaching. They include listening skill, questioning skill, commanding coach's respect, collaborative coaching approach, and using a participative discussion style. Also mentioned are, authenticity in all the dealings, the coach to be credible, regular meetings between the coach and the coachee, application of action, and reflection to drive learning. Collin's (2012, p. 309-310) made a list of recommendations that will enhance one-to-one coaching at the stages of the process.

Collins' (2012) research was qualitative research like a longitudinal study (before the beginning and after the coaching session) within a case study-based setting. It explored the distinction between one-to-one executive coaching and other dyadic interventions. The aim of the study was mainly to understand coaching dynamics and its relationship with existing theories. Data collection was from multiple sources including CV, questionnaires, speed coaching, and semi-structured interviews. The possibility exists that the data collection and analysis may be complicated, and this may impact quality assurance.

One-to-one coaching is more tailored to give personalised attention to the coachee. Ben (OCP) agreed that one-to-one coaching tackles the participant's need more directly. For him it helped in reflection, planning, addressing issues, getting helpful feedback, and a safe environment to discuss weaknesses and needs.

> *"One-to-one addresses more directly my own needs". "One-to-one is better – to have a safer environment". "I think the one difference one-to-one coaching has made for me is trying to make the link between my perceived needs for improvement and linking them directly with feedback from people who are relevant to me for my day-to-day work. Like leaders of other departments with whom I work and how they perceive some of the things I believe I need to develop. So, this direct feedback and communication back and forth on my development needs were quite valuable"* (Ben. OCP).

Mark (GCP & OCP), who as a HiPo team member had both group coaching and one-to-one coaching, commented on some benefits of one-to-one coaching. He put it this way,

> *"Changes your mindset to think in a proper way". "When I returned from the first coaching session, I decided that I should start coaching my team". I should explain to the team what happened during the trip. One of the things that I used with the team is influencing. When you have the coaching knowledge with influencing, I think you will have a good impact on the team. So, I feel how they*

can improve their performance, how they will make me feel that I am properly supporting them or taking care of them. Supporting my team is one of the good things I used from the coaching". "One-to-one is good, and you will feel more relaxed to speak about something like detailed things or issues internal- within your team" (Mark, GCP & OCP).

"When he applied the learning from the coaching, he came to my office and said …., you will not believe, my team have started enjoying the work better than before". "Within one year he reduced the managed-services to 40% and the performance increased by 50%" (Mark, GCP & OCP).

Bobby (OCP), thanked the company for providing the coaching opportunity which has helped him to understand the concept and various approaches to coaching and enhanced confidentiality. He reaffirmed that he benefitted as a GM and also appreciated the process of coaching which does not provide the solution but through questioning unleashed the solution from the participant and provided the discipline to put learning into action. He recommended one-to-one coaching to be integrated into the future design of a leadership development programme.

"It is really a great opportunity, and I give thanks to the company …. We benefited a lot as GMs …. The coach really helped me to put the discipline, to put the plan, to implement what we learned from all modules of the Top-1000. Sure. It is very important" (Bobby, OCP).

Alex (OCP) affirmed his benefits. He stated his experience by saying,

"To be honest, one-to-one coaching was extremely helpful". "Now, to be fair, I have benefited a lot". "This question triggered up a lot of different ideas and made me, and I will say to think in a totally different way". "I will say it was great… I loved it. It was really helpful. This gave me an opportunity to change the way I assign tasks to my directors". (Alex, OCP).

Dan (GCP) could see changes in his manager who had one-to-one coaching. He put

it this way,

> "*I noticed there's a dramatic change in my manager's behaviour after the training and the coaching*" (Dan, GCP).

Collins (2012) identified coaching as a tool for unlocking the greatness in a coachee instead of a spoon-feeding process. Collins stated,

> "unlocking a person's potential to maximise their performance. It is helping them to learn, rather than teaching them" (p.77).

She identified coaching as a process to improve performance, a tool for optimising potential, and a process that enables learning to take place (Collins, 2012).

Bachkirova, Arthur & Reading (2015) found from their study that one-to-one coaching improved feedback, created positive change in behaviour, and resulted in better time management. It also improved communication and increased use of coaching as a tool. An improvement was also noticed in confidence, work-life balance, capacity for decision making and solving problems, better off-work relationships, and improved retention.

4.4 Theme 4 – Challenges of One-to-one coaching

Theme 4 Challenges of One-to-one coaching

- **Categories:**
- What did not work
- how to improve one-to-one Coaching
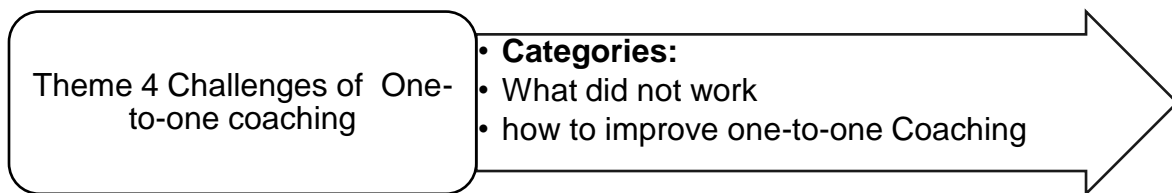
Figure 4.6 Theme 4 – Challenges of One-to-one coaching

4.4.1 What did not work

A few participants were of the view that one-to-one coaching did not entirely work for them. The experience that Ben (OCP) found the least valuable was the theoretical aspect of the coaching. He was of the view that the coaching was more conceptual than practical. He wanted the coaching to be closer to what he sees in his day to day working life. His position may have been related to the coaching style adopted by the coach. Every coach has their style of delivering the coaching session.

Ben's view may be a result of his expectation or pre-conceived ideas of how coaching should be (which may not always be).

> *"It was the more theoretical part that was more textbook rather than something relevant to me"* (Ben, OCP).

Bobby (OCP), opined that it is more challenging to arrange group coaching for GMs because of the nature of their calendar and due to the sensitive nature of the role of GMs and above, one-to-one coaching is better.

> "*And for lower levels, it is easy to arrange a meeting with them as a group, for the high level, you cannot match the GM's calendar together*". "*You know the GMs and VPs have role requiring much information that they need to discuss with the coach, …, no need for another one to hear it, regarding the work, how to deal with the boss, how to deal with the employee*" (Bobby, OCP).

As can be seen below, participants affirmed that one-to-one coaching would be better for personal issues.

> *"Sometimes I discuss with my coach something related to personal issues. So, I think one-to-one more comfortable" (Mark, GCP & OCP).*

> *"You have one-to-one for an hour, which means it is dedicated to you, so it is more personalised" (Dave, OCP).*

> *"One-to-one is better when we have personal issues so that the coach can be with the person and then they can discuss privately then he will be open and talk to the coach (Jack, GCP).*

> *"Personal or individual cases that you would not like to share with everybody so that it would work with one-to-one coaching" (Oscar, GCP).*

> *"You need one-to-one coaching in a closed session, and you may move forward with it especially when it comes to, let's say your subjects or your department. It is not good to have a lot of people that will not feel related to the same subject and understand exactly what you are talking about" (*Tom, GCP).

The pressure of work was Bobby's (OCP) reason why the coaching did not work for him in applying his learning into practice (an example is 6-steps to problem-solving – one of the concepts discussed during the Top-1000 training);

> *"We learnt the 6-steps to solving a problem and taking the right decision… The methodology is good, but if we need to run or implement, it may be the first week, the second week, or one project, two projects then we forget it" (Bobby, OCP).*

Alex (OCP) voiced that work-life balance suffers due to time shared by the coaching and work demands. For him, he lost track of the coaching and the entire programme learning due to the pressure of work. He stated,

> *"Balance between work and life – give quality time for your kids and wife and these kinds of things. Unfortunately, that did not work well…. Sometimes I manage to balance between work and my personal life for a couple of months then I believe I stop, losing track because of the burden of work and situation"* (Alex, OCP).

4.4.2 How to Improve one-to-one Coaching

Dave (OCP) was of the view that one-to-one coaching methodology needs to be more developed and structured, starting with defining the purpose. For him, he wants the coaching to be reviewed, restructured and rescoped. If this entails additional cost implications, he did not mind bearing the coaching cost from his pocket. He stated,

> "*I think methodology has to be developed more, even if it comes to me and the company tells me that they want to deduct part of my salary for the coaching, then I do not mind*". "*We need more structure and facility for the coaching*". "*Coaching should start by defining the purpose*" (Dave, OCP).

A few participants recommended one-to-one for GMs and above.

> "*GM level and above, maybe one-to-one will be more effective … once you reach to a GM level, you should have a mature level of knowledge and experience, so what you want more in some cases is more answer from the coach*" (Jack, GCP).

> "*GMs, and I think the VPs should be one-to-one*". "*It depends on the leader. I would say with senior levels – for the GM, and above, I would really recommend having one-to-one coaching*" (Alex, OCP).

Mark (GCP & OCP) recommended coaching to continue, and employees should be made to understand the meaning of coaching. He was of the view that one-to-one coaching is better suited for complex situations, and when you need to set a goal that needs the support of a coach.

> "*One-to-one is useful as I told you if it is something let's say a complex situation*". "*One-to-one is more important when you have the goals that need to be achieved …and you need some support from your coach to follow up your tasks*". "*Employees should understand what's the meaning of coaching and I think the coaching should not end*" (Mark, GCP & OCP).

The recommendations of Mark (GCP & OCP) and Dave (OCP) reflects that of Collins (2012) who thinks that the starting point of improving one-to-one coaching is in developing a clear definition. It should be followed by having a clear understanding of the various phases of the executive coaching relationship with various stakeholders as listed in Table 2.3. The development of the coach and his understanding of the participant will impact the coaching experience positively Collins, (2012).

Becker (2007) recommended building one-to-one coaching awareness in the organisation and differentiating it with other leadership development tools. The author recommended the creation of an enabling environment that will support reflection, self-directed, and transformative learning. Incorporating adult learning in the coach's development programmes was also recommended by the author. Becker's recommendation also agrees with the recommendations of Mark (GCP & OCP) and Dave (OCP).

Despite the limitation mentioned in various studies, there is a consensus from researchers that the output of one-to-one coaching impacted positive change in the individual participants and their organisations.

4.5 Theme 5 – Learning Impact

Theme 5
Learning Impact

- **Categories:**
- Impact of Coaching Culture
- Top-1000 Impact
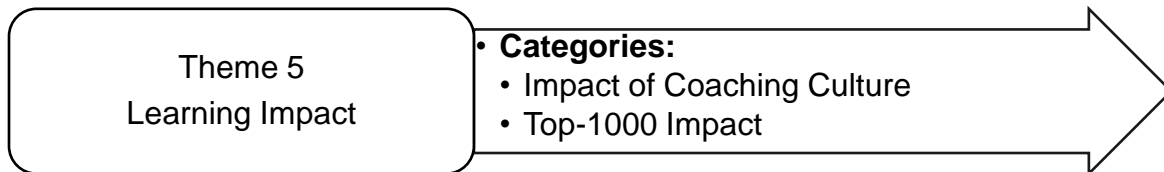
Figure 4.7 Theme 5 – Learning Impact

4.5.1 Impact of Coaching Culture

Culture is a word that has many meanings (Berger, 2000). From the regional, national, tribal, organisational culture, to a culture of a specific practice like coaching culture. The organisation's transformation project is a total transformation including cultural transformation. It covers the values, the leadership competencies, business strategies, policies and procedures.

The responses obtained from participants reflects how they understood the concept of culture. To some, it was as simple as the way things are done around here. For others, it meant the documented programmes in the organisation that speak about culture. The responses of participants on culture indicate that culture applied to every aspect of the organisation's life.

From the responses of most participants, there was an impact of organisational culture regardless of whether it was one-to-one coaching or group coaching.

Dan's (GCP) perspective was that organisational learning took place in the training sessions and also in the coaching sessions.

> **"**_We discuss what we are learning that is applicable in my Organisation. Usually, it is more useful there during the training, so we do these discussions during the training, and we learn from each other_**"**.

Jimmy (OCP) affirmed that coaching had positively impacted the leadership culture in the organisation. He put it this way,

> "*Having the coaches essentially is very important because it helps to build the right leadership in the organisation*" (Jimmy, OCP).

For Stan (GCP & OCP), the impact of the Top-1000 programme is the new openness, flexibility, and dynamism witnessed in the organisation. His view is that the organisation is growing more leaders, and the leaders are more focused on their roles in the organisation.

> "*The environment is more open now than before. There is dynamic flexibility in terms of process and policy. When you are in an organisation where there is coaching, you think about the organisation, but when you are in an organisation where there is no coaching, you think about yourself*" (Stan, GCP & OCP).

Fred believed that the new coaching culture had affected the positional gap between various leadership levels. Lower leadership is now closer to the top leadership as a result of coaching.

> "*We are closer to top management*" (Fred, GCP).

Mark (GCP & OCP) corroborated the view of Fred (CP). He sees the gap between leaders appears to be bridged, and there are more collaboration and trust among leaders as a result of the introduction of coaching. In his words, Mark stated,

> "*Before there was a lot of gaps between the top management …. No one will believe how we fix issues sometimes. Before it was the GM's that fixes the issues between different sectors and departments, but now we have this trust between us. We trust each other because we know what the other person is looking for. So, building trust is one of the output from the coaching of leadership in the company*" (Mark, GCP & OCP).

For Ben (OCP), structured coaching improved teamwork.

"*If you are talking about the organisation as a whole, then I think the fact that there is a structured coaching effort at the leadership team level is precious because it creates an environment where team dynamics at the leadership level can be improved, which is necessary*" (Ben, OCP).

The new coaching culture helped to develop leaders. According to Dave (OCP),

"*If it is structured and meant to sustain people and the team within the organisation it will be more useful for the organisation*" (Dave, OCP).

Tom (GCP) commended the favourable climate created by coaching and its ability to enable the leaders to track progress. He stated,

"*Positivity and positive climate helped a lot". "If you work in an organisation where there is a coaching culture it helps you leaders to be able to measure progress*" (Tom, GCP)*.*

Jack (GCP) affirmed that communication between leaders has improved because of coaching.

"*We are not suffering from the surprising communication between us. We all have the same language, and this is the most benefit from the coaching*" (Jack, GCP).

Bobby (OCP) opined that coaching had raised the organisation culture to the next level where leaders are all put through the same leadership development programme for a standardised experience. He stated,

"*The coaching really is a new concept, and this is bringing all GMs together. We have the same culture, and we get the same information, we get the same level of education, knowledge, process, as I mentioned problem-solving – 6 steps. It is for all GMs, all VPs, all directors, and all section managers. Keeping this culture and keeping this information will raise and will move the organisation to the next leve*l" (Bobby, OCP).

For Oscar (GCP) leading with agility has improved and for Alex (OCP), coaching has helped in the development of the Individual Development Plan.

"*For being agile or managing or leading with agility, people now feel the importance and feel the need*" (Oscar, GCP).

"*It does actually, and one of the most important things is what we design on a yearly basis which is the Individual Development Plan*" (Alex, OCP).

The organisation of this study views culture as embedded in all its existence. Introducing executive coaching was seen as a way of improving leadership culture. It aligns with previous studies of organisations and culture. Some of them are mentioned below. HCI & ICF (2015) research on building a coaching culture showed that organisations with a strong coaching culture invest in coaching, have higher employee engagements, report higher revenue growth, encourage their leaders to use coaching skills to support their employees to reach their goals, and have higher high-potential employee engagement.

It was quantitative research using a survey to collect the data administered to HR professionals. The sample size of respondents was 340 comprised of HR professionals, talent management professionals, and learning and development professionals in diverse industries. It is noteworthy that there was no mention of the number of the questionnaire sent out and the response rate. The response from this research is solely from HR-related professional who was the drivers of coaching initiatives.

There was no input from other professionals in the organisations impacted by the coaching initiative. It poses a challenge of bias by the respondents to favour their initiative (coaching). A more diversified approach to data collection from diversified members of the organisation may have given more robust and credible perspectives on the impact of coaching.

In a similar study by Anderson (2001) revealed that investing in coaching experience improved decision making, team performance and employee motivation. Furthermore, for this organisation, there was an improvement in the following areas; financial performance, employee confidence in coaching, employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, output and output quality, and coaching produced 788% on return on investment (ROI). However, no mention was made about how the ROI was calculated.

Anderson's (2001) quantitative research study collected data through questionnaires that were administered through email and telephone call from 43 participants drawn from the US and Mexico. Thirty of the 43 returned their questionnaire (70% response rate). The distribution of the respondents cut across various business units, and a 70% response rate was recorded.

Some of the candidates interviewed in this study believed that without coaching, most of what is learned in the classroom is forgotten as soon as one gets back to the workplace. Dave (OCP) saw coaching as a way to complement classroom learning. Tom (GCP) called it a 'wake-up call' to start implementing learning.

> "*In normal training when we attend a course and return to your job that means it's done, nothing else. However, in coaching experience, you complete the course, you return, but you sometimes set some of the KPI with your coach, and this is the follow up*" (Mark, GCP & OCP).

> "*You hear and learn from the other managers and their experiences, try to apply for the program in everyday operation*" (Tom, GCP).

> "*The good thing as I mentioned is the discipline to help you to implement what you learned*" (Bobby, OCP).

> "*Coaching compliments (classroom training)*" (Dave, OCP).

> "*It was like a wake-up call. From that time, I remembered a lot of my colleagues started to change, started to explore, started to read by themselves and started to excel*" (Tom, GCP).

Mark (GCP & OCP) saw the benefit in, setting up a plan with your coach on how to implement learning, and measure progress.

> "*In coaching experience, you complete the course, and you return, you sometimes set some of the KPI with your coach …*". "*You will feel the improvement and understand exactly where you are, and the things that changed*" (Mark, GCP & OCP).

Dave (OCP) saw value in the experiences the participants brought to the room, while for Jack (GCP), what jumped out to him was the two-way communication associated with coaching which is not the same with a classroom-only training. Bobby (OCP) revealed on the transfer of knowledge to the team, the change and improvement which coaching process helps to facilitate.

"*You are listening to different experiences*" (Dave, OCP).

"*The difference is that the communication itself will be brought by two sides not only one side. This makes a difference*" (Jack, GCP).

"*This coaching really improves the organisation to go to the next level*" (Bobby, OCP).

Despite the dearth of empirical studies on one-to-one and group coaching, the views of the participants to a great extent mirrors the views of the few empirical studies, personal experiences of experts and literature reviewed. Medland and Stern (2009) from personal opinion and expert experience, view coaching as the tool to translate classroom learning into action. The authors opine that coaching supplements classroom training in providing results. Coaching was seen as helping to maintain retention of classroom learning. Classroom training when combined with coaching increases productivity and can support individuals with different learning styles (Medland and Stern, 2009). The authors stated;

"Traditional training is an important component for improving managers' skills and performance; however, translating learning into actionable steps is a true test of a training program's long-term effectiveness, and coaching can make that happen. Evidence from the business sector suggests that coaching provides dramatic results as a supplement to formal training" (Medland and Stern, 2009, p.143)

Cornett and Knight (2009) reviewed the literature on coaching from over 250 research articles on coaching and concluded that coaching compliments training. The authors reported from a longitudinal 5-year study (Bush, 1984) based on data from 80 school in over 20 districts that coaching increases the transfer of new skill from 10% on training alone to 95% when a combination of feedback, modelling, practice, and coaching is the case. The study did not reveal any details about the data collection that gave this result. The study of Cornett and Knight (2009) was a summary review of various research studies. The study acknowledged there were some limitations but did not disclose the nature of these limitations. It is advisable to consume the outcome of Cornett and Knight's (2009) research with caution.

Another research project (Showers, 1984) reviewed by the authors showed a higher score in students' performance for students that received coaching compared to students that received only training. The same trend was noticed in the teachers' interest, efficacy, and practice. The result from all research reviewed by the authors indicated that training alone has a positive impact on the teacher and the learner. However, this impact is magnified when coaching was added. One can reasonably conclude that coaching compliments training. In Showers' study, nothing is mentioned about the instruments used to collect the data, the participant selection criteria, and the response rate. My interest in Top-1000 research is in executive coaching being the major new component added to the design of the programme.

4.5.2 Top-1000 Impact

The significant impacts of the Top-1000 leadership programme to Fred (GCP) were that the training drew him closer the Management, made him more responsible and made his team better.

> "*I feel closer to the management, more responsible and I believe we are now one team, and we will work together to achieve certain targets*" (Fred, GCP).

Mark (GCP & OCP) opined that Top-1000 programme had helped leaders to build a better relationship, a better understanding of self and others, delegation, trust in self and team.

> "*When I attended the sessions from the Top-1000 coaching I understood the importance of building a relationship with my team…. The important things of Top-1000 is how to understand yourself, understand others …. Is the delegation, and trusting others. One of the achievements that I saw from the Top-1000 with the section managers for one year, four times they are away from work; some of them are just starting this delegation. Before coaching, they were not delegating*" (Mark, GCP & OCP).

Dave (OCP) testified that he learned some strategies that are helping him in his work and enlarging his strength by understanding himself better.

> "*Literally the Top-1000 coaches, I have milked them, and I can boldly say I have milked them. I have developed three strategies related to my work from this programme. The course gave me some opportunity to enlarge my strengths because the Top-1000 leadership course is more about realising where you are*" (Dave, OCP).

From the perspective of Tom (GCP), the Top-1000 programme was a good concept, a learning and progressive journey for both coaches and leaders and it was considered a good development effort thus far.

> "*So, it is a good experience, still in the company, we are not 100% adopting this approach, but I see it improving especially when we have an initiative in marketing to have GMs, Directors as coaches or sometimes section managers as coaches …. The coachee is learning, and the manager is learning. So, it is a good development coming this far. It is two years from the start of the programme. It is a good concept*" (Tom, GCP).

Bobby's (OCP) benefits included self-improvement especially problem-solving steps. He saw the programme as the most significant opportunity to learn and implement new ideas in the company.

"*Top-1000 program is one of the greatest opportunities to the company leaders to understand, to have new knowledge and to start implementing this knowledge with the support of the coach …. We learnt the 6-steps to solving problems and taking the right decision. This is one of the good examples to improve myself, my leadership, improve my decision, improve my work*" (Bobby, OCP).

Oscar (GCP) saw the programme as a golden opportunity, and certain concepts like the priority-urgency matrix worked well for him. He liked the fact that the programme was deployed consistently to all levels of leadership, implying that you are fixing issues at all levels of leadership. The result is that leaders are speaking the same language.

"*The priority matrix and the urgency …. The people are now talking the same language when it comes to 'the company's values. The difference made by the Top-1000 program is that it is consistent. What I mean is that the same training is delivered to all managerial levels, from Section manager, Director, GM, so all managerial people are speaking the same language, all referring to the same values …; So, you are not fixing the problem at one level, and it will remain at another level*" (Oscar, GCP)

As an indication that the Top-1000 programme was a success, Alex (OCP) mentioned that other organisations are approaching the company to help to implement the same programme. For him, the programme has helped him in dealing with issues and conflicts.

"*Other bigger organisations are approaching the company and asking them about how they can implement the Top-1000 in their company …. I believe now I am in a way better position to deal with conflicts and issues of communication in a team as rather compared to previous years*" (Alex, OCP)

Megheirkouni (2016) researched the impact of the various leadership development methods used by a Syrian organisation. Megheirkouni's (2016) study was qualitative, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews from 36 managers who are in the middle and top-level management levels.

However, despite these limitations (lack of visibility on how the selection for the participants was conducted, the design information, collecting the data during wartime) the outcomes of the Megheirkouni's (2016) research aligns with the experience shared by those who participated in my research. Megheirkouni stated that companies used leadership development (including coaching) to develop the business skill that fit their type of business. Learning from all sources increased the quality of decision making, creativity, problem-solving. Additionally, this learning helped to develop competency in managing conflict and developing communication skill. Teamwork competency improved, and learning exchange also took place between participants through these leadership development methods.

Having analysed the data, I will discuss the implications for practice, recommendations and conclusions.

Chapter 5 –Implications for practice, recommendations and conclusions

This chapter is aimed at making recommendations and drawing conclusions on the implications for practice based on the data collection and analysis, and the mapping of this to the original research questions.

5.1 Review of the Research Aim

This research aims to explore the participants' experiences of the two types of executive coaching adopted within the leadership development in the organisation's setting, a view to making necessary improvements. It involves capturing the involvements from a personal perspective of the participants who attended the various executive coaching of the Top-1000 leadership development programme and discover meaning from the lived experience concerning executive coaching. The ultimate intention was to incorporate the findings of the study in the leadership development strategy of the organisation to improve practice.

5.2 Review of the Research Questions

For the summary of responses from the Group Executive Coaching Participants (please see Appendix 9

Research Question 1. What is the nature of the lived experience of engaging in group executive coaching or one-to-one executive coaching? (Interview questions 1-4).

From the eight individuals who participated in group coaching, six of them found it very helpful. Out of the two who did not give a positive response, one of them gave his response on how to improve the coaching programme. The other respondent who did not give a positive comment was of the view that the coaching did not add much value to him. In subsequent interview questions, he, however, agreed that he benefited from the coaching. One may take it that he benefitted, but maybe not as much as he expected.

In the interview question of any examples of what worked well for them, all the participants gave at least one example of what worked for them. They mentioned as examples, learning from others, prioritising matrix, positive mindset, helping them to coach their team and supporting them for better performance, and solving problems together with colleagues.

On what did not work for the participants, it was expected that some aspects of the coaching might not work for the participants. Apart from one participant who did not have anything that did not work for him, the rest had at least one suggestion or concerns for the programme. Some complained about the lack of time, wasting of time in some topics, distractions during the course, not focusing on specific topics, stillness exercise, not taking into cognition the experiences of the participants, lack of trust in sharing weaknesses with colleagues. These concerns have been highlighted as part of the recommendation on how to improve the programme.

On the interview question – comparing the experience of other leadership development methods in the past and the difference the group coaching has made, all the participants described at least one value-add that emanated from the group coaching. These include, it is an important process, learning from others, applying the learning, reminds you of what you have learnt in the classroom, and putting it into practice. Other comments are, bringing together different experiences, improving communication, helping the participant to develop an implementation plan with the coach, and measuring progress.

Overall, despite the suggestions for improvement, and concerns expressed by the few participants, there appear to be more positives from the coaching for all the participants.

Research Question 2. From the participants' accounts does there appear to be any differences in experience and outcome between one-to-one and group executive coaching? If so, in what ways do these differences manifest themselves? (Interview questions 5-8)

When asked, given a choice, which type of coaching would they prefer – one-to-one executive coaching or group executive coaching, four of the participants preferred one-to-one coaching, while the other four stood for both, with the remarks that it depended on the need and circumstances in question. It is worth mentioning that all the participants understood the difference between one-to-one and group coaching as this was part of the content of their classroom sessions.

When asked – which of the two coaching approaches do you see more relevant to leaders in your organisation, for the participants that had group coaching, four of them participants preferred one-to-one, one preferred group coaching, and three agreed that both were equally good depending on the need. It is interesting to note that having said something good about group coaching, half (n=6) of the entire interviewed participants preferred one-to-one.

On whether there are instances where the participant deems group coaching as being most suitable for their organisation's leaders, all the eight participants agreed in affirmative. They gave several instances especially when it is a generic topic, and when it has to do with Directors and Section managers due to their headcount in the organisation.

On the instances when one-to-one coaching is deemed as being most suitable for the organisation's leaders, all the participants affirmed with various reasons including when it is for personal development, self-improvement, long-term planning, something specific to the coachee, personal character fixing, and when it is GM and above.

From the responses, all the participants agreed that there are differences between the two types of coaching. They all mentioned instances when to use each type.

Research Question 3. Are there any aspects of the organisational culture which participants feel have influenced, positively or negatively, their learning and development while undertaking the Top-1000 Leadership Programme? (Interview questions 9-10).

The word culture was understood from a different lens, ranging from the organisation's core values to the leadership development programme -Top-1000. Seven participants gave instances of a positive impact of culture which points to the outcome of the Top-1000 programme. They saw the Top-1000 as a leadership development culture of the organisation. The instances cited include, improvement in communication, recruiting leaders internally, learning from one another, developing an individual plan, and being closer to top management.

On the interview question – if there are examples where they deem their organisation's culture as not impacting leadership development. Six said there was none. The other two mentioned not paying attention to job-specific development, and concern that some business units are yet to imbibe the new way of leading resulting from the outcome of the Top-1000 programme.

Organisational culture appears for the majority to be positively affecting the learning and development of the participants. There are pointers from the participants' narratives that work relationship and problem solving among leaders have improved. This improvement is a useful culture change. There is room for improvement, and the comments of the two can be taken into consideration for improving the programme.

Research Question 4. From the participants' perspective, how (if at all) have their leadership and management practices 'on-the-job' developed as a result of group executive coaching? (interview questions 11-15).

From the interview question on examples of what the participants found most valuable from the Top-1000 coaching experience, all the participants (except one) gave at least one positive value. It includes, it propels one to practice, the excellent programme design, better relationships, more open environment, one language, better prioritising, and the use of questioning skill by the coach to get the best out of the participants.

The only odd one out claimed that he learnt how to think better as a leader during the classroom forums. On what they found least valuable; one participant did not have any least valuable experience.

On how the Top-1000 coaching programme differs regarding their development as a leader, all the participants described at least one value-add of executive coaching. It includes, enlightening, learning from others, better communication, better collaboration, and helping leaders to reach their goal in a short time.

On the examples from the coaching they received during the Top-1000 programme and how it has impacted on their performance as a leader, six participants gave various positive reasons including, being more organized, being able to coach their team, positive mindset, validating how they are doing as a leader, influencing the team better, and better communication. The other two participants did not give any positive example.

On whether they would recommend group coaching to be integrated into the design of future leadership development programmes in their organisation, seven participants agreed in affirmation while one disagreed preferring one-to-one executive coaching. Overall based on the answers given by the participants, group coaching has positively impacted their on-the-job leadership and management practices.

5.2.2 Summary of responses from the One-to-one Executive Coaching participants (See appendix 10)

Research Question 1. What is the nature of the lived experience of engaging in a one-to-one executive coaching or group executive coaching? (Interview questions 1-4).

All the participants expressed positive responses to their experiences with the coaching programme. They viewed the programme as beneficial, valuable, a great opportunity, a wake-up call, a mindset shift, helped in maximising time and guiding their thinking process.

For the examples of what worked for them, all the participants had at least one thing that worked for them. It ranges from changing the way they assign tasks, addressing their needs directly, giving them the discipline to put learning into action, clarifying their vision, helping them in coaching and influencing their team in a better way, and improving their problem-solving skills.

The interview question on the things that did not work for them attracted several comments in the form of areas of improvements and concerns. It includes the need for better work-life balance to enhance the actualisation of the lessons of the coaching, focusing on more practical than theoretical approach to coaching, the difficulty in practising the lessons of coaching due to work pressure, need for more engagement and tracking, and lack of time on coaching the team when participant is back at work. When one considers these experiences that did not work for the participants, most of them are not linked directly to the core process of coaching. They are mainly things outside the coaching sessions that can support coaching.

On comparing the experience of other leadership development methods in the past, and any differences that the one-to-one coaching has made for them, all the participants agreed that one-to-one executive coaching had made at least one positive difference for them. Most of the participants confirmed that the Top-1000 programme was their first time attending executive coaching as part of a leadership development programme. Participants compared the leadership development with coaching and leadership development programme without coaching. They described their experiences as raising the bar, boosting, linking improvement with feedback, helping to implement learning, helping to transfer learning, complementing classroom learning, setting up an action plan, and structuring their thinking process.

Generally, the responses of the interviewees seemed to be suggesting positives experience from the coaching for all the participants. The few divergent views came in the form of suggestions on improving executive coaching in the organisation.

Research Question 2. From the participants' accounts does there appear to be any differences in experience or outcome between one-to-one and group executive coaching? If so, in what ways do these differences manifest themselves? (Interview Questions 5-8).

From the interview question – given a choice, which type of coaching would you prefer, one-to-one or group coaching, the participants unanimously favoured one-to-one executive coaching except for two participants who opted for both. They all gave their reason for their choice. For those who chose one-to-one, they are of the view that it helps transparency of the coachee, addresses more directly the need of the coachee, better confidentiality, freedom to share your issues with your coach, better trust and confidence. For the two who opted for both gave the reason of opportunity of learning from others as the main benefit of group coaching.

On the interview question – Which of the two coaching approaches do you see more relevant to leaders in your organisation, four participants opined that it depends on the need. They are of the view that some situations will require one-to-one while other situations will be better handled through group coaching. Two participants opted for one-to-one as their personal preferences based on their personal needs.

In responding to the interview question – 'Are there instances when you deem group coaching as being most suitable for your organisation's leaders?', all the participants agree and gave examples of when group coaching is most suitable. These instances include, for Directors and below due to their large headcount number, during cultural transformation, relationship building is needed, when one needs to learn from others, and when participants need to understand coaching fundamentals.

For instances when one-to-one coaching is deemed as being most suitable for your organisation's leaders, the response of the participants to the interview question includes, for GM and above due to their small number and sensitive nature of their roles, when discussing something specific to the leader, personal development, and when the organisation is going through change.

Clearly, from the participants' view, there are differences in the experiences of group coaching and one-to-one coaching. Being able to apply the right approach to the right needs will enhance the experience of the participants.

Research Question 3. Are there any aspects of the organisational culture which participants feel have influenced, positively or negatively, their learning or development while undertaking the 'Top-1000 Leadership Programme'? (Interview questions 9-10).

For the interview question on any examples where the participant deems their organisation's culture impacted participants' leadership development, all the participants gave instances of how the culture has affected their leadership development. As the participants of the group executive coaching, one-to-one executive coaching participants perceived culture from the various perspective and gave examples. These examples include coaching culture has helped them to develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP), improve feedback culture, developing leaders, improved trust, bridging the gap between leaders, and improving collaboration.

On the interview question of examples where participants deem their organisation's culture as not impacted their leadership development, four participants had no instances. One participant mentioned the mentality of participants, and another participant suggested for more development of the coaching methodology.

From the response, one can reasonably opine that the participants feel that the organisational culture has more positively influenced their learning or development while undertaking the Top-1000 Leadership Programme, than negatively.

Research Question 4. From the participants' perspective, how (if at all) have their leadership and management practices 'on-the-job' developed as a result of one-to-one executive coaching? (interview questions 11-15).

The interview question on Top-1000 coaching experience and any examples of what they found most valuable, all the participants gave at least one instance. These include, it has helped them to develop Individual Development Plan (IDP), the push to take a step back and look at how other key people in the Organization perceive the way they work

and behave. Other views include the use of questioning skill instead of telling, helping in setting their life objectives, building a better relationship among leaders, improved open environment, more flexibility, achieving performance objectives, and growing leaders in the organisation.

On the interview question of what the participants found least valuable from Top-1000 coaching experience, three participants expressed concern over time constraints suggesting for the programme to be squeezed to a shorter period. Other views expressed include that it should also be more practical than theoretical, and the need for better development of the methodology.

On how the Top-1000 coaching programme differs regarding their development as a leader, all the participants described at least one value-add of executive coaching. It includes being a benchmark for some organisations who are now approaching the organisation to help them implement the same programme. Other testimonies include, coaching reinforces the action, coaching acting as a mirror to leaders to evaluate their actions, helping leaders to set and achieve their goals, and focusing on the result.

The interview question on any examples from the coaching the participants received during the Top-1000 programme and how it has impacted on their performance as a leader, attracted a positive response from all the participants. They described their experience, helped in better dealing with issues and conflicts, being more aware of the team needs, appreciating better how they are perceived, better alignment between the team's expectations and solutions, improved self, accepting feedback, better influencing of the team, improved trust and openness, and better communication.

The final interview question of whether participants will recommend one-to-one coaching to be integrated into the design of future leadership development programmes in their organisation, all the participants affirmed 'Yes' with various reasons that point to the notion that it was valuable and beneficial.

In synthesising the view of the participants who took the group executive coaching and those who participated in one-on-one executive coaching, one can reasonably conclude (see table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Research Questions and conclusion from the study

Research Question	Conclusion from the Study
What is the nature of the lived experience of engaging in group executive coaching or one-to-one executive coaching?	Notwithstanding the type of coaching undertaken by participants, the experience proved to be positive and beneficial to the participant more than negative. For the participants, executive coaching helped them to apply their classroom learning to practice. They were now using the coaching skill in managing their team. They saw the coaching experience as a game changer in the way leaders are developed in the organisation. They recommended that executive coaching should be articulated in the design of subsequent leadership development programmes. The recommendation points to the value the participants see in executive coaching.
From the participants' accounts do there appear to be any differences in experience or outcome between one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching? If so, in what ways do these differences manifest themselves?	Both for group executive coaching and one-to-one executive coaching, all the participants agreed that there are differences between the two types of coaching. They all pointed to the uses and importance in different circumstances. The vital lessons from participants' feedback are in knowing the nature of the needs that require which type of coaching, and how to improve the use of each type. Group coaching is seen as being better for generic issues and when learning from the experience of others is needed. One-to-one coaching is more relevant to personal development and handling sensitive issues. The participants' suggestions will form part of an important input in improving the practice of executive coaching.
Are there any aspects of the organisational culture which participants feel have influenced, positively or negatively, their learning or development while undertaking the 'Top-1000 Leadership Programme'?	One can reasonably opine that the participants feel that the organisational culture has influenced their learning or development while undertaking the Top-1000 Leadership Programme, more on the positive than the negative. Overall, the response from the interview seems to suggest that participants on the program understood the aims of the programme, and for the most part, bought into them. The reasons for this are around the changes in their leadership approaches (and toolkit)- the improved communication between leaders, a sense of empowerment and community in that they are more comfortable working with their bosses and their staff are more comfortable working with them. This reflects a big culture change.
From the participants' perspective, how (if at all) have their leadership and management practices 'on-the-job' developed as a result of one-to-one executive coaching?	From the participants' perspective their leadership and management practices 'on-the-job' have developed positively than negatively as a result of group executive coaching and one-to-one executive coaching? There is an improvement in the way the leaders think through a task, manage their team, and feel empowered. The positive energy from the leaders is a valuable driver in achieving their goals and that of the organisation.

5.3 Emerging Insights implications and recommendations to Practice

There are a few empirical studies on the role of one-to-one and group coaching in leadership development in a corporate setting in the Middle East could be accessed at the time of my study. It is hoped that this study will serve as an addition to the research body of knowledge in the area of coaching as a leadership development process especially in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region. In addition to contributing to the repository of the academic body of knowledge, the study contributes to improving leadership development practice through coaching practice.

There is a call from a participant to extend the coaching to lower employees in the organisation. It was opined that they are the ones that need the coaching most. Currently, the coaching initiative is deployed only to Section Manager, Directors, General Managers, Vice Presidents, and Executive officers. The researcher is of the view that one of the ways to develop leaders is to start from the would-be leaders. The suggestion to decision makers is that one of the ways to explore the benefits of executive coaching is to introduce coaching at the employee level who in reality are the leadership talent of tomorrow.

Many of the participants who were interviewed mentioned that this is the first time they are attending a leadership development programme with an integrated approach (classroom, online reading, group work, and coaching). They were unanimous in the view that the design of future leadership programmes in the organisation should consider the inclusion of coaching as part of the learning delivery.

Some participants testified that they have started using the coaching skill with their teams as a result of attending the programme. It may be a good time for the organisation to consider the introduction of coaching to all levels of leadership and make it a policy. It should be considered as a crucial, mandatory performance indicator for all leaders to adopt coaching as one of the ways to develop their team members. The aligns with the principles of transformative learning – reflection and application of learning (section 2.7)

Most of the participants expressed their delight in working with the coaches for the programme. Some participants, however, had some reservations about the quality of coaching delivered by some of the coaches. Perhaps, it is time for the organisation to review the current coaching training given to the current coaches (continuing education), the selection criteria for new coaches (Stern, 2004), and creating a standard operating procedure for the practice.

Based on the responses of the participants, I recommend a review of the current coaching model may be considered. It may be considered to adopt a mixed model such as external coaches for some roles, full-time internal coaches for some roles, and managers as coaches for other roles.

The formal introduction of coaching to leadership development in the organisation is over two years. It may be the right time to review the effectiveness of coaching in developing leaders in the organisation, identify areas of improvement, and take necessary action to address any gap. This research is part of the steps in this direction, but further research is recommended for the areas not covered by this research.

Looking at the participants' views on why the different coaching did not work for them, it is observed that a good percentage of the reason is centred on the process especially the disposition of the participants to coaching. It is therefore recommended for the management of the organisation to carry out awareness programmes to educate its employees and leaders on the concept and operational modality of coaching. It is suggested that a framework is put in place to guide the coaching participants of the principles and guidelines that guide a good coaching culture in the organisation. Andragogy theory is in line with this recommendation – adults need to know what and why they are learning (see section 2.7).

Being one of the organisations in the region to embrace executive coaching culture, the coaching team and decision makers in the organisation has a golden opportunity to start ground-breaking work in establishing and driving a leading coaching practice, strategy, standardisation, and harmonisation of coaching practice in the region.

It is recommended that the organisation should reach out to businesses and other coaching stakeholders in the region sharing the findings of the research conducted in their organisation. They should also consider seeking and creating opportunities for collaboration with relevant interest groups in raising the bar for coaching practice in organisations in the region.

One insight to note (although coming from one participant) is the structure of the coaching delivery. One of the participants suggested the idea of deploying executive coaching through a virtual medium, alluding to the notion that every individual learns differently (Illeris, 2007; Mezirow, 1990; Honey and Mumford, 1982). People learn differently. Some prefer learning in face-to-face classroom interaction. Others prefer to learn through hard copy materials, while others prefer to learn through computer soft copy materials. There are some who prefer to learn through a collaborative technology-based medium like teleconferencing, social media groups, or apps in hand-held devices. I prefer a classroom setting and reading from hard copy material. Boneva & Mihova (2012, p. 5) put it precisely,

"What we should remember is that people are different, and each of us learns differently. The very same learning conditions, guidance and instructions that can be so effective for one person can cause problems for another".

Summary of the recommended action plan:

- The study recommends considering deploying executive coaching through a virtual medium, alluding to the notion that people learn differently (see section 4.2.2)
- There is a call to extend the coaching to lower employees in the pipeline for leadership in the organisation. It was opined that they are the ones that need the coaching most as the leadership of tomorrow. This call aligns with the Saudi government's National Transformation programme 2020, and 2030 Vision document 'Attracting the Talent we Need';

'Together we will continue building a better country, fulfilling our dream of prosperity and unlocking the talent, potential, and dedication of our young men and women' (Vision 2030: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (n.d., p. 7).

"Achieving our desired rate of economic growth will require an environment that attracts the necessary skills and capabilities both from within the Kingdom and beyond our national borders (p.37).

- The design of future leadership programmes in the organisation should consider the inclusion of coaching as part of the learning delivery. The recommendation arises from the fact that all the participants recommended the inclusion of coaching in the subsequent design of future leadership programme (see section 5.22)

- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of coaching in developing leaders in the organisation, identify areas of improvement, and take necessary action to address any gap

- Carry out awareness programmes to educate its employees and leaders on the concept and operational modality of coaching

- Coaching sessions should start by defining the purpose

- Consider carrying out managers as coaches for all leaders and include coaching as a key component of every leaders' key performance indicator.

- Collaborate with businesses and other coaching stakeholders in the region to improve practice

5.4 Strengths and Limitations of Methodology

The data collected for this study was limited to only the participants – the three levels of leadership (General Manager, Directors, and Section Managers). It did not include other employees, other levels of leaders like the Vice Presidents, Senior Vice Presidents and the Chief Officers who were not part of the Top-1000 programme. The data collection method was limited to only interviewing. Candidates who may not be very good at orally expressing themselves may have been under-explored. The study focused on coaching approach and did not consider other approaches used for the Top-1000 programme like Tele-mentoring, Online study, SharePoint interactions and Individual development assignment. The study is limited to the use of executive coaching in leadership development and did not cover the employee entire work-life. It is also restricted to leaders only – other employees of the organisations were not considered. The methodology is limited to qualitative approach and therefore cannot be triangulated or re-validated by any other approach. The study is in English which is the second language of all the participants. There may be a possibility that language proficiency may affect the quality of the response given by the participants.

The study focused on one organisation, and therefore the prospect of generalisation is absent. The reliability because various instances are assigned by the same researchers to different categories and validity because the finding is restricted to the institution studied (Ward, 2014). One of the advantages of this type of qualitative study, when compared to a quantitative study, is, that it enabled the researcher to explore in depth into a particular organisation and the practice intending to improving the practice for this organisation (the primary intention of the research). A phenomenological study provided the first-hand experience of affected participants. Although the intention is not for generalisation, the outcome of the study will, however, help (for benchmarking) organisation with similar circumstances and will add to the relevant body of knowledge.

The strength of this study is that it was specific to an organisation and as such the findings will be very relevant and fit the real context of the organisation. There may not be a broad scope for generalisation, but it has achieved the scope and coverage that is specific to one organisation and shed some light into executive coaching practices in the Middle East. It also has the strength of getting the real experience of the participants and not forced or influenced the experience and perspective of the researcher of any other third party. There is a dearth of research on the same topic in the region, and this gives this study a pioneer status and a contributor to further reference and academic benchmarking.

5.5 Recommendation for Future Research

At the Beginning of the Top-1000 programme, the organisation did not have any female employee; however, at the time of the thesis writing the organisation has employed women in various business units. It will be good to carry our further study with women participants, to see if the result will be the same or different, and what can be learnt.

This study is qualitative research with the sole source of data collection from a semi-structured interview. It is recommended that further research is conducted using data collected from other methods to provide the opportunity for generalisation of the findings. To improve the generalizability of this research, further research is recommended with a large sample and the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

This study was carried out in one organisation. Future research is recommended, focusing on multiple organisation to enhance the research coverage and improve the chances for generalisation.

The view explored in this research was that of the participant only. It is recommended that future research is carried out to include the views of other stakeholders (coach, line manager, team members; human resources, and business leaders) of the coaching journey. This approach more likely to produce a diversified and more robust perspective in evaluating success and impact of encompassing coaching experience.

This study only focused on the lived experience of the participants in executive coaching. It did not include the return on investment (ROI) of the contribution of executive coaching to the bottom line. Further research is recommended to investigate the real ROI and contribution of executive coaching to the individual leaders and the organisation.

Based on the limited responses gathered from the participants on 'organisational culture', there is a need for further research to explore the impact of the organisation's culture on leadership development regarding executive coaching.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this study has examined how the participants made sense and meaning of the executive coaching journey of the Top-1000 leadership development programme. It was noted that the journey had been a worthwhile experience for the participants based on the outcome of the interviews. The result of the interview of participants has shown the comparison between the two types of executive coaching covered in the study – one-to-one executive coaching and Group executive coaching. Emerging from the study are the positive and negative aspects of both types of coaching, when to use each one and how to improve the process.

Even though the various literature reviewed were more of personal and expert opinion than empirical evidence, there seems to be some commonalities and alignment between the views of the experts, the outcome of the limited empirical research, and the outcome of this study. All suggest that executive coaching is on the rise in many of the organisation as a leadership development practice. There is however the need to improve the structure and standardisation of the practice. There is also a need for collaboration between the academia and the professional coaching world in creating pragmatic and enduring documentation and operationalisation of the executive coaching field.

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7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1.

Research Questions and Interview questions for General Managers

	Research Questions	Interview questions
1	What is the nature of the lived experience of engaging in one-to-one executive coaching?	• Tell me about your experience having one-to-one coaching during the Top-1000 programme? • Can you give me any examples of what worked well for you? • Can you give me any examples of what did not work for you? • Based on your experience of other leadership development methods in the past, can you pinpoint any differences that the one-to-one coaching has made for you?
2	From the participants' accounts do there appear to be any differences in experience and outcome between one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching? If so, in what ways do these differences manifest themselves?	• Given a choice, which type of coaching would you prefer – one-to-one or group coaching? • Which of the two coaching approaches do you see more relevant to leaders in your organisation? • Are there instances when you deem group coaching as being most suitable for your organisation's leaders? • Are there instances when you deem one-to-one coaching being most suitable for your organisation's leaders?
3	Are there any aspects of the organisational culture which participants feel have influenced, positively or negatively, their learning and development while undertaking the 'Top-1000 Leadership Programme'?	• Can you give me any examples where you deem your organisation's culture impacted on your leadership development? • Are there examples where you deem your organisation's culture as not impacting leadership development?
4	From the participants' perspective how (if at all) have their learning and management practice 'on-the-job' developed as a result of one-to-one executive coaching?	• From your Top-1000 coaching experience, can you give me any examples of what you found most valuable? • From your Top-1000 coaching experience, can you give me any examples of what you found least valuable? • Have you worked in other organisations which did not have a coaching culture? If yes, how does the Top-1000 coaching programme differ in terms of your development as a leader?
		• Can you give me any examples from the coaching you received during the Top-1000 programme and tell me how it has impacted on your performance as a leader?
		• Would you recommend one-to-one coaching to be integrated into the design of future leadership development programmes in your organisation?

Research Questions and Interview questions for Directors & Section Managers

	Research Questions	Interview questions
1	What is the nature of the lived experience of engaging in group executive coaching?	• Tell me about your experience of having group coaching during the Top-1000 programme? • Can you give me any examples of what worked well for you? • Can you give me any examples of what did not work for you? • In what ways did the group coaching impact or did not impact your performance of your role as a leader? • Based on your experience of other leadership development methods in the past, can you pinpoint any differences that group coaching has made for you?
2	From the participants' perspective, is there a difference between engaging in one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching? If so, in what ways do these differences manifest themselves?	• Given a choice, which type of coaching would you prefer – one-to-one or group coaching? • Which of the two coaching approaches do you see more relevant to leaders in your organisation? • Are there instances when you deem group coaching being most suitable for your organisation's leaders? • Are there instances when you deem one-to-one coaching being most suitable for your organisation's leaders?
3	Are there any aspects of the organisational culture which participants feel have influenced, positively or negatively, their learning and development while undertaking the 'Top-1000 Leadership Programme'?	• Are there examples where you deem your organisation's culture impacting leadership development? • Are there examples where you deem your organisation's culture not impacting leadership development?
4	From the participants' perspective how (if at all) have their learning and management practice 'on-the-job' developed as a result of group executive coaching?	• From your Top-1000 coaching experience, can you give me any examples of what you found most valuable? • From your Top-1000 coaching experience, can you give me any examples of what you found least valuable? • Have you worked in other organisations which did not have a coaching culture? If yes, how does the Top-1000 coaching programme differ in terms of your development as a leader? • Can you give me any examples from the coaching you received during the Top-1000 programme and tell me how it has impacted on your performance as a leader? • Would you recommend group coaching to be integrated into the design of future leadership development programmes in your organisation?

9th October 2017

Participant Information Sheet for Top-1000 Leadership Programme Candidates

Research Study:

Using an Integrated Approach to Developing Leadership Capability in an Organisational Setting: The role of executive coaching.

You are being invited to participate in the above-mentioned research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is essential for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your work colleagues, Line Manager, your Line Manager's Manager or the next in line leader and with the Human Resource office of your organisation, if you wish. I want to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.
Purpose of the Study

The research study is part of the requirement for the award of Doctor of Education (EdD) programme of the University of Liverpool. The interviews are intended to provide knowledge on the issue of the Leadership development process in TO with a particular focus on classroom learning and coaching practice. This research aims to explore the leaders' (participants') experiences of the two types of executive coaching adopted within the leadership development in the organisation's setting, intending to finding out if there are notable differences. Within a Middle East context, to explore and compare two modes of delivering executive coaching: one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching to determine if there any perceived notable differences.

Why have I been invited to take part?

The study looks at your lived experience as a participant of the Top-1000 leadership programme and to capture the executive coaching experience from a personal perspective and uncover meaning from the lived phenomenon. Within a Middle East context, to explore and compare two modes of delivering executive coaching: one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching to determine if there any perceived notable differences.

Do I have to take part?
No. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw anytime without explanation and without incurring a loss if you wish to do so. You can also ask that any data that has been provided so far will not be included in the study.

What will happen if I take part?
If you agree to take part in the study, you are agreeing to be interviewed by me as a researcher. The interview will be semi-directed, that means some questions will be asked in a rather informal way to which you are invited to respond. It will last about 60 minutes. You can request to have the question beforehand if you wish so. The questions will mainly relate to how you perceive the using an integrated approach to developing leadership capability in an organisational setting and the role of executive coaching. These questions are **not** used to assess your performance nor that of your organisation. This research aims to explore the leaders' (participants') experiences of the two types of executive coaching adopted within the leadership development in the organisation's setting, intending to finding out if there are notable

differences. Within a Middle East context, to explore and compare two modes of delivering executive coaching: one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching to determine if there any perceived notable differences. You will **not** be held responsible at any time and in any way for your response as these will be strictly kept confidential, and a pseudonym will be assigned, and thus your real name will not be used at all.

The interview should last about an hour. The interview will take place via face-to-face, telephone or Skype (that will depend on your location) at a convenient moment for both of us and when you will be able to be in a place where you feel comfortable and where your privacy can be maintained.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded so that I can easily recall what we discussed to extract from the collected data relevant information that can be categorised in regards to similarities or commonalities or then connected to parts of the interviews that can lead to these findings for theory building. If you wish, I will provide you, via a password-protected email, with the draft of the interview before coding starts, so that you will have the opportunity to comment and ask for amendments, if necessary.

The recording of the interview and the findings of the data analysis will be kept for five years from the beginning of the data collection stage, in a secured place, which will be password protected and only accessible to me. However, I might have to share with my thesis supervisor some of the data bit only your pseudonym will be used. The collected data will be used to write my EdD thesis and may partially be used for direct quotes. You and your organisation will receive pseudonyms, and no geographical details will be revealed so that no one will be identifiable in my thesis.

Expenses and / or payments
There will be no compensation, whether in forms of gifts nor monetary reimbursement as you should not incur any expenses by taking part in this study.

Are there any risks in taking part?
I do not foresee any negative consequences in this research. However, as I will be interviewing you about using an integrated approach to developing leadership capability in an organisational setting, the role of executive coaching based on your personal experience of the Top-1000 leadership development programme. You could eventually feel uncomfortable with this procedure. I am therefore again stressing that the aim of the research is **not** directed towards assessing your work nor your leadership nor your organisation's efficiency/productivity level. For your comfort, your Human Resource Office can have access to the interview protocol and the interview questions, if requested. All participants will be advised of the intuition's Employee Care Unit (ECU) service should this be deemed to be required.

Moreover, you are assured that you can withdraw from the research at any time without incurring any negative consequences. You also have the possibility to refrain from answering questions you do not feel comfortable with. Furthermore, you will have the occasion to read the interview report before data analysis occurs so that you can have the opportunity to ask for amendments, if necessary.

Are there any benefits in taking part?
There are no direct benefits to participate in this study. However, potential benefits can be expected from this study for you as a participant and your organisation, as well as for the academic and professional society. The outcome of the research has the capacity to contribute to the improvement of professional practice and can impact the organisation's leadership development strategy.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?
If you should be unhappy with the interview procedures, or if there is any challenge during the process, please feel free to let me know by contacting me at the following email address:
dickson.ojukwu@online.liverpool.ac.uk or my thesis supervisor at morag.gray@online.liverpool.ac.uk and we will try to help as best as we can. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk or

the Research Participant Advocate at liverpoolethics@ohecampus.com or call the USA number 001-612-312-1210. When contacting the Research Governance Officer or the Research Participant Advocate, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make. If you wish, you can also make use of the confidential Employee Care Unit (ECU) services of the Organization.

Will my participation be kept confidential?

Yes, your participation will be kept confidential. The data I collect will be used to complete my EdD thesis and for subsequent publications. I will not disclose to anyone that you have agreed to participate in this study. You will remain anonymous throughout my thesis and in any other publication. Recorded interviews and transcripts will be stored in my personal computer that remains password secured until the thesis is successfully completed and up to five years. You and your organisation will receive assumed name (pseudonym), and no geographical details will be disclosed that could be used to identify you or your organisation.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The data from the interviews will be used to produce a theory on how professional doctorates can impact professional practice that leads to organisational change. As already stated above, you will have the possibility to verify the content of the interviews in a draft report before data analysis. Neither you nor your organisation will be identifiable in the final result of the thesis. Data will be used to discover findings that will be contained in my thesis to fulfil the requirements of the EdD doctoral program.

A copy of the thesis can be provided if requested.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw from the research at any time and without explanations or consequences. Results up to the period of withdrawal can be used if you agree to it. If this should not be the case, then you need to request that they be destroyed and that no further use can be made of them.

Researcher Role

My role in the organisation is that of an Advisor - Human Resource (HR) and Learning and Development. It entails recommending and designing best-practice HR and L&D solutions. In the Top-1000 leadership development programme, my role was participating as part of the initial design team who now manage the programme progress - nominating and scheduling participants, working with the facilitators (instructors) to ensure they follow the agreed content and design. I have no role at all in the delivery of the Top-1000 leadership development programme. I am neither a teacher nor a coach. I have no authoritative power over potential participants, and I do not appraise them in any way. There is, therefore, no power difference between me as the researcher and the participants in the research. Potential participants that are known to me personally will be excluded from the study. This study is separate from the researcher's other professional role**.**

Whom can I contact if I have further questions?

You can contact me: Dickson Ojukwu. Phone: +966505520039

E-mail: dickson.ojukwu@online.liverpool.ac.uk or my Supervisor

Dr Morag Gray. E-mail: morag.gray@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Appendix 4.

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Using an Integrated Approach to Developing Leadership Capability in an Organisational Setting: The role of one-to-one, and Group Executive coaching,

Researcher: Dickson I. M. Ojukwu

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the Participant Information Sheet dated **9th October 2017** for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily. ⊠

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. ⊠

3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish. ⊠

4. I agree to take part in the above study. ⊠

Participant Name	Date	Signature

Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

Dickson Ikechukwu M. Ojukwu	09-10-2017	Dickson Ojukwu
Researcher	Date	Signature

The contact details of lead Researcher (Principal Investigator) are:

Dickson Ojukwu
Phone: +966505520039
E-mail: dickson.ojukwu@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Appendix 5

Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) Approval

Dear Dickson Ojukwu			
I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.			
Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)		
Review type:	Expedited		
School:		Lifelong Learning	
Title:		Using an Integrated Approach to Developing Leadership Capability in an Organisational Setting: The role of executive coaching	
First Reviewer:	Dr. Lucilla Crosta		
Second Reviewer:	Dr. Kalman Winston		
Other members of the Committee	Dr.), Eileen Kennedy, Dr. Julie Regan, Dr. Janet Hanson, Dr. Kathleen Kelm, Dr. Rita Kop, Dr. Viola Manokore		
Date of Approval:	15/05/2017		
The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:			
Conditions			
1	Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.	

This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organisations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

Please note that the approval to proceed also depends on research proposal approval.

Kind regards,

Lucilla Crosta

Chair, EdD. VPREC

From: XXXXXXXXXXXXX
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2017 9:59 AM
To: Dickson I. Ojukwu
Subject: RE: Request for Doctoral Research Authorization

Approved.

Regards,
XXXXXXXX

مدير عام التعليم والتطوير
قطاع الموارد البشرية

Learning and Development
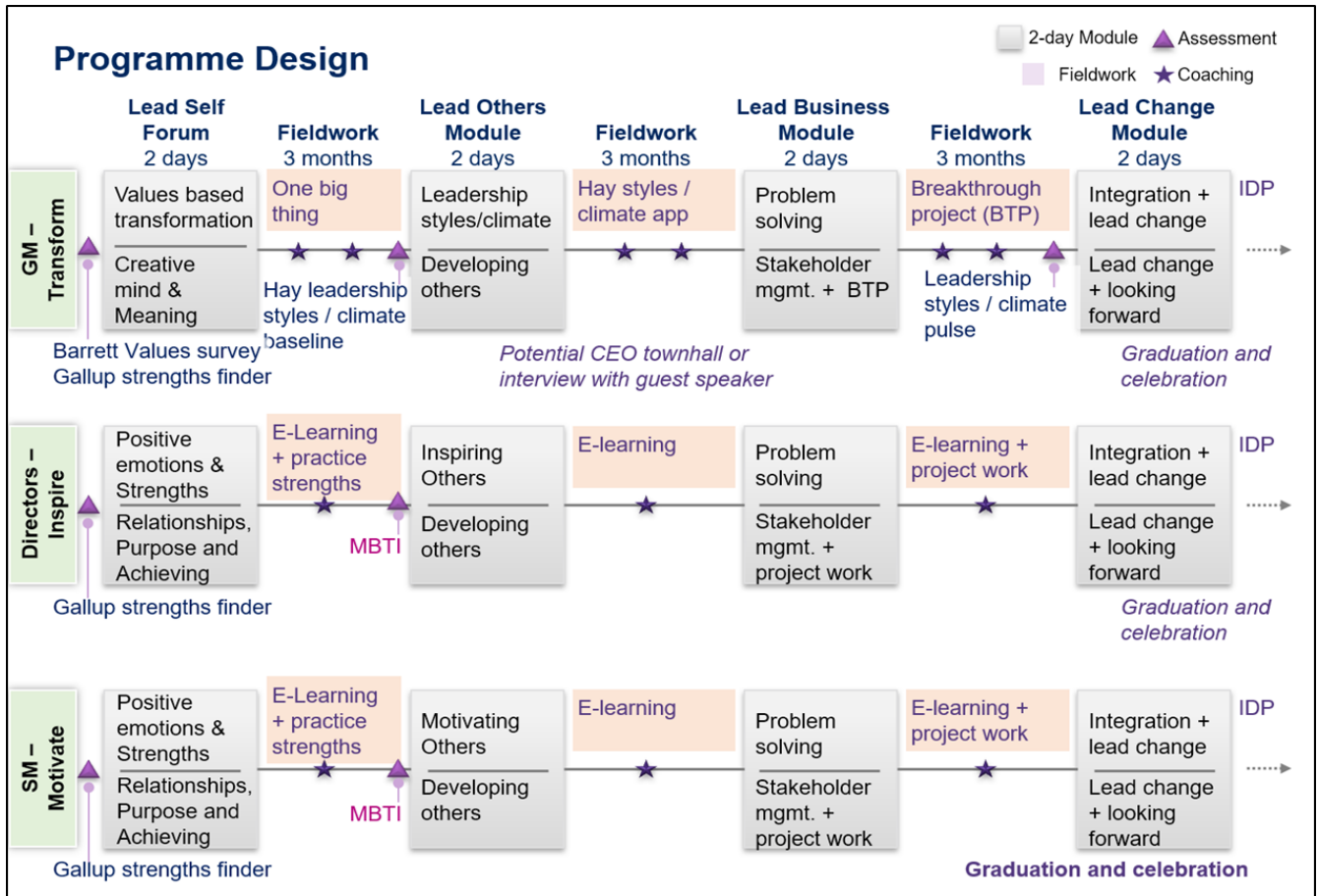GM, HR

From: Dickson I. Ojukwu
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2017 9:55 AM
To: XXXXXXXX
Subject: FW: Request for Doctoral Research Authorization

A Gentle Reminder!

Appendix   8. Sample of Detailed Programme Flow

1 Sample of Detailed Programme flow

Day 1		Day 2	
8.30-9.15	**Welcome / Meaningful Intro's**	8.30-9.00	**Check-in**
9.15-9.45	**Agreements and Short break**		
9.45-11.15	**Context and Objectives of the program and CEO video**	9.00-10.00	**Stages of growth**
		10:00-10.15	*Break*
11.15.11.45	**Transformation vs. Change**	10.15-10.45	**(Creative mind) Stillness practice**
11.45-13.00	**Balancing stick/Personal Iceberg**	10.45-12.45	**Meaning (Art exercise)**
13.00-14.00	*Lunch and Prayer (no agenda)*		
14.00-14.15	**Energiser**	*12.45-13.45*	*Lunch and Prayer (no agenda)*
14.15-15.45	**Barett 7 levels of consciousness and Values walk + PVA debrief**	13.45-14.00	**Energizing meaning debrief**
		14.00-15.00	**Group feedforward**
15.45-16.00	**One Big thing (OBT) introduction**	15:00-15.15	*Break*
16.00-17.15	**Iceberg coaching on OBT**	15.15-16.00	**Action planning (updating IDPs) Preparing my OBT for the Stand Program next steps and logistics**
17.15-17.30	**Debrief on coaching**		
17.30-18.00	**Stillness practice**	16.00-17.00	**Commitments and check-out**
18.00-18.30	**Check-out and set-up for exercise**		
19:00-21.00	**Life-line awareness exercise in social setting**		

Preparation in advance

- Thoughts around your One Big Thing (what you want to work on and how aware you are of it today)
- Barrett Values Survey
- Gallup Strengths Finder results
- Individual Development Plan (IDP) progress report

Upcoming fieldwork:	• Practice One Big Thing (included in IDPs with concrete actions to take) • Work on problem statement worksheet (in workbook) in preparation for Forum2

Appendix 9. Summary of responses from the Group Executive Coaching Participants.

Summary of Response from Group Coaching Participants

Research Question	Interview question	Candidates Response							
		Dan	Jimmy	Oscar	Fred	Tom	Jack	Mark (both)	Stan (both)
What is the nature of the lived experience of engaging in a one-to-one executive coaching or group executive coaching? (Interview Questions 1-4)	Tell me about your experience having one-to-one coaching during the Top-1000 programme?	-It's not exciting. -I didn't find it a good 3 hours investment for myself and the organisation. -What I hear from colleagues is that it didn't add much value. -I felt my experience was not listened to as another member of the group were busy with their devices.	-The first one was an unfocused discussion -Should be designed something specific to talk about -Group size too large – recommend 5 or less	-Good experience. -most of the coaches were very good. -very helpful -keep you on track	This group coaching was special	- Experience was great -Group coaching helps to learn from others and sharing from their experiences	-Sure it was helpful -Learning from others. -I learnt more from my colleagues than from the coach -The coach was helpful, but I learnt more from my colleagues	It's a nice experience for me. -It was a mindset shift. -It helped me to think better -It maximise your strength and using your strength to decide to a proper decision	-Group Coaching helps people to maximise their time and their commitment -Having a coach helps you guide your thinking.
	Can you give me any examples of what worked well for you?	-learning from others	Learning from others	The priority-urgency matrix	- Learning from others - Learning	-Positive mindset and climate in the organisation has emerged from the coaching	-Learning from others -Learning from my colleagues on how they	It helped me in coaching and influencing my team and supporting them for better performance	-Solving problems together with colleagues

			-Solving problems together	Worked for me	from the Coach		handled challenges. I also benefitted from their presentation skill.		
	Can you give me any examples of what did not work for you?	-Group coaching is characterised with distractions including work.	Unfocused on the specific topic.	Stillness exercise was weird, funny and a waste of time	-Nothing really didn't work for me	-The organisers should pay attention to the experiences of the leaders which differs from person to person -The programme should be segmented to experiences, specialisation, and function	-Time wasting (during the presentation by my colleagues)	Lack of time in coaching my team	Lack of trust; reluctance to share own views - With the group coaching, there is a lack of open discussion
	Based on your experience of other leadership development methods in the past, can you pinpoint any differences that group coaching has made for you?	For me, I think group coaching is important, but that doesn't replace one-to-one coaching.	-Learning from others -Lack of confidentiality	- Coaching helps to follow up learning -Helps commitment to applying what you have learned.	-The coaching follow-up after training was useful. In classroom training, we sometimes forget what was taught in	- Coaching brings different experiences to the room. -You hear and	In coaching, we have two-way communication with coach and coachee while other trainings without coaching do not have that.	-Without coaching, your abandon and forget the learning after you come back from the training. -coaching helps you to set	-Coaching helps you to structure your thinking -coaching comes with a commitment

				-It positively impacts your daily productivity	the class when we get back to work. - Coaching helps the revisiting of classroom learning	learn from others - Coaching reminds you of what you learnt in the class and helps you to apply it. - Coaching is a wake-up call to start implementing what you have learnt.		up a plan with your coach on how to implement the learning. -With coaching, you can measure your progress.	
From the participants' accounts do there appear to be any differences in experience and outcome between one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching? If so, in what ways do these differences	Given a choice, which type of coaching would you prefer – one-to-one or group coaching?	Of course, one-to-one.	I prefer one-to-one coaching - More focused & specific - a long-term relationship develops in one-to-one coaching	The best of both worlds -The group helps you to hear different experiences from different people -Personal or individual cases would	-One-to-one - Makes one relaxed and comfortable - Enhances concentrate	It depends on the situation -Group coaching is better when you need the experiences of others -One-to-one coaching is better when	-I prefer both. -Each has its benefit. -Group coaching gives you the opportunity to learn from others -One-to-one coaching	Both -With one-on-one coaching, you feel more relaxed to talk about some internal team specific issue and personal issues	I prefer one-to-one -With one-to-one, there is trust and confidence -You are free to express yourself including discussing your weaknesses

manifest themselves? (Interview Questions 5-8)			- continuous feedback from your coach - Confidentiality is better	work with one-to-one coaching	-Aids asking of questions	you need a private session to share things relating to you alone or your department	gives you focus, privacy and freedom to speak to the coach alone.	-In group coaching, you get to share from the experience of the others. -Group coaching is better for generic topics	-In group coaching, you are not free and open to speak because of others. -In group coaching, you try to hide some facts -Group coaching pushes you to unhealthy competition
	Which of the two coaching approaches do you see more relevant to leaders in your organisation?	-One-to-one is more relevant. -Due to a large number of leaders in my organisation one-to-one may not be viable.	- One-to-one should be for selected critical positions because the few available coaches cannot cover all leaders currently. -In selecting those to get one-to-one coaching,	So I think we need both of them	-It depends. -I think group coaching is good. -But for me, I prefer one-to-one coaching.	One-to-one is more relevant to leaders in this organisation -In one-to-one coaching your attention is maximum and all your senses awakened.	Group coaching is better, but we shouldn't forget the one-to-one	Both -Group coaching helps for building relationships with other leaders -Group coaching is better when the team is mixed from various departments	One-to-One. It helps me to be more focused and overt

	- Having a coaching hotline will be of good help.	priority should be given to leaders handling critical roles			-In Group coaching concentration is not at maximum		-One-to-one is better for a complex situation	
Are there instances when you deem group coaching as being most suitable for your organisation's leaders?	- with Group coaching you benefit from other people's experience When it has to do with synergy or improving your team, group coaching is better.	Group coaching would work better if generic topics were addressed.	-Group coaching would work for better when we are discussing the same generic theme	-Group coaching is better learning from others	Yes -Group coaching is better when we are discussing the same generic theme.	It depends on the position. For Directors and below, Group coaching is better. -The subject of dealing with people	In Group coaching you learn from others' perspectives	Group coaching good for understanding the coaching process, then follow up with 1-1 coaching -Start with general coaching knowledge through group coaching and follow it up with one-to-one coaching.
•Are there instances when you deem one-to-one coaching being most suitable for your	- I think one-to-one overall is better. -One-to-one is better	when you have a long term plan	-For personal skills or personal character, you want me to fix; this would be	-If the training is made to focusing at work and developing	-One-to-one coaching is better when you are discussing something	-For GMs, one-to-one is recommended. - At the level of GM,	-One-to-one is better for personal issues -One-to-one is better when you need	GM and above need one-to-one coaching One-to-one coaching is

	organisation's leaders?	when it has to do with self-improvement.		better for one-to-one coaching	yourself, then one-to-one is better.	specific to you alone.	you are at the maturity stage where the help from the coach is needed.	to set a goal that needs the support of your coach	better with personal development for short and long term -One-to-one coaching is very important when the organisation is going through a mindset change. -one-to-one coaching can help leaders plan and act in order to reduce resistance to change.
Are there any aspects of the organisational culture which participants feel have influenced, positively or negatively, their	Can you give me any examples where you deem your organisation's culture impacted on your leadership development?	-My organisation is a learning environment for me -The work situation enables me to learn from	-We have senior positions recruited internally. - We are now building our capability from internal	-Better communication -(when it comes to 'One TO ' value). -Leading with agility has	Because of Top-1000, - we have more changes. We are closer to top management	No instances	Has helped communication between leaders (The 'One TO ' value)	-The culture of trust has brought about positive change Bridged the gap	Coaching culture has helped me to have IDP and vision 1-1 coaching

learning and development while undertaking the 'Top-1000 Leadership Programme'? (Interview Questions 9-10)		senior colleagues, peers, and team members.	sources - our employees The cultures are decentralised management and more effective communication	improved in the organisation				between leaders -It has helped leaders to benefit from others' perspectives. -It has improved leaders; collaboration	stretches thinking Helps to guide thinking
	Are there examples where you deem your organisation's culture as not impacting leadership development?	-My Organization is not paying much attention to improving the skill in my profession, my functional speciality.	No examples.	None	Am sorry I have nothing to say about it.	None	Some sectors or department are yet to imbibe effective communication - Some of the Sectors are yet to imbibe the new way of leading in TO (maybe because they do not have their management support).	Nothing is in my mind now.	None

From the participants' perspective, how (if at all) have their leadership and management practices 'on-the-job' developed as a result of one-to-one executive coaching or group executive coaching? (Interview Questions 11-15)	From your Top-1000 coaching experience, can you give me any examples of what you found most valuable?	The coaching brings learning back and pushes you to practice what you have learnt.	The design of the programme-the four modules (how to deal with self, your team, change, the business) is interesting	My prioritising has improved -Helps in Self-improvement -Helps in discovering your internal voice	The coaching itself didn't add much to me, because it was a group coaching. - I have learnt how to think better as a leader during the forums	- Questioning by the coach helps you come up with solutions. - Coaches should also give knowledge transfer to their coachees	-We all have the same language -Learning from others.	The Top-1000 has helped my leaders in my team to build a better relationship -Top-1000 has helped me to understand myself and understand others -Top-1000 has helped me to create trust between my team and me -Coaching improves leader-member influence - The coaching has helped my team to improve performance	The environment is more open now than before. -There are more flexibility and dynamism -the organisation is growing more leaders -Coaching helped me on how to achieve my performance -Another valuable gain is developing my individual development plan. Helps to develop self.

	From your Top-1000 coaching experience, can you give me any examples of what you found least valuable?	Learning other people's experience was not valuable to me -It is useless. -The feedback am getting is not something positive.	-The group coaching did not reach expectation	None	-The coaching itself, no. The coaching itself didn't add any value to me.	The coaches should be mindful of the experience of the coachees and should not go below that standard.	-The employee level needs coaching more. There should be a plan that will include those below Section Manager level	Time-consuming. The period for the programme needs to be squeezed.	Time spent of filling the IDP templates
	Have you worked in other organisations which did not have coaching culture? If yes, how does the Top-1000 coaching programme differ in terms of your development as a leader?	To receive training and coaching was very useful.	-You were shut in the dark in programmes without coaching -Having the coaches essentially is very important because it helps to build the right leadership in the organisation. - Coaching helps	Learning from others and sharing with others	- I have learnt how to think better as a leader	-One-to-one coaching helps you to reach your goals in a short time -One-to-one Coaching helps to track progress, and you meet regularly with your coach throughout the year. -One-to-one coaching	Better communication with colleagues --With coaching, we have better communication effectiveness. With coaching, you have a standard of communicating for various reason and various stakeholders.	Coaching has helped me in setting my goals and achieving the goals By collaborating with my coach and holding the coaching sessions, I am more focused on achieving these goals.	Coaching helps individuals focus on their role within the organisation and achieving organisational goals. When there is no coaching, the focus is restricted to oneself.

			you to think out of your comfort zone			helps you to improve and measure your performance -When you are an organisation that has a coaching culture you have an opportunity to track progress.		-It made me be more accountable -Improved feedback from the team	
	Can you give me any examples from the coaching you received during the Top-1000 programme and tell me how it has impacted on your performance as a leader?	Sorry I cannot point which coaching	I deal with my team in a more organised way (-More organised in dealing with my team -More delegation of authority -More empowerment for my team)	-Group coaching has helped me on How to be a coach myself to my team. I am getting very good and positive results from coaching others team.	-The coaching itself, no. The coaching itself didn't add any value to me. - the training helped in focusing on my strength	- improved positive mindset -Helped to move from blaming others to seeking how to help other	The coach has helped me to validate how I am doing as a leader	-Coaching has helped me to influence my team better. -The trust and openness between my team and me has increased -It has helped me to support my team	Coaching helps mitigates being aggressive especially in meetings and other forms of communication.

	Would you recommend group coaching to be integrated into the design of future leadership development programmes in your organisation?	Yes -purpose and scope of coaching need to be defined.	-Yes, the number in the group coaching should not be more than 5	-Yes -It is helpful when facilitated by professionals. - It needs to be well structured, -Need to be well managed	No. I prefer one-to-one	It depends. Yes, I recommend group coaching if it is two or three persons sharing views on the generic topic	100% I strongly recommend coaching as part of leadership development design because it makes a very big difference	100% It helps to improve performance Coaching helps me to apply coaching principles – like question asking instead of issuing directives.	-Yes -Coaches should be empowered to recommend the training to their coachees based on their coaching interaction
	Closing Remarks	Coaching is very important as a concept and should be implemented and improved.	-Our average age of leader has reduced from 45-50 to 30-40. -the leadership programme is more organised and focused and no longer a holiday trip. - Being coached makes you feel valued as a leader.	This is a golden opportunity	-The training drew me close to the management -It made me more responsible -We are a better team	-In the beginning, we were not sure if we will derive any value from the coaching but Session after another, we felt more confident about coaching -So it's a good experience, still, in TO we are not 100%	-The employee level needs coaching more. There should be a plan that will include those below Section Manager level	Employees should understand what's the meaning of coaching and coaching should continue	-The coaches are helping coachees to implement what you have learnt. -The coaches are helping coachees to think and think better

| | | | | | | adopting this approach, but I see it improving.

- The coachee is learning, and the manager is learning.

-It's a good development coming this far for two years.

-It is a good concept. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

		Candidates Response					
Research Question	**Interview question**	Alex	Ben	Bobby	Dave	Mark (both)	Stan (both)
What is the nature of the lived experience of engaging in a one-to-one executive coaching or group executive coaching? (Interview Questions 1-4)	Tell me about your experience having one-to-one coaching during the Top-1000 programme?	-Benefited a lot -extremely helpful -Helps to think in a totally different way. -Triggered up a lot of different ideas -It was great. -I loved it. -It was really helpful	-Different approaches (academic approach and a free float approach) -Both approaches are valuable, but free-floating is more useful. -The coaching was not really tied to Top-1000	-It's really a great opportunity and thanks to TO - Understanding the concept of coaching - Understanding the various approaches of the coaches -We benefited a lot as the GMs	-I had a very successful coaching section -Coaching was like a wake-up alert for me to set up again my compass and select the direction I want to go - Since we started the coaching, everything has changed for me personally and at work.	It's a nice experience for me. -It was a mindset shift. -It helped me to think better -It maximises your strength and using your strength to decide to a proper decision	-Coaching helps people to maximise their time and their commitment -Having a coach helps you guide your thinking.
	Can you give me any examples	-It changed the way I assign tasks	-Addressed needs more directly	The discipline to put an implementation	-With the coaching, I clarified my vision and	It helped me in coaching and influencing my team and supporting them	-Solving problems together with colleagues

of what worked well for you?	-It's not I win, you lose. It's win-win -I have moved to the next level of leadership with the help of my coach. -Better collaboration amongst leaders	-Taking a step back to plan and address issues as opposed to giving in to pressure was very valuable.	plan of what you have learnt.	-I got objectives that I have to fulfil	for better performance	
Can you give me any examples of what did not work for you?	-Work-life balance is suffering -Losing tracks because of the burden of work -We didn't give quality time between me, my coach and my superior.	The more theoretical (textbook) approach did not work for me because it wasn't relevant to me	-It is difficult to put the learning into practice because of the pressure of work. -It's difficult for you to take every problem and go through 6 steps of problem-solving for example.	-More of engagement and tracking -The first coach wasn't transparent to me and lacked competency.	Lack of time in coaching my team	Lack of trust; reluctance to share own views - With the group coaching, there is a lack of open discussion
Based on your experience of other leadership development methods in the past, can you pinpoint any differences that the	-Gives you a boost. -It raises your bar -Re-energise your brain	Coaching links improvement needs with feedback from others.	-The discipline to help you to implement what you learned. -Coaching helps to transfer	-I have developed three strategies related to my work from this program -I can boldly say I have milked the coaches	-Without coaching, you abandon and forget the learning after you come back from the training.	-Coaching helps you to structure your thinking -coaching comes with a commitment

	one-to-one coaching has made for you?			of knowledge to the team. -With the programme without coaching, we forget what we have learnt as we come back to work.	-Coaching compliments classroom learning -Coaching helps to implement the classroom learning	-coaching helps you to set up a plan with your coach on how to implement the learning. -With coaching, you can measure your progress.	
From the participants' accounts do there appear to be any differences in experience and outcome between one-to-one executive coaching and group executive coaching? If so, in what ways do these differences manifest themselves? (Interview Questions 5-8)	Given a choice, which type of coaching would you prefer – one-to-one or group coaching?	Each one of them does have their pros & cons. Both are helpful. Mixture is beneficial. One-to-One helps you to become transparent. Group coaching makes you over-sensitive when you are talking. Helps you to learn from others	-One-to-one is probably better. One-to-one is better because it addresses more directly coachees' needs - Group coaching should be designed in a way that addresses coachees' needs. -Group coaching addresses a broader need (that may not be relevant to me)	-I prefer one-to-one - Confidentiality with the coach is better	I prefer One-to-one because it is better for personal issues -I think group coaching is a misuse of time. -Group coaching is a waste because you are reluctant to give a deep insight	Both -With one-on-one coaching, you feel more relaxed to talk about some internal team specific issue and personal issues -In group coaching, you get to share from the experience of the others. -Group coaching is better for generic topics	I prefer one-to-one -With a one-to-one, there is trust and confidence -You are free to express yourself including discussing your weaknesses -In group coaching, you are not free and open to speak because of others. -In group coaching, you try to hide some facts -Group coaching pushes you to unhealthy competition

Which of the two coaching approaches do you see more relevant to leaders in your organisation?	It depends GM and above - One-to-one Directors and below, group coaching Mixture(blended) Group coaches help Directors and Section managers to learn from others	-It is never black and white. -The group coaching is useful for a large population of employees -Group coaching helps in relationship building among leaders -one-to-one coaching is better for actual development & results	-Both coaches are good. -One-to-one is better for Senior Management (VPs and GMs) -Group coaching is better for Directors, Section Managers, Team Leader. The reason being that we do not have enough coaches for one-to-one for all leaders.	One-to-one I prefer One-to-one because it is better for personal issues	Both -Group coaching helps for building relationships with other leaders -Group coaching is better when the team is mixed from various departments -One-to-one is better for a complex situation	One-to-One. It helps me to be more focused and overt
Are there instances when you deem group coaching as being most suitable for your organisation's leaders?	Directors and below, group coaching	-Group coaching is better for cultural transformation -Group coaching is more useful for learning from other's experience	-Due to a large number of Directors and Section Managers, Group coaching is better. - It is difficult to get coaches for one-to-one for	Group coaching helps in relationship building -From a cultural perspective, no	In Group coaching you learn from others' perspectives	Group coaching good for understanding the coaching process, then follow up with 1-1 coaching -Start with general coaching knowledge through group coaching and follow it up with one-to-one coaching.

			such large number			
•Are there instances when you deem one-to-one coaching being most suitable for your organisation's leaders?	GM and above - One-to-one	-One-to-one coaching is better when you are discussing something specific to the leader -One-to-one provides a safe environment to address your weaknesses or needs	Due to the sensitive nature of the role of the VPs and GMs, one-to-one coaching is better	. Every time. (Though It is costly)	-One-to-one is better for personal issues -One-to-one is better when you need to set a goal that needs the support of your coach	GM and above need one-to-one coaching One-to-one coaching is better with personal development for short and long term -One-to-one coaching is very important when the organisation is going through a mindset change. -one-to-one coaching can help leaders plan and act in order to reduce resistance to change.

Are there any aspects of the organisational culture which participants feel have influenced, positively or negatively, their learning and development while undertaking the 'Top-1000 Leadership Programme'? (Interview Questions 9-10)	Can you give me any examples where you deem your organisation's culture impacted on your leadership development?	Coaching helps to develop an Individual Development Plan(IDP)	Improved feedback culture -The availability of structured coaching has improved team dynamics at the leadership	Coaching has raised organisation culture to the next level The culture of keeping leaders on the same level to attend the programme impacts TO leadership development positively.	I think with the right coaches it will affect positively. I think it is not a waste. -The new coaching culture helped actually to develop leaders	-The culture of trust has brought about positive change Bridged the gap between leaders -It has helped leaders to benefit from others' perspectives. -It has improved leaders; collaboration	Coaching culture has helped me to have IDP and vision 1-1 coaching stretches thinking Helps to guide thinking
	Are there examples where you deem your organisation's culture as not impacting leadership development?	None	The mentality of the people sometimes makes training or coaching not to work because some do it for doing sake	None. I don't think the coaching will bring any negative to the organisation.	-I think methodology has to be developed more	Nothing is in my mind now.	None

From the participants' perspective, how (if at all) have their leadership and management practices 'on-the-job' developed as a result of one-to-one executive coaching or group executive coaching? (Interview Questions 11-15)	From your Top-1000 coaching experience, can you give me any examples of what you found most valuable?	Coaching helps to develop an Individual Development Plan(IDP)	The most valuable is the push to take a step back and look at how other key people in the Organization perceive the way I work and the way I behave.	I like the coaching methodology because it did not recommend a solution to me but rather through the questioning of the coach, the solution is generated from inside me.	One-to-one has helped me in setting my life objectives.	The Top-1000 has helped my leaders in my team to build a better relationship -Top-1000 has helped me to understand myself and understand others -Top-1000 has helped me to create a trust for my team and me -Coaching improves leader-member influence - The coaching has helped my team to improve performance	The environment is more open now than before. -There are more flexibility and dynamism -the organisation is growing more leaders -Coaching helped me on how to achieve my performance -Another valuable gain is developing my development plan. Helps to develop self.

	None	Coaching should be less theoretical and more practical	No dislike for coaching. -Time constraints	I think methodology has to be developed more	Time-consuming. The period for the programme needs to be squeezed.	Time spent on filling the IDP templates
From your Top-1000 coaching experience, can you give me any examples of what you found least valuable?	None	Coaching should be less theoretical and more practical	No dislike for coaching. -Time constraints	I think methodology has to be developed more	Time-consuming. The period for the programme needs to be squeezed.	Time spent on filling the IDP templates
Have you worked in other organisations which did not have a coaching culture? If yes, how does the Top-1000 coaching programme differ in terms of your development as a leader?	Other bigger organisations are approaching TO and telling them about how they can implement the Top-1000 in their company.	-Continuous coaching reinforces the action -The continuous nature of the Top-1000 programme makes learning to stick.	Coaching brings change and improvement	-Coaching is like a mirror to me to see myself from outside as well as from within.	Coaching has helped me in setting my goals and achieving the goals By collaborating with my coach and holding the coaching sessions, I am more focused on achieving these goals. -It made me more accountable -Improved feedback from the team	Coaching helps individuals focus on their role within the organisation and achieving organisational goals. When there is no coaching, the focus is restricted to oneself.

		Can you give me any examples from the coaching you received during the Top-1000 programme and tell me how it has impacted on your performance as a leader?	Helps me in dealing with issues and conflicts	more aware of the needs of my people -Better knowledge of how I am perceived. -Alignment between my team's expectation and my solutions	Improved myself. (The six steps of problem-solving has helped to improve me, my leadership, my decision making and my work)	- It helped me to accept feedback.	-Coaching has helped me to influence my team better. -The trust and openness between my team and me has increased -It has helped me to support my team	Coaching helps mitigates being aggressive especially in meetings and other forms of communication.
		Would you recommend one-to-one coaching to be integrated into the design of future leadership development programmes in your organisation?	Yes	Yes I believe that there is value because it addresses the direct needs of the coachee. -Coaching has to be tied to individual needs and not one size fit all	Yes, I recommended one-to-one. It is very beneficial.	-I agree 100	100% It helps to improve performance Coaching helps me to apply coaching principles – like question asking instead of issuing directives.	-Yes -Coaches should be empowered to recommend the training to their coachees based on their coaching interaction

| | Closing Remarks | -Coaching provides a safe environment to address one's weaknesses or needs

-Coaching helps to

implement what you have learnt | Value is derived when coachees are committed | Top-1000 program, one of the greatest opportunity to TO leaders to understand, to have new knowledge and to start implementing this knowledge with the support of the coach. We need to have this coaching programme to continue | - Coaching should start by defining the purpose

- The course gave me some opportunity to enlarge my strength by understanding myself better

-More structure needed for coaching | Employees should understand what's the meaning of coaching and coaching should continue | -The coaches are helping coachees to implement what you have learnt.

-The coaches are helping coachees to think and think better |