EXPLORING THE COACHEE'S EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP WITHIN A STATE-OWNED UTILITY

Carina Viljoen

Hons (BA)

Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Magister Artium* in Industrial Psychology at the Vaal Triangle Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr D. H. du Toit,
Co-supervisor: Prof. M. W. Stander
Vanderbijlpark

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COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The editorial style in the first and last chapters of this mini-dissertation follows the format prescribed by the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus).

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- This mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The editorial style specified by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology is used in the second chapter.

DECLARATION

I, Carina Viljoen, hereby declare that “exploring the coachee’s expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship within a state-owned utility” is my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this mini-dissertation are my own and those of the authors as referenced both in the text and in the reference lists.

I further declare that this work will not be submitted to any other academic institution for qualification purposes.

CARINA VILJOEN NOVEMBER 2016

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I hereby declare that I was responsible for the language editing of the mini-dissertation: **Exploring the coachee's expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship within a state-owned utility** as submitted by **Carina Viljoen.**

DR ELSABÉ DIEDERICKS

BA Hons HED Hons MA PhD

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dearest husband,

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SUMMARY

Title: Exploring the coachee's expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship within a state-owned utility

Keywords: Leadership development, leadership coaching, coaching relationship, coaching, industrial psychology, grounded theory

Globally and in South Africa leaders are required to lead in economically unstable environments. Organisations are proactively responding to leadership challenges through the use of coaching as leadership development instrument. In context of the state-owned utility in South Africa, coaching is central to its leadership strategy to build leadership capacity and empower leaders. Coaching is mainly concerned with the enhancement of skills, productivity and attainment of developmental goals of leaders through a relationship between the coach and coachee that is characterised by trust, commitment and collaboration.

The coaching relationship has been identified as an important driver of the coaching process. Researchers have expressed a need to learn more about the coaching relationship. It has been found that current research entails predominantly outcome, effectiveness and impact studies of the coaching relationship. There is limited research available on exploring the coachee's perceptive experiences of the coaching relationship. Gathering information from coachees on their experiences of the coaching relationship will greatly improve the understanding of the effect their expectations from the leadership coaching and outcomes reached during the leadership coaching process might have.

Thus, the study endeavoured to explore the expectations and experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship. An explorative qualitative study was conducted using a social constructivist grounded theory methodology. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior managers in the state-owned utility who were selected through purposive and theoretical sampling. Cases were sampled to a point of data saturation. Grounded theory guided both data collection and analysis through the application of open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

The findings of the study supported the importance of the coaching relationship. The study revealed that participants enter the coaching relationship with no clear expectation of the coaching relationship. However, the results indicated that six theoretical categories depict the experiences of the coaching relationship. The coaching relational experiences have been identified as a growth-focused relationship, where the coach, through the informal application of a coaching approach, establishes a "friendly" relationship that enables the coachee to grow. The relationship develops over time and is strengthened by the establishment of a quality working alliance built on trust, commitment, collaboration, integrity and acceptance that extends beyond the formal coaching process. It was found that there are interdependent relationships between the theoretical categories, ultimately contributing to the experience of the coaching relationship as a *growth-enabling relationship.* Additionally, the coachees evaluate the quality of the relationship against the ability to facilitate experiences of growth and attainment of coaching objectives.

Recommendations are made for the coachee and coach, for the organisation and for future research

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In everyday language, the word coaching has become synonymous with organisations that take performance and learning seriously (Nyman & Thach, 2013). The world has witnessed a significant increase in coaching as leadership developmental strategy (Axelrod, 2006; Bozer, Joo, & Santora, 2015; Deloitte, 2015; Grant, 2016; Grant, Passmore, Michael, & Parker, 2010; Gray, 2006). This has stimulated coaching to develop into a multi-billion dollar industry (Bennett & Bush, 2009; de Haan, Duckworth, Birch, & Jones, 2013; Sherman & Freas, 2004). Although the use of executive coaching is still on the rise (Sonesh, Coultas, Marlow, Lacerenza, & Reyes, 2015), organisations have introduced coaching as a strategic developmental instrument across all layers of management (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Gray, 2006; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2008).

Organisations find themselves in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) business environments where they are required to stay competitive and adjust to a changing world of work (Henley Business School, 2015). In an effort to survive, organisations are faced with competition for the use of knowledge, fast-paced technological advancements, globalisation, a need for innovation and creativity (Gandotra, 2010), and adaptability. In addition to these challenges, organisations compete for talent (Se-Young, 2013) as they realise the importance of attracting and developing the right leaders to effectively manage organisational challenges (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Multinational organisations' preoccupation with the development of talent is an indication of the lack of leadership talent experienced by organisations (Eyring, 2011). This affects organisations' ability to manage their workforces and impact on sustainability. As a consequence, a high demand is placed on organisations to invest in talent management strategies to secure sustainable growth.

According to Denton and Vloeberghs (2003), South African organisations are faced by challenges such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, lack of leadership and management capabilities (Malnight & van der Graaf, 2012), entering into very competitive international markets, labour unrest, skills shortages, workforce diversity, affirmative action, crime and

inequality amongst South Africans in the distribution of wealth (Eustace & Martins, 2014; Geber & Keane, 2013). For South African organisations to enable their leaders to effectively respond to organisational challenges, , leadership development should be prioritised to ensure organisational sustainability (Deloitte, 2014; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003).

Leadership coaching has emerged worldwide as a very popular leadership developmental strategy (Clegg, Rhodes, Kornberger, & Stilin, 2005). Modern day organisations realise how important leadership is for survival in the global markets (Amagoh, 2009). Lack of effective leadership could undermine an organisation's sustainability, adaptability to technological advancements, organisational performance and need for innovation (Gandotra, 2010). According to Vardiman, Houghton, and Jinkerson (2006), the presence of strong leadership is necessary for organisations to grow and meet performance targets. It is evident that organisations proactively engage in leadership development, as they invest more in the training of their leaders (Loew, 2012).

Leadership development is defined "as the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes" (McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004, p. 2). The development of "well-structured leadership development programmes" are important, according to Shyamsunder et al. (2011, p. 68), as such programmes enhance the quality and strength of leadership development (Deloitte, 2016), building leadership capacity over time (Sar, 2011). Zenger and Stinnett (2006) state that "70 percent of organisations with any formal leadership development initiatives use coaching" as part of their leadership development strategy (p. 44). This is also true for the South African state-owned utility.

The state-owned utility within which the study is taking place provides economic infrastructure and distribution of services to all South Africans. It provides employment to 48 000 employees and has taken up the mandate to ensure sustainability through leadership development. Nyman and Thach (2013) are of the opinion that leadership coaching is a valuable instrument to address leadership inefficiencies which are aligned to the needs of the state-owned utility. This will assist the organisation to improve its leadership capability and expand its leadership capacity in order to drive the strategic imperatives. Alignment of leadership development strategies with the organisational strategic objectives brings long term benefits to organisations and drive business goals (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004).

This holds true for this state-owned utility as effective leadership development strategies will enable it to meet government objectives.

The growing interest in the use of leadership coaching, according to Bennet and Bush (2009), lies in leadership coaching's capacity to enhance leadership capabilities, fostering relationships between employees and assisting leaders to increase their performance in their current position (Harakas, 2013). In an effort to establish whether coaching is just another fad, Bolt (2008) found that not only leadership coaching, but also coaching in general is viewed as a rich learning opportunity by coachees. The motivation for leaders to become involved in leadership coaching can be ascribed to the quality of leadership development that takes place, as it allows successful leaders to become even better (Bolt, 2008). Coaching in the broader sense of the word supports the notion that development is person-centred, aimed at the individual (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006) and proactively addresses training needs of both the individual (Ely, Boyce, Nelson, Zaccaro, Hernez-Broome, & Whyman, 2010) and the organisation (Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006; Mayer & Viviers, 2016).

Coaching is defined as conversations with and encouragement of employees on a one-on-one basis towards enhancing their job performance (Stone, 1999) and to enable them to realise their potential on a professional and personal level (Nigro, 2007). In addition, Oberstein's (2009) definition of coaching refers to coaching as a "meaningful, accountable relationship" with the focus on the power of possibility and the completeness of the experience of the coachee (p. 10). Grant (2006) elaborates on the definition and defines coaching as a "collaborative, individualised, solution-focused, results orientated, systematic approach" which brings about change within the coachee and the organisation (p. 3). Coaching is mainly concerned with developing a set of skills and to enhance the performance of the coachee (Michael, 2008).

In addition, coaching is seen as a goal-oriented process (Ellinger & Kim, 2014) between coach and coachee to identify developmental needs of the coachee and to overcome performance impediments, by experimenting with new possibilities for the future. Coaching is valued for its ability to effectively address job performance challenges, sustain and develop a leadership pipeline (Ting, 2006), keep corporate knowledge and retain high performers (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014). Possible benefits for the coachee lie in the development of skills, enhancement of job performance, motivation, and opportunity for

growth where there are limited promotional opportunities (Fielden, 2005). Coachees rate coaching as an effective developmental strategy as it holds significant value for them to take part in such programmes (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007a). From an organisational perspective, organisations do acknowledge the impact of coaching and they strive towards soliciting this commodity based on its value and use to the organisation and its employees (Bennett & Bush, 2009).

Various types or models of coaching have emerged and Bennett and Bush (2009) identify leadership coaching, performance coaching, career coaching and executive coaching as some of the coaching types utilised in the organisational setting. In the context of the study, focus falls onto leadership coaching. The state-owned utility uses leadership coaching as a key developmental solution in order to support other leadership development programmes and to deepen the learning that takes place from such programmes. Leadership coaching is thus targeted at senior managers and executives within the state-owned utility, with the aim of enhancing leadership behaviours for the future. The benefit of leadership coaching, according to Brewer (2014), and which is shared by the state-owned utility, relates to its ability to serve as effective leverage for coaches to initiate change in organisations and individual employees.

However, it is important to understand what is meant by leadership coaching. Ely et al. (2010) define leadership coaching as an individualised one-on-one relationship between a coach and coachee with the aim of developing leadership effectiveness. According to Ely, Boyce, Nelson, Zaccaro, Hernez-Broome, and Whyman (2008), leadership coaching is more than leadership development and highlights four components which are unique to leadership coaching:

- Centers around the needs of the coachee and the organisation, while considering their individual characteristics;
- Requires a unique set of skills from the coach;
- Places a high value on the coach-coachee relationship; and
- Requires an adaptable process for the best results.

The definition of leadership coaching emphasises the value of the relationship between the coach and coachee by focusing on learning and development that take place (Egan & Hamlin,

2014). Key elements of an effective coaching relationship, according to Boyce, Jackson, and Neal (2010), are "rapport, trust, commitment and collaboration" (p. 915). In addition to these, Sills (2003) indicates that additional elements of a successful coaching relationship are flexibility in understanding the problem from the perspective of the coachee, assisting the coachee to discover his or her strengths, creating self-awareness, experimenting and challenging him or her to new solutions and establishing a sense of achievement within the coachee without creating dependency on the coach. In literature various terminologies are used to refer to the relationship between the coach and coachee. The most prevalent terms in literature are coaching partnership (Passmore, 2007), coaching alliance (Kemp, 2009; O'Broin & Palmer, 2009; Wang, 2013), coaching relationship (Boyce et al., 2010; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007b; Kemp, 2009) and coaching dyad (Spence & Grant, 2007). For the purpose of this study, reference will be made to the coaching relationship.

This unique coaching relationship is defined as a "one-on-one helping relationship between a client and coach which is entered into with mutual agreement to improve the client's professional performance and personal satisfaction" (Boyce et al., 2010, p. 917). The aim of the coaching relationship is to assist the coachee to attain his or her developmental goals, and increase his or her well-being and productivity for his or her personal benefit and that of the employer (Palmer & McDowall, 2010). According to Steele (2011), reference is made to the coaching relationship as a partnership since it is based on "mutual sharing, collaboration, and cooperation" during which expertise is shared amongst partners (p. 15).

The coaching relationship is important as it motivates the coachee toward attainment of his or her goals and assists the coachee to overcome his or her weaknesses (Palmer & McDowall, 2010). From the discussion, it is evident that a partnership between the coach and coachee is developed as a consequence of the leadership coaching relationship. The leadership coaching process thus allows for the development of a very intimate relationship between the two parties, where the coach will mirror behaviour back to the coachee that may challenge his or her own beliefs and comfort zone. Amidst the coaching process, the coachee is allowed to develop both on intrapersonal and interpersonal levels; the coach creates an open or safe environment in order to allow the coachee to create a new perspective of him/herself, others and his or her environment.

As highlighted, the coach and coachee are two critical role players within the coach-coachee relationship. The coach is described by Gray (2006) as the individual in the coaching relationship who plays the role of a partner or collaborator (Stelter, 2016). The coach is a trained professional (Ely et al., 2010) who assumes a non-expert role and acts as guide or facilitator (Allen, Manning, Francis, & Gentry, 2011) to assist the coachee in finding his or her own solutions. The coach may challenge the coachee and address aspects which might make him or her feel uncomfortable. Gray (2006) refers to the coachee or client as the person "who wants to reach a higher level of performance, personal satisfaction or learning" (p. 476). The coachee is part of a coaching relationship motivated and aimed at working towards a specific goal (Ely et al., 2010). Thus, the coachee is the person who is empowered by and benefits the most from coaching (Cox et al., 2014). According to Gray (2006), the coachee needs to take responsibility for the success of the relationship and outcomes of the coaching.

The study acknowledges that leadership coaching takes place within the organisational setting where the coach and coachee are not the only partners in the relationship. Additional partners in the coaching relationship are the sponsors who include direct line managers - the human resource business partner in the organisation (Beattie, Kim, Hagen, Egan, Ellinger, & Hamlin, 2014; de Haan & Nieß, 2015; McGovern, Lindemann, Vergara, Murphy, Barker, & Warrenfeltz, 2001). The focus of the study is on the relationship between the coach and coachee. Therefore, the leadership coaching relationship in the state-owned utility refers to a partnership between coaches external to the state-owned utility and the sponsor.

With a better understanding of who the role players are in the leadership coaching relationship, it is further vital to understand the importance of this relationship. Clear agreement in literature exists on the importance and value of the coaching relationship (Bluckert, 2005; Gregory & Levy, 2011; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). It is said that "the relationship between coach and client is the single largest predictor for coaching outcomes that we know and moreover that this relationship mediates most of the effect of other factors" (Baron & Morin, 2009, p. 199).

The question however is raised, whether the above-mentioned statement is true. To gain clarity to the question, coachees are approached to obtain an insider perspective on the coaching relationship. From the discussion it is evident that the coachee benefits the most due to the level of growth and development that takes place. As a consequence of their personal

experience of growth and being part of the coaching relationship, the aim of the study is to approach the coachee, and to elaborate on his or her expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship. It is clear from the literature review that there is a visible deficit in studies providing a voice to the coachee to share his or her expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship (Brand & Coetzee, 2013; Sonesh et al., 2015). Except for the limited research, it was also found that most research focuses on the evaluation of the effectiveness, the outcomes or value of the coaching process (Cavanagh, Grant, & Kemp, 2005). A recent study conducted by Brand and Coetzee (2013) aimed at exploring the "perceived value and experiences of the process of executive coaching for coach and coachee" (p. 247). The aforementioned study regarding the experiences of the coach and coachee of coaching, fails to address the expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship. In a study on the helpfulness of coaching from the coachee's perspective, it was found that it would be to the benefit of the coaching process if the coachee is approached to enquire what he or she finds to be a helpful relationship (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011). This again re-affirms the need to explore the coachee's expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship.

Organisations such as the state-owned utility invest large amounts of money in leadership coaching and need to ensure that the coachee benefits from the coaching, as it directly contributes to the performance of the organisation (Kilburg, 2010). The intent of the study was to explore the expectations and experiences of the coachees in the coaching relationship and the impact thereof on coaching outcomes. There is a need to build a theoretical understanding of the expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship from the coachee's perspective, in order to generate knowledge and understanding regarding the expectations and experience of the coaching relationship.

According to literature, there is a need to improve the understanding of the coaching relationship as to determine its effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). De Haan (2012), however, cautions that research should not merely look at the outcomes of coaching in terms of its effectiveness, but outcomes should also be evaluated in terms of the value thereof, the personal experience and growth of individuals and organisations. The challenge to researchers is that although literature indicates that coaching is gaining momentum, becoming popular and is in demand, substantial evidence exists that research is not keeping up with this trend (Baron & Morin, 2009; Gonzales, 2008; Kampa-kokesch & Anderson, 2001;

McGovern et al., 2001). Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006) are of the opinion that organisations are pressured to expand leadership coaching to senior management level, as coaching serves as a retention strategy and to enhance leadership skills. The state-owned utility places high levels of confidence and trust in the effectiveness of leadership coaching as developmental strategy for senior managers. With that in mind, it is clear that there is a need to investigate the matter further.

Considering that the coaching relationship is central to the success of leadership coaching, researchers expressed their concerns with regard to the limited research available in exploring the coachee's experiences of the coaching relationship (Gregory & Levy, 2010). Gregory and Levy (2010) further highlight a need to explore the coaching relationship, to understand what it is like being part of such a relationship. Sun, Deane, Crowe, Andresen, Oades, and Ciarrochi (2013) support this view and express the need for further research on the coachee's perception of the coaching relationship. Understanding the intricate details of being part of such a partnership will be revealed if the coachee is given a chance to speak out. In gathering this information, it will greatly improve the understanding of what effect these expectations might have on the leadership coaching relationship with respect to coachees' experiences and outcomes reached during the leadership coaching process.

There is consensus in literature that research on coaching has only evolved recently and there is a need for more research to be conducted (Ely et al., 2010; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Nyman & Thach, 2013). There is a definite need, according to Brewer (2014), for scientific studies relating to leadership coaching as it has implications for the coach, coachee, researchers and organisations. Leadership coaching in the organisational setting is constantly evolving. It is important that research is continuously conducted as it helps to create and influence "the professional practice of coaching and how coaches engage with their clients and organisations" (Brewer, 2014, p. 62).

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering the background of the study and in view of the limited understanding of the expectations and experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship, it is necessary to explore the topic further.

The study was aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. How are the expectations and experiences of the coachee of the leadership coaching relationship conceptualised in literature?
2. What are the coachee's expectations of the leadership coaching relationship?
3. What are the coachee's experiences of the leadership coaching relationship?
4. Was there a difference between the coachee's expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship?

1.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Contribution to the Individual and the Organisation

The practical contribution of the study was to stimulate awareness among coachees of the impact they might have on the coaching relationship and the importance of establishing a working relationship with the coach. It might advise prospective coachees how to prepare themselves for the coaching process by asking questions with regard to their role in the coaching process, and clarifying their understanding of coaching, the purpose and process involved to optimise the benefits from the coaching experience.

The research will assist organisations in gaining a deeper understanding of the coaching relationship and how it can influence the effectiveness and outcomes of the coaching process. It might lead to re-alignment of the coaching process in order to address identified gaps . It will allow organisations to refine their matching process and educate coaches about the expectations of the coaching relationship.

1.3.2 Contribution to Industrial/Organisational Literature

The theoretical contribution of the study lies in the expansion of the current body of knowledge regarding the coaching relationship from the perspective of the coachee. Little literature is available and will allow opportunity for further research. The development of

new theory might assist in bridging the gap between theoretical and practical understanding and application.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives were divided into a general objective and specific objectives.

1.4.1 General Objective

The general aim was to explore the expectations and experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research are to:

- Conceptualise the expectations and experiences of coachees about the leadership coaching relationship according to literature.
- Ascertain and describe the expectations the coachee has of the leadership coaching relationship with the coach.
- Explore and describe the experience of the coachee of the leadership coaching relationship.
- Discover whether there is a difference between the coachee's expectations and experiences of the leadership coaching relationship.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is described by Bellamy (2011) as the research plan that gives direction to research studies as it guides the "way in which data will be created, collected, constructed, analysed and interpreted" to allow the researcher to systematically explore the phenomena (p. 308). Charmaz (2006) confirms this view with the emphasis on the importance of the research problem as determinant of the research design; in this case to explore the expectations and experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship. Thus, by following a

clear research strategy, the researcher was able to draw sound conclusions and enhance the credibility of the study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006).

1.5.1 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was followed during the study (Bitsch, 2005). The aim of qualitative research is exploratory in nature and utilises the researcher as primary data gathering instrument (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The qualitative approach allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding, find meaning and give expression to the experiences of research participants and not to test or quantify experiences (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010). It is described as a subjective and interpretative approach which requires the researcher to be adaptable, open and understanding in order to give a voice to the experiences of participants (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). In support of the adaptability inherent to qualitative research, Charmaz (2006) highlights its ability to constantly follow up on new pieces of information throughout the data gathering process.

The study assumed a social constructivist paradigm holding an epistemological position of reality. Epistemology refers to theory of knowledge and how subjects come to know reality (Krauss & Putra, 2005). From the epistemological perspective, the researcher is part of the social reality and cannot be separated from the subject under study (Hall, Griffiths, & McKenna, 2013).

A fundamentally constructivist paradigm maintains the position that no objective reality exists (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). The view is held that reality is invented or constructed by individuals and represents one reality within a broader social context (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009). From a constructivist perspective, it was assumed that senior managers construct unique experiences from the coaching relationship. The researcher not only brings her own view of reality, but also constructs new realities during the interaction with the data (Glaser, 2012). “The constructivist inquiry starts with the experience and asks how members construct it” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). Conducting a constructivist study allows the researcher to explore how subjects create meaning, and how the context, situation, and relationship contribute to the reality created (Charmaz, 2006; Ong, 2012).

While conducting the research from a constructivist perspective, the researcher was aware of her influence on the creation of reality; being aware of her own bias toward the expectations

and experiences of the coaching relationship. According to Hall et al. (2013), the researcher is a key element of the interpretation that takes place. Thus, the use of the memo and journal process to reflect on bias and the influence it has on the analysis and interpretation of the social realities of the participants.

1.5.2 Research Strategy

A case study method was the most appropriate research strategy to explore the expectations and experiences of senior managers. Cases, according to Mouton (1996), refer to the senior managers who were interviewed for the study. In-depth interviews with the selected senior managers enabled the researcher to theorise about the subjective expectations and experiences of coachees (Dooley, 2002). Theoretical sampling guided the selection of multiple comparable cases that allowed the researcher to create themes through constant comparison within and between cases (Lee, 2005).

Grounded theory was used as both data collection and data analysis method. Strict adherence to the requirements for soundness of data was followed to ensure the credibility of research findings (Dooley, 2002). In an effort to ensure that the research strategy supports the researcher's aim of the study, a pilot study was conducted with a senior manager. A pilot study, according to Moerdyk (2009), is when an interview or survey is conducted prior to the actual research. The aim is to help "identify potential problems with the design" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 94). The data gathered during the pilot study were excluded from the study as the purpose of the interview was to clarify and prevent problems with the research design, adapt research questions and the interview approach, as well as to gain experience and build familiarity with the method.

1.6 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method provides a description of the data collection and analysis methods that were used during the research.

1.6.1 Literature Review

A literature review was done on the key constructs, namely leadership development, coaching, leadership coaching and coaching relationship. Due to the exploratory nature of

the research and the aim of the study to build a theoretical understanding of the expectations and experiences of senior managers of the coaching relationship, complete literature reviews were conducted after completion of the data analysis.

The sources that were consulted include:
Relevant articles for the period 2006 to 2016 via the following data bases: EbsoHost, Sabinet Reference, GoogleScholar, ScienceDirect and Emarald.

The following journals were studied due to their relevance to the research topic; *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges, Academy of Management Learning and Education, Advances in Developing Human Resources, American Journal of Psychotherapy, AORN Journal, Coaching that Counts, Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, Educational Administration Quarterly, Human Resource Development International, Industrial and Commercial Training, Journal of Management Development, Organisation Dynamics, OD Practitioner, Leadership Quarterly,* and *Journal of Positive Psychology.*

1.6.2 Research Setting

The researcher conducted the study within a state-owned utility in South Africa. The utility identified leadership development as one of its top priorities to ensure organisational sustainability through investing in its leaders. The study was conducted among current senior managers and included mangers on advanced leadership programmes preparing for future senior management positions. An outsourced model of leadership coaching exists within the utility and all participants received coaching from coaches external to the organisation. The external coaches are contractually informed of the leadership strategy and the organisational objectives for the purpose of leadership coaching prior to the coaching services commencing.

All interviews were conducted in boardrooms, offices and meeting rooms within the utility. The locations of the interviews were determined by participants as they were provided with an opportunity to determine the location of interviews. The researcher took the responsibility to ensure the facilities were conducive for interviews to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

1.6.3 Entrée and Establishing Researcher Roles

Access to participants was gained through the organisation that manages coaching contracts and acts as sponsor on behalf of the utility. A name list of coachees who had completed coaching services in the past three years was received from the gatekeeper. The researcher maintained continuous contact with the gatekeeper to ensure collaboration, to provide feedback where necessary and to obtain assistance when needed during the study (Curtis & Curtis, 2011).

Potential participants were contacted telephonically, informing them of the intent of the study and that their names were made available to the researcher by the gatekeeper. During the telephonic conversation, it was emphasised that participation was voluntary and that an email would follow with full details of the study in order to make an informed decision. The email provided potential participants information indicating the purpose, procedure, risk, benefits and costs of participation in the study. It further provided the participant with contact details of the researcher, supervisor and representative from the ethics committee. The consent form (Annexure A) was attached to the email. The letter of consent by the state-owned utility to conduct the research was included in the introductory email sent to participants. The researcher allocated pseudonyms to the names received of prospective participants prior to interviews; then requests for interviews were sent. Not all invited senior managers consented to the interviews; thus, the unique identifying codes of participants in the study are not sequential and have no significant meaning in the study.

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, the researcher enacted multiple roles, acting as primary data collector, data analysis, listener, and observer (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), and as a result was unable to remove herself from the research process. The researcher needed to ensure that the role as researcher was not neglected. The researcher continuously collaborated and interacted with the participants on a subjective level to extrapolate as much information as possible and to solicit the data required for the study.

In order to function as a powerful facilitator, the researcher acknowledged her limitations in terms of interviewing skills, knowledge of coaching practices, theory, personal bias, perceptions of coaching and senior managers, the leadership coaching process and the

coaching relationship. Prior to and post interviews, the researcher reflected on her role and stance with regard to the subject of the study.

1.6.4 Sampling

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a number of cases from the total population from which the sample was drawn (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). The population with reference to the study is the total number of senior managers or senior managers being talent-managed, who has been part of the leadership coaching process, and who has completed a minimum of six coaching sessions with an external coach in the past six to thirty-six months within the state-owned utility. Senior manager is defined as an employee on Patterson Grade, M/P17, M/P18 and EEE located in the Mpumalanga or Gauteng area. The sample refers to the actual cases which were selected from the population and that have agreed to take part in the study. The sampling method chosen by the researcher was guided by the purpose of the study (Currie, 2009).

As proposed by the grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2015), this study employed both purposive and theoretical sampling. Purposive sampling took precedence during the initial phase of sampling. The aim of the sampling method was not to be representative of the population, but rather to be selective of who are included in the study. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify cases as per criteria in the population which were similar in characteristics that were likely to support the objectives of the study (Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011). Due to the suspension of external coaching services, the researcher was unable to include participants in the sample that were within a coaching relationship.

Once purposive sampling was concluded, theoretical sampling was used as the main sampling method. Theoretical sampling refers to a grounded theory sampling process driven by theory generation (Sbaraini et al., 2011). The purpose of theoretical sampling is the extrapolation of theoretical categories and in the process selectively "seeks people, events, or information to illuminate and define the boundaries and relevance of the categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 189). Participants were theoretically sampled as theoretical categories emerged that allowed the researcher to explore in more detail on dimensions and properties of

theoretical categories which emerged through the process of constant comparison and theorising.

Due to the nature of grounded theoretical methodology, the researcher was cognisant that little value is placed on attaining a representative sample and in the process concentrated on sample size being determined by theoretical saturation of categories (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014). Theoretical saturation, according to Charmaz (2006), is reached when no new theoretical categories or insights emerge from the data. Indicators of theoretical saturation surfaced after the fourth interview and the researcher decided to conduct a further two interviews by aligning semi-structured questions to emerging theoretical themes. During the data analysis of interview six, it became apparent that no new data had been s gathered. The researcher requested follow-up interviews with all the participants to clarify dimensions and properties of theoretical themes. From the responses by the participants, only one participant agreed to a second interview.

1.6.5 Data Collection Methods

Due to the flexibility of grounded theory methods, the researcher was not restricted to specific data collection methods as a combination of tools and sources was utilised to construct a theory as guided by Charmaz (2006). Data were primarily collected through semi-structured interviews. Data collection and analysis took place simultaneously (Sbaraini et al., 2011) as data collection is guided by data analysis. After each interview, open coding was done and with each subsequent interview, the researcher integrated open coding with existing interview data. “Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2).

1.6.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Participants were interviewed by means of one-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore the coachee’s expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). Participants were interviewed at a location that was determined by the participant. A first interview was arranged where the researcher requested participants to contact her for a follow-up interview. Only one participant agreed to a follow-up interview

when requested. The researcher adjusted the interview questions to explore the theoretical categories as they emerged during the data analysis process (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). The qualitative research approached is less structured and allowed the participants to freely express themselves within guided boundaries, which in this case were the expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship.

Interviews started with the core question: *"Tell me about your expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship with your leadership coach"*.

This allowed the participants to relate their story. However, where the researcher found that the research questions needed to be posed again to guide the responses, the following probing questions were posed:

- What were your expectations of the leadership coaching relationship?
- What were your experiences of the leadership coaching relationship?
- Was there a difference between the coachee's expectations and the experience of the coaching relationship?

1.6.5.2 Field Notes

In addition to the interview, field notes were taken by the researcher and used as further data collection method. During the interview process, the researcher took detailed notes of the proceedings, observations, context, actions or behaviour of participants as prescribed by Charmaz (2006), as these allowed the researcher to place the interview data in context with her own subjective experiences during the process.

1.6.5.3 Biographical Questionnaire

Participants were requested to complete a biographical questionnaire prior to the interview. To protect the anonymity of the participants, the questionnaire reflected the predetermined identifying code to identify the participant. The codes had no specific meaning. The purpose of the biographical questionnaire was to obtain statistical data relating to the sample group

such as age, gender, race, highest educational qualification, job grading, profession, purpose of leadership coaching, and duration of coaching.

1.6.5.4 Researcher Journal

As social constructivist grounded theory was used, the researcher adopted the role of participant and acknowledged that her own meaning and subjective influence should be considered in context of data generated (Egan, 2002). The researcher kept a journal during the research process of subjective experiences and observation relating to data collection, analysis and influence on data. It included own perceptions, bias and thoughts on emerging categories during the research process. The researcher acknowledged her subjective abductions and interpretations during data analysis (Ong, 2012). Journaling is essential "to grounded theory in so far as it prompts the researcher to engage with and undertake preliminary data analysis during the data collection process" (Curtis & Curtis, 2011, p. 42).

1.6.5.5 Recording of Data

Interviews were digitally recorded as this ensured an accurate version of the interview, whereas notes would not be that accurate or comprehensive enough (Walsham, 2006). The researcher informed the participants of the recording of interviews during initial e-mail communication. Participants were reminded prior to the interview of interviews being recorded before the consent form was signed, enabling participants to make an informed decision regarding their participation in the study. The participants were informed who would have access to the audio types of the interview, and how the data would be utilised and stored. The researcher checked that the digital recorder was in a working condition beforehand and also during the interview. The use of digital recordings allowed the researcher to pay attention to the emotions, feelings and views of participants which, in return, prevented the researcher from making assumptions (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews were coded to protect the confidentiality of the data and to ensure anonymity of the participants. Field notes of the interviews were allocated with corresponding codes to ensure alignment of the data.

Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and an independent transcriber. "Transcription involves making a written record of an interview or group discussion (called a transcript) for data analysis" (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 211). The independent transcriber was requested to sign an indemnity form to further ensure the confidentiality of the data. Verbatim transcripts for grounded theory should be prepared, according to Hennink et al. (2011), as exact words and field notes are used to create meaning and understanding. Both the researcher and the transcriber reviewed the transcripts for accuracy (Sbaraini et al., 2011). The transcripts were sent to each participant for review to confirm whether it was a true reflection of their expectations and experiences as shared during the interview. According to Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012), it is a safe practice to allow the participant to add information to the transcriptions should they wish to do so. The researcher took responsibility to journal prior and post-interviews in order to capture all experiences and thoughts through the process. Journal and memos were reviewed in preparation for additional interviews.

1.6.6 Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, data analysis and data collection take place simultaneously in grounded theory. During data analysis, the researcher applied a process of constant comparison where identified themes are compared to earlier interpretations (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2006). An inductive thematic or content analysis process was followed where the researched-inducted themes, categories and patterns from data were collected until the researcher could identify emerging abstract themes (Petty et al., 2012).

Thematic analysis was facilitated through a process of coding. Coding conducted by the researcher was an interactive act of defining and labelling data which were called codes (Charmaz, 2006; Urquhart, 2013). The process was experienced as flexible, as it allowed the researcher to merge with the data and through a constant comparative process, while setting aside own subjective perspectives; themes were objectively refined, re-named and discovered (Charmaz, 2006). During the thematic analysis process, the researcher applied three steps of coding (Urquhart, 2013), namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

1.6.6.1 Open Coding

The researcher used open coding as the first step in the data analysis process. In the open coding process the researcher did line-by-line open coding. It was a very slow and detailed process of attaching a concept or label to each line (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). The researcher took care not to merely summarise the data, but attempted to look behind the words to what the participants were really saying. It was through the process of labelling concepts and constant comparison within and across interviews that theoretical categories were identified with their unique dimensions and properties (Ong, 2012). Emerging themes were used to guide the researcher to explore or clarify the categories further during the interviewing process (Jones, 2009). As the researcher's aim was to understand the expectations and experiences of coachees, she conducted the coding process without a prior literature review. The researcher's objective was to be neutral and she allowed the data to inform the labels (Urguhart, 2013).

1.6.6.2 Axial Coding

The second step in the data analysis required the researcher to assemble the pieces of data gathered during open coding, through a process of considering the relationships between the various categories and sub-categories in order to identify emerging categories (phenomena) (Mills, Bonner, & Rancis, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories were created by considering the specific relational conditions that contributed to the category. Relational conditions that the researcher considered during the axial coding process were causal conditions (contribute to the occurrence of the phenomenon), context conditions (reactions to circumstances or situations), intervening conditions (factors that impact causal conditions), interactions or processes that facilitated or constrained the category, and lastly the consequence (result of the phenomenon through a process of interaction) of the category identified (Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider, 2002; Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014). In this study, axial coding allowed the researcher to identify the emerging categories and she was able to describe how the expectations and experiences of the participants contributed towards each of the theoretical categories (Curtis & Curtis, 2011).

1.6.6.3 Selective Coding

Selective coding is the process whereby the researcher selected a core category with the consideration of categories identified during the axial coding process (Bitsch, 2005). It required the researcher to look for a story line or themes evident throughout the categories, validating the relationship between them, with consideration of the underlying properties and dimensions, integrating the categories and validating the relationships against the data. The researcher became selective in the sense of being direct and deliberate in order to facilitate building a core category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

1.6.7 Strategies Employed to Ensure Quality Data

Qualitative research is not exempted from providing evidence that good qualitative practices were employed during the research process. The researcher needs to take accountability as she has a significant impact on the data collection and analysis process. Research findings cannot merely be a subjective interpretation or perspective from the researcher's side. Qualitative research can be measured against five criteria for soundness:

1.6.7.1 Credibility

Refer to researcher's ability to provide a true representation of subjective experiences of participants through the research findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Credibility of data is possible through a process of triangulation where the researcher uses various sources of data to eliminate misinterpretation and distorted views of findings (Bitsch, 2005). The credibility of the study was addressed through verbatim transcriptions of the data that were sent to participants to verify the accuracy (Bitsch, 2005). The researcher further used peer reviews to verify coding and interpretation of data to minimise the effect of subjective interpretation. All the interviews were peer reviewed. The researcher was vigilant throughout the process to ensure quality data were collected and to become aware of anomalies.

1.6.7.2 Transferability

Transferability is similar to external validity and generalisability of quantitative research findings (Bitsch, 2005). Transferability refers to the ability to apply or transfer the research

findings to other or similar contexts or to a different population (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research strategy, the methodology, and contextual data specific to the study for future researchers who may want to replicate the study in alternative contexts.

1.6.7.3 Dependability

According to Bitsch (2005), dependability refers to the applicability of research findings over an extended period. The importance of dependability in light of qualitative research is the assumption that there is no objective reality and reality is constantly being created. However, it is important to create consistency in findings over time. To ensure dependability, all data related to the study were stored. Detailed information was kept of the coding process to ensure an audit trail. Transcripts of the interviews, audio recordings, field notes, journal, and memos are available for review (Bitsch, 2005).

1.6.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is also referred to as objectivity. It refers to the ability to replicate or verify the research findings by an independent researcher, according to Marshall and Rossman (1995), if the bias, perceptions and subjective evaluation of the researcher are removed. Thus, it is an indication of the neutrality of the findings. Confirmability was addressed by the researcher in keeping a detailed reflective journal of processes followed to triangulate the data, insight into the research data, and experiences and occurrences during interviews. The researcher reflected over the approach to the interviews, circumstances or conditions that might have impacted the research data, keeping detailed memos stipulating the theory-generating process.

1.6.8 Reporting

Through the process of reporting, the researcher is afforded the opportunity to encapsulate the findings of the research. According to Sandelowski (1998), there is no single reporting style to report qualitative findings. The reporting style of grounded theory should allow the researcher to present the data in a way that illustrates how theory was generated from the data and how it relates to the phenomena discovered (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999). Sandelowski

(1998) is of opinion that reporting on findings should support the research objectives and method.

The researcher reported data through use of verbatim quotations from transcripts to support the theory constructed through the study. A model of findings was developed to provide an overview of the emerging categories and the core category. The researcher reported the findings in such a way that the voice of the participants is expressed and does not reflect the opinion or subjective interpretation of the researcher.

1.6.9 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research is not exempted from ethical considerations (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The researcher was guided by the research approach and general ethical principles and ethical considerations during the study. "The essential purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of the research participants" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 61). The responsibility was with the researcher to ensure that research ethics were considered. Curtis and Curtis (2011) indicate that ethical clearance should be obtained to ensure ethical principles are adhered to during a research project. Hence, ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee of the university and permission was granted by the state-owned utility to conduct the research. Considerable effort was taken by the researcher to act in an ethical, respectful and sensitive manner.

1.6.9.1 Providing Information

Prior to conducting the research, the researcher obtained approval from the state-owned utility to conduct the research within the context of the organisation. The organisation was approached to obtain permission to conduct the study. A letter was submitted to the state-owned utility's ethics committee, stipulating the purpose of the study, defining the identified population, describing the process of engagement with participants, assuring confidentiality and protection of data integrity, and stating the intended use or publication of the research findings. Once approval had been granted by the state-owned utility, access to potential participants was arranged via the gatekeeper. An email was sent to the purposively selected participant to inform him or her of the aim of the study and how his or her participation would add value to the research. A letter of consent was attached to the mail to inform the

participant of the ethical principles that would be applied should he or she agree to take part in the study. The email was followed up with a telephonic conversation to enable the participant to ask any questions or clarify uncertainties should there be any. During the telephonic conversation, the participants were informed of the biographical questionnaire.

1.6.9.2 Informed Consent

The letter of informed consent was aimed at providing the participant with sufficient information regarding the study. The purpose of informed consent was "to ensure that all human subjects retain autonomy and the ability to judge for themselves what the risks are and if worth taking" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 76). Participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could suspend their participation in the research study at any given time. Participants were under no circumstance forced or pressurised to take part in the study (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). They were provided with contact details of contact persons in case that they felt uncertain, aggrieved or traumatised.

1.6.9.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Participants were provided an opportunity to express concerns with regard to anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher further ensured that the participants were assured of their anonymity as no personal details were reflected on either the informed consent form or the biographical questionnaire. Access to data was restricted at all times and only available to the researcher. Although complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the researcher took every necessary step to respect the privacy of each participant (Hennink et al., 2011). The documentation was stored in a secure cabinet and access to the documentation was controlled by the researcher. As a measure to protect the anonymity of the participants, unique codes were assigned to documentation to minimise the risk of identification of the participants. The participants were informed that their identities would be protected as data were "collected, analysed and reported anonymously" (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 71).

1.6.9.4 Minimising of Harm

The ethical principle of non-maleficence, according to Terre Blanche et al. (2006), "requires the researcher to ensure that no harm befalls research participants as a direct or indirect

consequence of the research" (p. 67). During the research process, the participants were not exposed to experiments or manipulation of the environment. There was a risk that they might have experienced a degree of discomfort or distress due to the nature of questions asked during the interviews. During the interview process and engagement with participants, the researcher was observant of possible warning signs of discomfort and distress. To conclude the interview, the researcher checked in with the participants to ascertain whether they felt any discomfort as the interview should be concluded without feeling disadvantaged or traumatised in any way.

The researcher acknowledges the subjective nature of the research process and the influence it might have on the research findings. Thus, the researcher ensured that participants, data and processes were handled with respect in order to ensure the quality and integrity of the research project.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the coachee's expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship within a state-owned utility

Abstract

Orientation: Globally and in South Africa leaders are required to lead in economically unstable environments. Organisations are proactive in addressing leadership challenges through the use of coaching as one of their leadership development strategies. In context of the state-owned utility in South Africa, coaching is central to their leadership strategy to build leadership capacity and empower leaders.

Research purpose: The aim of the study is explore the expectations and experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship.

Motivation for the study: The coaching relationship has been identified as the most important driver of the coaching process. Few studies have explored the actual experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on coachees' perceptions, expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship. If the expectations and experiences are better understood, it can contribute to the state-owned utility's ability to better prepare coachees, optimise coach-coachee matching and facilitate coach selection, to enhance coaching experiences which in return will impact the coaching outcomes for individual leaders and the state-owned utility.

Research design, approach and method: A qualitative study was conducted from a social constructivist perspective. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior managers, selected by purposive and theoretical sampling. Grounded theory guided data collection, analysis and literature review.

Main findings: The study found coachees had no significant expectations of the coaching relationship. Results, however, indicated that six theoretical categories depict participants' experiences of the coaching relationship. The results showed an interdependent relationship between the categories ultimately contributing to the experience of the coaching relationship as a *growth-enabling relationship.*

Practical implications: Findings provide the state-owned utility with insight into the importance of establishing and maintaining a quality coaching relationship between coach and coachee. Information from the study could enable the state-owned utility to enhance coaching practices by addressing coach selection, relational contracting, clarification of coaching objectives, and providing organisational support.

Contribution/Value add: The findings do not only provide valuable insight into the actual experiences of coachees in the coaching relationship, but creates opportunities for future research of the theoretical categories identified to determine significance and possible theoretical constructs involved.

Key words: Leadership development, leadership coaching, coaching relationship, coaching, industrial psychology, grounded theory

Leaders globally are required to lead in organisational contexts that are continuously changing and have become volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA; Henley Business School, 2015). In response to the changing world of work, organisations have realised the necessity to develop and mobilise leaders to lead in uncertain environments in order to ensure a competitive advantage and the economic sustainability of organisations (Eustace & Martins, 2014; Gandotra, 2010; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Loew, 2012; Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 2002).

A recent leadership study by Gentry, Eckert, Stawiski, and Zhao, (2016) revealed that the six most prevalent leadership challenges that confront leaders in a VUCA environment, are inspiring followers, leading teams, developing managerial effectiveness, change management, development of employees, and management of internal organisational politics and stakeholder management. These challenges relate to the ability of leaders to effectively execute their role as leaders. Gentry et al., (2016) State that leadership development programmes across the world should focus on these challenges among all managerial levels around the world. In response, there has been a global movement among organisations to prioritise leadership development, specifically in utilising coaching in their basket of leadership development instruments (Deloitte, 2014a; Loew, 2012; Petrie, 2011; Zenger & Stinnett, 2006).

The leadership landscape in South Africa is no different from the global landscape. South African leaders are required to lead in economically unstable environments with added challenges. Affirmative action and workforce diversity are prioritised, shortage of competence and skills exists and employee engagement is low (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Eustace & Martins, 2014; Maritz, 2002). This creates a need for leaders who display leadership courage, are visionary, optimise organisational and human resource capital, can lead in diversity, and motivate and inspire employees (Deloitte, 2015; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Malnight & Graaf, 2012).

South African organisations have stepped up to proactively address current and future leadership challenges through leadership development strategies, both at individual and business level (Deloitte, 2014b; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Loew, 2012). Coaching has increasingly been included by organisations in their formal development strategies to build leadership capacity, address leadership competency gaps and manage talented employees

(Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Shyamsunder et al., 2011; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014; Zenger & Stinnett, 2006). This is also true for the state-owned utility in South Africa where this study was done, which realised that investing in its leaders will contribute to a shared vision, also addressing employee engagement, organisational performance and effectiveness (Vardiman et al., 2006).

Coaching is distinguished from other leadership development instruments, as it is characterised by four components: 1) it addresses individual client needs; 2) requires a coach with a specific skill set to improve leadership development; 3) involves a relationship between the coach and coachee; and 4) relies on an adaptable coaching process to facilitate growth (Ely, Boyce, Nelson, Zaccaro, Hernez-Broome, & Whyman, 2010). Although all four components are critical for coaching success, the coach-coachee relationship has been identified as the most important driver of the coaching process (Bozer et al., 2015; Jowett, O'Broin, & Palmer, 2010). For Gyllensten and Palmer (2007, p. 168), the coaching relationship signifies a "vehicle to change", acting as a catalyst (Baron & Morin, 2009) and is necessary to effect beneficial change and growth (O'Brion & Palmer, 2010). An essential condition for the success of coaching is the existence of a working relationship between coach-coachee (Baron & Morin, 2009).

With an understanding of the importance of the coaching relationship, it is necessary to learn more about the dynamic and multifaceted coaching relationship. A variety of definitions of the coaching relationship exists. For this study, the coaching relationship is defined as "a one-on-one helping relationship between a client and coach which is entered into with mutual agreement to improve the client's professional performance and personal satisfaction" (Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010, p. 917). It is regarded as an intimate, reciprocal, supportive, collaborative relationship with an equal distribution of power between coach-coachee (Grant, 2014; O'Broin & Palmer, 2009; Wang, 2013); a relationship founded on trust, rapport, commitment and collaboration (Boyce et al., 2010). In addition, Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) found that transparency and a positive evaluation of the quality of the coaching relationship underpin the realisation of coaching outcomes.

From the discussion it is evident that the quality of the coaching relationship contributes to the establishment of a working alliance (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015) and facilitates positive coaching outcomes (Boyce et al., 2010). The working alliance systematically develops

during the partnering of the coach with the coachee in a helping process to facilitate development and empower coachees (Steele, 2011). The role of the coach as facilitator is to create self-reliant and competent coachees that take ownership for their development (Kauffman & Coutu, 2009), independent from the advice or need for sustained support or expertise of the coach (Sills, n.d.). Additionally, the coach takes on a non-expert role where the coachee is viewed as the owner of the process and expert of his or her life (Steele, 2011). The development of the working alliance is dependent on three elements, namely a collective agreement on coaching objectives, commitment to activities, and establishing affective bonds (Baron, Morin, & Morin, 2011; Grant, 2014; Ianiro & Kauffeld, 2014). Research found experiences of the working alliance differ between the coach-coachee (de Haan, Grant, Burger, & Erikson, 2016); influenced by their unique experiences, values, behaviour and characteristics (Allen, Manning, Francis, & Gentry, 2012; Jowett et al., 2010).

Baron et al. (2011) sensitise coaches to regularly evaluate coachees' experiences of the working alliance during the coaching process as it impacts on coaching outcomes and the engagement of the coachee in the process. This is affirmed by Lowman (2005), who is of the opinion that researchers should look into real experiences of coachees to provide a perspective of coaching. If coaches become aware of the experiences of the coachee and are able to reflect over their own experience of the relationship, possible negative coaching outcomes are associated with the helping relationship (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016), thus enabling the coach to evaluate the quality of the relationship (Machin, 2010).

Research that explored the experiences and perceptions of the coachee focuses on the coaching process, experiences of coaching, conversely failing to directly relate to the actual experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship (Boyce et al., 2010; Brand & Coetzee, 2013; Gregory & Levy, 2010; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Machin, 2010). Existing research that does address the coaching relationship is predominantly outcome studies or studies that investigate the impact or effectiveness of coaching as a leadership intervention (Cavanagh, Grant, & Kemp, 2005; Meuse & Dai, 2009; Noer, 2005). Existing research provides a one-sided view as research predominantly reflects the views and experiences of behavioural scientists, managers and coaches (Cavanagh et al., 2005) and fails to explore the experiences of these relationships from the coachees' perspective. In addition, de Haan (2012) highlights that outcomes studies should look beyond effectiveness and evaluate outcomes in terms of the personal experiences, growth and value of coaching for leaders and their organisations.

Coaching for the state-owned utility is central to its leadership strategy. It is used as an instrument to build capacity and empower leaders to lead through turbulent times, striving for disciplined execution, leading people with compassion and creating a workforce that is motivated. This will only be through the establishment of a quality coaching relationship. Thus, for the state-owned utility to optimise benefits from coaching and to address the current gaps in literature, the study's objective is to gain an insider perspective of the experience of the coachee of the coaching relationship. If the expectations and experiences are better understood, the coaching relationship can assist the state-owned utility in preparing coachees, and facilitating coach selection to ensure optimal coaching experiences which in return will impact the coaching outcomes for individual leaders and the state-owned utility.

The aim of the study is to add to the existing body of knowledge that investigates coachees' perceptions, expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship. This study endeavor' to explore actual expectations and experiences of the coachee of the coaching relationship through the application of a constructivist grounded theory approach. By providing coachees with the opportunity to voice their experiences, the researcher's aim is to explore the impact of coachees' expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship as well as to ascertain how the coaching relationship shapes the experiences of the coachees and contributes towards the success of coaching.

Research Objective and Research Questions

With consideration of the importance of the coaching relationship and very few publications available that provide information of the coaching relationship from the perspective of the coachee, the objective of the study was to explore the expectations and experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship in a state-owned utility.

The questions formulated for the study are:

1. What are the coachees' expectations of the leadership coaching relationship?
2. What are the coachees' experiences of the leadership coaching relationship?
3. Was there a difference between the coachees' expectations and the experiences of the coaching relationship?

Research Design

The research design of the study was guided by the objective, philosophical paradigm and context of the study to assure the credibility of research findings (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2012; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006).

Research Approach

The study was conducted from a qualitative research perspective due to the exploratory nature of the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research allows the researcher to study the richness of the subjective experiences from the coachees themselves (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). This was facilitated by the researcher following a social constructivist grounded theory approach, where the researcher recognises that the meanings coachees attach to the coaching relationship are constructed from experiences during the coaching process (Krauss & Putra, 2005). From a constructivist perspective, the researcher held the view that meaning is co-constructed during the engagement between coach and coachees (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009; Glaser, 2012), from where the researcher followed an interpretative process to discover and infer the underlying implicit meanings of behaviours and experiences of the coachees (Charmaz, 2006).

Research Methods

Research Setting and Sampling

The researcher conducted the study among senior managers within a state-owned utility in South Africa. The state-owned utility was selected as research setting based on it's highly-rated leadership development strategy and reputable leadership coaching programme. The senior managers who participated in the study had completed leadership coaching as part of talent management and succession planning. Cases were sampled to a point of theoretical saturation where no new categories emerged from the data (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014).

Table 1 depicts a summary of the biographic profile of the interviewed participants.

Table 1

Biographical Profile of Research Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Duration of coaching
CR-03	47	M	White	12 Sessions
CR-06	35	M	African	6 sessions
CR-07	44	F	Indian	6 session
CR-09	40	F	Coloured	8 Sessions
CR-10	30	M	White	12 Sessions
CR-11	51	M	White	6 sessions

The research followed the grounded theory principle of starting with purposive sampling as the target population had been predetermined by the researcher (Currie, 2009). For this study senior managers were selected who had completed leadership coaching in the past three years. During the constant comparative data analysis phase of the study, theoretical sampling was used to identify new cases to explore specific emerging themes that needed clarification (Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical saturation was reached when the researcher had sufficient data to support theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2012).

Entrée and Establishing Researcher Roles

Permission was granted by the state-owned utility to conduct the research and assisted with entrée by availing names of coachees. The researcher contacted potential participants via email, providing them with full details of the study in order to make an informed decision. Interviews were conducted with the participants who voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. During the interview, the role of the researcher was clarified and questions with regard to the study and interview were addressed.

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection is flexible as the researcher can select from alternative instruments and sources of data (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). With the focus on understanding the experiences of coaches, the researcher collected data through in-depth semi-structured interviews. A pilot interview was conducted to determine whether the core questions would

bring the desired outcomes. The pilot interview data were not included in the study; however, the data guided the researcher to refine questions based on the responses of pilot interviewees (Passmore, 2010). Theoretical saturation was reached after six interviews.

Recording of Data

Interviews were digitally recorded as it ensured high accuracy and enabled the researcher to actively listen to and concentrate on the interviewee (Walsham, 2006). The richness of the data obtained during the interview process can be ascribed to the amount of data obtained from each interview. The word count for the interviews were; 15 472 for CR-03, 4 537 for CR-06, 4 712 for CR-07, 7 081 for CR-09, 8 619 and 6 156 respectively for CR-10, and 4 724 for CR-11. The researcher completed the initial transcriptions and later employed an independent transcriber to transcribe the rest of the interviews. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and shared with participants to verify the transcripts.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analyses were carried out simultaneously as data collection was guided by data analysis, according to grounded theory principles (Charmaz, 2006). The three phases of data analyses of grounded theory; namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding facilitated data analyses (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). Open coding was used to dissect information through line-by-line coding which allowed the researcher to conceptually analyse data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Lines were coded with conceptual labels to describe data without interpreting the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). During the open coding process, the researcher was able to identify categories with their underlying dimensions and properties (Egan, 2002) through a process of constant comparison and memoing (Jones & Alony, 2011). Axial coding is a process followed by the researcher to organise and condense the data by continuously asking questions to make meaningful relational connections by comparing the categories with sub-categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories were developed with the consideration of causal, intervening and contextual conditions between the phenomenon of interest (Bitsch, 2005). In the last phase of selective coding, the main categories and sub-categories were merged into a main theme, identifying a core phenomenon (Jamieson, Taylor & Gibson, 2006). Once the core phenomenon had been identified, the researcher selectively coded categories related to the core phenomenon by

reviewing categories identified during axial coding, systematically validating their relational connectedness to the core phenomenon (Holton, 2010; Kolb, 2012).

Strategies Employed to Ensure Quality of Data

Ensuring quality in qualitative research is a contentious topic (Shenton, 2004), therefore the researcher employed strategies to ensure the quality of data. Credibility was addressed through verbatim transcripts, participant-checking and peer review were done to verify the interpretation of data (Anney, 2014; Welch, Grossaint, Reid, & Walker, 2014). To enable the replication of the study, a complete description of the research strategy, methodology and contextual data for future research - to determine application to alternative contexts - is provided as suggested by Terre Blanche et al. (2006). A detailed recording and documentation of the process provides an audit trail to enhance dependability and confirmability.

According to Curtis and Curtis (2011), it is important for a study to obtain ethical clearance to ensure the research project adheres to ethical principles and minimises harm to participants. Thus, approval was obtained from the ethical committee of the university to conduct the study. Ethical practices such as voluntary informed consent and assurance of anonymity were followed.

Findings and Discussion

In line with the objectives of the research, two theme clusters were used. Each cluster has its related core categories and sub-categories which emerged from the analysis of the interviews. The two theme clusters are expectations of the coaching relationship and experiences of the coaching relationship. The discussion of categories will follow the introduction of each of the theme clusters.

Theme Cluster: Expectations of Coaching Relationship

This theme explored the expectations of coachees when entering the coaching relationship for the first time. Expectations could include perceived or assumed forethought of what they want from the coaching relationship or expect to find.

No Relational Expectations

With regard to the first question on expectations of the coaching relationship, the study did not reveal any significant relational expectations. When participant CR-10 was asked about his relational expectation, he responded with: *"Look, I went into this whole coaching thing blank"*.

Most of the participants' expectations of the coaching relationship were linked to expectations of the coach, the coaching process and goal setting with less of a relational focus, as expressed by CR-06: "*For me the expectation is the explanation of what a coaching experience is. And what you get from a coach and what you cannot get from a coach"*.

The responses by participants alluded to a realisation that coachees may lack understanding of the coaching relationship or hold preconceived ideas of coaching, which raise the question as to whether coachees understand coaching in general as explained by the following expressions of the participants:

> *So what I had thought… was going to be some structured programme. She was going to give me some structure to say; month one we are going to discuss this, month two we are going to discuss this (CR-7).*
>
> *I think she told me from the first meeting that she is not going to tell me what to do; it is all going to come from me (CR-06).*
>
> *...I will call you my coach, and you will tell me to run faster or slower, you know, another lap around the track. That's the kind of coach, that's my mental model of the coach (CR-10).*

The participants expressed a need to define and contract on the coaching relationship due to failed experiences of relational contracting during inception of the coaching process. Relationship contracting is a critical activity to be concluded during the first session of the coaching process (Pelham, 2015) as well as clarification of expectations (Simon, Odendaal & Goosen, 2014); this was affirmed by the experiences of participants:

> *So for me that it is key, to explain upfront what the relationship will entail. And I think for me it is key, because you are managing the expectation as well (CR-06).*

I would really define the relationship upfront (CR-10).

Under these conditions failure of participants to express protuberant relational expectations could be ascribed to their coaching readiness, being coaching novices or the presence of a need for coaching. Here the role of the coach is to assess the coachability of coachees to determine if coaching is the desired intervention (Pelham, 2015) as it impacts both the establishment of the coaching relationship and the coaching success (Butterworth, Moore, Meg, Stolzfus, & Walkup, 2014; de Haan, 2008). CR-09 explains her view of the need for coaching, as she was offered coaching without expressing a need:

> *You got to really need it. But if they just came in and just say everybody have a coach. We most probably might have sit across one another and asking what is it that we need to talk about because I do not need you. I think you definitely need to need it. You got to need it and feel like you are in the space to need it otherwise the business wastes its money.*

The conversations with coachees emphasise the importance to prepare coachees for the coaching relationship. Relationship effectiveness could be better managed if coaches determine coachee readiness (Robinson-Walker, 2008; Stevens, 2005), place emphasis on clarifying roles and expectations during contracting, and educate coachees on establishing a quality coaching relationship with less focus on the process (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011) and relationship management. There is power in relational contracting between coach and coachee (Pelham, 2015), not forgetting that there are other role players such as the sponsor or gatekeeper in the coaching process that can influence the preparation of the coachee.

Theme Cluster: Experience of Coaching Relationship

The experiences of the coaching relationship include six categories related to the coaching relationship. The six categories identified; growth focused working alliance, informal business relationship, experiencing a friendly coaching relationship, evolving relationship, lasting relationship and perceptive experience of the quality of the coach-coachee relationship. Each category will be discussed below.

Growth Focused Working Alliance

The category growth focused working alliance represents setting goals and collaborative engagement between coach and coachee working towards goals. Participants experience a growth focused working alliance when coachees participated in goal setting; devising action plans also referred to setting the coaching agenda (Segers, Vloeberghs, & Henderickx, 2011). Collaborative goal setting is a fundamental element towards establishing a working alliance (Berry, Ashby, Gnilka, & Matheny, 2011; Sun, Deane, Crowe, Andresen, Oades, & Ciarrochi, 2013) and central to the coaching relationship (Grant, 2014). This is reflected in the following statement:

> *In short he would ask; what is your current stance or what do you feel is your current level of competency in that. Then we would work on how we are going to get better. Like develop a plan kind of thing (CR-10).*

Setting the coaching agenda, according to Segerset al. (2011), is an explicit process of contracting between coach-coachee on coaching objectives with the consideration of the organisational coaching agenda. The study found that the participants may enter the coaching relationship with implicit personal agendas outside the coaching agenda that had been set with the coach. This could indicate that coaching is viewed as an opportunity to personally benefit from coaching in the short term or perceived as a career advancement intrument. The finding is significant as coachees may influence the coaching agenda to fullfil their own personal and professional objectives in the process that may or may not be shared with the coach (Grant, 2014). CR-09 refered to her personal agenda; however, she never indicated whether she had disclosed her agenda to the coach:

> *Also in terms of personal goals I wanted. It assessed me to move out of the …. I wanted to move out, the business did not want to move me out and it assisted me to get the process in place to move out. Because it is not just go out, it was various things that had to come into play.*

Participants' ability to track progress through coaches' development feedback is found to intervene with the experience of collaborative working alliance. All the participants expressed the need for continuous feedback to self-reflect on development, confirmed in a study by Brand and Coetzee (2013). Similarly, Olckers (2016) states progress feedback by the coach at the start of the coaching relationship is essential to strengthen the working

alliance. Participant CR-03 describes his experience of not being able to monitor his development: “I couldn’t track my progress through this methodology, but as I say, there was no chronological flow of where we were going.”

All participants expressed the need to experience integrity, trust, authentic interest, pure intent, commitment and support for their development from their coaches. According to Grant, Passmore, Michael, and Parker (2010), the presence of these experiences by coachees intensified their growth experience:

> *It was about him really wanted to see you grow, and really caring for you (CR-10).*
>
> *… I saw in most cases the session will be allocated for an hour, but we will spend one and a half. So it was always longer than what she allocated (CR-06).*
>
> *It is very important that you will be able to feel that I can trust this person (CR-09).*

The willingness of coaches to confront enables goal achievement (Noer, 2005). Similarly, the participants felt that their growth was reinforced when their coach displayed the ability to confront and challenge them (Ely et al., 2010) towards facilitating alternative perspectives, learning through self-reflection (Brand & Coetzee, 2013) and embracing candid conversations, as explained by CR-10:

> *We actually disagreed on a few points… But then … would give you a few things to go and think about as well and I would mention a few things to him as well, during the coaching sessions he would tell me: ‘I thought about this, I am a bit of reading on this, I see your point in it, I still do not agree with you, but I see your point in it.*

Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) caution coaches not to see the relationship as more important than the proces. For the participants, the growth experience is faciltated by the growth focused working alliance, knowing the coach and the process will support them on their journey. Furthermore, the presence of a transparent coaching agenda at inception and the ability to evaluate the extent to which the coaching agenda was attained at the end of the coaching process may reinforce the growth experience of participants (Wasylyshyn, 2003).

Informal Business Relationship

The experience of an informal business relationship denotes that the coaching approach applied by a coach to attain goals is perceived to be relaxed, non-directive (Ives, 2008) and informal. Initially expecting a structured process, some participants described the experience of an informal non-directive relationship that allows flexibility to adjust processes towards addressing the coaching needs of the client, referred to as mode of delivery by Cavanagh et al. (2005), while following a formal process. CR-07 explains how she experienced the informal relationship:

> *My, my initial thought that it is a structured programme. I did not realise that it could be so informal. It is almost as if you sitting around and chatting, yet you are being coached at the same time. …Because we kept it informal, it made it a lot easier to talk, as opposed to say, this is our programme today.*

Despite the experience of informality, participants need the assurance of the existence of a process that will facilitate their growth (Brand & Coetzee, 2013). The credibility of the coach as skilled coaching expert (Boyce et al., 2010) and the ability to systematically direct behaviour through a process, contribute to coachees' trust in the process (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006) However, it appears that participants initially have a need for a formalised process, but the prominence of the process disappear as the relationship becomes more important, as reflected in the following comments:

> *…wanting to understand the journey or the methodology that they are going to put me through first, before we just start (CR-03).*
>
> *I think initially there had to be that, it worked a couple of times and I could see that it worked, I did not need to have an understanding of every little process (CR-09).*

In line with the experiences of the participants, Ives (2008) regards the coach as expert to direct the coaching process. From the experiences of participants, it is evident that coachees expect the coach to direct the coaching process. The coach is also expected to be skilled as coaching expert to individualise (Ives, 2008) the coaching process or approach through facilitation of the coaching process, in order to accommodate the needs of the coachee and to stimulate growth through informal coaching discussions (Cavanagh et al., 2005). Participants inferred 'informality' from experiences of being in control of the coaching process as they felt empowered to determine their coaching priorities as mentioned by CR-10 and CR-07:

What you like to focus on or what do you feel will get you to grow as a manager? Then he will slot things that he knows as well.

..I would say what was on the top of my mind at that point or what was troubling me the most at that point in time or what is it that I wanted to discuss the most at that point.

Furthermore, informality was associated with open conversations where they experience freedom of expression, trust, and confidentiality; with the coach being accommodating towards their needs. Coaches' roles are seen to create a supportive environment (psychological safety) where coachees can experience that they can freely express themselves, are accepted and can deal with pressing matters (Brand & Coetzee, 2013; Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999). As explained by participants:

I could take literately anything to…., he won't judge it. He was a sounding board for everything (CR-10).

I can say anything that I want. And I did not expect her to call my boss…that is why I would go there and talk about things that is really worrying me (CR-06).

It allowed me to talk about anything that I wanted to…. work related stuff, what is going on at work, how it was affecting me, how I felt, how it affected my personal life outside of work (CR-07).

The experience of participants appear to be influenced by the coaching paradigm or approach (Ives, 2008), skills, and characteristics of the coach as people developer (Passmore, 2007; Wasylyshyn, 2003). Both this study and literature show that a relationship - experienced as informal - fosters experiences of open conversations, an environment of trust, confidentiality, feeling safe and accepted (Brand & Coetzee, 2013).

Experiencing a Friendly Coach-Coachee Relationship

The majority of participants referred to their coaching relationship as friendship or a "friendly relationship". It appears to relate to a personal affiliation and bond with their coaches. CR-11 describes the friendship:

So, where do I go to clear my head? I can sit and chat with a friend over a beer to tell him in what a bad space I am. It will only be a while until the friend will tell me to get over myself. So, if I refer to a friendship, it is not the typical friendship where we go out and do things together. It is more like a confidant. Someone whom you feel comfortable

with to share your personal, but not personal problem, if I can say it like that. It is more about sharing your personal experiences at that time.

The findings of this study are confirmed by Ianiro, Schermuly, and Kauffeld (2013) who found that "friendliness" relates to covert affiliation, and dominant (relates to goal attainment through coach's competence) behaviours of the coach are associated with a positive perception of the quality of the coaching relationship. The experience for them was having a place to share day-to-day experiences, get a perspective on and to deal with things that prevent them from growing (Hall et al., 1999), as is explained by (CR-10):

So by eliminating the small sweat that makes you stress and …. irritates you. By removing that, which you feel is 80%, which he shows you 20%. Gives you 60% back and let you focus on growth opportunities rather.

The researcher found that the ability to build affiliation was dependent on the chemistry, bond, trust, respect, and value alignment between coach-coachee. This is reflected in the experiences from participants:

Like I said, I think everybody's got their secret, so … did not ask what was your secret. But with time I think you will feel comfortable and you would share your secret (CR-10).

But some people you just get along with and some you do not and I think it is important that that connection must happen. But I think a lot of it speaks to the two values and the person respects your values as well. So, I think those little intricacies is what really create that bond (CR-09).

Maybe it was just her as a person you know, the fact that we clicked made a difference (CR-07).

Most participants experienced psychological support through the coach's caring nature, commitment, active listening and authenticity that facilitated participants to use the coach as soundboard and become vulnerable in the process (Passmore, Peterson, & Freire, 2013; Wang, 2013). However, according to Pelham (2015), vulnerability is embraced when coaches themselves become vulnerable as it contributes to the establishment of a bond between coach and coachee (Zenger & Stinnett, 2006). As mentioned by the participants:

Really caring for you. ...knowing that you got a big exam coming up … will make a point by remembering to send you a message. This is not part of his duty by coaching you, but just that caring attitude coming through again. (CR-10).

That they are here for my best interest and not just here to do a favour. They are really there to help me. It creates a more friendship. (CR-09).

I would say more like a father figure as well, but you know you will not get into trouble but you can sound board of him. Even though you know you wrong. I will still tell him. (CR-10).

Fact that she made me feel very comfortable, it was very easy to talk to her. And she listened. …during that one hour, she focused on me and me alone (CR-07).

The role of the coach, as described by Gyllensten and Palmer (2007), included being friendly and to act as confidant to foster growth, which is confirmed by participants in this study. This study indicated that the presence and strength of affiliation between coach-coachee may be more important to the experience of the coaching relationship than previously understood. The experience reflected from coachees and which they felt was difficult to verbalise is explained by Bluckert (2005), as a coach is that one person, when you look back at your life, that has left a lasting impression.

Evolving Relationship

Evolving relationship is experienced as the progressive maturation of the coach-coachee relationship during the coaching process. Participants engaged in evaluative processes to measure the growth of the relationship. The continued evaluation of the relationship growth is necessary to examine the state of the relationship for both coach and coachee (Ely et al., 2010). The participants assess the strength of the bond from their initial engagement experiences:

Initially it weren't like we walked in and we were connected. It took a bit of time. And I think at times it is also just keeping at it and then keeping at it initially and then it seeing this will work or won't work (CR-09).

I think it was just basically to get know each other. It was for him to get to know me, but for me to get to know him as well. I think it was three months in, you felt safe that you can share anything with him and then he would ask you as well (CR-10).

From the experiences of most of the participants, trust developed over time and they became more comfortable with the relationship. The participants and de Haan (2008) indicated that the number of coaching sessions influences the establishment of a working alliance and the

ability to evaluate growth and the coach-coachee relationship (Baron & Morin, 2009). This is illustrated by CR-10:

> *We did about 12 sessions, I think 12, 18 sessions will be really nice. Because you get the ball rolling by about session 3 or 4, then it is already 4 months down the line.*
> *When together he will ask have you made any progress on it? And then we set goals…. Then we would work on how we are going to get better. Set out what we will be working on. I think that is how this relationship grew*

Despite the duration of coaching, CR-03 expressed his disappointment at failing to experience personal growth and in the relationship with the coach: *"So very little learning, very little learning out of very little change. So went in the same, came out the same,with just a little bit of patting on the back"*.

The experiences of participants confirmed the impact of the qualities of coaches, especially characteristiscs of trust, commitment, integrity, and honesty. They also indicated that open feedback influences their experiences and evaluation of the effectiveness of the relationship (Boyce et al., 2010; Wang, 2013). In the case of CR-03, the absence of some of these factors contributed to the coachee evaluating the coaching relationship as stagnant:
"… everything is so perfect …, there's no harm words ever, no direction change, or no disagreements. It's almost a fake environment from the word go".

According to the narratives of the participants, they also experienced the relationship evolving from a business-like relationship into a more personal relationship with the coach. CR-07 reflects on her experience of the evolving relationship:

> *You know to the point that that … and I have now become friends. We still see each other, you know outside of work, if I need advice from her, I need to chat to her. I give her a call or I message her or something (CR-07)*

The experiences of the maturing relationship provide insight into what is happening during the coaching relationship (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015). An important finding is that participants experience that the relationship is not just an instrument, but rather see the relationship as a journey that progressively evolves with the coach over time.

Lasting Relationship

The experience of the lasting nature of the relationship is reflected in the statement by CR-07: *"I mean, it is over a year later and we still keep in touch. We still go out for a drink, whatever the case may be"*.

The expectation is that the coaching relationship terminates at the end of the coaching process. The study showed that some of the participants maintained informal contact with their coaches beyond the formal coaching process. The category 'lasting relationship' seems to relate to participants' evaluation of the success of the relationship, coach-coachee bond, valuing the relationship and experience of the growth journey, as explained by participant CR-10:

> *The coaching sessions have been over for more than a year now, but I still send him photos when I graduated. To say, the ideas were for me to finish my MBA, I finally have done it. That for me is a connection (CR-10).*

The pattern of keeping contact may allude to the importance of the working alliance, the personal affiliation established with the coach, and the impact that the coaching had on their lives. CR-10 explains his personal affiliation with the coach as follows:

> *I can still contact him. It is definitely a long lasting relationship. For now 10 years down the line I will definitely keep contact. I do not really have a word for it. It is not business relationship, it is a real caring, good relationship (CR-10).*

Participants suggested that the experience of a long term relationship stems from the evolution of the coaching relationship between the coach and coachee. Participants view it as a relationship they benefit from and they prefer to maintain the relationship for current and future use. This, according to the researcher, may suggest the presence of a possible dependency on the coach as contact is maintained even after the formal coaching relationship has been terminated by the organisation. There are dangers, according to Kauffman and Coutu (2009), to coaching relationships that can create dependency for support and expert advice. It could be said that the experience of dependency on the coaching relationship may stem from the personal benefit gained from the relationship. This is true for CR-07 who, after a year, still maintained contact with the coach and stated the benefit of maintaining contact with the coach:

… to the point that where I am looking for a job outside of …, because I do believe that I do not have a future here. To a point where she is even telling me, contact this person contact that person, and she tells people that she knows me, she has coached me and tells people what type of person that I am.

In the case of CR-10, failure to terminate the coaching relationships may indicate a growth dependency as his coaching objectives had not been achieved. It was found that, cases where coaching objectives had been attained, the coaching relationship had been terminated.

> *I would say 18 sessions so that you can have a long term plan. Maybe do it over 3 years and having a session every second month, so that the person can see how you develop as well. Within a year, we have discussed my 3 & 5 year plan but still I did not really go anywhere after a year.*

In the case of CR-10, the coach maintained contact which may re-enforce the need to maintain contact with the coach; "I would say every 3rd month he would send me a message, how is it going?"

An evolving relationship for participants is built on trust, commitment (going the extra mile, willing to make sacrifices), collaboration, open communication, value alignment, respect, empathy and acceptance. Inherent to trust that evolves with time between the coach-coachee, is the presence of integrity and the competence of the coach (Bluckert, 2005a). This is confirmed by Grant (2014) who found that commitment, trust, and respect create feelings of closeness that are important for the development of lasting coaching relationships. Participants in this study mentioned:

> *She would refer me to certain movies and things like that and for me that was things that add value. That means that coaching was not only for an hour thing (CR-06).*
>
> *You get that feeling you can trust this person because they do have your interest at heart (CR-09).*
>
> *They accept you at face value (CR-10).*

Notably participants who reported high personal affiliation with coaches referred more to the experience of a lasting relationship and continued to maintain contact with coaches after the formal coaching relationship had been terminated by the organisation. Of further interest is the coach's apparent endorsement of continued engagement, re-enforcing the coachees'

experience of a lasting relationship. Findings by Hall et al. (1999) affirmed that the coaching relationship provides a safe place for coachees in an otherwise lonely world. Thus, the relationship may be useful over the long term or coachees value the impact of the coach in their lives, using the coach as a lifeline when needed, as explained by CR-09:

> *I mean recently I did ask, for example I wanted to see him... and he says come for free, there is a slot.… That is what I mean. It is somebody who is not just like, sorry…. you have to pay R3000 or whatever they charge an hour, this is my fee. No it was, just come you know, we can just talk.*

The findings correspond with the findings of Grant (2014) that the experience of a lasting relationship relates to the closeness between coach-coachee. The impact of a relationship beyond the scope of a formal coaching relationship might have negative consequences, as it might indicate a dependency on the coach that might be linked to personal benefit, or it might indicate that coaching objectives had not sufficiently been addressed. Kauffman and Coutu (2009) indicate that coaches should be cautious in creating a dependency, as it might potentially create conflict of interest in relation to the responsibility towards the organisation.

Quality of the Coach-Coachee Relationship

This category reflects the perceptive experiences of relational success or failure. The study found that participants base their experience of the coaching relationship on unique subjective evaluations. This finding is confirmed by de Haan et al. (2016) and supports the view that the presence of a working alliance determines whether the coaching relationship is evaluated as being successful or a failure. Participant CR-10 reflects experiences of a successful relationship, whilst participant CR-03 expresses experiencing a weak working alliance with his or her coach:

> *A good coaching relationship would be exactly what I had with... You can have open discussions with him. You have respect for each other and a working relationship. You can actually see the individual being coached is actually growing. It is again difficult to say which specific items make up a good coaching relationship. The fact is that it worked.*
>
> *So this is what I experienced in the relationship. It was really, in both cases, the outcome to me was exactly the same. It was a woolly, fuzzy, sort of you are the best, you are so good, and there is nothing really we can change, because you are doing so well and you*

have all these attributes and you have all these early successes. So what I expected - they would be a lot more objective and a lot more abrasive.

The study also confirmed that the evaluation of the quality and helpfulness of the coaching relationship was determined by coaches' behaviour (de Haan et al., 2011), application of coaching models, as well as the extent to which core elements of trust, commitment, respect and collaboration were present in the relationship (Baron & Morin, 2009; Boyce et al., 2010; Brand & Coetzee, 2013; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). The participants reflect over their experiences:

I thought it was very good and very open and a very trusting environment.…obviously talking about quite personal experiences. You felt that it was a trusting relationship, that there was confidentiality (CR-09).

It's more going the extra mile over and above what you are paid to do. Which means you are committed in doing the job. Probably the happiness in you seeing the success of the people that you are looking after. (CR-06).

For CR-03, the failed relationship represented an experience of misaligned coaching objectives between himself and the coach:

So the goal for me was not I want to be told I was still the right guy for the job or that … is the right place for me or that my personal life. …I was hoping that they would show me where there is room for improvement.

The experience of CR-10 corresponds with findings by Gyllenstena and Palmer (2007), who emphasise the importance of chemistry in the coach-coachee relationship, as the experience of trust influences the experience of relational success:

I do not want to share any of my plans, of my future, my five to ten year plan. There is no trust and you do not know. There is nothing that I will say that is going to affect my career. I do not feel like sharing it with the coach. I feel like I am going to put a lot of effort into telling you everything, we are going to sit an hour and nothing is going to come from it, anyway.

The study supports the importance of relationship components such as trust, and respect for participants to evaluate the quality of the coaching relationships, as mentioned by Ely et al. (2010) and Grant (2014). In the quest to understand the coaching relationship better, the

current research provides opportunity for researchers to learn more from coachees' actual experiences of what contributes to relationship success, failure and an experience of a working alliance.

Literature highlighted two main themes which emerge as central to the coaching relationship. The first theme relates to the quality of the working alliance between the coach-coachee. The working alliance refers to the establishment of a facilitative relationship between the coach and coachee, where agreement on goals and tasks is reached through a process (Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015); where the coachee feels safe and supported in the relationship (de Vries, 2013) that is built on trust, transparency and is valued as it stimulates growth (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). The second relates to the coaching relationship experienced as being goal-focused in nature. It is evident from literature that coachees experience the relationship as goal-focused, associated with the coaches' ability to facilitate goal-setting, -attainment and -evaluation (Grant, 2014), which all influence coaching success (Grant, 2016).

These two themes were affirmed as core considerations in the perceptive experiences of the coaching relationship by the coachee. Coachees' experiences were influenced by the assurance of clear goals, presence of a defined process and ability to monitor and evaluate their growth through self-reflection and feedback received from the coach. This study found - in contrast to Gessnitzer and Kauffeld (2015) who measured the elements of the working alliance, goal, task and bond through the WAI questionnaire - that the bond as element of the working alliance has no effect on coaching success. However, the bond appears to be significant from a coachee's perceptive experience of the coaching relationship. It was found, through the perceptive experiences of the quality working alliance, that the bond was perceived as being important for the establishment and maintenance of the coaching relationship. This was evident in coaching relationships where goals were clear and coach-coachee experienced progressive development, which in return strengthened the bond.

The study further revealed that participants enter the coaching relationship with no clear expectation of the coaching relationship. They enter the process with a need for development and faith that the coach will help them in their endeavour. However, as they embark on the coaching journey, their relational experiences start to formalise. It is through a process of continuous evaluation and assessment of their experiences within the ambit of the coach-coachee engagement process that their relational expectations and experiences evolve.

Six categories emerged which signify the coachee's experiences of the coaching relationship. Each of the categories systematically relates to one another and relationship experiences are cultivated through engagement with the coach and the coaching process. The coaching relational experiences have been identified as a growth focused relationship, where the coach - through the informal application of the coaching approach - establishes a "friendly" relationship that enables the coachee to grow. The relationship develops over time and is strengthened by the establishment of a quality working alliance built on trust, commitment, collaboration, integrity and acceptance that extend beyond the formal coaching process.

Conclusion

The study's findings related to the first objective of the study, to explore the expectations of coachees of the coaching relationship in the State Owned Utility, findings indicate that the coachee holds no clear expectations of the coaching relationship. Possible reasons for the absence of relational expectations can be ascribed to insufficient coaching readiness, deficiency in the coaching experience contributing to being uninformed of what to expect of the coaching relationship, and the coachee's 'mental' model of coaching. The absence of relational expectations influences the development of a collaborative coaching relationship with the coach. Thus, if coaching expectations could be clarified early in the coaching process, it may accelerate the establishment of a quality coaching relationship, allowing more time to actively work on coaching objectives which in return will enhance the coaching experience and outcomes for the coachee.

The second objective of the study was to explore the experiences of the coaching relationship. The results showed an interdependent relationship between the six theoretical categories ultimately contributing to the experience of the coaching relationship as a *growth-enabling relationship*. The experience of the quality of the coaching relationship is evaluated against the experience of developmental progress and the ability to realise coaching outcomes. This affirms the importance of goal-orientation in the experience of the coaching relationship. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

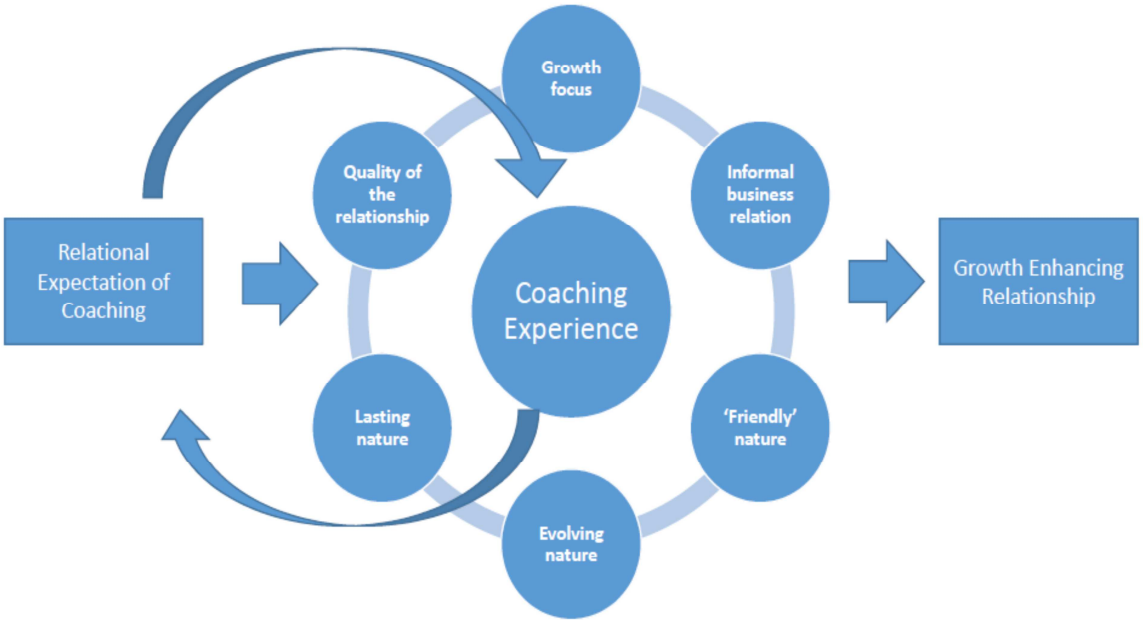

Figure 1. Growth-enhancing relational model

The study further found that coaching relationship resemble that of a therapeutic relationship being helping in nature and where the coachee can become vulnerable, seek understanding and serve as soundboard. Thus the coach creates a coaching environment that stimulates emotional support.

The coaching relationship is further experienced as being founded on trust, respect, commitment, collaboration, acceptance, commitment, confidentiality, active listening and clear coaching agenda by the coach. The presence of a close working alliance between coach-coachee creates a growth facilitative relationship with genuine interest and care for the coachee where he or she can be him/herself. Furthermore, it is defined as a non-judgmental, friendly, informal relationship which encourages open discussions, respect and challenges perspectives. Considering the findings it is evident that the study contributes to an insider perspective of the experiences of coachees regarding these factors in a coaching relationship.

Limitations and Recommendations

The sample of the research was limited to the experience of coachees within the state-owned utility and cannot be generalised to the expectations and experiences of the general South African coachee population. Further limitations are the small number of coachees interviewed and the period between research and the coaching relationship. The time lapse may have

affected the ability to accurately recall expectations and experiences. All cases represented coachees who have completed a coaching process and no cases were included while in the midst of a coaching relationship

Recommendations for coachees, coaches, and sponsors are to place more emphasis on relational contracting at the inception of the coaching process. Regular evaluations of experiences could facilitate maintaining quality coaching relationships. Clarify roles in the coaching process and the relationship. Sponsors should become more involved in coaching and line managers should take on a supportive function.

Recommendations for future research are to explore the theoretical categories contributing to the growth-enhancing relationship in order to determine the significance of the coaching relationship and coaching effectiveness, and to extend research to explore the theoretical constructs of the theoretical categories. Furthermore, research need to be extended to the training of coaches, with a focus on coach education and training in relation to contracting, establishment and maintenance of the relationship to enhance effectiveness of coaching relationships. Lastly it is recommended that future research should investigate coaching models and their impact on the ability of coachee to establish an effective coaching relationship coach.

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CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the chapter is to present the conclusion with reference to the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations are made for the coachee, coach, organisation and future research.

3.1 CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was twofold; first to gain insight into the expectations and secondly, to explore the experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship in a state-owned utility in South Africa. Since limited literature is available that accounts for the expectations and experiences of coachees, a grounded theory study was conducted by the researcher to explore the phenomena.

3.1.1 Expectations of the Coaching Relationship

The first objective of the study was to explore the expectations of coachees in the coaching relationship. Results showed that coachees had no clear expectations of the coaching relationship. This finding and the lack of literature regarding the expectations of the coaching relationship confirm the lack of insight into the expectations of the coaching relationship and that the topic needs further investigation. The study revealed that the coachee enters the coaching relationship with no preconceived/predetermined expectations of the coaching relationship. Possible reasons could be that the coachee has no prior coaching experience, sees it as an organisational initiative and may not think of the relationship or may use it as a career advancement instrument with the focus on goals and not the relationship.

It can further be influenced by the 'mental' model held by coachees or their coaching readiness. Relational expectations were found to be established during the coaching experience and engagement with the coach. It can be concluded that having no clear relational expectations evolve into relational expectations of which the coachee becomes aware or can express, as these expectations are derived from experiences within the coaching relationship. The absence of relational expectations has consequences for the establishment of a mutual collaborative coaching relationship. It could indicate a one-sided expectation from the coachee that could reflect a misunderstanding or uninformed view of what coaching is or

what the coachee's role is in the coaching relationship. This could mirror that coachees may enter a coaching relationship with insufficient coaching readiness. Finally, it can be said that emphasis should be placed on relationship contracting by the coach and the organisation, as this will contribute to the establishment and co-creation of a well-defined coaching relationship (Pelham, 2015). Readiness and commitment from both the coachee and the organisation contribute to expectations of the coaching process and the coaching relationship and, if appropriately addressed, contribute to the realisation of the coaching objectives (Ely, Boyce, Nelson, Zaccaro, Hernez-Broome, & Whyman, 2010).

3.1.2 Experiences of the Coaching Relationship

The second objective of the study was to explore the coachee's experiences of the coaching relationship. Results of the empirical study indicated that six theoretical categories depict the coachee's experiences of the coaching relationship. The results showed an interdependent relationship between the theoretical categories ultimately contributing to the experience of the coaching relationship as a *growth-enabling relationship*. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

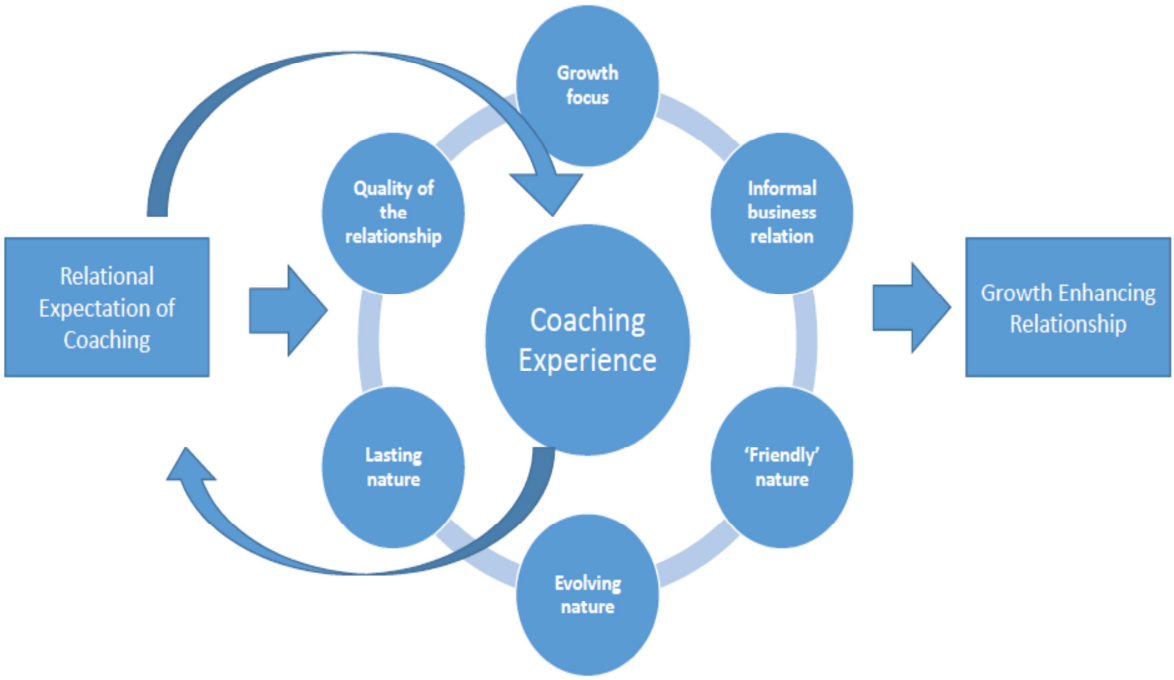

Figure 1. Growth-enhancing relational model

The core category growth-enabling relationship depicts important findings in relation to the coachee's experiences of the coaching relationship as a goal-orientated relationship. It confirms the view that the coaching relationship is a vehicle that brings transformation, growth and learning (Critchley, 2010), affirming the importance of the coaching relationship for the growth of the coachee. However, the study revealed that the experience of the coaching relationship stands in line with whether the coach - through his or her characteristics, skills, knowledge and the characteristics of the coaching relationship - facilitates a growth experience. The results suggest that the quality of the coaching relationship was evaluated against the experience of developmental progress and the ability to realise coaching outcomes. The goal-focused nature of the coaching relationship is said to contribute to an evaluation of coaching success (Grant, 2014). However, this study goes further to affirm the importance of goal-orientation in the experience of the coaching relationship.

An unexpected finding of the study was the view of the coaching relationship as a friendship. This has been found to relate to the resemblance between a coaching relationship and a therapeutic relationship, being helping in nature and where the coachee can become vulnerable, seek understanding and soundboard as he or she sees the coach as someone who is there to assist (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011; Maxwell, 2009). The difference, according to the coachees, is that they do not want to use coaching for therapeutic purposes, but rather need assistance with day-to-day challenges that constrain their development in the workplace. This finding supports the view of Critchley (2010) that the coach's role is to create a coaching environment that provides emotional support to coachees.

The results show that the experiences of the coaching relationship are founded on trust, respect, commitment, collaboration, acceptance, confidentiality, active listening and honest feedback by the coach, to mention but a few. The study thus confirms the importance of the components of a coaching relationship (Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010), active ingredients of coaching and the characteristics of coaches to establish and maintain a coaching relationship. The study contributes to an insider perspective of the experiences of coachees regarding these factors in a coaching relationship.

In conclusion, the growth-enhancing relationship is defined by the experiences of coachees as an enduring relationship founded on mutual trust, approachability and confidentiality. The

presence of a close working alliance between coach-coachee creates a growth facilitative relationship with genuine interest and care for the coachee where he or she can be him/herself. Furthermore, it is defined as a non-judgmental, friendly, informal relationship which encourages open discussions, respect and challenges perspectives.

3.2 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study should be viewed in light of the objectives, the context, the research approach and research methodology of the study. The main limitation of this study was the timeframe between the coaching relationship and the research. This might have affected the coachee's ability to accurately recall expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship. In a study by Correia, dos Santos, and Passmore (2016), the limitation is related to the retrospective nature of research which contributes to recall bias. The second limitation relates to the sample used in the study. All cases represented coachees who have completed a coaching process and information is gathered post-coaching. This limitation could be addressed in future research by inclusion of cases where coachees are in a coaching relationship. It is advised to include cases in the different phases of the coaching process as well, in order to monitor experiences during the coaching process. Although there is no prescribed sample size for grounded theory research (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), the sample size may restrict the findings. The sample was limited to experiences of coachees within the state-owned utility and may not represent the expectations and experiences of the general coachee population.

The third limitation of the study was the unresponsiveness of participants when the researcher requested follow-up interviews as part of the theoretical sampling process. All participants were approached for a follow-up interview of which only one participant agreed to the interview. Lastly, due to the subjective data analysis approach of grounded theory (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007b), the researcher acknowledges that her own personal experience, knowledge and perceptions might have influenced the interpretation of the data. The researcher made every effort during the interview and data analysis process to be aware of her own bias and to stay as close as possible to the data to guide the interpretation.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3.1 Recommendations for the Coachee and Coach

It is recommended that coachees do more to ensure that they understand their role in the coaching relationship within the framework of the coaching triad. The growth experience is dependent upon the ownership the coachee takes in managing the coaching relationship. Hence, coachees are advised to clarify where there are uncertainties, engage with the sponsor to better prepare coachees for coaching, to ask questions and not to enter the coaching process without knowledge of what coaching is and the role of the coaching relationship. Coachees need to face their own assumptions of coaching and evaluate if coaching is what they require.

Recommendations to coaches relate to their role during the chemistry session, clarification of the coaching agenda and relationship management. Coaches need to take greater responsibility to contract with the coachee on the coaching relationship, and to gain insight into the coachee's understanding of the coaching relationship. That should also assist with the clarification of expectations and to educate the coachee regarding the coaching relationship. This should take place in context of evaluating coachees' coaching readiness as well as their exposure to coaching (whether coached before or prior coaching with a different coach). Relational contracting should also extend to a relationship with the sponsor and clarification of expectations from the triad.

Within the ambit of the growth-enabling relationship, coaches should place emphasis on establishing clear coaching agendas by engaging the coachee and sponsor to align coaching objectives. Coaches are advised to clarify the coaching process and to evaluate whether the process facilitates growth for the coachee as it is important for the coachee to identify with a process that supports his or her growth needs. With regard to relationship management, coaches need to play an active role as evaluator of relational health through relational conversations related to the experience of the coachee of the coaching relationship; coachees' experience of goal attainment and growth feedback; and the signs of coach overdependence. It is further recommended that coaches evaluate expectations of the coaching relationship at the start of coaching, throughout the coaching process till the end in order to determine whether relational expectations had been met.

3.3.2 Recommendations for the Organisation

In the research, organisation refers to the state-owned utility in South Africa; however, it also applies to any organisation that wishes to apply the research in an organisational context. Organisations, representing line managers, human resource business partners and coaching gatekeepers, need be become more involved in the coaching process. It is recommended that organisations take on an active role to ensure coachability of coachees by having open conversations with regard to the objectives of coaching and clarifying any misperceptions that the coachees may have of the coaching process and coaching relationship. More should be done to inform coachees of their role in the coaching process and relationship. The organisation should further play a more prominent role to clarify expectations of the coaching relationship.

In relation to the selection of coaches and chemistry sessions, organisations need to facilitate the process to ensure compatibility between coach and coachee. Incompatibility negatively affects experiences of the coaching relationship. It is also recommended that coaches have insight into and an understanding of the organisational context of the coachee. Furthermore, coaches must have business experience as it builds the coach's credibility, contributing to the establishment and overall experience of the coaching relationship. Coachees expressed a preference towards external coaching; thus, it is essential for organisations to take note where in-house coaching is offered in order for coachees to develop a trusting relationship. Coaches should be credible, well trained and display commitment towards the coaching process.

The organisation's role is to support coachees and participate during the coaching process. Coachees expressed a need for the involvement of their sponsors, specifically with reference to line managers taking on a support function in their development. Should organisations fail to support coachees, coachees will drive their own coaching agendas or create a dependency on the coach which will affect coaching outcomes and organisational benefit from the coaching programme, negatively.

3.3.3 Recommendations for Future Research

The research study's contribution is significant as it provided more insight into the experiences of coachees of the coaching relationship. Some of the findings have not been

recorded before and theoretical categories identified should further be investigated to determine their significance and possible theoretical constructs involved. It is recommended that a quantitative research methodology is used to measure the experiences of a growth-enhancing relationship. Qualitative research approaches could be used to further explore specific categories of the experiences identified throughout the study in order to enhance the understanding of the coaching relationship and to contribute towards existing knowledge of the experiences of the coaching relationship.

Future research is needed to further explore coachees' experiences as it is still unclear what the influence of the experiences of the coaching relationship are on coaching outcomes as this study's aim was only to explore the experiences. The researcher did not validate the experiences with those of the coaches and it may be valuable to include coaches in a similar study, exploring their experiences related to the categories identified.

In cases where the intent of organisations is to implement the research, it is advised that the study become accustomed to the specific organisational context. Future research may include a tracking system of experiences of the coaching relationship through action research and use of technology to monitor the coaching relationship.

3.4 PERSONAL REFLECTION OF RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

To conclude the research study, I would like to reflect on my personal experiences during the research process. The use of grounded theory has been a very taxing but fulfilling experience. I have come to realise that research is a skill that you will only develop through actual experience. It was certainly not the easiest research methodology for a novice researcher; however, the application of the steps of the research method made the process easier as it served as a guide. Through the process of keeping a journal, I noted many times that I felt overwhelmed by the amount of data, wondering whether I had the necessary skills to truly do coding and whether my codes were accurate. I also realised that coding is a perspective of my interpretation and this is where peer review of my coding assisted in cautioning me not to imprint my subjective views on the codes.

The memoing process enabled me to work through my thoughts and to bounce ideas against the data. I was able to take the reflections back to the interviews to explore more on the

dimensions or properties of categories. Initially I felt very insecure about my interviewing skills. The pilot interview enabled me to gain confidence in myself as an interviewer; with each subsequent interview I observed that I had posed the questions with more authority as I learned more of the coaching relationship through the data analysis process.

Reflecting back, I have learned much more about myself during the research process. The application of grounded theory pushed me, as my personal preference is to know whether things are right and wrong. Since grounded theory is so abstract and open to interpretation, I found it very challenging, especially when it came to axial coding where the story line of all the pieces of data needed to come together.

With regard to my research topic, I felt engaged and enjoyed working in the field of coaching. As I am not a coaching expert, I have learned of my own perceptions of the coaching relationship through the coachees. The research allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the coaching relationship and how it contributes to the ultimate goal of growth and fulfilment. I am proud of myself to be able to provide experts in the field - organisations, coachees and coaches - a little more insight into very personal reflections from the coachees. The research allowed me, together with the coachees, to experience how coaches touched their lives through a mere process where their growth and development had been placed as priority.

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ANNEXURE A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

OPTENTIA
RESEARCH FOCUS AREA

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS

Exploring the coachee's expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship within a state-owned utility

My name is Carina Viljoen, I am a student at the North-West University, Optentia Research Focus Area, Faculty of Humanities, Vaal Triangle Campus. My study focuses on understanding the expectations and experiences of coachees who have been part of leadership coaching. In this regard, I would like to invite you to give consent and participate in my study. Below is the information about the study so that you can make an informed decision.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore, your unique expectations and experiences of the coaching relationship, while being part of leadership coaching within the state-owned utility. The study aims to contribute to understanding the coachee's experience of the coaching relationship better.

You are invited to take part in my study, since you work as a senior manager at Eskom, are based in Mpumalanga/Gauteng and have completed leadership coaching in the past two years. The reason for me targeting managers based in Mpumalanga/ Gauteng is due to the fact that I am based in Mpumalanga (Witbank), which makes it easier for me to access senior managers in my area with consideration of cost, time and convenience to all parties.

It will be of great value to me, if you are willing to participate in my study in order to gain a deeper understanding of your personal expectations and experiences being part of a formal coaching relationship.

2. PROCEDURE

If you agree to take part in my study you will expected to:

- Complete a short biographical questionnaire, consisting of nine (9) items. The questionnaire should not take more than 5 minutes of your time. The questionnaires will be collected during the initial interview or you can send it back to me electronically.
- Participate in a voluntary interview. The initial interview should take approximately one and a half hours. It may be required of you to participate in a one hour follow-up interview, if deemed necessary for the purpose of the study. Interviews will be conducted on a date and time convenient for you. You may select a venue of your choice at your place of work. When selecting the venue please consider the safety, privacy and noise levels. You will not be required to travel for the purpose of the study. I will do the necessary traveling. Furthermore you have the option to indicate your preference whether the interviews should be conducted during or outside working hours, should it be more convenient for you.
- During the interview you will be requested to reflect over the expectations you had of the leadership coaching relationship with your coach. You will further share your personal experiences of being a coachee within a leadership coaching relationship. All interviews will be voice recorded, transcribed and submitted to you for review, verification and comments.

The interviews will be conducted by me, in English. I have developed my interviewing skills through formal training, as part of my training as psychometrist, student industrial psychologist and during the execution of my work. My interviewing competence will be further enhanced through formal training.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

It is my intention that all foreseeable risks during participation in the study will be controlled and kept to a minimum. In view of the nature of the research questions it is unlikely that it may lead or contribute to emotional distress in senior managers. However should the interview process trigger emotions and should you have a need to consult with anyone, I will supply the details of the relevant helping professionals within the organisation after the initial interview and subsequent interviews. The services are free of charge and are rendered by professionals within the organisation. My aim is to respect the sensitive nature of your information and you may at any stage during the research process withdraw with no negative consequences.

Identifying information is only known to me and all your data will be treated as confidential. Your consent form will be kept separate from any other documentation used during the research process. A unique number will be allocated to your on the biographical questionnaire and recorded data. This is to protect your privacy and facilitate the anonymity of your information. Please reference this unique number if you need feedback. All information and documentation, including transcripts of interviews will be safeguarded, limiting access through storing all electronic copies of data on a password protected computer and keeping hardcopies in a lockable storage facilities.

BENEFITS

If you agree to take part in the study, you may contribute to help me and industrial psychologists understand what expectations and experiences coachee's have of the coaching relationship with their coach. This has the potential to deepen knowledge and understanding of the coaching relationship from the perspective of a person who has been part of the coaching process

The study may hold possible benefits to the state-owned utility to gain a deeper understanding of the coaching relationship, how it influences the effectiveness and the outcomes of the coaching process. It may lead to re-alignment of the coaching process to address possible gaps in the matching process and educating coaches what coachee's expect and experience of the coaching relationship.

3. COSTS

There will be no cost to you as a result of your participation in this study.

4. PAYMENT

You will receive no payment for participation in the study.

5. QUESTIONS

You are welcome to ask any questions to a member of the research team before you decide to give consent. You are also welcome to contact myself the principal researcher Carina Viljoen, carina.viljoen@gmail.com, at 083 236 8899 or you may contact the supervisor, Dr. Danie du Toit at 016 910 3410 or alternatively the Co- Chair: Optentia Research Ethics Committee, Prof. Tumi Khumalo at Tumi.Khumalo@nwu.ac.za or telephonically during office hour, 016 910 3397, should you have any further questions concerning the consent form.

6. FEEDBACK OF FINDINGS

The findings of the research will be shared with you if you are interested. You are welcome to contact us regarding the findings of the research. We will be sharing the findings with you as soon as it is available.

Your unique identifying code that you could reference should you have any enquiries is:
Please take time to consider the information that I have shared. Should you like to discuss any of the information with me, please do not hesitate to contact me: (office number) 013 693 9216, (Cellphone) 083 236 8899 or via email carina.viljoen@gmail.com.

Thank you very much

Carina Viljoen

_____

CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.

You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw at any point even after you have signed the form to give consent without any consequences.

Should you be willing to participate you are requested to sign below:

I _____ (unique identifying code: CR-00) hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the above mentioned study. I am not coerced in any way to participate and I understand that I can withdraw at any time should I feel uncomfortable during the study. I also understand that my name will not be disclosed to anybody who is not part of the study and that the information will be kept confidential and not linked to my name at any stage. I also understand what I might benefit from participation as well as what might be the possible risks and should I need further discussions someone will be available.

_____	_____
Date	Signature of the participant
_____	_____
Date	Signature of the researcher