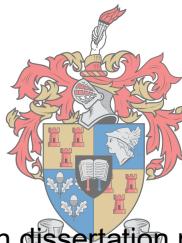


# **A coaching framework to facilitate transformative learning during senior leadership transitions**

**Nicky Terblanche**



Research dissertation presented  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (Business Management and Administration)  
at Stellenbosch University



**Supervisor: Dr R Albertyn**

**Co-supervisor: Dr S van Coller-Peter**

**March 2018**

## Declaration

I, Nicolaas Hendrik de-la-Rey Terblanche, declare that the entire body of work contained in this research assignment is my own, original work; that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

NHD Terblanche

March 2018

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my two super(hero)visors, Dr Ruth Albertyn and Dr Salome van Coller-Peter for their constant support throughout my PhD journey. Thank you for providing the perfect balance between structure, freedom, praise and the whip.

Thank you to my family Tami, Kira and Jade for allowing me the time and space to complete this project and for your regular encouragement and reminders of why I started this in the first place.

A word of thanks to Dr John Morrison and Dr Kathy Bennet who acted as sounding boards during the difficult initial stages of conceptualising this research.

To the research participants, thank you very much for your time and input. This research would not have been possible without you.

And last but not least, to my faithful running shoes for all the A-ha! moments at the edge of exhaustion.

## Abstract

When corporate leaders are promoted into senior positions, they face significant challenges on intrapersonal, interpersonal and systemic levels. The complex landscape of contemporary organisational dynamics, the fast rate of change and the need for strong, senior leadership exacerbate the situation. Transitioning leaders often fail to perform as expected in their new roles, with harmful effects to the individual, their colleagues and the organisation. Although challenging, career transitions present an opportunity for individual learning and growth. Learning takes a number of forms, ranging from superficially adjusting thinking and behavioural patterns on the one end of the spectrum, to challenging and adjusting deeply held world views and perspectives on the other.

Organisations attempt to assist transitioning leaders. One method of support is transition coaching, a sub-category of business coaching. Transition coaching is not well researched or used adequately in practice. In addition, current approaches to transition coaching do not attempt to create overtly deep, lasting change in transitioning leaders. Transformative learning theory is a mature, well-researched field that offers the potential to create deep, permanent shifts in people. The present research set out to create an innovative transformative transition coaching framework that combines transformative learning theory and transition coaching approaches into a novel method to support transitioning leaders by facilitating deep, lasting changes in their world views and perspectives in order to help them succeed in their new roles.

A two-phased research design consisting of a foundation phase using grounded theory principles, and an application phase using canonical action research was employed to create, refine and evolve the transformative transition coaching framework systematically. In the process, a number of research questions were answered. Firstly, insights were gained into the challenges faced by newly promoted senior leaders. Secondly, an understanding was obtained of the current use of transition coaching to support transitioning leaders. Thirdly, the challenges with which transition coaching could assist transitioning leaders were identified. Fourthly, a set of coaching techniques that could potentially facilitate transformative learning was identified. Fifthly, elements of transformative learning theory were incorporated into a transition coaching framework that appears to have the ability to facilitate deep, permanent changes (transformative learning) in transitioning leaders. These findings culminated in the creation of a new approach to coaching in the form of the transformative transition coaching framework.

This research contributes at scholarly<sup>1</sup>, methodological and practical levels. On a scholarly level, coaching theory is enhanced through the creation of a new coaching sub-category, transformative transition coaching. Adult learning and transformative learning theories are enriched through the

<sup>1</sup> Three journal articles were created from this research. Two have been published (Terblanche, Albertyn & Van Coller-Peter, 2017; Terblanche, Albertyn & Van Coller-Peter, in press) and one is under review (in African Journal of Business Ethics).

application of these theories in the domains of coaching and the corporate world, which fall outside of their traditional area of application in higher education. Leadership transition theory is enhanced through the creation of a novel support mechanism in the form of the transformative transition coaching framework. On a methodological level, this research presents a new way to approach coaching research by combining grounded theory principles with canonical action research. On a practical level, a new coaching framework is presented that could be used by coaches during transition coaching interventions. Purchasers of transition coaching services such as human resource practitioners and line managers could use the transformative transition coaching framework as a reference model to ascertain the comprehensiveness of services offered. Coaching training institutions could use the new coaching framework in the education of coaches to create awareness of the potential use of transformative learning and transition coaching.

**Key words**

Transition coaching

Transformative learning

Career transitions

Leadership development

## Table of contents

<b>Declaration</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of tables</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>List of figures</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>List of acronyms and abbreviations</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	3
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	6
1.4 RESEARCH AIM	6
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	6
1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN	7
1.7 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY	8
1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE	8
1.9 SUMMARY	9
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION	10
2.2 CONTEMPORARY ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AND LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES	11
2.3 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	15
2.3.1 Intrapersonal factors in leadership development	16
2.3.2 Interpersonal aspects in leadership development	18
2.3.3 Leadership development processes	19
2.4 LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS	21
2.4.1 Transition models	22
2.4.2 Challenges faced and new skills required	25
2.4.2.1 Cognitive challenges	27
2.4.2.2 Behavioural patterns	28
2.4.2.3 Interpersonal skills	28
2.4.2.4 Psychological challenges	29
2.4.2.5 Systemic perspective	29
2.4.3 Reasons for and the cost of failure	29
2.4.4 Interventions to assist transitioning leaders	31
2.5 ADULT LEARNING	33
2.5.1 Definition of adult learning	33
2.5.2 The role of critical theory in adult learning	36
2.6 TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY	38

2.6.1 Conceptualisation of transformative learning	38
2.6.2 Evaluating transformative learning	43
2.7 COACHING	47
2.7.1 Definitions of coaching	47
2.7.2 Theoretical foundations and frameworks	48
2.7.3 Coaching application	53
2.7.4 Career transitions, transformative learning and coaching	54
2.8 SUMMARY	57
<b>CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>59</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION	59
3.2 THE CASE FOR COMBINING GROUNDED THEORY AND ACTION RESEARCH	62
3.2.1 Grounded theory	64
3.2.2 Action research	66
3.3 THE POPULATION AND SAMPLE	70
3.3.1 Foundation phase	70
3.3.2 Application phase	72
3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	73
3.4.1 Foundation phase data collection	73
3.4.2 Foundation phase data analysis	74
3.4.2.1 Line-by-line coding	75
3.4.2.2 Focused coding	77
3.4.3 Foundation phase deductive and summative content analysis	79
3.4.4 Application phase data collection	81
3.4.5 Application phase data analysis	85
3.5 RESEARCH QUALITY ASSURANCE	87
3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	88
3.7 SUMMARY	90
<b>CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS FROM THE FOUNDATION PHASE</b>	<b>91</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION	91
4.2 THE EXPERIENCES OF MANAGERS DURING SENIOR LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS	92
4.2.1 Initial impressions	93
4.2.2 Facing challenges	95
4.2.3 Overcoming challenges	99
4.2.4 Concluding insight	103
4.3 CURRENT USE OF TRANSITION COACHING	104
4.3.1 Initiating coaching	105
4.3.1.1 Timing	106
4.3.1.2 Duration	107
4.3.1.3 Coach selection	108

4.3.1.4 Logistics	108
4.3.1.5 Contracting	108
4.3.2 The coaching process	110
4.3.2.1 Managing the coaching process	111
4.3.2.2 Using theory	112
4.3.2.3 Consulting external parties	112
4.3.2.4 Networking	113
4.3.3 Concluding insight	115
<b>4.4 USING COACHING TO OVERCOME TRANSITION CHALLENGES</b>	<b>116</b>
4.4.1 Psychological benefits	116
4.4.1.1 Improved self-awareness	116
4.4.1.2 Feeling more confident	118
4.4.2 Cognitive benefits	119
4.4.2.1 Improved thinking	119
4.4.2.2 New perspectives	120
4.4.2.3 Building relationships	121
4.4.3 Behavioural	121
4.4.3.1 Being more balanced (work–life)	121
4.4.3.2 Improved communication	121
4.4.4 Concluding insight	122
<b>4.5 COACHING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES THAT ARE ABLE TO FACILITATE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>4.6 EMERGENT TTC FRAMEWORK AFTER THE FOUNDATION PHASE</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>4.7 SUMMARY</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Chapter 5 FINDINGS FROM THE APPLICATION PHASE</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>5.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>5.2 FOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL THEORIES GUIDING THE EVOLUTION OF THE COACHING FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>5.3 MACROCYCLE 1</b>	<b>129</b>
5.3.1 Plan	129
5.3.2 Act	130
5.3.3 Evaluate	132
5.3.4 Reflect	132
5.3.5 Influence on TTC framework	133
<b>5.4 MACROCYCLE 2</b>	<b>134</b>
5.4.1 Plan	134
5.4.2 Act	137
5.4.3 Evaluate	138
5.4.4 Reflect	139

5.4.5 Influence on TTC framework	139
<b>5.5 MACROCYCLE 3</b>	140
5.5.1 Plan	140
5.5.2 Act	141
5.5.3 Evaluate	142
5.5.4 Reflection	147
5.5.5 Influence on TTC framework	147
<b>5.6 MACROCYCLE 4</b>	147
5.6.1 Plan	148
5.6.2 Act	148
5.6.3 Evaluate	150
5.6.4 Reflect	151
5.6.5 Influence on TTC framework	151
<b>5.7 MACROCYCLE 5</b>	152
5.7.1 Plan	152
5.7.2 Act	152
5.7.3 Evaluate	154
5.7.4 Reflect	156
5.7.5 Influence on TTC framework	156
<b>5.8 THE FINAL TTC FRAMEWORK</b>	157
5.8.1 Seven aspects of the TTC framework	157
5.8.1.1 Contextual	158
5.8.1.2 Contractual	159
5.8.1.3 Anticipatory	159
5.8.1.4 Procedural	159
5.8.1.5 Temporal	160
5.8.1.6 Technical	160
5.8.1.7 Efficacious	161
5.8.2 Mapping of focal and instrumental theory to TTC framework	161
<b>5.9 ADHERENCE TO CAR PRINCIPLES</b>	163
<b>5.10 SUMMARY</b>	167
<b>CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	168
<b>6.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	168
<b>6.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS</b>	168
6.2.1 Experiences of managers during senior leadership transitions (sub-question 1)	169
6.2.2 Current use of transition coaching (sub-question 2)	171
6.2.3 Overcoming challenges faced during senior leadership transitions (sub-question 3)	172
6.2.4 Coaching tools and techniques to facilitate transformative learning (sub-question 4)	172

6.2.5 Applying transformative learning to the transition coaching process (sub-question 5)	173
6.2.6 Creation of a coaching framework to facilitate transformative learning during senior leadership transitions (main objective)	174
6.2.6.1 Contextual	175
6.2.6.2 Contractual	175
6.2.6.3 Anticipatory	175
6.2.6.4 Procedural	175
6.2.6.5 Temporal	176
6.2.6.6 Technical	176
6.2.6.7 Efficacious	176
6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH	176
6.3.1 Scholarly contributions	177
6.3.2 Contributions to practice	178
6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH	179
6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS	180
6.5.1 Using the TTC framework and other findings of this research in practice	180
6.5.2 Further research	181
6.6 A FINAL WORD	182
<b>LIST OF REFERENCES</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>APPENDIX A ILLUSTRATION OF THE GROUNDED THEORY CODING PROCESS</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>APPENDIX B EXTRACT FROM DEDUCTIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS FOR INSTANCES OF PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>APPENDIX C EXTRACT OF REFLECTIVE LOG USED DURING THE APPLICATION PHASE</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>APPENDIX D EXAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM</b>	<b>215</b>

## List of tables

Table 2.1: Intrapersonal factors in leader development	16
Table 2.2: Interpersonal factors in leadership development	18
Table 2.3: Leadership development processes	20
Table 2.4: Transition models	22
Table 2.5: Transition challenges and new skills required	26
Table 2.6: Links between andragogy concepts and coaching concepts	35
Table 2.7: Examples of perspectives that people hold	40
Table 2.8: Mezirow's original ten phases of transformative learning plus an eleventh phase added later	41
Table 2.9: Evaluation methods relevant to transformative learning	44
Table 2.10: Poutiatine's nine principles of transformation	45
Table 2.11: Definitions of coaching	48
Table 2.12: Types of coaching and their origins	49
Table 3.1: Canonical action research principles	69
Table 3.2: Research participants for grounded theory phase	71
Table 3.3: Research participants for action research phase	72
Table 3.4: Action research cycles, steps and data sources	84
Table 4.1: Initial impressions	93
Table 4.2: Facing challenges	95
Table 4.3: Facing challenges	100
Table 4.4: Initiating coaching	106
Table 4.5 The coaching process	111
Table 4.6: Benefits of transition coaching	116
Table 4.7: Coaching techniques identified that could potentially facilitate transformative learning	123
Table 5.1: Focal and instrumental theories used in the AR phase of this research	128
Table 5.2: Challenges faced by TMs	131
Table 5.3: List of coaching questions to determine current Mezirow perspectives	135
Table 5.4: Most problematic perspectives, three-level reflection and experiments to address them	144
Table 5.5: Seven aspects of the TTC framework	158
Table 5.6: Adherence to CAR principles	164
Table 6.1 Foundation phase findings mapped to the first four research sub-questions	169
Table B.1: Detailed account of potential transformative learning instances and coaching techniques used	206

## List of figures

Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework: Theoretical perspectives informing this research	3
Figure 2.1: Conceptual map of the literature review	10
Figure 2.2: Leadership transition process	21
Figure 2.3: The leadership pipeline	23
Figure 2.4: Mapping of adult learning, transformative learning and coaching to career transition support	33
Figure 2.5: Mezirow's transformative learning topology	39
Figure 2.6: Structural analysis of a coaching engagement	52
Figure 3.1: Canonical action research process model	68
Figure 3.2: Grounded theory analysis process used in this research	75
Figure 3.3: Final main themes and sub-categories (detail)	79
Figure 3.4: Coaching technique versus transformative learning perspective matrix	81
Figure 3.5: Action research nested iterations	82
Figure 4.1: Findings from foundation phase linked to research sub-questions	92
Figure 4.2: Key aspects of fulfilling a senior leadership role	93
Figure 4.3: Experiencing transitions coaching	105
Figure 4.4: TTC Framework v0.1 after the foundation phase	125
Figure 5.1: TTC Framework V0.2 before AR phase	129
Figure 5.2: TTC Framework v0.3 after AR macrocycle 1	134
Figure 5.3: TTC framework v0.4 after macrocycle 2	140
Figure 5.4: TTC framework v0.5 after macrocycle 3	147
Figure 5.5: TTC stages and transitions	150
Figure 5.6: TTC framework v0.6 after macrocycle 4	152
Figure 5.7: Five TTC stages	154
Figure 5.8: Coaching state transition notation applied to TTC stages	155
Figure 5.9: Final TTC framework	157
Figure 5.10: Mapping of focal and instrumental theories to the TTC framework	162
Figure 6.1: Foundation phase findings mapped to TTC framework aspects	173
Figure 6.2: The transformative transition coaching framework	174
Figure A.1: Network view after coding of interview 1	198
Figure A.2: Detailed view of emerging category 'Benefits of coaching' after interview 1	199
Figure A.3: Network view after coding of interview 6	200
Figure A.4: Detailed view of emerging category 'Benefits of coaching' after interview 6	201
Figure A.5: Network view after final coding sequence	202
Figure A.6: Detailed view of sub-category 'Benefits of coaching' after final coding	203
Figure B.1: Instances of possible transformative learning after deductive content analysis	204
Figure B.2: Matrix of perspective transformations and coaching techniques used	205

## List of acronyms and abbreviations

AR	action research
CAR	canonical action research
CEO	chief executive officer
CIO	chief information officer
COMENSA	Coaches and Mentors of South Africa
COO	chief operations officer
EQ	emotional intelligence
GT	grounded theory
HR	human resource
ICF	International Coach Federation
IT	information technology
KPI	key performance indicators
MD	managing director
TL	transformative learning
TM	transitioning manager
TTC	transformative transition coaching
USB	University of Stellenbosch Business School
VUCA	volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The rate of change in the global business landscape has increased the challenge of building sustainable businesses and is currently a key concern for organisational leaders (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008). An important element of organisational sustainability is effective leadership on all levels in the organisation. Placing the right leaders in the correct positions and retaining them has become a condition for success (Charan, Drotter & Noel, 2011; Collins, 2001). However, there is a shortage of effective organisational leaders in the world, which is compounded by the frequent positioning and repositioning of leaders in new roles (Dotlich, Noel & Walker, 2004; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008). Some estimates state that up to 25% of managers in a typical company enter a new position each year (Watkins, 2003) and, while many attempt the transition, fewer than 50% succeed (Watkins, 2003), up to 46% underperform (Sutton, 2008) and only 16% of executives are seen as fully transitioned (Freedman, 2011). What is the cost of career transition failure? Different estimates put the financial cost of a failed executive transition at several million dollars (Bunker, Kram & Ting, 2002; Martin & Gentry, 2011) and as much as 24 times the leader's annual salary (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008). There are also negative emotional and psychological effects, not only on the failed leader but also on the people who work with him or her (Martin & Gentry, 2011; Watkins, 2003).

A leadership transition occurs when a leader is promoted to a more senior level in the organisation with more and different responsibilities. A senior leadership<sup>2</sup> transition poses numerous challenges to the individual and the organisation. The incumbent is expected to –

- be productive instantly and to complete the transition quickly (Sutton, 2008; Watkins, 2003);
- deal with higher levels of complexity and uncertainty than before (Dotlich *et al.*, 2004);
- work with longer time horizons than previously (Jaques, 1996) and
- step out of the comfort zone of a specialist to take on strategic challenges (Peltier, 2010).

---

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this research, 'senior leader' is defined as a person operating at a senior management or executive level in a corporate organisation or business unit.

Organisations try to support transitioning leaders and spend an estimated US\$ 12 billion annually on leadership development, although evidence of the success of these development programmes is not clear (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Furthermore, although the challenges of career transitions and the influence of failure are well known, research into the correct management of leadership transitions and specifically developing leaders' ability to adapt quickly to new roles is scarce (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008). This is surprising, especially since leaders who transition successfully are typically successful and effective throughout their tenure (Bear, Benson-Armer & McLaughlin, 2000).

In the face of these potentially significant transition challenges, leaders have to 'adapt or die', as the saying goes. Adapting could take many forms. At the one end of the spectrum, leaders could merely learn the new 'tricks of the trade' by trying out a number of different approaches to solve a problem, evaluating the outcome and trying a different strategy if not successful. This equates to single-loop learning (Argyris, 1991) or merely adapting to the new situation (Poutiatine, 2010). On the other end of the spectrum, leaders could examine the deeper governing variables that influence the nature of their thinking and behaviour. They could re-evaluate and reframe these deep-seated patterns and habits to achieve a more permanent shift in the way they interpret and interact with the world. This type of change is defined as double-loop learning (Argyris, 1991) or transformative learning (Mezirow, 1994). While potentially daunting, the significant personal challenges posed by the transition to a senior management position offer an opportunity for leaders to undergo transformation (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) instead of mere adaption (Poutiatine, 2010).

Coaching is an emerging field of research that is showing signs of maturing as a scholarly field (Bachkirova, Spence & Drake, 2016). It is a strategy that is often used to support leaders during a transition (Freedman, 2011; Kauffman & Coutu, 2009; Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004), although widespread adoption of transition coaching, despite high demand, is not yet a reality in the workplace (Bond & Naughton, 2011). Coaching has been shown to be effective in developing high-potential managers, enhance individual performance, reduce attrition, improve team performance, encourage self-reflective awareness, and help leaders challenge their existing mental models (Freedman, 2011; International Coach Federation [ICF], 2013; Kauffman & Coutu, 2009; Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker & Fernandes, 2008).

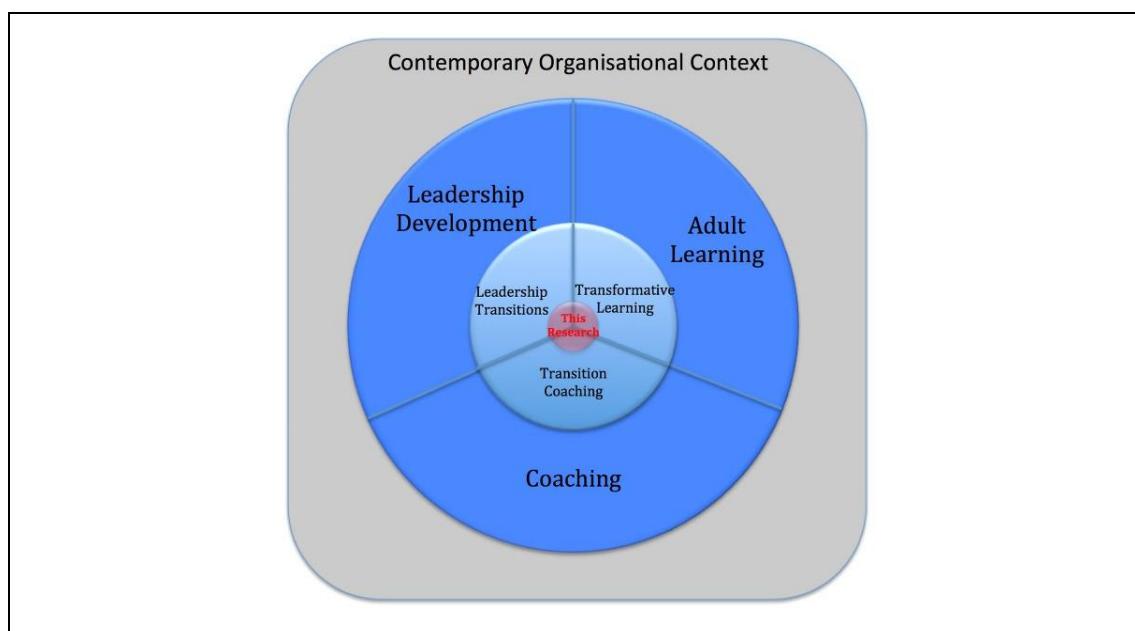
From the preceding introduction, we thus conclude that leadership transitions occur frequently, are high-risk events with a chance of failure and with consequences for

the individual and the organisation. Coaching is increasingly used as a support mechanism and has the potential to support transitioning leaders, but do current approaches to transition coaching explicitly aim to facilitate sustainable, transformative learning? Little scientific, empirical research has been published on the transformative aspects of transition coaching. It would appear therefore that there is a gap in coaching literature. This gap sits comfortably within what Theeboom, Beersma and Van Viaven (2013:13) describe as a need for more research on the design of coaching interventions that draw from adult learning theory and specifically Mezirow's (1994) transformative learning theory.

The present research set out to investigate this apparent gap in the understanding of how coaching could be used to facilitate transformative learning during senior career transitions.

## 1.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The main theoretical perspectives that informed this research were **leadership development theory** with a specific focus on leadership transitions, **coaching theory** with a specific focus on transition coaching, and **adult learning theory** with a focus on transformative learning. These theories are located within the context of contemporary organisations as depicted in the conceptual framework (see Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework: Theoretical perspectives informing this research**

Source: Author's own compilation

As Figure 1.1 indicates, this research focused on the central concepts within each of the three disciplines namely the role of transition coaching in facilitating transformative learning during a leadership transition. A brief overview of the theoretical perspectives (leadership development, coaching theory and adult learning), and how they relate to the research problem is provided here and discussed in more detail in the literature review section (Chapter 2).

Leadership development and, more recently, leadership transitions have received much attention in the popular, business and academic press. Often cited publications include the work of Charan *et al.* (2011) who introduced the notion of leadership transitions. Through their leadership pipeline model, they describe six leadership passages and significant challenges faced at each stage (see 2.4.1). Moving into a senior leadership position is one of the key challenges facing leaders during their career (Dotlich *et al.*, 2004). Transitions are described as “nothing less than corner-office crucibles” (Watkins, 2009:47). Linked to this notion of transition is the concept of management derailment. This phenomenon describes how fast-track leaders stop advancing before reaching their full potential on their way up the leadership ladder with detrimental consequences for the individual and the organisation (Denton & Van Lill, 2006; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1995; Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; McCall & Lombardo, 1983).

Leadership transitions are complex and challenging. Many strategies, tools, models and frameworks are provided to help overcome these challenges, including coaching (Bradford, 1995; Charan *et al.*, 2011; Dotlich *et al.*, 2004; Sutton, 2008; Watkins, 2003). Coaching may assist in general areas, such as charisma and inspiration, improved goal-setting and self-regard, aiding in skills transfer, positive peer perception of individual effectiveness, enhanced resilience, assisting in stress reduction and general higher workplace performance (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Peltier, 2010). It would appear that coaching might be effective in helping senior leaders transition to the next level. However, two questions need to be asked:

- Does coaching go far enough to facilitate transformational learning in the process also?
- Why is transformative learning important in this context?

Transformative learning theory was developed by Jack Mezirow in 1978, and has been elaborated on significantly since then to stand currently as one of the primary theories of adult learning (Taylor, 1997). Transformative learning is a complex and multifaceted process of deep, structural shifts in basic premises of thought, feeling

and action (Kitchenham, 2008) and may start with a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1978) such as moving into a senior leadership role (Dotlich *et al.*, 2004). A disorienting dilemma alone, however, is not a guarantee of deep structural change (Poutiatine, 2010). For a senior leader to avoid derailment and succeed in the long run, transformative learning and not mere change and adaption is required during a transition (Charan *et al.*, 2011; Denton & Van Lill, 2006; Poutiatine, 2010).

On a personal level, my interest in researching career transitions and transformative learning stems from my practice as an executive coach and consultant in the information technology (IT) industry. In my consulting role – from an employee perspective in IT – I often observe and experience how newly promoted leaders go through coaching interventions that address superficial aspects of their problematic behaviour. While creating more awareness, this type of coaching does not always facilitate deep, lasting change, and old habits could come back to derail the incumbent. In my coaching practice, I have observed that some clients may want to achieve a goal, but are unwilling or unable to perform the difficult task of changing deep-seated patterns of thinking and behaving. Those who do succeed to make sustained change are often individuals who had faced the greatest dilemmas, such as not performing at the expected levels and therefore teetering on the brink of a career failure. It thus seems that it takes a specific, conscious approach from the coach and a readiness and willingness from the client to facilitate deep, structural change.

The above-mentioned experience triggered my interest in doing in-depth, empirical research to inform the construction of a coaching framework that could facilitate transformative learning during the potentially disorienting dilemma of senior leadership transitions. Given the three theoretical underpinnings of this proposed research, the literature review found that limited research has been done on combinations of the disciplines. Literature exists on the role of coaching during leadership transitions (Bond & Naughton, 2011; Reynolds, 2011), using transformative learning during coaching interventions (Gray, 2006; Stober & Grant, 2006) and transformative learning during job transitions (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008). However, at the time of this research, no publications could be found that specifically consider the convergence of the three fields, namely the role of coaching to facilitate transformative learning during senior leadership transitions. Given the high cost of leadership failures to both the individual and the organisation and the fact that coaching is already used as a transition strategy, research into how coaching could

potentially facilitate personal transformation during the transition and hence assist in a more successful outcome, seems warranted.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In the literature, there is evidence of an understanding of the challenges faced by newly promoted leaders into senior positions and the potential for failure (Charan *et al.*, 2011; Denton & Van Lill, 2006; Dotlich *et al.*, 2004; Watkins, 2003). The role of coaching to help overcome some of these challenges is also acknowledged (Charan *et al.*, 2011; Dotlich *et al.*, 2004; Kauffman & Coutu, 2009; Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008; Peltier, 2010; Reynolds, 2011). To my knowledge though, no empirically researched theoretical and practical coaching framework exists to facilitate transformative learning during a transition coaching intervention aimed at senior leaders.

### **1.4 RESEARCH AIM**

The primary aim of this research was to create the transformative transition coaching (TTC) framework for the practical application of transition coaching to facilitate specifically transformative learning during senior leadership transitions. The framework could guide the various parties involved in coaching during leadership transitions namely the sponsor (human resource [HR] or line manager), the coach and the coachee (transitioning leader).

The aim of this research was to create an understanding of the context that surrounds coaching during career transitions and the potential for the application of transformative learning in this context. This could add to the existing knowledge of how to apply coaching during career transitions.

A further aim of this research was to help establish transformative transition coaching as a new theoretical field in the coaching and adult learning domains and to stimulate further research in this area.

Finally, while transformative learning is seen as a foundational scholarly field that underpins coaching (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2014), no explicit empirical links have been made between the two fields to my knowledge. It was the aim of this research to provide the first tentative steps in this regard.

### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main question posed for this research was:

*How can the coaching process be designed to facilitate transformative learning during senior leadership transitions?*

The main research question was further broken down into five sub-questions intended both to inform and to unfold the context incrementally for the development and use of the TTC framework by answering the following questions:

- What are the experiences of managers during the transition into senior leadership?
- How is transition coaching currently used?
- How does coaching assist in overcoming challenges faced during a transition?
- Which coaching tools and techniques are useful in facilitating transformative learning?
- How can transformative learning be applied in the transition coaching process?

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This project consisted of two research phases. The first phase, which will be referred to henceforth as the ‘foundation phase’ followed grounded theory principles to establish an empirical base for the TTC framework. The second phase, referred to hereafter as the ‘application phase’ followed an action research approach to refine and evolve the TTC framework. The reason for following this two-phased approach was to create a coaching framework with both theoretical rigour and practical value.

In the first phase, the foundation phase, principles from Charmaz’s (2014) interpretation of grounded theory (constructivist approach) were used to analyse interview data from 16 participants on their experience of career transitions, transition coaching and the transformative potential of coaching in the context of career transitions. The participants comprised transitioning leaders, coaches who coach transitioning leaders, HR professionals responsible for leadership development and line managers of transitioning leaders. The findings of the foundation phase were sufficient to answer the first four research sub-questions and to provide the basis for a draft TTC framework.

In the second phase, the application phase, canonical action research (CAR) (Davison, Martinsons & Ou, 2012) was used to refine and evolve the draft TTC framework. During this phase, I coached six recently promoted senior leaders using the draft TTC framework by applying CAR principles. The findings of the application phase documented the evolution and emergence of the TTC framework up to its final version. This phase answered the fifth research sub-question and delivered the TTC

framework, a novel coaching framework that facilitates transformative learning during senior leadership transitions, which was the overall objective of this research project.

### **1.7 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

This research aimed to make novel contributions to the existing bodies of knowledge of leadership development, transition coaching and transformative learning.

Considerable amounts of money are spent on leadership development in organisations (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh & Parker, 2010). The cost of senior leadership failure is high to both the individual and the organisation (Bunker *et al.*, 2002; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008; Martin & Gentry, 2011). A novel coaching framework that illuminates the application of a widely used tool, such as coaching, to facilitate lasting transformative change during leadership transitions will add to existing leadership development theory and practically help leaders, HR, coaches and organisations to maximise the effect of coaching and minimise the potential for transition failure.

The executive coaching profession is still in its infancy and more academic research is needed (De Haan & Duckworth, 2013; Grant *et al.*, 2010; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). Relatively little research has been done on transition coaching (Bachkirova *et al.*, 2016; Bond & Naughton, 2011). An original theoretical framework focusing on the transformational value of transition coaching for senior leaders will help promote transition coaching as a niche in the academic coaching research field and may see transformative transition coaching established as a new sub-field of coaching. It will also add to the professional coaching practice by giving guidance on the selection, application, management and evaluation of transition coaching interventions.

Research into transformative learning focuses mostly on formal higher education settings, and more research is required in the workplace context (Taylor, 2007). The potential for the use of transformative learning in coaching has been identified, but more research is needed in terms of the theoretical and empirical links (Sammut, 2014). It is anticipated that the knowledge created through research into the link between transformative learning, leadership development and coaching will expand the current boundaries of transformative learning theory and coaching theory.

### **1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This dissertation consists of six chapters including this introductory chapter.

**Chapter 2 (Literature review)** provides an overview of the three main fields (leadership development, adult learning, coaching) and three sub-theoretical fields (career transitions, transformative learning, transition coaching) that underpinned this research as well as contemporary organisational context within which leaders currently operate.

**Chapter 3 (Research methodology)** provides the rationale for using a two-phased research approach as well as an overview of grounded theory and action research, and a discussion of the sampling, data gathering, data analysis and quality assurance for both phases.

**Chapter 4 (Findings from foundation phase)** presents the findings from the first phase of this research and in the process answers the first four research sub-questions. It further presents the first draft of the TTC framework.

**Chapter 5 (Findings from the application phase)** uses a narrative style to take the reader through the action research (AR) process that was followed in phase two of this research. By systematically narrating the various stages of the AR cycle, the evolution of the TTC framework is documented, and the fifth research sub-question is answered.

**Chapter 6 (Summary, conclusion and recommendations)** concludes this dissertation by summarising the findings in relation to the research questions. The chapter then provides a set of recommendations for implementing the findings, as well as for further research.

## 1.9 SUMMARY

This chapter set the scene for the rest of this dissertation. It explained the context and challenges of career transitions, the need for more focused interventions, such as coaching, and the potential of transformative learning to be used in coaching to attempt to facilitate deep, lasting change in transitioning leaders. The research aims and questions were spelled out, and a brief overview of the research design was provided. Finally, the importance and potential benefits of this study were specified.

The next chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the literature that informed the theoretical fields underpinning this research.

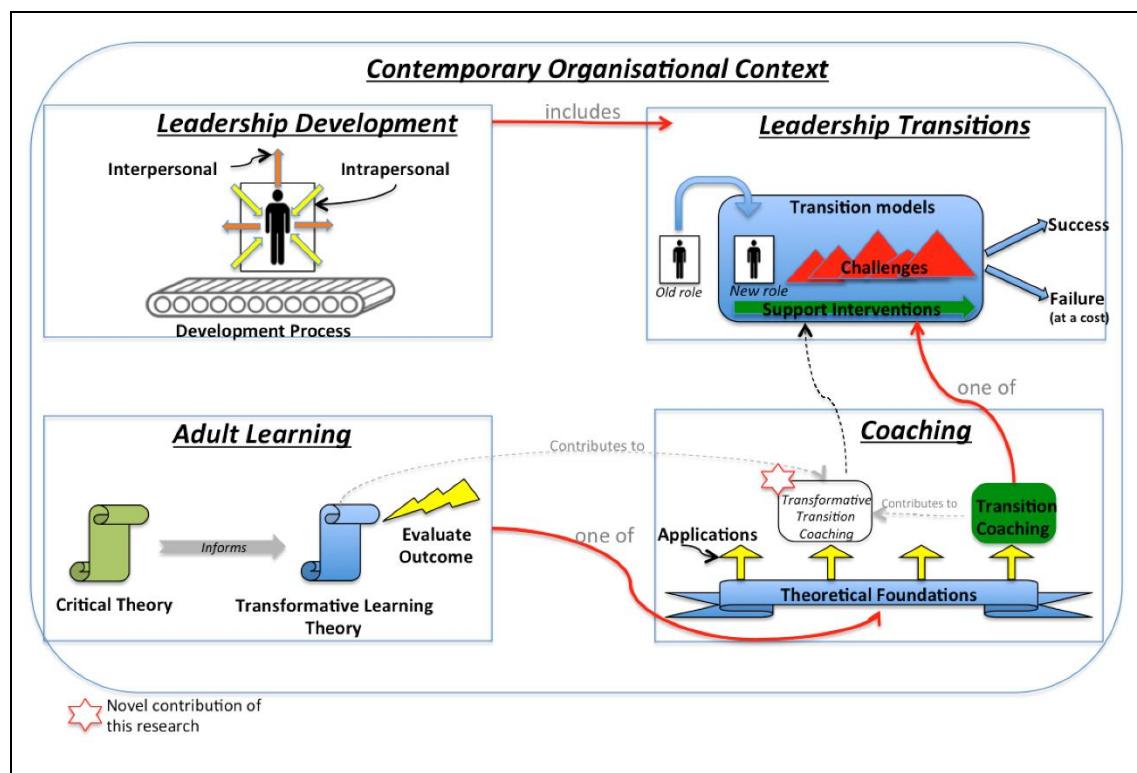
## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this research was to create a novel coaching framework, the transformative transition coaching (TTC) framework that could support transitioning leaders during their career transitions, while at the same time facilitating transformative learning. Three overarching theoretical fields underpinned this research as illustrated in Figure 1.1: Leadership development, adult learning and coaching. Each of these fields contains a specific sub-field relevant to this research: leadership transitions, transformative learning and transition coaching.

The literature review presented in this chapter examined particular aspects of and relationships between these underpinning theoretical fields. It will be shown that there is need for a TTC approach that combines transformative learning and transition coaching to support transitioning leaders uniquely. This conceptual map is illustrated in Figure 2.1 and will guide the discussion in this chapter.



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual map of the literature review**

Source: Author's own compilation

The conceptual map in Figure 2.1 shows that **leadership development** consists of a developmental process where inter- and intrapersonal aspects of the leader are addressed. **Leadership transitions** is an aspect of leadership development, and is described by a variety of transition models consisting of challenges faced by the incumbent, various support strategies, and theories and implications of success or failure. One of the strategies used to support transitioning leaders is **transition coaching**, an example of a particular application of coaching. **Coaching** in turn is informed by a number of theoretical foundations. **Adult learning** is one such foundation, and **transformative learning theory**, a type of adult learning was chosen as a theoretical basis for the creation of the TTC framework. All of these theories exist within the contemporary organisational context that imposes certain constraints on the leader and organisation.

The flow of this chapter is as follows. First, contemporary organisational context and leadership challenges are discussed. This sets the scene for exploring leadership development and leadership transitions. Next, adult learning theory is examined with a focus on transformative learning theory, which leads to a discussion of coaching, and in particular transition coaching, as a support for leadership transitions. Finally, the potential for transformative learning theory in combination with transition coaching to support transitioning leaders is examined. It is shown that a gap in knowledge exists (how to apply transformative learning in a transition coaching approach) that this research addressed.

## 2.2 CONTEMPORARY ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AND LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

Leadership does not take place in a vacuum but occurs within the organisational context (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). This section provides a brief summary of the current organisational context within which leaders find themselves and the challenges they face. This helps to develop an understanding of the systemic forces at play when a leader undergoes a career transition.

Most of the current assumptions about business, technology and organisations are at least 50 years old, and according to Drucker (1998), they have outlived their time. There has been a shift toward the knowledge economy, heralding a new economic age in which 21<sup>st</sup>-century organisations are facing a complex competitive landscape driven largely by globalisation and the technological revolution (Bettis & Hitt, 1995; Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). Changes at macro level, such as digitisation, the integration of states and opening of markets, have resulted in new organisational

forms and dynamics to take advantage of new opportunities. Access to data, disruptive technological advances and the speed of innovation are some of the key drivers in this revolution (Barkema, Baum & Mannix, 2002). If organisations do not respond to these changes, they will not remain viable, and strong leadership is required to navigate the complex territory (Jackson, 2003).

By some accounts, humanity has entered the fourth industrial revolution, an era of ubiquitous, mobile supercomputing, intelligent robots, self-driving cars, neuro-technological brain enhancements and genetic editing (Schwab, 2016). This new era holds major implications for organisations. Technology and the speed of innovation lower the barriers to entry. Competitive advantages are eroding and global giants are vulnerable as aggressive rivals, unencumbered by time- and history-dependent capabilities utilise technological advances to enter the competition (Barkema *et al.*, 2002). All of this adds up to substantial challenges for leaders at all levels of organisations (Charan *et al.*, 2011).

A potentially useful lens through which to view the present-day organisational context is the VUCA concept (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). While this acronym originated in the US Army War College (Stiehm & Townsend, 2002) to describe the new multi-lateral world that emerged after the end of the Cold War (round about 1991), it seems relevant in describing the world within which organisational leaders currently operate (Casey, 2014). In fact, the level of VUCA in recent years is unprecedented (Johansen, 2013).

Volatility, the first aspect of VUCA is embodied in the nature, speed, volume, magnitude and dynamics of change (Horney, Passmore & O'Shea, 2010), the unexpected and unknown challenges that organisations face, as well as the potential unknown duration of the phenomenon. An example of this is found when product prices fluctuate after a natural disaster (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). From an employment perspective, there is volatility in terms of job security and job tenure, which all contribute directly to the increased rate of career transitions (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015).

Uncertainty, the second characteristic of the VUCA world, is prevalent in all areas of social and organisational life in terms of a lack of predictability of issues and events (Horney *et al.*, 2010). Aspects such as globalisation, new technologies, education, travel and immigration are challenges to the social status quo (Leihan, 2011). There is a general perception that the future is uncertain with the implication that identity,

relationships and decisions at both personal and organisational level are seen as temporary and in flux (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). The increased rate of career transitions can be seen as contributing to personal uncertainty.

The third aspect of VUCA, complexity, is encapsulated in the emerging discipline of complexity theory (see Stacey, 2011). Organisations and their environments are characterised by non-linear feedback loops, which make them sensitive to small differences in initial conditions and ensure that their behaviour is unpredictable. Long-term planning is therefore supposedly impossible (Jackson, 2003), and managers are challenged to identify patterns of behaviour to respond appropriately. Connections between parts of the system are crucial in ensuring a constant flow of information (Stacey, 2011). Adaptability, knowledge and learning are needed for organisations to navigate these complex landscapes (Volberda, 1996). In fact, organisations need to raise their level of complexity to that of the environment in order to compete, instead of simplifying and rationalising structures (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2007). This increased level of complexity has a direct influence on leaders in organisations, and potentially increases the magnitude of challenges faced when entering a new senior leadership role.

Given the complex nature of the corporate landscape, it is no wonder that ambiguity, the fourth feature of the VUCA world, has increased. Reality has become obscure and the environment sends out mixed signals (Horney *et al.*, 2010). Ambiguity presents challenges from the perspective of ethics and decision-making. Most decisions can be made using a wide range of options, and each option has a potential influence on the individual's ethics and the core values of the organisation. It would seem that every decision presents a series of ambiguous dilemmas (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). It stands to reason that stepping into a new, more senior role with a large set of unknowns could very well add to the level of ambiguity.

The VUCA lens implies a number of challenges to organisational leaders not seen before (Jackson, 2003). These include remaining ethical and authentic, addressing more complex and diverse problems, stretching their cognitive abilities, finding alternative ways to solve problems, and providing clarity to their followers (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2007). How can these challenges be addressed?

In terms of moral and ethical challenges, organisational leaders struggle to remain true to themselves as a result of the relentless pressure to produce profits at the cost of everything else (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). Authentic leadership is required, i.e. leaders

who lead by example to foster healthy ethical climates characterised by transparency, trust, integrity and high moral standards (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Leaders must tackle a greater diversity of more complex problems than before (Stacey, 2011). There is a danger of oversimplifying complex problems and while this is tempting, it could also be dangerous (Johansen, 2013). The challenge is to take a holistic approach to problem solving by applying concepts from systems thinking and complexity theory (Jackson, 2003).

In the face of complex problems, leaders need to find new ways of constructing solutions. They need to form an understanding of the complex dynamics they face, while they realise that they have limited intellectual and emotional energy (Casey, 2014; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). Leaders need to rely more on the collective process offered by their network or people and trust that a solution will emerge over time (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2007). A potentially helpful perspective is what Johansen calls “dilemma flipping”: turning threats into opportunities (Johansen, 2013:10). In other words, leaders need to reframe situations to create a new understanding of the situations at hand. They can achieve this by applying critical thinking, remaining open to new ideas and using scenario planning to create more clarity (Bolman & Deal, 2015; Johansen, 2013).

Finally, leaders are expected to provide clarity in the VUCA environment by motivating and uniting their followers. Leaders are required to be agile and to learn and adapt fast (Horney *et al.*, 2010). They need to set realistic expectations of which problems they can solve, remain physically fit and healthy (Johansen, 2013), and apply a strategy of making continuous shifts in people, processes, technology and structures (Horney *et al.*, 2010).

In summary, it appears that contemporary organisations are complex entities that present challenges to organisational leaders on a scale not seen before. Supporting and developing these leaders are important if they are to succeed, especially when they are most vulnerable during a career transition. It also appears that leaders may need to change deeply held perspectives and frames of reference if they are to stay in the game.

The next section will provide an overview of leadership development theory with the aim of positioning the type of support leaders may require during a career transition. The purpose of this argument is to show how transition coaching, and ultimately transformative transition coaching, may be useful as a support mechanism.

### 2.3 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT<sup>3</sup>

The first major theoretical pillar of this research was leadership development with leadership transition theory as its sub-field as illustrated in Figures 1.1 and 2.1. These two theoretical fields were important to this research since the focus of enquiry was the transitioning leader. The TTC framework derived in this research aims to support transitioning leaders and can be seen as a form of leadership development. Understanding the processes and outcomes of leadership development may therefore inform and position the TTC framework within leadership development theory.

Leadership theory is a complex and diverse topic, and no single agreed definition currently exists to describe this phenomenon. More has been written and less known about leadership than about any other topic in behavioural science (Day & Antonakis, 2012). Leadership development, described as the effective development of leaders and leadership behaviour is a multifaceted topic that is studied separate from leadership theory. As a result, leadership development has emerged as a research field distinct from leadership theory in the last 10–15 years (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm & McKee, 2014). Learning to lead involves a complex and involved set of skills, knowledge and characteristics (O'Connell, 2014). A distinction is made between leader development and leadership development. Leader development concentrates on developing the individual leader, whereas leadership development involves multiple individuals, namely the leader, their followers and the social influence of this process (Day *et al.*, 2014).

At the individual level, leader development, also referred to as a source of **human capital** encompasses the work experience, education, knowledge, skills, abilities and training of the leader. These aspects represent most of the knowledge of an organisation and are therefore an important part of achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage (Hitt & Ireland, 2002). Leadership development, a source of **social capital**, on the other hand, focuses on the structure and content of the social relations of individuals or groups, which affect the flow of information and influence available to the individuals or groups (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

A career transition presents challenges to both leader and leadership development as will be shown in this section. With this in mind, a discussion of the interpersonal

---

<sup>3</sup> Note that management, which is objective-driven and transactional in nature, is seen by some as different to leadership (Zaleznik, 1992). Others argue that successful leadership also requires successful management and that the concepts are complementary, but that leadership goes beyond management (Day & Antonakis, 2012). In this research, when reference is made to management, the leadership aspects are also implied. The words 'leader' and 'manager' are therefore used interchangeably in this research.

and intrapersonal factors that play a role in leader and leadership development processes (Day *et al.*, 2014) through the lenses of career transitions and coaching is presented.

### **2.3.1 Intrapersonal factors in leadership development**

Intrapersonal factors play a role mostly in leader development (as opposed to leadership development). Research into this field reveals aspects such as experience, learning, skills and self-development. Table 2.1 below summarises findings with potential significance to career transitions.

**Table 2.1: Intrapersonal factors in leader development**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Findings from literature review</b>	<b>Possible career transition implications</b>
Experience	Experience is important in leadership performance, but tenure and number of positions do not guarantee experience (Bettin & Kennedy, 1990).	The type of experience must be taken into account when promoting leaders.
Learning	Less-experienced leaders have more to learn, but experienced leaders may struggle to adapt their established cognitive frameworks. It takes 4–8 months for learning to translate to facilitative leadership behaviour (Hirst, Mann, Bain, Pirola-Merlo & Richter, 2004).	Newly promoted leaders with vast experience should remain open to new learning. Patience is required from both newly promoted leaders and their organisations since assimilating learning takes time.
Skills	Certain skills are more important than others during certain career phases (Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro & Reiter-Palmon, 2000; Mumford, Campion & Morgeson, 2007) and certain skills are more prevalent at senior leadership level (Mumford, Zaccaro, Johnson, Diana, Gilbert & Threlfall, 2000).	Leaders, organisations and coaches must be cognisant of the skills typically required at senior leadership level to develop the appropriate skills, given the leader's level.
Self-development	Work orientation, mastery orientation, and career-growth orientation facilitate leader self-development activities (Boyce, Zaccaro & Wisecarver, 2010).	Awareness of these orientations may encourage self-development in newly promoted leaders.

Source: Adapted from Day *et al.* (2014)

Experience is a significant predictor for leadership performance, but interestingly, time in service and number of previous positions are unrelated to leadership performance (Bettin & Kennedy, 1990). It is acknowledged that it takes time to gain experience, but the findings reported by Bettin and Kennedy suggest that merely clocking up time is not a guarantee of gaining experience. It appears that the types of experience gained are more important than the time aspect (Day *et al.*, 2014). This principle of job variety may potentially have significance for leadership transitions in

that leaders may not have sufficient experience for a more senior position merely because they have spent time at a certain level. Transition coaching interventions should take cognisance of this fact.

Learning and experience are interconnected. Leaders with less experience have more to learn whereas experienced leaders have well-established cognitive reference frameworks and may have to work harder to integrate new knowledge into these frameworks (Hirst *et al.*, 2004). The challenge of unlearning established patterns opens the case for a learning intervention such as transformative learning, which aims to change deeply held, but potentially flawed perspectives.

Hirst *et al.* (2004) found that there is a time delay of four to eight months between leadership learning and demonstrating this learning through facilitative leadership behaviour. Newly promoted leaders are often expected to show results fast (Watkins, 2003), which seems unrealistic given the findings of Hirst's *et al.*'s (2004) research. It appears that the temporal aspects of a career transition are important. The coaching framework created from this research therefore had to take cognisance of the timing aspect of the coaching intervention.

Skills play an important role in leadership performance. Certain skills are more important during certain phases of a leader's career than during others, for example, technical skills at a junior level and strategic and business skills at a senior level (Mumford, Marks *et al.*, 2000; Mumford *et al.*, 2007). At a senior level, two skill sets appear more frequently: the extraverted, dominant, responsible, high in achievement needs skill set; and the introverted, intuitive, achievement-oriented, open skill set (Mumford, Zaccaro *et al.*, 2000). Other research identified the synthesis of wisdom, intelligence and creativity as important skills in effective leadership decision-making (Sternberg, 2008). Furthermore, self-regulation appears to play a significant role in the successful acquisition of skills (Day *et al.*, 2014). Aligned with self-regulation seems to be self-development.

Leaders may engage in self-development to become more skilled at leading. Certain leader characteristics appear to indicate propensity for self-development leading to increased skills. These leader characteristics were identified by Boyce *et al.* (2010) as being:

- Work orientation (organisational commitment and job involvement);
- Mastery orientation (greater self-efficacy, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and intellectual maturity); and

- Career-growth orientation (greater career exploration and feedback-seeking behaviours).

Leaders with a strong career-growth orientation were found to be especially skilled at performing self-development activities although overall for the self-development of leaders, all three (work orientation, mastery orientation and career-growth orientation) appear to be important (Boyce *et al.*, 2010).

### **2.3.2 Interpersonal aspects in leadership development**

Interpersonal factors in leadership development are focused on enhancing leadership capacity (Day *et al.*, 2014). This form of social capital relies on the content and structures of relationships involving leaders (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Two lenses through which to view the interpersonal aspects of leadership development are the social mechanisms that encourage leadership development and the striving towards authentic leadership practices (Day *et al.*, 2014). Table 2.2 below summarises research into these aspects and the potential significance for leadership career transitions.

**Table 2.2: Interpersonal factors in leadership development**

Topic	Findings from literature review	Possible career transition implications
Social mechanisms	Positive learning environments and awareness of social mechanisms assist in building strong relationships (Scandura & Lankau, 1996).	The systemic contribution of the environment must be taken into consideration during career transitions.
Authentic Leadership	This leadership style requires self-awareness, self-regulation, openness and trust from both leader and followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner <i>et al.</i> , 2005). Authentic leaders must hold balanced views but also need to earn the legitimacy from their followers to represent the followers' values (Eagly, 2005).	Authentic leadership qualities should be fostered during leadership career transitions.

Source: Adapted from Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm & McKee (2014)

In terms of social mechanisms (the first lens) aspects, such as friendship (Boyd & Taylor, 1998) and race (Scandura & Lankau, 1996), play both positive and negative roles in relationship building depending on how these aspects contribute to learning. Social psychological processes, such as self-knowledge, interpersonal skills, communication competence and cultural competence, influence the quality and longevity of relationships. Contextual influences, such as organisational climate and

culture, group and organisational composition, economic environment and organisational support, also affect the forming of relationships. If transitioning leaders experience positive contextual influences they have a greater chance of building positive relationships. Leaders are therefore encouraged to create positive learning environments that take cognisance of social mechanisms, socio-psychological and contextual factors (Boyd *et al.*, 1998; Scandura & Lankau, 1996). For this research, the conclusion from these perspectives is that the environmental and systemic forces present during a career transition must be mapped explicitly and incorporated in the career support intervention.

Authentic leadership (the second lens) has a strong focus on interactive leader–follower dynamics and, as a result, offers guidelines for developing this form of social capital (Day *et al.*, 2014). Through the development process, both leaders and followers gain self-awareness and establish open, transparent, trusting and genuine relationships, which can partly be facilitated by planned interventions, such as training (Avolio & Gardner, 2005:322). Self-regulation and the personal histories of leaders and followers have also been shown to play an important role in relationship development. The effect of authentic leader–follower relationships leads to heightened levels of follower trust in the leader, enhanced engagement and workplace well-being, as well as more sustainable performance (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). Another study showed that it is important for authentic leaders to take a balanced, multi-perspective view to build and preserve trust (Ilies, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005). An interesting study by Eagly (2005) suggests that authentic leadership goes beyond merely holding a balanced view, and in fact requires leaders to promote a set of values and beliefs on behalf of the followers. Followers will identify more with leaders if they afford leaders the legitimacy of representing them (Eagly, 2005). It appears that authentic leadership qualities are important to succeed as a leader and arguably even more so when transitioning into a new role given the heightened expectations from the organisation and the leader's new followers.

### **2.3.3 Leadership development processes**

The process of leadership development has been researched in terms of rate or patterns of development over time. Typical interventions are mentoring and coaching, 360-degree feedback, job assignments, self–other agreement, use of self-narrative and life stories and action learning, among others (Day *et al.*, 2014; Fleenor, Smither, Atwater, Braddy & Sturm, 2010; Ligon, Hunter & Mumford, 2008).

Coaching and mentoring as a leadership development tool will be discussed in more detail under the coaching literature review section (2.7) while the rest of the enablers identified here are discussed in this section and summarised in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3: Leadership development processes**

Topic	Findings from literature review	Possible career transition implications
360-degree feedback	This is a powerful tool to increase self-awareness, but the effectiveness is linked to the organisational culture and level of openness and trust (Atwater & Waldman, 1998).	Using 360-degree feedback could help transitioning leaders to increase their level of self-awareness.
Job assignments	Variety in types of jobs is more important than time spent in a particular role (Day <i>et al.</i> , 2014).	Awareness of the power of having a varied past career may be used as a tool to find solutions to current challenges.
Self-other agreement	Leaders who have a realistic self-view are more effective as leaders (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992).	Newly appointed leaders' accuracy of self-view may increase their self-awareness.
Self-narrative	Reflecting on life stories may assist leaders in gaining self-knowledge (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Leaders rely on past experience when making decisions (Ligon <i>et al.</i> , 2008)	Life stories could be used as a coaching tool for transitioning leaders.

Source: Adapted from Day *et al.* (2014)

The use of 360-degree feedback, where feedback on a leader's behaviour and effectiveness is obtained from multiple people including subordinates, peers, superiors and even external parties, has received much research attention (Day *et al.*, 2014). Although a powerful tool, merely giving feedback to a leader on his or her 360-degree review is not sufficient to ensure behavioural change in the leader. Organisational culture and level of openness, trust and participation have been shown to be a significant indicator of how seriously the results of a 360-degree review are taken by a leader (Atwater & Waldman, 1998). The content of the review and leaders' perception of how supportive their organisations are, play a role in determining how leaders respond to the 360-degree feedback (Facteau, Facteau, Schoel, Russell & Poteet, 1998). Research also found that it was more effective to conduct two feedback interventions than one (Seifert & Yukl, 2005).

Research on self-other agreement, or the level of correspondence between how leaders rate themselves compared to how others rate them, indicates that leaders who rate themselves similarly to how others rate them are likely to be effective leaders (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992). Furthermore, self-awareness and self-

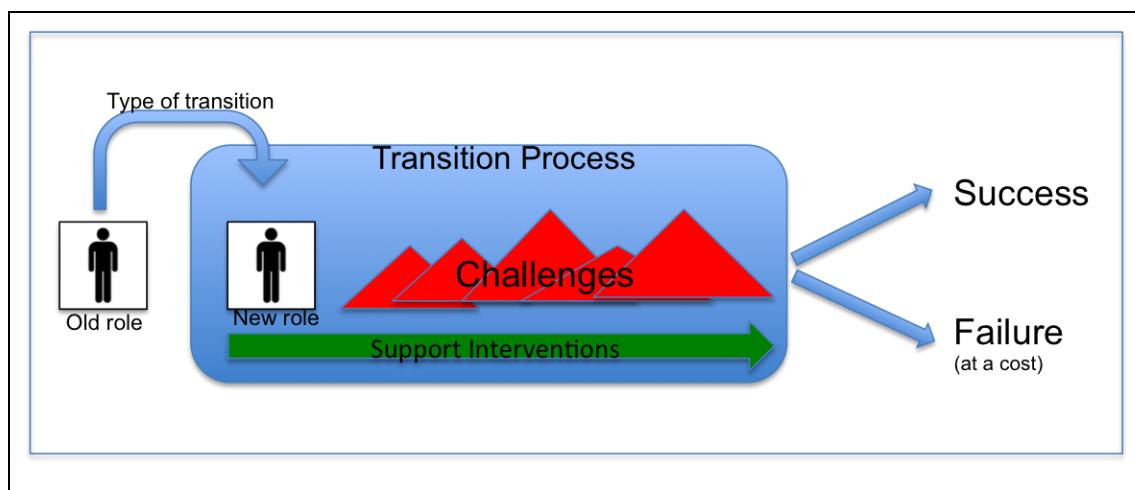
perception could increase through self–other agreement when a multi-score assessment is used (Fleenor *et al.*, 2010).

Leaders' life stories, explored as a self-narrative process where leaders wrote personal narratives about themselves, were shown to assist them in gaining self-knowledge and clarity about self-concept (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Through written journals, leaders are able to construct their identities from their interpretations of self-narratives (Sparrowe, 2005). Research has shown that outstanding leaders rely on experiences in their sense-making processes (Ligon *et al.*, 2008). It therefore appeared that reflection could play an important role in the coaching framework that this research set out to create.

This section provided an overview of leadership development theory through the lens of leadership transitions with coaching as a possible support mechanism. In the next section, leadership transitions, which is an aspect of leadership development, is discussed.

## 2.4 LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

For the purpose of this research, 'leadership transition' was defined as the phenomenon where a leader is promoted to a more senior level in the organisation and takes on different and more complex responsibilities. This section explores this phenomenon using Figure 2.2 as a guide to describe various types of transition and transition models, the typical challenges faced by newly promoted leaders, typical support interventions applied and the reasons for and the cost of failure. The dynamics discussed in this section present the context within which a career transition support intervention, such as the TTC framework, must function.



**Figure 2.2: Leadership transition process**

Source: Author's own compilation

#### 2.4.1 Transition models

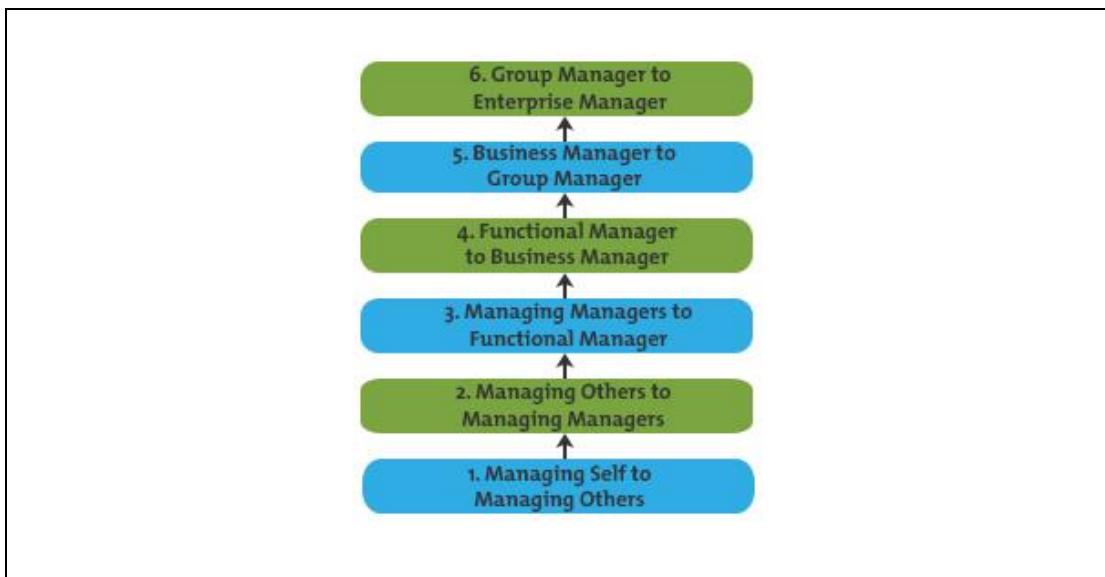
Several theories and models of transitions in general, leadership transitions, leadership levels and leadership developmental stages exist. These models are summarised in Table 2.4, and are discussed in more detail in this section. The aim of this discussion is to raise awareness at a meta-level of the dynamics of career transitions.

**Table 2.4: Transition models**

Transition model	Phases or levels
Leadership pipeline	Managing self, managing others, managing managers, functional manager, business manager, enterprise manager (Charan <i>et al.</i> , 2011)
Pathways and crossroads	Individual contributor, supervising manager, single business manager, executive manager of several businesses, institutional leader (Freedman, 2011)
Levels of work (stratified systems theory)	Level 7: 20–50 years' time span Level 6: 10–20 years' time span Level 5: 5–10 years' time span Level 4: 2–5 years' time span Level 3: 1–2 years' time span Level 2: 3–12 months' time span Level 1: 0–3 months' time span (Jaques, 1996)
Three-phased models	Executive, middle management, supervisor (Katz & Kahn, 1978) Ending, neutral zone, new beginning (Bridges, 2003) Arrive, survive, thrive (Elsner & Farrands, 2006) Unfreeze, transition, refreeze (Lewin, 1952) Sensing, presencing, realising (Scharmer, 2009) Trigger, downturn, redefining, starting over (Hyatt, 1990) Releasing, learning, adapting, adjusting (Bebb, 2009)

Source: Author's own compilation

Arguably the most well-known of the leadership transitions models, and one that made the concept popular is the **leadership pipeline** (Charan *et al.*, 2011). This model is popular despite the limited empirical research to validate the model (Kaiser, 2011). The leadership pipeline model brought attention to the different levels of leadership within an organisation with each level requiring different skills. As shown in Figure 2.3, leaders move through a number of stages on their way up (Charan *et al.*, 2011). Each stage requires leaders to let go of certain thinking and behaviour patterns and learn new ones. Due to the influential nature of the leadership pipeline model, a brief overview is provided below.



**Figure 2.3: The leadership pipeline**

Source: Adapted from Charan *et al.* (2011)

The first stage in the leadership pipeline model is the move from managing self to managing others. During this transition, individual contributors have to learn how to plan work, assign tasks, motivate others, measure their performance and let go of their specialist comfort zone to value intangible managerial work. During the second transition to managing managers, the new role entails a purer form of management, meaning that the incumbent should refrain from performing individual specialist tasks and focus purely on the management role. The manager of managers must start thinking strategically and should act as a coach to first-line managers. Moving into the functional manager position (the third transition) requires advanced communication skills. At this level, leaders need to learn to value work outside of their area of expertise and take a longer-term and more strategic perspective to help ensure organisational sustainability. The fourth transition, moving into the business manager role, is typically associated with more autonomy to integrate various functions within the organisation. Working with an even wider variety of people is also part of this transition. Becoming a group manager (transition five) involves being concerned with the success of not one business, but multiple. Holistic thinking is a crucial aspect of success at this level. In the final transition, to enterprise manager, the focus is on values rather than on skills. Long-term thinking and a deep understanding of the nature of the organisation, the industry and the geo-political landscape are important. Mentoring of new leaders is also essential.

While influential, it must be noted that the leadership pipeline model is not without criticism. Foremost is the lack of empirical research and formal theory to support the

model even though extensive research literature exists on the subject of managerial jobs across hierarchies (Dai, Tang & De Meuse, 2011; Kaiser, Craig, Overfield & Yarborough, 2011). Kaiser *et al.* (2011) highlight the work of Katz and Kahn (1978) as an example of a leadership transition baseline model. According to this model, there are only three leadership levels in an organisation: executive, middle management and supervisory.

- i) The **executive level** is responsible for creating organisational structure and policy, monitoring the external environment for threats and opportunities, linking the organisation to the larger external environment, building consensus among stakeholders on strategic imperatives, and securing capital resources (Kaiser *et al.*, 2011:80).
- ii) **Middle levels** of management are responsible for translating strategy set at the executive level into specific operating goals and ensuring the execution thereof by allocating the necessary resources across functional areas (Kaiser *et al.*, 2011).
- iii) At the **lowest level** of Katz and Kahn's (1978) framework, supervisory leaders have to apply existing structure through use of standard operating processes. They have to distribute resources, assign specific tasks, and manage the employees and teams who execute the core work of the organisation (Kaiser *et al.*, 2011).

A different perspective on leadership levels is Jaques' **stratified systems theory**, which defines work in organisations in seven strata on a basis of decision-making complexity. According to Jaques' model, each level of work is related to the time span and complexity required by the executor of the task to complete the task (Jaques, 1996). The original reason for creating the seven levels of work was to justify higher remuneration for more senior roles (Jaques, 1956, in McMorland, 2005). Jaques' research revealed the time cut-off points of each stratum: three months for stratum one, one year for stratum two, two years for stratum three, five years for stratum four, 10 years for stratum five, 20 years for stratum six and 50 years and more for stratum seven (Jaques, 1996). Although there are differences, each layer of management makes a unique contribution to the total organisation despite the different time spans (McMorland, 2005).

A study by Hyatt (1990) found that people who go through job transitions go through a series of phases starting with a trigger event, a downturn (feeling stuck), defining oneself and then starting over. In a similar vein, Bebb's (2009) research produced a four-phase transition model consisting of releasing, learning, adapting and adjusting.

Bebb found that during each phase, the four domains of cognitive, behavioural, relational and role perspective were affected.

There are a number of more generic three-phased models describing transitions. One of the earliest change models was that of Lewin (Elrod & Tippett, 2002). Lewin talks about unfreeze, transition and refreeze (Lewin, 1952). 'Unfreezing' involves the breaking down of the status quo and preparing for change. 'Transition' implies resolving uncertainty and finding new ways to operate, while 'refreeze' involves settling down and creating a new sense of stability. Bridges (2003) describes a three-phase process comprising an ending, a neutral zone and a new beginning. The 'ending' is about letting go of the past. In the 'neutral zone', old behaviours must be let go of and new ones learnt, and in the 'new beginning' phase, the new task at hand must be embraced with the new skill set. Elsner and Farrands (2006) recognise the three phases to be arriving (getting to know the organisation), surviving (standing up and standing out) and thriving (showing success by mining experience and getting on with the job). Finally, Theory U talks about **sensing** (deep observation and becoming one with the situation), **presencing** (retreating, reflecting and allowing inner knowing to emerge) and **realising** (action that flows from new knowledge and understanding) (Scharmer, 2009). Transitions associated with dying cancer patients (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005) have even been adapted for organisational and management application (Henderson-Loney, 1996; Perlman & Takacs, 1990).

From this discussion, it is evident that much research has been done on transitions in general and career transitions in particular. These models and theories, while emphasising different aspects of transition, support the general notion that leaders operating at different levels require different skills and abilities. This insight reinforces the view that personal change and transformation may be required to function successfully at a higher level. By implication then, if a leader is promoted to the next level, he or she needs to adapt to the new level and will face challenges. The types of challenges are discussed in 2.4.2.

#### **2.4.2 Challenges faced and new skills required**

The aim of this research was to establish a coaching framework to assist transitioning leaders to be more successful in their new role. It is reasonable to expect that this coaching framework should have the ability to assist transitioning leaders with some of the challenges they face and help them acquire some of the

skills that the new role demand. With this in mind, this section discusses the literature on the challenges faced and new skills required by transitioning leaders.

Career transition challenges and the new skills required to succeed have been grouped into various categories by a number of researchers. Mumford *et al.* (2007:155) describe a 'strataplex' of skills required by transitioning leaders grouped into cognitive, interpersonal, business and strategic skills categories. Bebb (2009) identified four skill sets, namely cognitive, behavioural, relational and role perspective. For the purpose of this discussion, a combination of Mumford *et al.* (2007) and Bebb's (2009) career challenge and skill sets groupings were used: cognitive, behavioural, interpersonal, psychological and systemic. This is summarised in Table 2.5 followed by a discussion.

**Table 2.5: Transition challenges and new skills required**

Transition challenge domain	Practical example of new skills required	Reference from literature
Cognitive	New thinking patterns and cognitive models needed (learning new skills)	Bebb (2009), Charan <i>et al.</i> (2011), Freedman (2011), Kaiser <i>et al.</i> (2011)
	Develop strategic thinking	Charan <i>et al.</i> (2011), Kaiser <i>et al.</i> (2011), Lombardo and McCauley (1988), Watkins (2003)
	Obtain business knowledge and acumen	Freedman (2011) Jaques (1996), Kaiser <i>et al.</i> (2011), Lombardo and Eichinger (2002)
	Deal with complexity and ambiguity	Avolio and Hannah (2008), Hooijberg, Hunt and Dodge (1997), Jaques (1996), Kegan (1994), Lombardo and Eichinger (1995), Rooke and Torbert (2005), Zaccaro (2001)
Behavioural	New patterns of behaving required	Bebb (2009), Charan <i>et al.</i> (2011), Freedman (2011)
	Time management	Bebb (2009)
	Driving for results	Lombardo and Eichinger (2002)
	Active listening	Mumford <i>et al.</i> (2007)
	Learning to communicate effectively (verbal and written)	Mumford <i>et al.</i> (2007), Zaccaro (2001)
	Learning to rely on others (delegate)	Freedman (2011), Martin (2015)

**Table 2.5: Transition challenges and new skills required (continued)**

Transition challenge domain	Practical example of new skills required	Reference from literature
Interpersonal	Developing advanced interpersonal skills	Charan <i>et al.</i> (2011), Lombardo and Eichinger (1995)
	Building new networks	Bebb (2009), Hill (2007), Manderscheid and Ardichvili (2008), Watkins (2003)
	Influencing others (political savvy)	Guillen and Ibarra (2009), Hooijberg <i>et al.</i> (1997), Lombardo and Eichinger (2002), Mumford <i>et al.</i> (2007), Mumford, Marks <i>et al.</i> (2000), Zaccaro, Wood and Herman (2006)
	Being comfortable around higher management	Lombardo and Eichinger (2002)
	Establishing trust and aligning expectations	Freedman (2011), Hill (2007), Manderscheid and Ardichvili (2008), Watkins (2003)
	Building consensus among stakeholders (managing shared vision and purpose)	Kaiser <i>et al.</i> (2011), Lombardo and Eichinger (2002), Martin (2015)
	Developing people	Freedman (2011)
Psychological	Uncertainty, anxiety, feeling of isolation, loss of identity	Argyris (1991), Dotlich <i>et al.</i> (2004), Elsner and Farrands (2006), Manderscheid and Ardichvili (2008), Sutton (2008)
	Self-awareness (strengths and weaknesses)	Avolio and Hannah (2008), Elsner and Farrands (2006), Luthans and Avolio (2003), Watkins (2003)
	Increasing emotional intelligence and emotional control	Freedman (2011), Goleman (1996), Jaques (1996)
Systemic	Understanding what new job entails within the systemic context and organisational culture	Elsner and Farrands (2006), Freedman (2011), Kaiser <i>et al.</i> (2011), Martin (2015)
	Maintaining a global perspective	Freedman (2011), Lombardo and Eichinger (2002), Mumford, Marks <i>et al.</i> (2000)

Source: Author's own compilation

#### **2.4.2.1 Cognitive challenges**

Letting go of what worked before and embracing the unknown that lies ahead requires transitioning leaders to be open to the fact that they may need to change their cognitive models (Bebb, 2009; Charan *et al.*, 2011). This cognitive shift can be difficult since it may require leaders to change some of their deeply held values, beliefs and assumptions. A particularly challenging cognitive shift for transitioning

leaders is the importance of thinking more strategically (Charan *et al.*, 2011; Kaiser *et al.*, 2011; Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; Watkins, 2003). The ability to think more strategically is especially difficult for leaders who transition from an expert or operational role into a senior position (Watkins, 2003). Leaders also need to understand the new business they enter and should acquire the necessary knowledge and business acumen (Freedman, 2011; Jaques, 1996; Kaiser *et al.*, 2011; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002).

Linked to the strategic thinking skill is the need to deal with the significantly increased level of complexity associated with senior roles (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Hooijberg *et al.*, 1997; Jaques, 1996; Kegan, 1994; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002; Rooke & Torbert, 2005; Zaccaro, 2001). Leaders' ability to cope at higher levels is linked to their ability to perceive and manage complexity (Rooke & Torbert, 2005). Kegan (1994) distinguishes between orders of complexity and people's ability to cope with the increased complexity. He asserts that people are capable of managing only a certain level of complexity at a given time and that they require assistance to master the next level.

#### **2.4.2.2 Behavioural patterns**

Research points out that new patterns of behaviour must be learnt in order to succeed in a new role (Bebb, 2009; Charan *et al.*, 2011; Freedman, 2011). Examples of behaviours that may help transitioning leaders to succeed are improved verbal and written communication and active listening skills (Mumford *et al.*, 2007; Zaccaro, 2001). More time would be demanded in more senior leadership roles; therefore, time management and the ability to use time effectively to drive for results become important (Bebb, 2009; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002). The ability to delegate is a crucial skill that assists with time management (Freedman, 2011).

#### **2.4.2.3 Interpersonal skills**

A senior leadership position demands the development of advanced interpersonal skills (Charan *et al.*, 2011; Kets de Vries, 2006; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1995). For a senior leader to sell his or her vision, he or she needs sophisticated interpersonal skills to be able to influence others (Guillen & Ibarra, 2009; Hooijberg *et al.*, 1997; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002; Mumford *et al.*, 2007; Mumford, Marks *et al.*, 2000). He or she also needs to be comfortable around other senior leaders (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002) to establish trust and build consensus among stakeholders (Kaiser *et al.*, 2011; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002; Martin, 2015). Building new networks is at

the core of successful interpersonal achievement (Bebb, 2009; Hill, 2007; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008; Watkins, 2003).

#### **2.4.2.4 Psychological challenges**

Transitioning into a senior leadership position typically causes a significant amount of uncertainty and anxiety, which may lead to a feeling of loneliness and isolation (Argyris, 1991; Elsner & Farrands, 2006; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008; Sutton, 2008). This anxiety can partially be ascribed to the sensation of loss of identity (Dotlich *et al.*, 2004). The new senior leader needs to increase his or her levels of self-awareness through among others becoming aware of strengths and weaknesses (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Elsner & Farrands, 2006; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Watkins, 2003). Increased emotional intelligence and emotional control are also important to withstand complex human relationships that accompany senior positions (Freedman, 2011; Goleman, 1996; Jaques, 1996).

#### **2.4.2.5 Systemic perspective**

New senior leaders need to understand their new role within the context of the organisation and its culture from a systemic perspective (Elsner & Farrands, 2006; Freedman, 2011; Kaiser *et al.*, 2011; Martin, 2015). They also need to keep the big picture in mind by maintaining a global perspective on where the business and the industry are heading (Freedman, 2011, Mumford, Zaccaro *et al.*, 2000). The new leader must essentially manage by considering a number of systems, and by facilitating the open flow of information (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002).

From this review, it is evident that transitioning leaders, especially at senior level, face significant challenges during the transition process and there are a number of advanced skills they need to learn to succeed. It also appears that some of the new skills required demand from the leader to change deeply held beliefs. This need for fundamental change strengthens the case for support mechanisms that facilitate deep, structural shifts in world views and perspectives such as proposed by this research.

What happens when they do not acquire these skills and as a result fail? The next section will discuss the literature on the high cost associated with leadership failure and the reasons behind it.

### **2.4.3 Reasons for and the cost of failure**

Literature on the success rate of transitioning leaders reveals a worrying picture. Freeman (2011:144) quotes a 2008 study conducted by the Emerge group who

conducted interviews and surveys with Fortune 1000 firms. Findings indicate that only 16% of executives were seen as fully transitioned (doing their job in a way effective executives are expected to). Other studies show that fewer than 50% of transitioning leaders succeed (Watkins, 2003) and up to 46% underperform (Sutton, 2008). The notion of management failure is a common occurrence and the term 'management derailment' is used to describe this phenomenon. Several studies (dating back to the 1980s) have examined the reasons behind this phenomenon (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). Some estimates place the level of executive derailment at between 30% and 50% (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1995). It is also noted that most career derailments occur when middle managers transition to the executive level (Hogan, Hogan & Kaiser, 2010), which was of particular interest to this research.

Several studies have tried to understand the dynamics of transition failure and derailment and the factors contributing to it (Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; Martin & Gentry, 2011; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). Consistently prominent themes emerge from derailment research. The first theme is problems with interpersonal relationships, which comprise of aspects such as insensitivity to others, being cold and aloof and being overly ambitious (McCall & Lombardo, 1983). The second theme is failure to meet business objectives, which entails a lack of follow through and poor performance (Lombardo & McCauley, 1988). A third theme is the inability to build and lead a team, which refers to failure to manage staff appropriately and inability to handle conflict (Martin & Gentry, 2011). The fourth theme is the inability to develop or adapt, which includes not being able to adapt to a manager with a different style or being unable to think strategically (Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; McCall & Lombardo, 1983). A fifth theme is having an overly narrow functional orientation (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). Research has also shown that the derailment phenomenon is not limited to specific generations, with the same themes emerging across Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1960), Generation X (those born between 1961 and 1980) and Millennials (those born between 1981 and 2002) (Martin & Gentry, 2011).

Other factors that may contribute to derailment are the lack of adequate preparation and skills for the next level as well as a poor understanding of what is unique about the new role (Charan *et al.*, 2011). In fact, people are often promoted before they are ready, and promotions are based purely on their track record (Elsner & Farrands, 2006; Kaiser *et al.*, 2011). Smart, talented young people are favoured by executives for early promotion in order to retain their skills even though these young people may not be emotionally mature enough to succeed at executive level (Bunker *et al.*,

2002). The fact that transitioning leaders are not given the necessary support from their organisations appears in a number of findings (Elsner & Farrands, 2006; Kaiser *et al.*, 2011; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008). This lack of support reinforced the motivation for this research.

The effect and cost of derailment are significant. From a financial perspective, the cost of a derailed executive to the organisation can be several millions of dollars (Bunker *et al.*, 2002; Martin & Gentry, 2011) and as much as 24 times the leader's annual salary (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008). Apart from the direct financial influence, there are emotional costs and decreased morale of people close to the derailed executive (Martin & Gentry, 2011). An indication of the ripple effect of a failed executive is the fact that 12.4 people are affected by the arrival of a new midlevel manager in an organisation (Watkins, 2003). The conclusion drawn from this discussion is that leadership failures occur frequently and that the effect on the individual and organisation is substantial. What can be done to prevent transition failures?

#### **2.4.4 Interventions to assist transitioning leaders**

It is evident from the literature reviewed that leaders face challenges when they transition into new roles, and especially so when these are senior leadership roles. Coaching, the focus of this research, is one of a number of interventions currently used to support leadership development. This section therefore provides a brief overview of other typical leadership interventions that are currently in place to support transitioning leaders.

There is evidence that organisations are increasingly implementing programmes to support transitioning managers (Freedman, 2011; Watkins, 2003). These interventions are costly, with some estimates putting the total amount spent on leadership development at approximately \$12 billion in 2007; yet, there is very little evidence of the efficacy of these interventions (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

The more successful interventions focus on helping the transitioning leader to learn fast and to develop trusting relationships (Bebb, 2009). Learning on the job is necessary given the pressures associated with senior positions (Freedman, 2011). Studies involving identical twins have shown that environmental factors cause variance in leadership ability (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). These findings confirm the research done by Dai *et al.* (2011), which found that leadership development follows a roadmap and that specific experience must be gained at certain levels before advancing. They further recommend that, as part of leadership development

programmes, organisations should identify high-potential leaders accurately and start their development process early so that they can be exposed to the appropriate experiences at the right time.

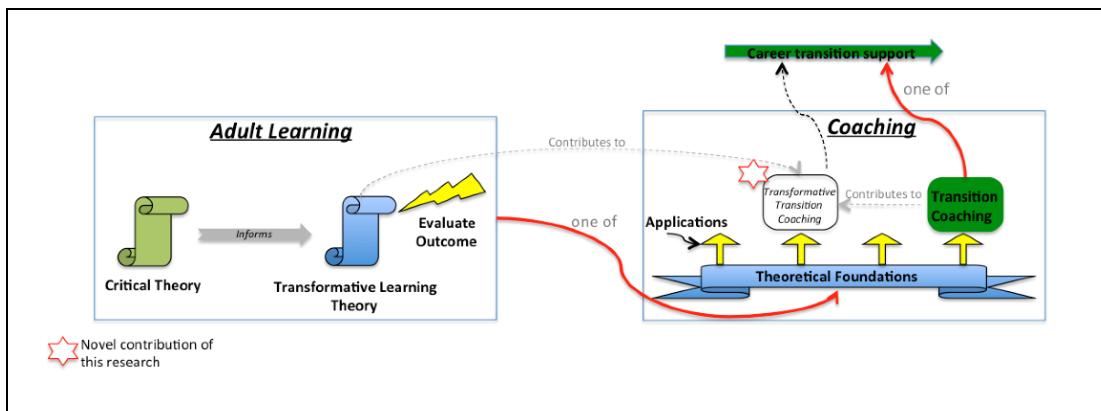
Leader readiness must be considered before promoting people into senior positions, and leadership development programmes must use assessments to be cognisant of a leader's readiness to advance (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). If leaders are assumed to be ready to advance, Freedman (2011) recommends that a detailed job analysis be performed by the transitioning leader, his or her superior and subject matter experts so that a coherent and comprehensive job description is created from multiple perspectives. This approach makes sense since one of the main challenges for transitioning managers is role clarity (Elsner & Farrands, 2006; Freedman, 2011; Kaiser, 2011; Martin, 2015).

Coaching and mentoring can be useful during leadership transitions by assisting with self-reflective awareness (Freedman, 2011). Self-awareness is necessary to help overcome potentially incomplete, biased and irrelevant mental models from previous positions (Freedman, 2011:152). Research has shown that coaching during transitions can help leaders overcome a deep sense of vulnerability in the face of complex challenges, develop new personal, social and cognitive capacities, and identify new purpose and meaning in their whole lives (Reynolds, 2011:39). This is in line with Manderscheid's (2008) assessment that external facilitators can assist in creating self-awareness by soliciting feedback from the leader's work group to assist in identifying potential issues (Petrock, 1990). The role of coaching as a career transition support intervention was of particular importance to this research since the transformative transition coaching (TTC) framework that resulted from this research is a type of coaching intervention aimed at transition support. Section 2.7.4 discusses in more detail the role of coaching as a support intervention.

It is evident from this discussion on leadership transitions that a number of transition models exist and although they vary in detail, they share the notion that career transitions present challenges to the individual and that the rate of failure is high. It is therefore important to support transitioning leaders to minimise their risk of failure. As shown, a number of support mechanisms exist. Coaching is one such support mechanism and one of the foundations of coaching is adult learning, in particular transformative learning. The next section discusses adult and transformative learning as important foundational aspects of the TTC framework.

## 2.5 ADULT LEARNING

The second major theoretical pillar of this research (after leadership development) was the field of adult learning, with transformative learning as a focus. The relationship between adult learning, transformative learning theory and coaching is illustrated in Figure 2.4 below.



**Figure 2.4: Mapping of adult learning, transformative learning and coaching to career transition support**

Source: Author's own compilation

Adult learning is one of the theoretical foundations of coaching. Transformative learning is a particular type of adult learning and is influenced by critical theory.

### 2.5.1 Definition of adult learning

Adult learning is a distinct form of learning experienced by adults, which has certain characteristics, such as being self-directed, voluntary, experiential and problem-based (Cranton, 2006). The phenomena of adult learning and change have been studied for many years (Knowles, 1970; Kolb, 2014; Piaget, 1972), yet it is considered to be one of the least understood and most complex types of change (Anderson, 2001).

The father of adult learning is considered to be Malcolm Knowles. In the late 1960s, he was the first to theorise how adults learn (Russel, 2006). His perspective was different to the dominant view of the time where insights about the adult learning process were extrapolated from research on how children learn (Illeris, 2008; Merriam, 2001). This child-centric view of learning had its origins in the monastic schools of Europe dating back to the seventh century and was known as 'pedagogy', a term derived from the Greek words *paid* (child) and *agogus* (leading), thus literally meaning the art and science of teaching children (Knowles, 1970). Studies focused on how adult learning differs from pedagogy only started after World War II and

eventually culminated in the concept of ‘andragogy’ where *aner* means ‘man, not boy’ or ‘adult’ in Greek (Knowles, 1970).

Andragogy is premised on five assumptions, which describe the adult learner as someone who –

- Has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning;
- Has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning;
- Has learning needs closely related to changing social roles;
- Is problem-centred and interested in immediate application of knowledge; and
- Is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Knowles, 1970; Merriam, 2001; Russel, 2006).

Knowles further spelled out five implications for practice with regard to andragogy (Knowles, 1970):

- i) **The learning climate:** The physical learning environment should be one where adults feel at ease. More importantly, the psychological climate should foster a feeling of acceptance, respect, support, teacher–student joint inquiry status and freedom of expression. The behaviour of the teacher is the most important factor determining the learning climate. Teachers need to show that they really care for and listen to learners.
- ii) **Diagnosis of needs:** The adult learner, more so than the teacher, must be allowed to self-diagnose his or her needs for learning. Self-diagnosis consists of three phases:
  - Firstly, constructing a model of the competencies required by the learner;
  - Secondly, providing diagnostic experiences (games, simulations, laboratory experiments) in which the learner can assess his or her present level of competence; and finally
  - Measuring the gap between the learner’s present competence and the desired state.
- iii) **The planning process:** Learners have to participate in the planning of their learning process (with the guidance of the teacher) so that they show their agreement, acceptance and commitment.
- iv) **Conducting learning experiences:** The teacher’s role is that of co-inquirer, not instructor; hence, the responsibility of conducting the learning experience must be shared by both parties.

- v) **Evaluation of learning:** Awarding a mark or a grade to an adult learner tends to invoke a sense of being judged in adults and could force the teacher–student relationship into an adult–child power structure. Andragogy prescribes a process of self-evaluation where the teacher assists the adult learner to obtain evidence of his or her learning progress.

It is interesting to note how these andragogical practices relate to coaching practices. Coaching as a theoretical field underpinning this research is discussed later in this chapter (see 2.7), but for the moment, the following tentative links were made between andragogy and coaching theory (Table 2.6).

**Table 2.6: Links between andragogy concepts and coaching concepts**

Concept from andragogy	Related concept from coaching
Learning climate	Rapport building (Cox <i>et al.</i> , 2014)
Diagnosis of needs	Goal-setting and feedback on progress (Kauffman & Coutu, 2009; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011)
The planning process	Allowing coachees to decide which action experiments they want to conduct (Theeboom <i>et al.</i> , 2013)
Conducting learning experiences	Non-directive coaching (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 2007)
Evaluation of learning	Reflection by coachee on progress (Kolb, 2014)

Source: Author's own compilation

It must be noted that andragogy as a discipline moved from being a separate learning theory, to “a model of assumptions about learning or a conceptual framework that serves as a basis for an emergent theory” (Knowles, 1989:112). Instead of a pedagogy versus andragogy view, Knowles saw it as a continuum ranging from teacher-directed to student-directed learning and applicable to both children and adults depending on the situation. Andragogy is therefore defined by the situation of the learning more so than by the learner (Merriam, 2001).

While andragogy as explained above is an example of an adult learning theory, Merriam (2001) notes that there is currently no single model of adult learning that comprehensively explains the adult learning process. Rather, what is known today provides a knowledge base for adult learning, and it may even be a mistake to attempt to create an exclusive theory of adult learning given the complex nature of the phenomenon (Brookfield, 1995).

To illustrate the variety of approaches to adult learning theory, Brookfield (1995) identifies four major research areas in adult learning: self-directed learning, critical

reflection, experiential learning, and learning to learn. Of importance to this research were critical reflection and experiential learning. Mezirow (discussed in 2.6.1) sees critical reflection as the primary mechanism for learning in that adults have the ability to examine the assumptions they hold critically and then reframe them in order to have a more inclusive and less dysfunctional world view (Mezirow, 1995). This ability to change deeply held perspectives on life – which may be keeping people from living a fulfilled life – is the central tenet of the coaching framework that this research set out to create. Experiential learning sees adult learning as a continuing process of evaluating experiences (Brookfield, 1995). Kolb's model of experiential learning (Kolb, 2014) is one of the most influential in this area and played an important role in the development of the coaching framework in this research. It will be discussed later in this chapter under the coaching section (see 2.7).

### **2.5.2 The role of critical theory in adult learning**

As indicated in the conceptual map depicted in Figure 2.4, critical theory informs and influences transformative learning theory. Given that transformative learning is an important foundation of the TTC framework, a brief overview of critical theory is presented here.

One of the proponents of critical theory, Jurgen Habermas (1996), was a source of influence for Mezirow's (1994) version of transformative learning. A basic understanding of Habermas' view on critical theory therefore provides an important base for understanding Mezirow's theory.

In essence, critical theory tries to explain how social control works so that current systems of capitalist control can then be dismantled and society transformed into a democratic socialist model (Brookfield, 2012:131). The origins of critical theory can be traced back to the work of a group of sociologists at the University of Frankfurt in Germany in the 1930s. Critical theory provides a specific interpretation of Marxist philosophy by asking: How is it that the majority of people who are limited and constrained by grossly unfair society come to accept this state of affairs as not only normal but actually desirable? The central hypothesis of critical theory is that the dominant ideology of the day is organised to convince people that the status quo is an acceptable state of affairs and that change is not necessary (Brookfield, 2001).

Critical theory informs adult learning by suggesting that such learning should have at its core an understanding of how adults learn so that they can recognise the level of control of an ideology (or way of thinking) over them and encourage thoughts and actions which could open the way for a change in the problematic ideology

(Brookfield, 2001). In other words, in the same manner that critical theory studies the ways for society to question and change ideologies critically, adult learning needs to examine how adults learn to assist them to change deeply held, problematic beliefs as part of the learning dynamic.

While there were a number of academics who helped develop critical theory, the work of Jurgen Habermas specifically influenced Mezirow. Mezirow was interested in Habermas' search for a learning society and a discursive democracy (Murphy & Fleming, 2008). Habermas' notion that critical discourse is essential to reach a more inclusive understanding by questioning validity claims, forms the basis of Mezirow's explanation of how transformative learning works. Mezirow sees Habermas' conditions of rational discourse as central to facilitate adult learning. Participants must have –

- Accurate and complete information;
- Freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception;
- Openness to alternative points of view;
- Empathy with and concern for the thoughts and feelings of others;
- The ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments;
- Awareness of ideas and the ability to be critically reflective of assumptions;
- Equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse; and
- A willingness to understand and accept agreement, and to accept agreed best judgments as a test of validity until new outcomes from discourse are identified (Mezirow & Associates, 2000).

In addition to the conditions of rational discourse, Mezirow interprets Habermas' idea of "self-organising committees of free and equal citizens" (Habermas, 1996:7) as adult educators encouraging communities of collaborative discourse, aimed at truthful communication in the face of differences in power and privileges (Murphy & Fleming, 2008). Mezirow also draws on Habermas when he identifies critical reflection, rational discourse and praxis as central to adult learning (Murphy & Fleming, 2008).

This brief overview of critical theory laid the foundation for a discussion of transformative learning theory in the next section. The incorporation and operationalisation of transformative learning during a transition coaching process was one of the research objectives of this project, and was fundamental to the derivation of the TTC framework.

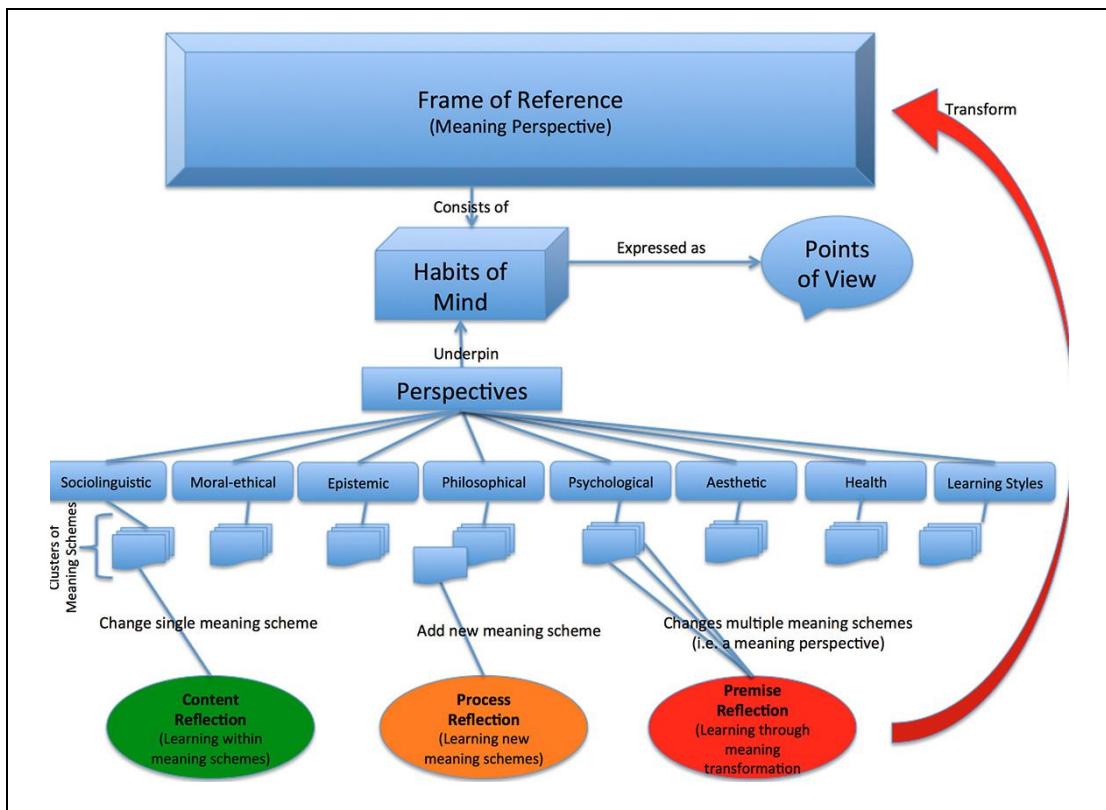
## 2.6 TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

The previous section provided a brief overview of adult learning. An area of specialisation within adult learning is transformative learning theory. Transformative learning theory studies the phenomenon of deep structural and permanent changes in adults (Mezirow, 1997). It is a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open and permeable (Cranton, 2005). Put differently, transformative learning is the process of “meaning becoming clarified through expanded awareness, critical reflection, validating discourse and reflective action as one moves towards a fuller realization of agency” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000:25)

### 2.6.1 Conceptualisation of transformative learning

Although a number of scholars have provided frameworks to describe the transformative learning process (Cranton, 1994; Dirkx, 2006; Mezirow, 1997; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006), perhaps the most prolific writer and thinker on the subject of transformation in adults is Jack Mezirow. Starting in 1978, he developed a structured theory of the transformational process of adult learning (Poutiatine, 2010). Given the prominence of Mezirow’s work, this research predominantly used Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2008) as a lens to explore the phenomenon of transformative learning in senior leaders during their career transitions. With this in mind, specific attention is given in this section to Mezirow’s theory.

Mezirow’s theory is illustrated in Figure 2.5 below.



**Figure 2.5: Mezirow's transformative learning topology**

Source: Adapted from Mezirow (1994) and Kitchenham (2008).

Mezirow's theory (2008) holds that adults organise and interpret life's experiences through sets of filters. These filters are called 'meaning perspectives' or 'frames of reference' and they refer to a person's overall world view consisting of structures of cultural and psychological assumptions (Mezirow, 1985). These meaning perspectives or frames of reference comprise habits of mind and are expressed as subsequent points of view. Habits of mind involve how one categorises experience, beliefs, people, events and oneself. They may involve the structures, rules, criteria, codes, schemata, standards, values, personality traits and dispositions upon which our thoughts, feelings and actions are based (Mezirow, 2008). Specific perspectives are underpinned by meaning schemes, which are sets of assumptions governing particular situations (Brookfield, 2012).

Mezirow (2008) identifies a number of perspectives or habits of mind as summarised in Table 2.7 below. This classification of perspectives played a critical role in the development of the TTC framework, as will be revealed in Chapters 5 and 6.

**Table 2.7: Examples of perspectives that people hold**

Perspective	Description
Sociolinguistic	Language and how it is used in social settings, social norms, cultural expectations, the way language reflect these norms and expectations
Moral-ethical	Involving conscience, moral norms and values
Epistemic	Knowledge and how we acquire knowledge
Philosophical	World view, political view, religious doctrine
Psychological	Self-concept, inhibitions, anxieties and fears, emotional response patterns; how people view themselves
Health	View on approach to health; interpreting health problems
Political	Informal, unofficial and sometimes behind-the-scenes efforts to sell ideas, influence an organisation, increase power or achieve other targeted objectives
Aesthetic	Taste, attitude, standards, judgments about beauty and the insight and authenticity of aesthetic expressions, such as the sublime, the ugly, the tragic, the humorous, the drab

Source: Adapted from Mezirow (2008)

Mezirow distinguishes between a number of different learning mechanisms. When a person is faced with the need to learn, four options are possible:

- i) Firstly, learning *within* meaning *schemes* involves people working with what they already know by expanding on, complementing, and revising their present domain of knowledge (Mezirow, 1997).
- ii) Secondly, people could learn *new* meaning *schemes* that are compatible with existing schemes within their meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1997).
- iii) Thirdly, learning can take place through *transformation* of meaning *schemes*. This process requires “becoming aware of specific assumptions (schemata, criteria, rules, or repressions) on which a distorted or incomplete meaning scheme is based and, through a reorganization of meaning, transforming it” (Mezirow, 1985:23).
- iv) Lastly, learning can take place through the *transformation* of meaning *perspectives* (Taylor, 1997).

Not all learning leads to a transformation. If a person encounters a problem or challenge that cannot be resolved through the first two learning mechanisms (via present meaning schemes or through learning new meaning schemes), the problem dictates that the assumptions and basis for sense making must be transformed. Transformation then occurs by critical self-reflection of the assumptions that supported the meaning scheme or perspective in use (Mezirow, 1997). In other words, for transformative learning to occur, the person needs to reflect critically on

the assumptions that support the meaning scheme or perspective in use and undergo scheme or perspective transformations to interpret new events in a different way (Kitchenham, 2008). The revision of meaning structures seems to be initiated by a disorienting dilemma followed by a series of learning strategies involving critical reflection exploration of different roles and options, and negotiation and renegotiation of relationships (Taylor, 1997). Significant learning occurs through “identifying problematic ideas, values, beliefs and feelings, critically examining the assumptions upon which they are based, testing their justification through rational discourse and making decisions predicated upon the resulting consensus” (Mezirow, 1995:58).

Mezirow (1978) originally identified ten phases that a person typically experiences when undergoing transformation and later added an eleventh phase. These phases are depicted in Table 2.8. The additional eleventh phase is, for the sake of logical progression, inserted between the original phase 8 and 9. It should be noted that it is not necessary for a person either to experience all 11 phases or to experience it in a set order for transformation to occur (Kitchenham, 2008; Taylor, 1997).

**Table 2.8: Mezirow’s original ten phases of transformative learning plus an eleventh phase added later**

Phase	Experience
1	A disorienting dilemma
2	A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions
4	Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
6	Planning of a course of action
7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8	Provisional trying of new roles
(11)	Altering present relationships and forging new relationships
9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10	A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspective

Source: Adapted from Mezirow (1978) and Kitchenham (2008)

Reflection forms a critical aspect of Mezirow’s transformation mechanism. Mezirow (1995) identifies three types of reflection: content reflection, process reflection and premise reflection. **Content reflection** entails thinking back to which action was taken in the past and how that could be used now to learn. **Process reflection**

considers the origins of action and factors related to the actions in order to learn. **Premise reflection** considers the larger picture and questions the basis of current assumptions. Content and process reflection may lead to the transformation of meaning *schemes* whereas premise reflection may lead to the more profound transformation of meaning *perspectives* (Mezirow, 1995). The latter is also similar to Argyris' double-loop learning (Argyris, 1991). There are a number of methods recommended to fostering critical self-reflection and discourse, namely using critical incidents, life histories, journal writing, media analysis, repertory grids, metaphor analysis, conceptual mapping, action learning and collaborative learning (Mezirow, 1990). The three types of reflection were incorporated in the TTC framework as a mechanism to arrive at the core issues preventing successful transitions. This is elaborated on in Chapter 5.

While critical reflection is considered the cornerstone of successful transformation (Mezirow, 1995), other views (Taylor, 2001) hold that implicit memory or unconscious ways of knowing through emotions and feelings play important roles in transformative learning. Specifically "extra-rational and nonconscious ways of knowing" claim to play a role in revising meaning structures (Taylor, 2001:221). Neurobiological research reveals that habits, attitudes and preferences that are inaccessible to the conscious brain can be transformed via non-conscious activities and, by implication, that the process of transforming meaning perspectives should take transformation mechanisms into account (Taylor, 2001). Emotional literacy (Goleman, 1996) and awareness of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) are cited as important contributors to non-reflective methods of transformative learning (Taylor, 2001). The importance for this research was to keep an open mind about which methods, techniques and approaches may be useful during a coaching intervention to facilitate transformative learning.

If a person undergoes transformational learning, a number of changes may be possible. These are more inclusive and integrative perspectives on life (Mezirow, 1995), an increase in personal power, spirituality, compassion for others, creativity and new connectedness with others (Taylor, 1997). Taylor specifically emphasises the importance of building connections and community via improved relationships as part of the transformative learning process. This notion has important implications for coaching to facilitate transformation since coaching in the business context often focuses on improving relationships (Peltier, 2010).

If transformative learning forms the basis of the TTC framework, and if the aim of the TTC framework is to support transitioning leaders by facilitating transformative

learning, it becomes important to understand how to measure the level of transformative learning. The next section discusses various approaches to evaluating transformative learning and highlights the approach employed in the TTC framework.

### **2.6.2 Evaluating transformative learning**

It can be argued that for leadership transitions, the transition event equates to a disorienting dilemma (Dotlich *et al.*, 2004), which opens the space to transformative learning (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). However, a disorienting dilemma alone is not sufficient to guarantee transformation (Taylor, 1997). This begs the question: when is learning transformational? This question was of particular interest for this research since the aim of the coaching framework that emerged from the research is specifically to facilitate transformative learning. How can we be sure that the coaching framework does in fact facilitate transformative learning?

A search in the literature for ways to evaluate transformative learning initially revealed a discouraging picture. Cranton and Hoggan (2012:527) state, “The literate is oddly silent on the issue of evaluation of transformative learning”, while Taylor and Snyder (2010) state that it is very difficult to assess both the outcome of transformative learning and which practices have contributed to those outcomes. Newman (2012:36) goes as far as to suggest that transformative learning as a phenomenon does not exist and that, instead, there is only “good learning”. Clearly, one has to be careful when labelling learning as ‘transformative’ or risk the devaluation of the concept of transformative learning.

Mezirow (1991) states that it may not be possible to evaluate the *product* of transformative learning, but instead that the *process* should be evaluated. Cranton and Hoggan (2012) suggest that transformative learning can be evaluated based on how people do things differently, and they propose a number of methods for assessing transformative learning as shown in Table 2.9.

**Table 2.9: Evaluation methods relevant to transformative learning**

Transformative learning assessment method	Description
Self-evaluation	Learners evaluate themselves based on guidelines set by the learner, the educator or both.
Interviews	Interviews are conducted with learners focusing on their story of a particular experience to gain insight into the process or outcome of the learning.
Narratives	Learners can capture their learning journey as a narrative in, for example, learning journals, autobiographical wiring or case studies.
Observations	If changes in observable behaviour are important then this technique can be used to document change.
Surveys	Questionnaires administered multiple times over a period of time may be able to provide an indication of change. There may however be an issue with the depth of information captured, which implies that this method could be combined with more in-depth methods, such as interviews.
Checklists	A written list of observable behaviours or characteristics that can be used by the learner or the educator to determine the level of transformative learning is compiled.
Journals	Learners record their life story, dreams, images or dialogues, but educators must be sensitive to the private nature of these journals.
Metaphor analysis	Learners articulate the meaning that certain metaphors have for them, which assists with critical reflection.
Conceptual mapping	Concept maps are graphical representations of how concepts relate to a topic or theme. Concept maps can be compared to assess similarities or differences to evaluate change.
Arts-based techniques	Use mediums such as photography, collage, creative writing, music, improvisation and body movement to allow learners to express the changes they have experienced.

Source: Adapted from Cranton and Hoggan (2012)

A further search in the literature revealed a number of specific methods that were considered for use in this research. Poutiatine provides nine principles that form a foundational start to answering the question of what is required to facilitate transformational learning (Poutiatine, 2010). These principles are illustrated in Table 2.10 below.

**Table 2.10: Poutiatine's nine principles of transformation**

<b>Principles of transformation</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
It is not synonymous with change	Transformation is change, but a very particular type of change. It must be engaged actively by the individual and may be discontinuous in nature.
It requires assent to change	We can be forced to change by external agents, but we cannot be forced to transform; we must consent to it.
It always requires second-order change	Second-order change implies a fundamental or significant break with past and current practices vs. first-order change, which is a logical extension to past and current practices.
It always involves all aspects of an individual's life	Multiple dimensions (perhaps all) of the individual changes are rational, affective, spiritual, imaginative, somatic and socio-cultural.
The change is irreversible	The individual cannot return to behaviours that were habitual; cannot go back to 'not knowing'.
It involves letting go of the myth of control	Deep change implies surrendering control and embracing uncertainty and ambiguity.
It always involves some aspect of risk, fear and loss	Reordering a world view implies letting go of opinions, values and beliefs. This may induce fear. Critical reflection and support of trusted allies and professionals are required to navigate the change successfully.
It always involves a broadening of the scope of world view	Leads to a different and more effective world view, including a more expanded view of self and others. It is not about forgetting our previous views but it includes expanded boundaries.
It is always a movement towards a greater integrity of unity – a movement toward wholeness	Is a movement towards self-actualisation, a step towards more harmony between one's inner and outer world.

Source: Poutiatine (2010)

In a review of 51 publications that sought to measure perspective transformation, Cheney (2010) found that the majority (43 publications) used qualitative methodologies. These publications based the degree of transformational learning on similarities of their research outcomes with the generally accepted concepts associated with transformative learning (Cheney, 2010). This finding concurs with a finding by Cranton and Hoggan (2012) that the most popular approach currently to evaluate transformative learning is to conduct retrospective interviews with participants and to search for themes in the narratives that align with generally agreed definitions of the transformative process. This approach was used during the foundation phase of this research to identify coaching techniques that could potentially facilitate transformative learning. This is discussed in section 4.5.

Few attempts at developing and using a quantitative instrument to measure transformative learning have been published. The only statistically reliable instrument found was that of Kember *et al.* (2000). They designed a 16-question questionnaire that measures the level of the students' reflective thinking in professional preparation courses. The questionnaire was specifically designed for use in academic programmes, and its use in other contexts would require modification (Kember *et al.*, 2000:393).

A popular instrument is King's (2004) Learning Activities Survey (LAS) (Taylor & Snyder, 2010). This instrument has been used widely in a number of educational settings and there is a guide for modifying the survey for specific settings. The purpose of the LAS is to identify whether adults involved in a learning experience undergo a perspective transformation because of the learning experience (King, 2009). This tool however lacks construct validity (Taylor & Snyder, 2010:47) and was not considered for use in this research.

The most practical method for evaluating transformative learning in this research was found to be Hoggan's (2016) three aspects of learning that should be considered when deciding whether learning was in fact transformative: depth, breadth and relative stability:

- i) **Depth** signifies the magnitude of the influence of the change on the person's life. A minor change in the way a person interacts with the world cannot be considered transformative.
- ii) **Breadth** refers to the number of contexts in which a change is manifested. When learning is restricted to one aspect of a person's life then regardless of the depth (significance), the change does not qualify as transformative.
- iii) **Relative stability** indicates that a change must be permanent to qualify as transformative.

These aspects for evaluating transformative learning proved useful in the present research and were used during both the foundation and application phases to assess the extent of transformative learning experienced by the participants.

This section presented transformative learning theory as an instance of adult learning and as an underpinning for the TTC framework as illustrated in Figures 2.1 and 2.4. Adult learning is also one of the theoretical foundations of coaching, which is discussed in the next section.

## 2.7 COACHING

Coaching is the third theoretical pillar on which this research was built. It is an important foundation given that the main objective of this research was to create a particular coaching framework. This section provides a general overview of coaching before discussing transition coaching as a way to support leadership transitions, and the link between coaching and transformative learning in more detail. Refer to Figure 2.4 for a conceptual map of this discussion.

### 2.7.1 Definitions of coaching

The word ‘coach’ is said to be derived from a town called Kocs in northern Hungary, which manufactured horse-drawn carriages, while in the 1830s, ‘coach’ was used at Oxford University to refer to someone who helps a student through an examination (Cox *et al.*, 2014). Coaching is also linked to the Socratic method of questioning to promote self-awareness (Brock, 2010). More recently, in the twentieth century, the word ‘coaching’ started being used in the workplace in the context of an instructor training new recruits, and it has since mushroomed into many different models and approaches (Cox *et al.*, 2014). Coaching became popular in the 1980s and 1990s with recent estimates suggesting there to be approximately 53 300 professional coaches world-wide and the total market size to be 2 356 billion USD (ICF, 2016).

In terms of definitions of coaching, Table 2.11 below provides a summary of various attempts to define coaching.

**Table 2.11: Definitions of coaching**

<b>Author/Source</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Brock (2010:16)	"Coaching is a dynamic and contextual mutual-learning process that fosters self-awareness, attention to behaviours, personal growth, and conscious choice for the highest good."
Kilburg (1996:138)	"A helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement."
Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011:74)	"Coaching is a Socratic based future focused dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (coachee/client), where the facilitator uses open questions, active listening, summaries and reflections which are aimed at stimulating the self-awareness and personal responsibility of the participant."
Bachkirova, Cox and Clutterbuck (2014:1)	"A human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools, and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders."
Grant <i>et al.</i> (2010:3)	"A collaborative relationship formed between coach and coachee for the purpose of attaining professional or personal development outcomes which are valued by the coachee."
Maltbia, Marsick and Ghosh (2014:165)	"Executive and organizational coaching is a developmental process that builds a leader's capabilities to achieve professional and organizational goals."

Source: Adapted from Ciporen (2015)

While definitions clearly vary, they seem to agree that coaching is a partnership and a process where an individual is guided through a development process with a client-determined end goal in mind. This development process could be personal or professional in nature.

### **2.7.2 Theoretical foundations and frameworks**

A significant number of disciplines and theoretical fields influence and contribute to the emerging field of coaching practice and research, such as management, education, social sciences, philosophy and psychology (Cox *et al.*, 2014)

From a purely theoretical perspective, adult learning and development is seen as the foundational theoretical underpinning of coaching (Bachkirova *et al.*, 2014) with andragogy, experiential learning and transformative learning seen as specific instances of adult learning closest to coaching (Cox *et al.*, 2014). This insight lent weight to the premise for this research - if transformative learning is an underpinning for coaching it makes sense to investigate the specific dynamics of incorporating

transformative learning into a coaching intervention, which was the main objective of this research.

In terms of operationalising coaching, Cox *et al.* (2014) identified 13 distinct approaches to coaching, most of which originates from psychological tradition as illustrated in Table 2.12.

**Table 2.12: Types of coaching and their origins**

Theoretical approach	Description
Cognitive behavioural coaching	Facilitates self-awareness of underlying cognitive and emotional barriers to goal attainment and aims to equip the client with more effective thinking and behavioural skills. Uses an operational model developed by Albert Ellis (Neenan, 2009).
Existential coaching	Existential coaching is based on three principles that describe the human condition: relatedness, uncertainty and existential anxiety. It involves descriptive exploration of the clients' world view from the context of their present concerns.
Narrative coaching	In this approach, clients are seen as narrators, and the coach helps them to identify new connections between their stories, their identities and their behaviours using the narrative material in the session. The coach enables clients to generate new options and to create new stories of their lives in action.
Gestalt coaching	The main principles of Gestalt are creative adjustment to a changing environment that emphasises the need for clients' moment-to-moment awareness in relation to their experience, external world and blocks to awareness. Gestalt coaches use their own subjective experience when appropriate as part of an authentic dialogue.
Neuro-linguistic (NLP) approach to coaching	The NLP approach attempts to identify patterns that represent the way individuals construct their realities to control their inner experiences in various environmental contexts. It involves many techniques, such as matching and pacing, working with well-formed outcomes, and anchoring.
Ontological coaching	Ontological coaching implies working with individuals with a focus on their language, emotions and physiology (body posture). The coach attempts to be a catalyst for change by triggering a shift in the client's 'way of being'.
Person-centred approach to coaching	This approach is based on a key assumption: the actualising tendency – a tendency of people to develop in positive and constructive ways when the appropriate conditions are present. The main purpose of coaching is to provide such conditions, including positive regard and quality listening.
Positive-psychology	This approach to coaching is based on positive psychology as a discipline where the focus is on a positive spectrum of people's experiences. It involves consistent shifting of attention away from problems and weaknesses to opportunities and strengths.

**Table 2.13: Types of coaching and their origins (continued)**

Theoretical approach	Description
Psychodynamic approach to coaching	The premise of this approach is that current behaviours and feelings are powerfully affected by unconscious motives rooted in earlier experiences. Coaches use awareness about the working of the unconscious for deepening their practice.
Solution-focused coaching	This approach is based on the premise that knowing how a problem arose does not necessarily tell us how to fix it. The approach aims at assisting clients to define a desired future state and to construct a pathway in both thinking and action that assists them in achieving that state.
Transactional analysis	Transactional analysis (TA) is an interactional approach to coaching based on several notions such as ego states, life scripts and interactional patterns. TA involves a thinking framework and accessible language that can be shared with clients for greater understanding of the motivations, interactions and coaching goals.
Transpersonal approach to coaching	This approach recognises dimensions beyond the personal and facilitates the experience of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy. The coach engages with clients in a variety of ways that enhance various manifestations of the transpersonal, such as creativity.
Psychological development in adulthood and coaching	This approach is based on research and theories suggesting that developmental changes in meaning making, world views and maturity of the ego occur in a logical sequence of stages throughout the life of the individual. Knowledge of developmental trajectories allows coaches to be better equipped to understand the diverse needs of their clients.

Source: Adapted from Cox *et al.* (2014)

As Table 2.12 illustrates, coaching is a multifaceted discipline that draws on a number of existing theories and practices. These diverse supporting structures imply that coaching provides a multi-layered array of possible solutions to match the varied and complex challenges faced by organisations and individuals. On the one hand, this could be positive for the challenges presented by leadership transitions: there could be a coaching approach that purposefully caters for career transition challenges. On the other hand, the diversity of existing, inherited approaches could also mean that insufficient effort is spent on creating focused coaching approaches where inherited models are lacking. The lack of a coaching approach that facilitates transformative learning during career transitions, the topic of this research, is an example of the latter. Auspiciously, coaching is open to the notion of expanding its theoretical and practical base (De Haan & Duckworth, 2013; Grant *et al.*, 2010; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011), which allowed for and necessitated the research conducted for this project.

Given the diverse theoretical underpinnings of coaching, it may be useful to define conceptual or meta-frameworks and models that guide a coaching intervention. These frameworks and models assist with making sense of the coaching dynamics during the coaching interventions (Stout-Rostrom, 2014). Frameworks and models have three primary aspects: structure, process and the underlying philosophy (Stout-Rostrom, 2012). For this research, the concept of a guiding framework was important since the output of this research was itself a coaching framework.

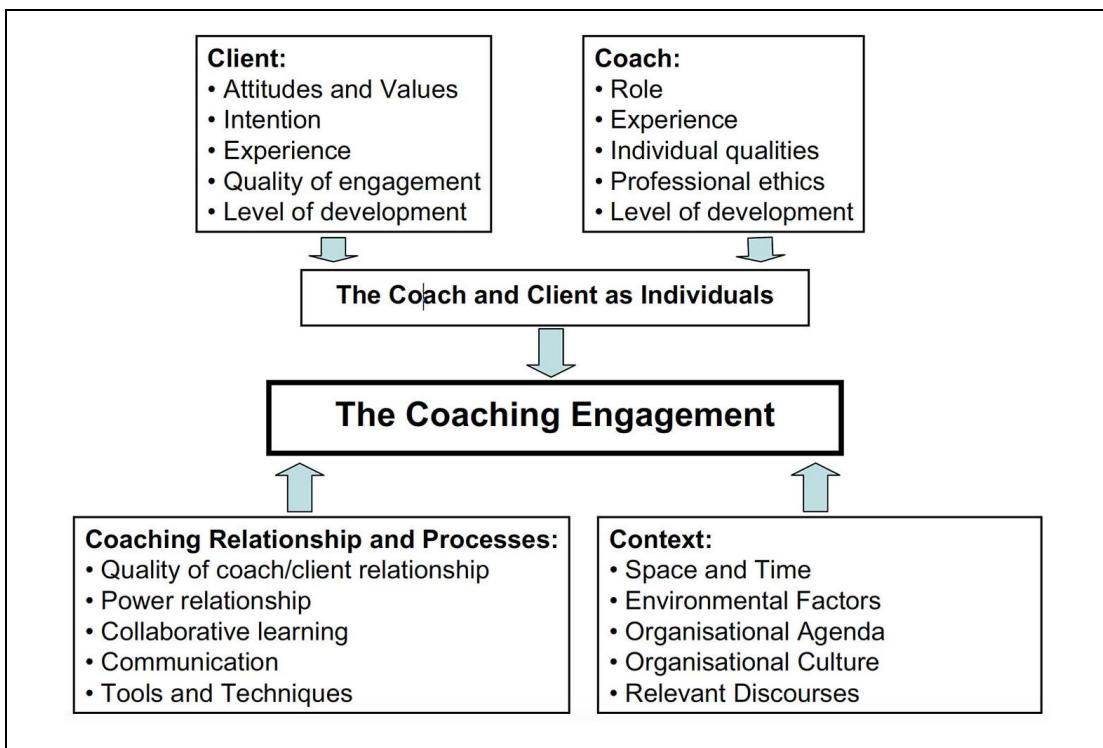
One such framework is Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework for identifying purpose, perspective and process. Although originating from the psychological practice domain, it is also relevant to coaching. This framework identifies three domains to consider as a framework to guide enquiry and case formulation during a coaching intervention:

- **Purpose** – be clear about the purpose of the process you are about to initiate with your client.
  - What are you setting out to achieve?
  - Which boundaries are placed on the purpose of the engagement?
- **Perspective** – be clear on what you bring to the encounter including your values, beliefs and knowledge.
  - Which models, philosophies and theories inform your perspectives?
  - What are the perspectives that the client brings?
- **Process** –
  - Which process (including any tools and methods) would best serve the achievement of the purpose, given the constraints of the perspectives held by the coach and client?

This formulation framework of Lane and Corrie (2007) was used as one of the focal theories (explained in Chapter 3) during the application phase of this research to derive the coaching framework that emerged from this research. The reason for selecting Lane and Corrie's framework as a focal theory is that it provides structure at a meta-level without being specific to coaching. It was felt that working with a meta-framework not particular to coaching would encourage novel thinking unencumbered by existing coaching models.

There are coaching-specific frameworks, an example of which is illustrated in Figure 2.6. This framework provided by Cox *et al.* (2014) depicts a useful breakdown of the important aspects of a typical coaching intervention and serves as an illustration of

the meta-level application of Lane and Corrie's framework. An attempt is made here to map Cox *et al.*'s (2014) framework to Lane and Corrie's (2007) framework.



**Figure 2.6: Structural analysis of a coaching engagement**

Source: Cox *et al.* (2014)

The coaching engagement consists of the client and coach in their individual capacity and all aspects that they bring to the engagement, and can be mapped to Lane and Corrie's (2007) 'Perspective' dimension. The coaching relationship and process as well as the context within which the coaching takes place must be present for coaching to be successful (Cox *et al.*, 2014) and can be mapped to Lane and Corrie's 'Process' dimension. It appears that the 'Purpose' dimension of Lane and Corrie's framework is not addressed explicitly. In a similar manner to this example, Lane and Corrie's meta-framework was used to guide the development of the TTC framework as discussed in Chapter 5.

Another coaching-specific framework is mentioned by Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) who report on unpublished research that comprised the presence of six generic coaching stages in the coaching models that were analysed. These six stages are formal contracting, relationship building, assessment, getting feedback and reflecting, goal setting and implementation and evaluation.

An understanding of existing meta- and actual coaching frameworks acted as a reference and sanity check for the development of the TTC framework. In the

discussion of the evolution of the TTC framework in Chapter 5, reference is made to the TTC framework in relation to some of these existing frameworks.

### 2.7.3 Coaching application

As is evident from the preceding sections, coaching is a multi-dimensional, eclectic approach to helping people. Its complexity stems from the wide range of topics it tries to tackle within a large array of disciplines (Cox *et al.*, 2014). This section looks at the typical scenarios where coaching is used, and the associated outcomes. This discussion aims to position transition coaching and the TTC framework within current coaching applications.

One of the earliest classifications of the application of coaching is that of Witherspoon and White (1996) who distinguished between skills coaching, performance coaching and developmental coaching. **Skills coaching** assists in developing a specific skill set. Examples of such skills are sales skills, presentations skills and negotiation skills. The role of the coach is to expose the coachee to specific skills and then to allow the coachee to rehearse the skills for the coach to provide feedback. **Performance coaching** assists the coachee to improve his or her work-related performance by setting specific, measurable goals to be achieved in a certain timeframe. **Developmental coaching** takes a more strategic approach by addressing the coachee's personal and professional development. The coach assists the coachee in reflecting on his or her current internal sense-making models within their current systemic contexts. This process may lead to new insights and perspectives, which ultimately lead to changes in the way the coachee thinks and behaves. Most executive coaching interventions fall into this category (Grant *et al.*, 2010) and the coaching framework developed through this research can also be classified as a developmental coaching framework.

Coaches have started to identify niche markets, and focus on areas such as coaching on executive presence, team building, group coaching, coaching for emotional intelligence, coaching across cultures, coaching for performance, sales coaching, coaching aimed at particular industries and even transition coaching (Bond & Naughton, 2011; Ciporen, 2015:10). The strength of coaching is in fact in its tailor-made individual approach to each client (Cox *et al.*, 2014).

Areas where coaching has been found useful are to:

- Develop capabilities of a high-potential manager;
- Facilitate a transition;
- Act as sounding board on organisational dynamics;

- Act as sounding board on strategic matters;
- Address a ‘derailing’ behaviour;
- Enhance interactions of a team;
- Reduce workplace stress;
- Enhance individual performance; and
- Enable dialogue and communication (Kauffman & Coutu, 2009; Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008; Rich, 1998; Scandura, 1992; Wright, 2007). Note that transition coaching is mentioned explicitly in this list.

In terms of the benefits of coaching, the International Coach Federation (ICF) 2013 survey of 24 organisational leaders found that coaching assists with leadership development and performance, increased levels of employee engagement, reduced attrition and improved team performance (ICF, 2013). Another study showed that the benefits of coaching for the organisation include enhancing employees’ performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes, and goal-directed self-regulation (Theeboom *et al.*, 2013).

Given the diverse areas that coaching attempts to cover, it would appear that more focused research is required to distil specific frameworks for situations such as career transitions and in particular transformative transition coaching. This in part was the motivation for this research.

#### **2.7.4 Career transitions, transformative learning and coaching**

Transition coaching is a niche application of coaching (Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004). This section provides an overview of current literature on transition coaching and the current links between coaching and transformative learning.

Opinions on the role of coaching during leadership transitions originate mainly from the fields of leadership development and executive coaching. Authors in the field of leadership transition briefly refer to coaching directly and indirectly as a support mechanism during transition (see Charan *et al.*, 2011; Watkins, 2003). Watkins (2003:219) mentions the need to build an “advice-and-council network”. Charan *et al.* (2011) more explicitly devote a chapter to coaching, and propose a simplistic three-question framework to use with the leadership pipeline model:

- “Tell me about your career?”
- “Talk about your current position”
- “What are your career aspirations?”

Dotlich *et al* (2004) say a coach needs to help leaders think and talk about the values and skills with which they are struggling. None of these perspectives provide a detailed transition coaching framework and they certainly do not address the transformative learning capacity of transition coaching. The coaching discipline's perspective on the role of coaching during leadership transitions is more comprehensive than the perspectives from leadership theory, although specific reference to transition coaching as transformative learning mechanism is missing.

Transition coaching is a relatively new field of coaching and while coaching seems to have relevance to transition theories, very little empirical research has been conducted to understand the potential of coaching to support the individual career transition process (Bachkirova *et al.*, 2016). Transition coaching is a specialisation of business coaching that aims to –

- Facilitate career transitions by helping leaders identify critical issues they face as a result of the transition;
- Define the expectations of their stakeholders;
- Gain an outside perspective on their new role; and
- Communicate more effectively within the organisation.

The basic aim of transition coaching is to help the newly appointed manager become effective in his or her new role, and at the same time to protect the organisation against the significant cost of leadership transition failure (Bond & Naughton, 2011; Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004).

Coaching plays an important role in accelerating job transition (Sutton, 2008). Important considerations for transition coaching include –

- The timing of coaching;
- The specific role of the coach;
- Taking into account the business realities during the personal journey;
- Understanding which skills and behaviours are required;
- Increasing self-awareness;
- Establishing goals; and
- Creating an action plan and concentrating on building new networks and relationships (Bond & Naughton, 2011; Sutton, 2008).

This is an operational view of transition coaching and lacks the focus on the transformational effect.

Empirical research investigating the role of transition coaching is limited to only one study found thus far, namely that of Reynolds (2011). Reynolds used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to explore the meaning that coaching had for six recently promoted senior leaders during their transition. The findings provide evidence that coaching assists transitioning leaders in overcoming a sense of vulnerability, developing new personal, social and cognitive skills and finding new meaning and purpose in their lives. No specific attempt was made to link Reynolds' findings to the transformation of the individuals.

There is a general lack of empirical research to guide the coaching process during career transitions, and Bond and Naughton (2011) assert that despite the demand by transitioning leaders for transition coaching, the widespread adoption of transition coaching in organisations is lacking. Reasons offered for the lack of transition coaching prevalence include the corporate culture, cost pressures and a lack of effective measurement of the transition coaching intervention.

A recent publication that stems from the research presented in this thesis attempted to reflect the lack of empirical research, and recommends the following (Terblanche, Albertyn & Van Coller-Peter, 2017):

- Starting transition coaching as soon as the appointment is official;
- Continuing for at least 3 years with a session every 2–3 weeks for the first 6 months and a session every 2–3 months thereafter;
- Providing the coachee with a number of coach options; and
- Allowing coaching to happen outside the office environment.

As part of the coaching process, the following aspects must be present (Terblanche et al., 2017):

- Clear coaching goals must be set, which take into account the organisational needs;
- The coach's model must include reflection and active experimentation;
- Assessments and theoretical frameworks must be used during the coaching intervention to help create self-awareness;
- Mentors, line managers and the new leader's team must be involved in the coaching process; and
- A new network, which must be an explicit part of the coaching process, should be created.

These recommendations are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4 (see 4.3).

The links between transformative learning and coaching are sparse. Cox *et al.* (2014) refer to transformative learning as one of the theoretical bases for coaching. Only one article was found that attempts to link transformative learning and coaching explicitly (Sammut, 2014). Sammut interviewed eight coaches (who had at least 100 hours of coaching each) on their experiences with coaching in relation to aspects of transformative learning, including critical reflection, dialogue and holistic experience. She found links between Mezirow's six core elements of transformation (see Author, date) and the experience of coaches: experience, critical reflection, dialogue, holistic orientation, awareness of context, and authentic relationships (Sammut, 2014). Sammut concludes that even though coaches are not necessarily aware of Mezirow's theory on transformative learning, they actively use Mezirow's six core elements of transformative learning when they coach. This result was encouraging since it confirmed the notion that coaching has a close link to transformative learning (Cox *et al.*, 2014) and it supported the focus of this research to establish concrete links between coaching and transformative learning. The challenge of creating a coaching framework to facilitate transformative learning was not taken lightly, given the warning by Cox *et al.* (2014:148): from a coaching standpoint, meaning perspectives are especially difficult to transform, but they do need to be challenged if deep learning is to occur.

In summary, while the usefulness of coaching as a leadership development tool has been researched in the past, limited research aimed at transition coaching and the link between transformative learning and coaching has been conducted and, to date, no research could be found on the confluence of transition coaching and transformative learning.

## 2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the three main theoretical fields and their specific specialisation that underpin this research: leadership theory and leadership transitions, adult learning and transformative learning, and coaching and transition coaching. The review showed that leadership transitions are complex events in the life of any professional and that failure rates are high with severe consequences for the individuals and their organisations. Transitioning leaders need to be supported, and one form of support is coaching. Learning occurs during career transitions and coaching and, as a particular form of learning, transformative learning has the potential to shift problematic perspectives that prevent transitioning leader from being successful in their new roles permanently. The review also showed that, to date, no empirical research has been done on the link between transition coaching and

transformative learning. The next chapter explains the research design that was followed for this project.

## CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters provided the context for and theoretical underpinnings of this research. This chapter presents an overview of the research design and methodology that were employed.

Two views informed the principles followed in the research design. The first is Dreher's (1994:293) view that the rationale for a specific research approach should not be "a treatise on the relative merits" of one approach over another, but that one should concentrate on providing a clear explanation of why the chosen approach will answer the specific research question. The second is Stern's (1994) view that choosing a research methodology is a time-consuming, personal and reflective process and that the researcher should critically evaluate his or her beliefs and convictions of what he or she believes is true and how truth can be derived (Stern, 1994). Using these two principles, the process of deciding on a research approach is described below.

Although tempting from a practical perspective to start evaluating research methodologies and methods of data gathering and analysis immediately, it is important to take a step back and apply Stern's (1994) suggestion to understand what 'truth' is and how it can be derived. To help, I reflected on Crotty's four questions in reverse order when designing a research approach (Crotty, 1998:2):

- Which methods should be used?
- Which methodology (strategy, plan of action) governs the choice of methods?
- Which theoretical perspective (philosophical stance) lies behind the chosen methodology?
- Which ontology (view on the nature of reality) and epistemology (how we know what we know) lies behind the theoretical perspective?

Question four forms the foundation of a research design. It therefore made sense to establish my own ontological and epistemological stance first, and the pointers below from Greenwood and Levin (2007) were helpful in this regard:

- Logical positivism is based on the ontological argument that the world is objectively given; the epistemological effort is to apply objective techniques in order to acquire the truth.

- Hermeneutics is based on the ontological position that the world is only available subjectively and the epistemological project is to negotiate interpretations of this subjective world.

To answer question four, deep reflection was required on what, for me, constitutes reality and how I understand reality (my ontological perspective), and my idea of what constitutes valid knowledge and how I obtain it (my epistemological perspective).

As a trained and practicing engineer, my personal ontological and epistemological perspectives for many years have been a quest for hard facts and a search for objective knowledge leading to immutable truths about the world. I was therefore preoccupied with my work and personal sense making process with measurement, correlation and verification. Since becoming a coach and working with people on a deeply personal level, I became aware of the power and relevance of personal, subjective views. This challenged my views on specifically social reality. Personally, I could no longer hold the view that the world of people and social interaction is based on a logical, positivist ontology, but rather that social reality is co-constructed by individuals through interaction and that there may not be an absolute, objective truth that is this reality, thus leaning more towards the hermeneutic ontological stance. From a research perspective, my former ontological stance relates closely to a positivist theoretical perspective and the latter relates to an interpretivist theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998).

My research is intrinsically linked to humans and social interaction: senior managers who may experience significant personal and interpersonal challenges as they transition into a more complex world. This research context allowed me to conclude that, given my new ontological stance, the interpretivist paradigm was appropriate for this proposed research. The interpretivist paradigm is purported by numerous scholars in the field of social research as an appropriate paradigm to uncover social truths (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003; Dreher, 1994; Willis & Jost, 2007). This answers Crotty's third question.

With questions three and four answered, the next step was to decide on an appropriate research methodology and methods. A number of designs are consistent with the interpretivist paradigm (Creswell *et al.*, 2003; Willis & Jost, 2007); therefore, to select the most appropriate design, a set of criteria was defined to evaluate different options.

One criterion related to the fact that the topic of the proposed research has received limited research attention to date. It therefore required a methodology able to explore the phenomenon in substantial detail. Another criterion addressed the pragmatic view on how the choice of methodology would influence the methods required to gather and analyse data, the availability of these data sources and the time required to gather and analyse the data. The fact that this was a PhD research project imposed certain boundaries in terms of time and scope.

In finding an answer to the latter criterion, a cue was taken from Creswell who states that the methods a researcher chooses should be dependent on the purpose of the research (Creswell, 2009). Dreher (1994:293) adds that “consistency of the method used, with the research questions being asked” is the single most important aspect of a research design and that the rationale for the choice should be anchored in the existing literature relating to the field being researched.

Dreher’s reference to literature (1994) led to an investigation of methodologies and methods used in coaching and transformational learning research. From the coaching research literature, a recently published meta-analysis of coaching efficacy in the organisational context (Theeboom *et al.*, 2013) revealed that the majority of research uses qualitative methodologies with self-reports (the opinion of the coachee) as data source. Theeboom *et al.* (2013) found that self-report studies showed stronger positive results than studies using other or additional data sources, raising questions about the accuracy of the findings. The limitations of self-reporting were also found when examining the transformative learning research literature. A meta-analysis of studies that attempted to measure levels of transformative learning concluded that retrospective self-report studies have an inherent weakness because they rely on subjective claims of transformation from the participants based on their memory. A recommendation is made that self-report designs should be supported by “multiple data pathways” and include longitudinal aspects (Snyder, 2008:179). The implication of these recommendations for the present research was that careful consideration be given to the selection of data sources and data collection.

In summary, in choosing a methodology, the challenge was to find one that best satisfies the following criteria, in other words, a methodology which –

- Was consistent with my interpretivist research paradigm choice;
- Would provide a sufficiently comprehensive approach to generate significant new understanding;
- Was pragmatic, given the available data sources and timelines;
- Would answer the research question and;

- Would take the typical pitfalls of both coaching and transformational learning research designs into account.

A number of research designs consistent with the requirements of the interpretivist paradigm were considered. This comprised mixed method, case studies, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), grounded theory, action research and phenomenology. Given the criteria set for this study, none of these designs fitted seamlessly. More searching through literature revealed a solution: to divide the research into two distinct phases with different research designs in each phase. During the first phase, called the foundation phase, grounded theory principles were used to create an initial coaching framework. During the second phase, the application phase, action research was used to evolve and refine the framework. The next section provides a motivation for this approach.

### **3.2 THE CASE FOR COMBINING GROUNDED THEORY AND ACTION RESEARCH**

Having considered the criteria set for selecting an appropriate research design for this study, the main challenge was the availability of reliable data sources. An obvious source of data would be senior managers who were coached during their transition as well as other parties involved in the process, such as their coaches, line managers and colleagues. Two possible research methods were considered: either collecting data retrospectively or performing an evaluative study with pre- and post-measures of the ability of coaching to facilitate transformation. Retrospective data collection has its weaknesses since it relies on recollection and could be undermined by subjective interpretation if self-report methods are used (Snyder, 2008; Theeboom *et al.*, 2013). Performing a pre- and post-measure offers logistical challenges. Obtaining access to a sufficient number of recently promoted executives who are about to be coached and who are willing to participate in pre- and post-measurements may prove to be difficult to find and potentially time-consuming relative to the timeline limitations imposed by a PhD research project. This could delay the research or lead to insufficient data volumes that could affect the reliability of the findings.

From literature where researchers faced similar challenges (Schachter, Teram & Stalker, 2004; Wastell, 2001), a solution was found for this study: create a two-phased research design using grounded theory to construct an initial framework and applying this framework in a second phase action research cycle to refine and evolve the initial framework.

The marriage of grounded theory and action research is not novel. A case can be made for combining grounded theory and action research specifically to address the perceived inability of action research to develop theory (Dick, Stringer & Huxham, 2009). A number of authors from diverse disciplines have either used or recommended the combination of action research and grounded theory (Greenall, 2006; Henfridsson & Lindgren, 2005; Kock, 2004; Wild River, 2005). From literature, it seems that the most common way to combine grounded theory and action research refers to those cases where the design is initially conceived as action research with grounded theory added later to assist with theory building, although exceptions do occur (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Two such exceptions that followed a very similar approach to my research design were found. From the health sciences, Teram, Schachter and Stalker (2005) used a two-phased research design where grounded theory was used in the first phase to create a theoretical understanding of the area of study, while action research was used in the second phase to refine the theory further (Schachter *et al.*, 2004). This is similar to the approach used by Wastell (2001) in the field of information systems in researching knowledge management in the motor manufacturing industry. Wastell also followed a two-phased approach with grounded theory used in the first phase to create an effectiveness model, which informed the design of the second phase where action research was used to evaluate the outcome of the model (Wastell, 2001). Both studies reported positive results, and in the former case, the research led to the publication of a book (Teram *et al.*, 2005).

From these two studies (Teram *et al.*, 2005; Wastell, 2001), conditions under which this two-phased approach is suitable can be summarised as:

- The need to create a practical, workable solution for practitioners, not merely an academic theory;
- The need for the model or framework to be substantiated by rigorous theory that would also be acceptable to the academic community; and
- Challenges with regard to working with people's recollection of events as data sources.

These three motivations were applicable to my research.

For my research, the two-phased research approach was applied as follows. In the foundation phase, grounded theory principles were followed to create an initial coaching framework. The framework was informed by the recollection of senior managers, transition coaches, HR practitioners and line managers of transitioning

senior managers regarding the transition process, the challenges faced, how these challenges were overcome and the role that coaching played in facilitating the transition and possibly the transformation of the transitioning managers. In the application phase, action research was used to refine and evolve this initial framework from the foundation phase by applying the draft framework in a number of coaching interventions. The framework was used to coach recently promoted senior managers with the aim of supporting their transition and facilitating their transformative learning. Various forms of feedback from the process were used to refine and evolve the framework. Combining action research and transformative learning is cited as providing “unique compatibility” due to shared requirements of change, participation, emphasis on dialogue and a reflective process (Taylor, 2007:188). The need for observing and recording the learning experience as it happens as opposed to retrospective data collection was also encouraged and was therefore compatible with using an action research approach (Taylor, 1997).

This two-phased research design was justified from the sources referenced in this section, and was also a good fit for the original criteria set for choosing a research design:

- It was consistent with my interpretivist research paradigm choice;
- It provided a sufficiently comprehensive approach to generate new understanding;
- It was pragmatic, given the available data sources and timelines;
- It seemed able to answer the research question; and
- It took into account the typical pitfalls of both coaching and transformational learning research designs.

More detail on the theory and practice of both grounded theory and action research is provided in the rest of this section.

### **3.2.1 Grounded theory**

In the foundation phase, grounded theory principles were followed to construct an initial coaching framework that could potentially guide the transformative learning process of a recently promoted senior manager. I want to state clearly that the foundation phase of the research did not claim to have followed a ‘pure’ grounded theory approach. Rather, the appeal of using grounded theory as a process was that a significant amount of practical advice about how to do qualitative research was readily available in the literature (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). I followed the grounded theory approach as far as it made sense but stopped short of generating a significant

'theory' during this first phase. My aim for this first phase was not to generate a theory, but rather to create a foundational understanding of the challenges faced by transitioning leaders and how coaching was being used to assist them, in line with the first four research sub-questions (see 1.5). From these insights, I hoped to generate an initial coaching framework that could be used in the application phase. Using a grounded theory approach proved to be useful to achieve these goals. The grounded theory principles that were followed are discussed in the rest of this section.

Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology that allows the researcher to derive a theory inductively from the ground up by studying the phenomenon it represents (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is used to develop a theory that is grounded in data that are systematically gathered and analysed according to a specific process. The theory evolved during the research process itself and is a product of continuous interplay between analysis and data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To probe underlying conditions, consequences and actions, the researcher moved through various levels of theory building from description through abstraction to conceptual categorisation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory shares many similarities with other qualitative approaches but is unique in that it asks the researcher to follow a set of distinct procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Grounded theory was created by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s as a reaction against the predominant view that qualitative research is inferior and preliminary to quantitative research in the field of sociology. Their aim was to emphasise the importance of a rigorous process of theory building by staying close to the evidence rather than speculative theory building or verification of an existing theory (Goulding, 2002). Charmaz (2014) introduced a specific flavour of grounded theory (constructivist grounded theory) that is more sympathetic to the interpretivist research paradigm where researcher and participants co-construct meaning, and it was this approach that was employed during the foundation phase of the present research.

There were three motivations for following grounded theory principles for the foundation phase of this research. Firstly, although grounded theory was originally developed for sociologists, it is now widely used for research in management (Goulding, 2002), which fell within the theoretical realm of this research. Secondly, grounded theory is used most frequently in cases where the topic has been ignored or only superficially addressed in literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Transformation

during coaching for leadership transitions fell in this category. Thirdly, other research similar to the present study that faced challenges with the reliability of data sources used grounded theory as a first-phase methodology (Teram *et al.*, 2005; Wastell, 2001).

Using only grounded theory in this research had limitations. Using the obvious source of data implied gathering data in a retrospective nature, relying on the recollection via interviews of senior managers who were coached, their coaches and line managers. As was stated before, this is not ideal from both a coaching and transformative learning perspective since there are reliability issues (Snyder, 2008; Theeboom *et al.*, 2013). In order to enhance the reliability of the framework and also to ensure the practical applicability to the framework, the application phase of the research used action research.

### **3.2.2 Action research**

Action research (AR) was used in the application phase to refine and evolve the initial framework by applying it in real-life coaching sessions with recently promoted senior managers who had not received coaching. This section provides a brief overview of AR and how it was employed in this research.

AR is an approach to research that aims “both at taking action and creating knowledge or theory about that action” (Coughlan & Coghlan, 2002:220). The aim is to solve a problem and contribute to science (Gummesson, 2000). For research to be called ‘action research’, three elements must be present: action, research and participation (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). In AR, the aim is to help resolve or improve the issue faced by the participants and at the same time to contribute to the existing body of knowledge (Reason, 1999). It is also described as a methodology that brings together action, reflection, theory and practice in order to provide practical solutions (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003). As far as research methods are concerned, action researchers can employ qualitative, quantitative (James, Slater & Bucknam, 2011) or mixed methods (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

AR dates back to the period after the Second World War with Kurt Lewin (1952) being one of the founding fathers of this research methodology. Lewin’s research differed from typical social research in that it went against the idea of the researcher as an objective outsider who merely observes and records. His vision included the active participation of the researcher with the aim of achieving a particular goal (James *et al.*, 2011). AR involves an critique of conventional academic practices that assert either the necessity or desirability of studying social problems without trying to

resolve them (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Action research started gaining popularity in the 1970s in response to the lack of the ability of research methods of the day to solve practical organisational problems (Susman & Evered, 1978).

Creating a coaching framework to facilitate transformation during leadership transitions may end up as just another piece of theory. Instead, by applying AR in the second phase of the research, the aim was to *take action* by *involving* recently promoted senior managers and practically applying the framework created in phase one to *improve* the framework (*create theory*) and also to *improve* the lives of the people who would be coached. This is consistent with the above definitions of AR and also with my personal aim of contributing to a better and more socially just corporate environment.

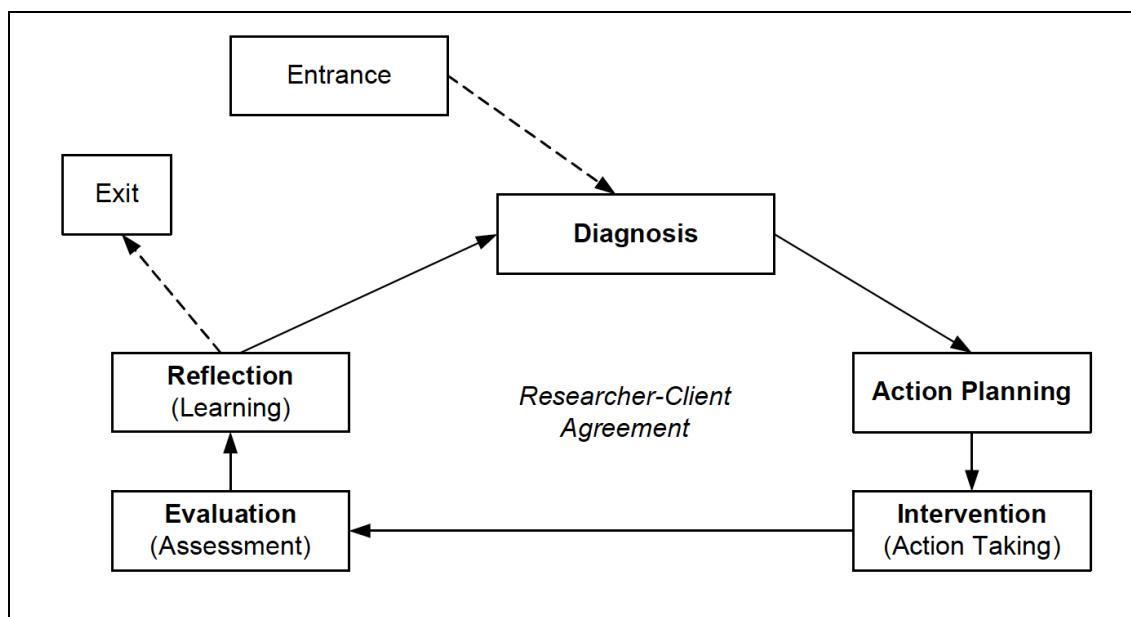
AR is appropriate when the research question relates to describing an unfolding series of actions over time and understanding the process of change or improvement in order to learn from it (Coughlan & Brannick, 2001). Applied to an organisational setting, the role of the action researcher is to act as a facilitator to help the client inquire into his or her own issues and create and implement solutions (Schein, 1995). In the context of the application phase of this research, a link can be created to the coach, acting as action researcher who helps the client (recently promoted senior manager) to learn and improve (transformational learning) via a number of coaching sessions. This is another testimony to the appropriateness of AR for this phase of the research. AR has been used successfully in a number of coaching-related research projects (Crawshaw, 2010; McLaughlin, 2013; Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997; Terblanche, 2014).

From a practical implementation perspective, numerous models describe the AR process (Davison, Martinsons & Kock, 2004). Most of them agree that the process is cyclical in nature with distinct steps in each cycle. An often-cited source according to Dick (2000) is the Kemmis and McTaggart cycle consisting of plan, act and observe and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). This, incidentally, is similar to Kolb's experiential learning cycle (often used in coaching) of observe → reflect → plan and act (Kolb, 2014). A simplified version of this is action → critical reflection → action → critical reflection, etc. where cycles may be nested within cycles (Dick, 2000). Zuber-Skerrit (2001) captures this concept in a spiral structure that contains a number of these four-step cycles with the option of revising the plan between each cycle transition.

The specific form of AR used in this research is based on the canonical action research (CAR) process. CAR is a popular form of AR developed by Suzman and Evered (1978) and is widely used in social science research, hence the label ‘canonical’. CAR consists of five cyclical steps similar to the types of AR described above and is illustrated in Figure 3.1. The CAR steps are (Davison *et al.*, 2012):

- Diagnosis (identify what the problem is that needs to be addressed);
- Action planning (plan which approach to take during the ar cycle);
- Intervention (perform the actual intervention);
- Evaluation (assess the outcome of the intervention); and
- Reflection (reflect on the meaning of the outcome and how this shapes the practical and theoretical outcome of the ar process).

Researchers are encouraged to adapt the AR process to suit their research and client’s needs: “We are emphatic in rejecting a one-size-fits-all approach to AR because doing AR means engaging in a codetermined process of mutual action and reflection” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007:108). Davison *et al.* (2012) concur and state that the CAR principles should not be followed in a “blind, deterministic, inflexible and/or dogmatic manner” (Davison *et al.*, 2004:66). Instead, they encourage researchers to embrace the spirit of the principles and criteria which aim to facilitate the clear and systematic presentation of ideas and findings and to help researchers justify their choices of action and their contributions to knowledge.



**Figure 3.1: Canonical action research process model**

Source: Davison *et al.* (2012)

The specific appeal of CAR to my research was the fact that it addresses a widely levelled criticism of AR: AR's lack of methodological rigour, its inability to distinguish itself from consulting and its tendency to produce either "research with little action or action with little research" (Davison *et al.*, 2004:65). To address this criticism, Davison *et al.* (2012) developed a set of independent principles and associated criteria specifically for CAR to assess rigour and relevancy; provide practical guidelines for implementing and monitoring AR; and explicitly involve theory in the AR process. Davison *et al.* (2012) propose five principles of CAR as shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Canonical action research principles**

CAR principle	Description
1. The principle of the researcher-client agreement (RCA)	Concerned with the client's understanding of the process, benefits and drawbacks of the CAR process.
2. The principle of the cyclical process model (CPM)	Concerned with the level of adherence to the cyclical nature of AR.
3. The principle of theory	Indicates how theory was used during the CAR process.
4. The principle of change through action	Concerned with the level of awareness of the context for change through CAR.
5. The principle of learning through reflection	Concerned with the results of the CAR process for both the client and the research community.

Source: Davison *et al.* (2004)

Each principle in Table 3.1 consists of a number of criteria that must be fulfilled for the research to be considered CAR. Table 5.6 indicates how the CAR criteria were fulfilled in this research.

Two important aspects of Davison *et al.*'s (2012) CAR principles relevant to my research need further explanation: the use of focal and instrumental theories. Focal theory provides the intellectual basis for change in a CAR project, while instrumental theory is used to explain processes and tools that are used to establish and verify focal theories (Davison *et al.*, 2012:765). Instrumental theories comprise any tools, models or processes that theorise how work is done or how outcomes are achieved (Davison *et al.*, 2012:766). For my research, two focal and three instrumental theories were used. The overarching aim of the research was to create a coaching framework, and the aim of the application phase was to distil this framework to enable it to facilitate transformative learning. It therefore made sense to use seminal coaching process theories as focal theories, and to use transformative learning and career transition theories as instrumental theories.

Two well-known coaching theories were used as focal theories: Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework (purpose, process, perspective) and Kolb's (2014) experiential learning theory (plan, act, observe, reflect). These theories provided the basis for both the construction of the TTC framework and the underlying flow of the coaching intervention employed during the AR phase. Instrumental theories should complement focal theories (Davison *et al.*, 2012), and to this end, Mezirow's definition of perspectives and types of reflection (Mezirow, 1994) and Hoggan's evaluation of the level of transformative learning (Hoggan, 2016) were selected as instrumental theories. This specific combination of focal and instrumental theories helped the AR process to follow a coaching approach with a focus on transformative learning. The application of the theories is explained throughout Chapter 5 where the findings of the application phase are detailed.

Davison *et al.*'s (2012) principles of CAR were used as guidelines for this research. These principles were very appealing since it provided practical guidelines for promoting rigour in AR, made explicit recommendations for the use of theory in AR and were therefore seen as a way to address the potential research bias given that I was both the researcher and the coach during the AR process. Using CAR as guideline also assisted in providing a convincing theoretical base for the TTC framework that emerged from the application phase.

### **3.3 THE POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

This section describes the sampling strategy following in the foundation and application phases.

#### **3.3.1 Foundation phase**

Purposeful, theoretical sampling, consistent with the requirements of grounded theory research, was used to identify 16 participants from various organisations (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Practically, this implied starting with the most likely source of data (a recently transitioned senior leader known to the researcher), leading on to coaches who practiced transition coaching, followed by the custodians of coaching in organisations and concluding with line managers of recently promoted senior leaders. Participants were interviewed face to face as well as via telephone given the remote location of some participants relative to the researcher, and given the paucity of senior leaders who received coaching during their career transitions.

The sampling strategy was informed by the outcome of the constant analysis and comparison process prescribed by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). In total, eight

senior leaders, five coaches, two HR practitioners and one line manager were interviewed, in that order, as summarised in Table 3.2 below.

**Table 3.2: Research participants for grounded theory phase**

#	Reference	Type	Position	Company size	Gender
1	P1	Transitioning leader	Chief information officer (CIO)	100–1 000	Male
2	P2	Transitioning leader	Head of transformation	5 000+	Female
3	P3	Transitioning leader	Divisional director	100–1 000	Female
4	P4	Transitioning leader	General manager	100–1 000	Male
5	P5	Transitioning leader	Chief operations officer (COO)	100–1 000	Male
6	P6	Transitioning leader	Executive manager	5 000+	Female
7	P7	Transitioning leader	Executive manager	5 000+	Male
8	P8	Transitioning leader	Chief executive officer (CEO)	100–1 000	Male
9	C1	Coach	Professional coach	N/A	Female
10	C2	Coach	Professional coach	N/A	Female
11	C3	Coach	Professional coach	N/A	Male
12	C4	Coach	Professional coach	N/A	Female
13	C5	Coach	Professional coach	N/A	Male
14	HR1	HR	HR practitioner	5 000+	Male
15	HR2	HR	HR practitioner	100–1 000	Female
16	M1	Line Manager	CEO	100–1 000	Female

Source: Author's own compilation

The sequencing of interviews was deliberate and led to insights starting from the most direct (transitioning leader) to the least directly affected (line manager). This sampling strategy collected data in accordance with grounded theory principles of constant data collection, analysis and comparison, giving preference to the richest source of data needed next to address the research question at hand (Charmaz, 2014). Although gender and race were not specific inclusion criteria in this study, all four South African racial groups (white, coloured, Indian and black) and equal gender grouping were represented in the sample.

Access to the recently promoted senior leaders was gained either through direct connection with the researcher or via the companies' HR departments. In the case of the latter, official permission was obtained from the head of HR of the organisation. Coaches, HR practitioners and the line manager were sourced from the researcher's personal network. In all cases, the participants signed informed consent forms (see Appendix D).

### **3.3.2 Application phase**

In the application phase, six senior managers who were promoted less than six months ago (when the AR phase started) and who had not received any coaching during the transition were identified via convenience sampling as depicted in Table 3.3. Participants were sourced via my network of HR practitioners in corporate South Africa.

**Table 3.3: Research participants for action research phase**

TM	Title	Gender	Date of promotion	Size of team	Size of company
TM1	Head of brand	Female	Dec. 2015	± 10	± 40 000
TM2	Software development head	Male	Nov. 2014	± 75	± 15 000
TM3	Managing director of business unit	Male	Dec. 2015	± 800	± 6 000
TM4	CIO	Male	Dec. 2015	± 50	± 4 000
TM5	Financial director	Female	Feb. 2016	1	< 100
TM6	Managing director	Male	Feb. 2016	4	< 100

Source: Author's own compilation

The size of the sample was dictated by the scope and timelines of this research project. This phase of the research required me to coach all the participants myself due to the immaturity of the emerging coaching framework from the phase one results. It was not clear how many AR cycles (coaching sessions) would be needed to evolve the coaching framework to an acceptable level, and I therefore decided to restrict the number of participants to a maximum of six. I attempted to include a diverse group of participants to cover aspects such as when they were promoted, the size of the team that reported to them, and the size of the organisation where they worked.

### 3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

During the two research phases, data were collected and analysed. This section first describes the data collection and analysis for the foundation phase followed by the application phase.

#### 3.4.1 Foundation phase data collection

Grounded theory allows for various sources of data (Goulding, 2002), but in this research, the data source was limited to open-ended interviews lasting between one and two hours, conducted with each participant individually. Interview questions were high-level questions followed by prompts around how participants experienced the coaching process, which aspects of the coaching worked or did not work for them as well as the extent to which they felt ‘changed’ as a result of the coaching. This approach is in line with what Charmaz (2014:30) describes as “sensitizing concepts”, which provide a starting place for the research inquiry. She warns however that these initial vantage points must be treated with care and that the research must remain open to other possibilities that the researcher may uncover. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed. Some grounded theory scholars argue that using prepared interview guides have the danger of forcing the data in a specific direction (Glaser, 1998), but Charmaz (2014:32) takes a more pragmatic view by asserting that the lack of preparation for an interview may lead to “loaded questions” which inadvertently may force data in a specific direction.

Analysis and memo writing occurred after each interview to inform the interview strategy and questions for the next participant in accordance with grounded theory principles of constant comparison and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014; Goulding, 2002). In the first interview, for instance, the recently promoted senior leader made a distinction between being promoted internally versus externally. While this concept was not part of the original interview prompts, the coding and memo writing process following this interview revealed the potential importance of this phenomenon. This led the researcher to enquire consciously about this phenomenon in subsequent interviews.

In some instances, participants were contacted via email or telephone again after the interviews to confirm certain statements made by the participants, or to obtain new information. These follow-ups were the result of new themes emerging from the analysis of the most recent interview or a lack of clarity around prominent emerging themes. Towards the end of the data gathering cycle, for instance, there was an emerging theme of ‘transforming as a result of coaching’; however, the initial

interviews did not focus on this topic. This necessitated me to revisit the earlier participants to obtain their views on the level of change they experienced as a result of the transition coaching they received. This allowance of grounded theory for follow-up when collecting data proved to be invaluable in this research since it allowed themes to be enriched as they emerged (Charmaz, 2014:26).

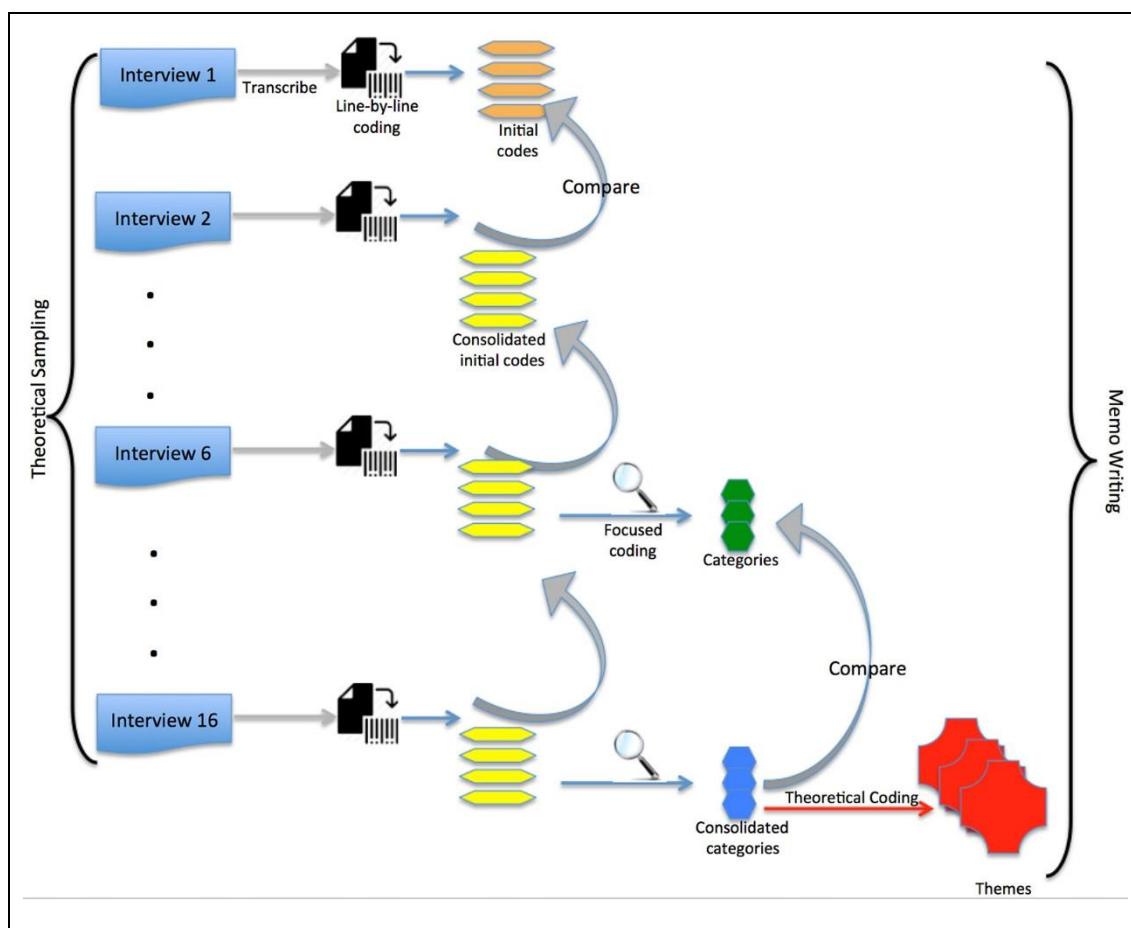
A question with which all grounded theory researchers must grapple is when to stop data collection, or using grounded theory parlance, when is data saturation reached (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Some put a hard number to the amount of data to be collected for PhD level grounded theory research: between 20 and 30 interviews (Gibbs, 2010), while others state that it is the quality of the emerging theory that should guide the amount of data to be collected (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Charmaz (2014:33) presents a set of questions that researchers should ask themselves to assess whether their data collection process has reached saturation. These questions aim to assess the richness, depth and, most importantly, the ability of the data to generate substantial categories and themes. Put differently, data collection stops when the ideas run out, when categories are saturated and when “no additional data are being found whereby the analyst can develop the properties of the category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:61).

Applied to my research, it must be remembered that the foundation phase was the first of two phases of research. The intention of the foundation phase was to derive an initial, draft coaching framework and to provide answers to the first four research sub-questions (see 1.5), which illuminated the coaching framework. The constant data collection, analysis and comparison allowed me to gauge the level of data saturation against these objectives. After analysing the 16 interviews and doing follow-up data gathering from some of the participants, the themes that emerged and the ability of the dataset to render a draft coaching framework that was ready for consumption in the application phase, I judged my data saturation criteria to be fulfilled and the grounded theory phase was terminated.

### **3.4.2 Foundation phase data analysis**

For data analysis, grounded theory provides a structured, three-stage approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) with each stage leading the researcher to a higher level of abstraction until a core is reached that justifies the emergent theory (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This is not a sequential process but rather allows the researcher to return to the field and collect more data via theoretical sampling to refine the emerging theory (Goulding, 2002).

A variation on the classic three-stage approach was used in this study by applying line-by-line coding, focused coding and category identification through extensive memo writing as advocated by Charmaz (2014). Throughout this research phase, the core principles of grounded theory were employed as far as possible, namely theoretically sensitive coding, constant comparison and theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The qualitative analysis software application ATLAS.ti was used to assist with the analysis process. The analysis process that was followed is depicted in Figure 3.2 below and is elaborated on in the rest of this section.



**Figure 3.2: Grounded theory analysis process used in this research**

Source: Author's own compilation

### 3.4.2.1 Line-by-line coding

The first step in the analysis process was the line-by-line coding of the transcribed interviews, starting with the first interview. This meant reading the transcript and assigning a code that best captured the essence of each line of text. To identify codes, I selected labels that showed action and progression (Charmaz, 2014:112). Charmaz (2014) suggests using labels that depict data as *action* to avoid creating static codes, which may miss variations in the studied phenomena. I followed the

advice from Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (2014) to use gerunds instead of topics or themes when labelling codes. Gerunds are words that are formed from verbs, but which act as nouns, for example ‘transforming’ versus ‘transform’. This helps the researcher to engage with the data on a more intimate level and to remain open to other possibilities within the data as opposed to a static topic label (Charmaz, 2014). I applied this principle as far as possible in my coding process.

The constant comparison principle of grounded theory as applied to this research implied that, unlike other types of qualitative data analysis, coding started immediately after the first interview was transcribed as illustrated in Figure 3.2. The line-by-line coding of the first interview yielded 143 codes (see Appendix A and Figure A.1). After the second interview had been transcribed, the codes generated by the line-by-line coding process were compared to the codes of the first interview. This allowed for codes to be reused or extended depending on the outcome of the comparison process. At the end of the second interview coding process, there were 192 codes. This comparative line-by-line coding process continued until the end of the sixth interview. I was mindful of the fact that at some stage I would have to start the process of moving on to the next level of conceptual coding (focused coding), but I was wary not to start the narrowing process too soon to avoid premature optimisation (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). By the fifth interview, there were 294 initial codes. The sixth interview yielded only five additional codes (see Appendix A and Figure A.3). At this point, I judged the code set to be sufficiently rich for focused coding to commence.

The focused coding process is discussed in 3.4.2.2, but it must be noted here that the comparative, line-by-line coding of interviews seven to 16 continued as described above, with the addition that focused codes were also updated in the process. This process of constant comparison greatly assisted in gauging the level of data saturation. By interview 16, no significant new codes were identified which implied the main themes and their sub-categories that had been identified captured the phenomenon under study in sufficient conceptual detail (Charmaz, 2014).

This constant comparison process compelled me to keep interacting with the data and alerted me to the need for theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). By constantly interacting with the data, I started identifying what seemed like important categories, but with limited depth. To address this issue, I applied theoretical sampling, which asserts that the research needs to gather more data from particular sources that may help to refine and elaborate on the emerging categories (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Charmaz (2014) states that theoretical sampling distinguishes

grounded theory from other types of qualitative inquiry by bringing explicit systematic checks and refinements into the analysis, but warns that theoretical sampling “pertains only to conceptual and theoretical development of your analysis; it is not about representing a population or increasing the statistical generalizability of your results” (Charmaz, 2014:198). Theoretical sampling was done throughout this phase in the sense that I systematically included different role players in the leadership transition realm in the interviews. I started with the actual transitioning leader, moved on to coaches who have coached transitioning leaders, through HR representatives who were the custodians of transition coaching in organisations, and concluded with a line manager of transitioning leaders.

As illustrated in Figure 3.2, memos were written throughout the analysis process and formed a crucial part in guiding the theoretical sampling and the direction of the analysis process. Memo writing is the process of charting, recording and detailing the major analytic phases of the research process (Charmaz, 2014:162), and is used to keep track of what a researcher thinks about the data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). I started writing memos straight after the analysis of the first interview and continued doing so until the end of the analysis process. The memos included diagrams, tables and free text, which assisted me in identifying gaps in the data, and to guide the emergence of the main categories. The memos also served as first drafts of the findings presented in Chapter 4, and was used as basis for writing articles, based on this research, which were submitted to academic journals.

### **3.4.2.2 Focused coding**

After the initial coding of the sixth interview had yielded only four new codes, it appeared that there was a strong analytical direction and I decided to start focused coding as illustrated in Figure 3.2. The aim of focused coding is to reduce the overall number of initial codes by selecting initial codes that appear to be more conceptual than other codes and which capture the data incisively and completely (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1978). For most of my analyses, focused coding meant using certain initial codes that had significant theoretical reach, direction and centrality and treating them as core categories (Charmaz, 2014:141). The focused coding after the sixth interview yielded 15 main categories as follows:

- Being promoted;
- Stepping into new position;
- Supporting myself;
- Understanding how to get things done;

- Managing complexity;
- Managing expectations;
- Facing challenges;
- Establishing relationships with new team;
- Changing through coaching;
- Coaching logistics;
- Benefits of coaching;
- Coaching techniques;
- Coach duties;
- Coaching expectations; and
- Coaching relationship.

As an example, Figures A.3 and A.4 in Appendix A provide a graphic illustration of one of these categories, 'Benefits of coaching' after interview 6.

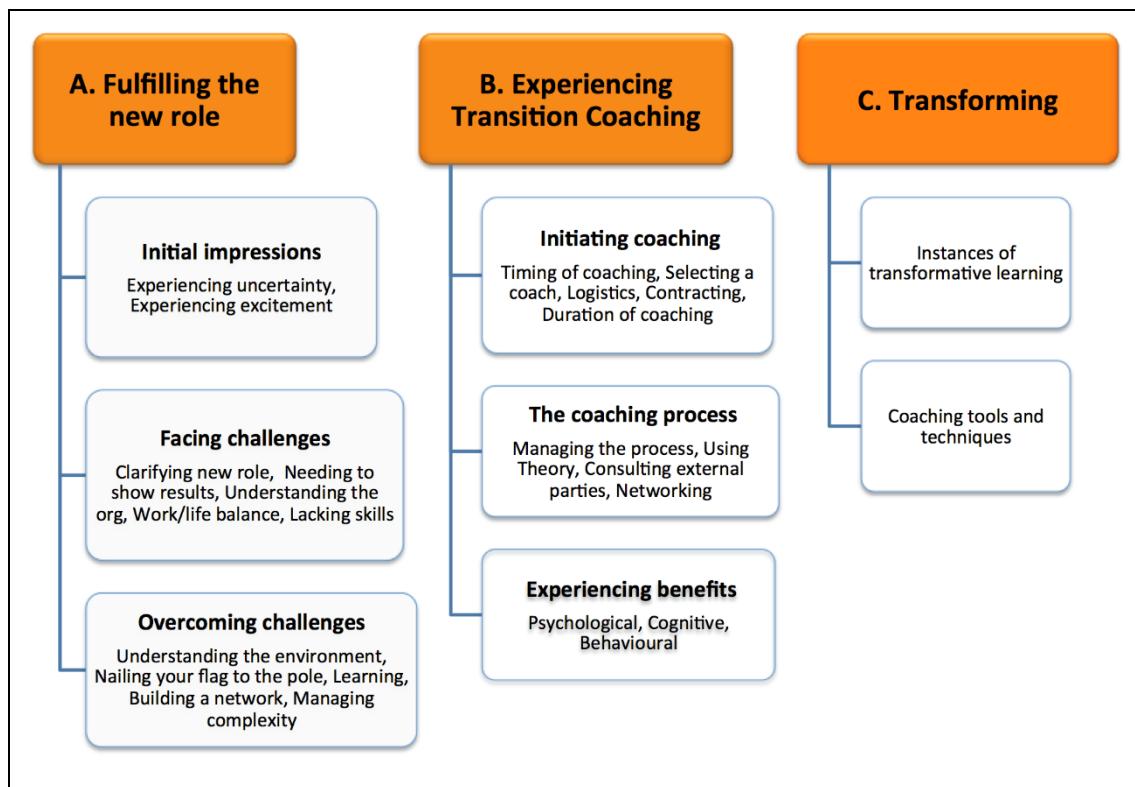
As the data gathering, comparison and analysis process continued, I needed to raise the level of the main categories to a more conceptual level to identify overall themes. I employed the grounded theory concept of 'theoretical sensitivity'. Theoretical sensitivity is the ability to understand and define phenomena in abstract terms and to demonstrate abstract relationships between studied phenomena (Charmaz, 2014). This allowed me to reduce the number of main categories after the sixteenth interview to three themes. The final three main themes seemed to capture succinctly and conceptually what the data from the 16 interviews were telling me. The three main themes are:

- Fulfilling the new role;
- Experiencing transition coaching; and
- Transforming.

Figure A.5 in Appendix A illustrates the convergence of the data into three main themes and a number of sub-categories.

A more detailed view of the main themes and sub-categories from is illustrated in Figure 3.3. The first theme ('Fulfilling the new role') consists of three sub-categories, namely 'Initial impressions', 'Facing challenges', and 'Overcoming challenges'. The second theme ('Experiencing transition coaching') also consists of three sub-categories: 'Initiating coaching', the 'Coaching process' and 'Experiencing benefits'. The third theme ('Transforming') contains two sub-categories, namely 'Instances of

'transformative learning' and 'Coaching tools and techniques'. These themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.



**Figure 3.3: Final main themes and sub-categories (detail)**

Source: Author's own compilation

### 3.4.3 Foundation phase deductive and summative content analysis

At the end of the foundation phase, I was satisfied that the main themes and sub-categories provided sufficient insights to answer the first three research sub-questions, but I was not convinced that the fourth research sub-question, the coaching tools and techniques that could facilitate transformative learning, was adequately addressed. I therefore decided to reanalyse the transcripts and to search specifically for instances where participants indicated that they experienced 'deep, permanent' changes, as well as to ascertain which coaching techniques had been used. I needed this information to inform the draft coaching framework that would be used in the AR phase.

As a result of constant comparison and re-interviewing the 16 participants, questions were put to all the participants to try and understand to what extent transition coaching (as experienced or observed by the participants) facilitated transformative learning. It was assumed that the participants did not know what transformative learning was; therefore, the questions were phrased in a theoretically neutral way,

yet aimed at capturing the essence of transformative learning. Examples of such questions are:

- Would you say that you changed as a result of the coaching you received?  
How?
- How permanent is this change?
- Does this change show itself in other areas of your life outside of work? How?
- How do you know it was the coaching that caused the change in you?
- What specifically did the coach do to help this change along?

The 16 interviews contained data relating to potential occurrences of transformative learning as well as coaching techniques used to facilitate these instances of transformative learning. Extracting these occurrences and techniques became an important part of the final TTC framework since it provided a practical toolbox for facilitating transformative learning.

Content analysis was performed on the 16 interviews to extract the occurrences and techniques. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) refer to three types of qualitative content analysis: conventional (inductive), directed (deductive) and summative (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To derive the coaching techniques, deductive and summative content analysis were used. In deductive content analysis, the analysis starts with an existing theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). For my research, I used Mezirow's (1994) transformative learning perspectives (Table 2.7) as guiding theory. The interviews were analysed for instances where participants indicated that they experienced a deep and lasting change in their lives as a result of the coaching they received during their career transitions. These instances were classified into one of the eight Mezirow perspectives reflected in Table 2.7. In cases where potential transformative learning instances were identified, the coaching techniques used during the instance were recorded. This yielded a list of 13 coaching techniques (discussed in section 4.5; also refer to Appendix B for detailed analysis).

The next step was to identify the most prominent coaching techniques used by performing summative content analysis. Summative content analysis involves counting occurrences of certain predefined instances in the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In my research, this implied counting the number of instances where the 13 coaching techniques led to indications of transformative learning. The combination of the instance of possible transformative learning and the specific techniques used to facilitate these transformations yielded a matrix as shown in Figure 3.4 below.

		TL Coaching Technique															Challenging views and providing different perspectives	
		TOTAL	Listening	Questioning	Reflection	Goal setting	Active experimentation	Frameworks and theory	Assessments	External parties	Networking and branding	Current situation	Future vision	Coachee commitment			Unclear	
TL Perspective	Socio-linguistic	58	3	8	8	1	15	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	11	3		
	Moral ethical	7	1	1	1		1	1							2			
	Epistemic	11		2	3		4	2										
	Philosophical	17	0	4	4	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1		
	Psychological	81	5	22	13	3	16	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	5		
	Health	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	Aesthetic	0																
	Learning styles	0																
		TOTAL	176	9	37	29	5	41	17	0	0	1	0	0	1	27	9	

**Figure 3.4: Coaching technique versus transformative learning perspective matrix**

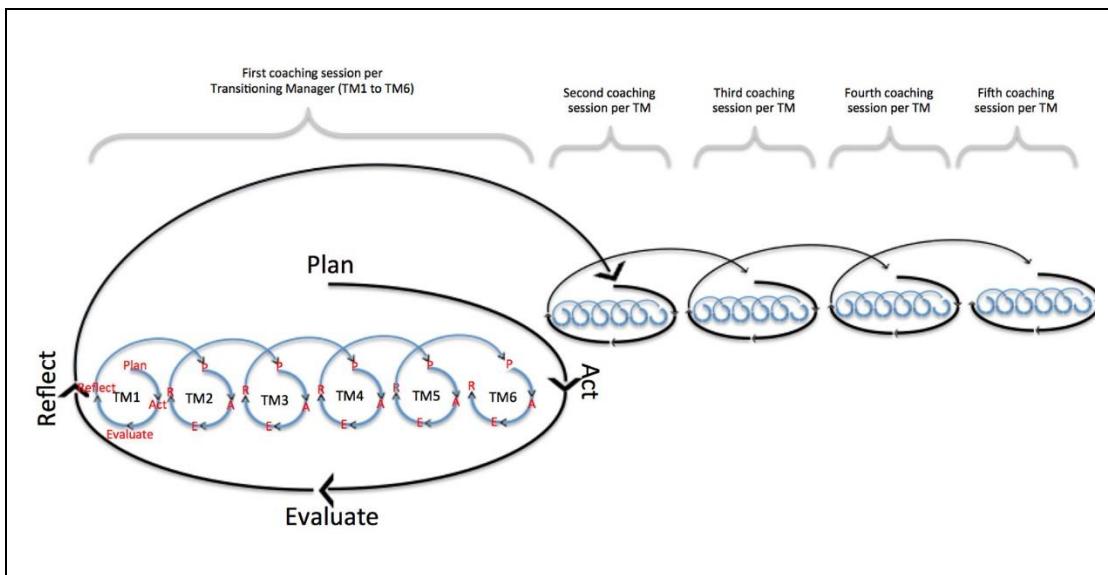
Source: Author's own compilation

This matrix was used to identify the most prevalent coaching techniques used to potentially facilitate transformative learning as indicated by the yellow highlighted fields in the last row of Figure 3.4: questioning, reflection, active experimentation, frameworks and theory, and challenging views and providing alternative perspectives. These techniques were included in the draft coaching framework and are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (see 4.5).

### 3.4.4 Application phase data collection

With an initial coaching framework (described in 4.6) in place after the foundation phase, more data were gathered and analysed via AR in the application phase to refine and develop the framework. Before explaining which data were gathered in this phase, the AR process that was followed must be explained.

In principle, this research followed CAR (Davison *et al.*, 2012) as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Six recently promoted transitioning managers (TM1 to TM6) were coached for between five and seven sessions by me following this CAR model. A nested, iterative approach was followed as illustrated in Figure 3.5.



**Figure 3.5: Action research nested iterations**

Source: Author's own compilation

Macro- and micro- AR cycles were followed (Terblanche, 2014). A macrocycle consisted of a series of six microcycles where each microcycle constituted an individual coaching session per transitioning manager (denoted as TM). Each TM was coached in sequential order. In other words, TM1 received his or her first coaching session followed by TM2 through to TM6. This sequence of six microcycles constituted the end of the first macrocycle. This was followed by the second set of six coaching sessions, one per TM, which constituted the second macrocycle, etc. In total, there were five full macrocycles (implying each TM received at least five coaching sessions). TM3 and TM4 received two additional coaching sessions (discussed in 5.7.4).

Both the macro- and microcycles followed the plan: act → evaluate → reflect sequence prescribed by CAR (Davison *et al.*, 2004). Note that CAR has an additional first step 'diagnose', which was not included in this research. The diagnose step in CAR is used to identify what the problem is that needs solving through CAR. In the case of the present research, the problem was known: 'How to assist a transitioning manager to be more successful in his or her new role by facilitating transformative learning', and was therefore omitted from the CAR cycle. This adaptation of the CAR process is condoned and researchers are encouraged to adapt the process to suit their specific research needs (Davison *et al.*, 2004).

The exact meaning of each of the CAR steps for the macro- and microcycles as well as the data that were generated is summarised in Table 3.5. At the start of each macrocycle (*plan*), the current state of the evolving TTC framework was reviewed

and a decision was made about which aspect needs to be explored further given the focal and instrumental theories. The *act* step involved performing the six coaching sessions, one for each of the TMs by repeating the same approach and exploring the same aspect of the TTC framework as decided on in the *plan* step with each TM. The *evaluation* of a macrocycle involved aggregating feedback from the TMs on how they experienced the specific macrocycle, and recording my observations in the researcher's journal. The final step involved structured *reflection* on a number of aspects of the evolving TTC framework as summarised in Table 3.5, most importantly, how the TTC framework had changed during this macrocycle and how the focal and instrumental theories have contributed to the ultimate goal of facilitating transformative learning during the coaching process.

During the microcycles, the *plan* step implied explaining to the TM what the aim of this macrocycle was in terms of developing the TTC framework, but also to ensure that the specific needs of the TM were addressed in this session. This was done to be truthful to the AR philosophy of generating knowledge and facilitating real-life change (Zuber-Skerrit, 2001). The *act* step referred to the actual coaching for the session and the *evaluate* and *reflect* steps constituted the recording and analysis of data. Data were captured throughout the macro- and microcycles in the form of –

- Researcher reflections in a research journal;
- Field notes taken by the researcher during the coaching sessions;
- A structured reflective feedback form completed by the tm and myself after each coaching session (see appendix c for an example); and
- A post-coaching interview with each tm approximately two months after the coaching had ended.

The AR cycles, steps and data sources are summarised in Table 3.5 below.

**Table 3.4: Action research cycles, steps and data sources**

Cycle	Step	Description	Source of evidence
Macro	Plan	Before starting the next macrocycle, review the current state of the emerging TTC framework and decide which aspect of the TTC framework should be explored in this macrocycle.	Researcher and participant reflections recorded in research journal Structured coaching feedback forms from TMs Post-coaching intervention interview with TMs
	Act	Perform the six sessions of coaching, one with each of the TMs and record the results.	
	Evaluate	At the end of the macrocycle, aggregate feedback from each TM and update the researcher's journal. After the last macrocycle, conduct exit interviews with each of the TMs.	
	Reflect	Reflect on the following data in relation to the CAR focal and instrumental theories: To which extent is the TM closer to showing signs of transformative learning? Which coaching tools and techniques have been useful? To which extent has this macrocycle contributed to the emerging TTC framework? What is still missing from the TTC framework and what still needs to be explored in the next macrocycle?	
Micro	Plan	Together with the coachee, decide how this coaching session will proceed, given the research goal of the current macrocycle and the needs of the coachee.	Researcher and TM decisions, actions and reflections as recorded in the coaching field notes Structured coaching feedback form from TM for this session Post-session reflections captured in researcher's journal
	Act	Coach the person.	
	Evaluate	During the coaching, take notes, play back to coachee, observe and check progress against the aim for this session as agreed in the <i>plan</i> step	
	Reflect	At the end of the coaching session ask coachee to reflect on the session. Discuss my observations with the coachee. Reflect with the coachee on the effectiveness of the session given the agreed plan for this session in terms of both the TTC framework needs and the coachee's needs.	

Source: Author's own compilation

### 3.4.5 Application phase data analysis

In terms of analysing data and building theory, the intention with AR from the onset was to consider both practice and theory, but there are not many published sources that explain clearly how theory is built during AR. The apparent lack of instructions on how to build theory during an AR project in fact deters many researchers from using AR (Dick, Stringer & Huxham, 2009). Many researchers rely on frameworks from other disciplines to assist with theory building (Dick *et al.*, 2009), and grounded theory is used by many (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Greenwood and Levin (2007) however make a strong case for the fact that AR has its own way of knowledge creation via ‘cogeneration’ where local insight contributed by the participant and research-based knowledge brought by the outsider (researcher) merge (Greenwood & Levin, 2007:102). In the context of this research, the outsider (coach) brought a number of theories and frameworks that were experienced by the participant (TM) and both contained valid information for refining the coaching framework. The theories and frameworks were applied using Davison *et al.*'s (2012) suggested use of focal and instrumental theory. This played an important and valuable part in guiding the data analysis in this phase. Using theory in CAR projects serves a dual purpose: it frames the focal problem and guides the intervention (Davison *et al.*, 2004).

The aim of the application phase of the research was to refine and evolve the draft coaching framework that was created in phase one. Data collected during the macro- and micro- AR cycles were continuously analysed by means of content analysis during the various *reflection* steps of both cycles, and guided and informed by the various focal and instrumental theories employed during this AR process.

At the end of each microcycle (individual coaching session), the structured feedback form (completed by both the TM and myself – see Appendix C) and my field notes captured during the coaching session were analysed for clues as to the appropriateness of what was explored in that session given the overarching *plan* for the current macrocycle. I reflected on what contributed and what detracted from the macro plan. The feedback from the TM was usually received via email a few days after the coaching session, incorporated into the form and compared to my own reflections. TMs had to answer two questions:

- How did today's coaching session help me to become more successful in my new role (if at all); and
- What did the coach do to facilitate this?

This two-pronged approach tried to ensure that the process stayed true to the AR philosophy of seeking to add knowledge via research and helping the client to improve his or her situation by facilitating change (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Insights from these reflections were captured in my researcher's journal in the form of memos, a practice I found very useful during the foundation phase. The content of the memos was guided by the various focal and instrumental theories used in this AR process. These reflections informed the coaching approach in the next coaching session with the next TM in terms of which aspect of the TTC framework needed refinement or clarification.

Data analysis at macro level followed a similar approach, but with slightly different use of the data sources. At the end of each macrocycle, all the structured feedback forms and field notes were examined as a whole to identify potential trends or dominant themes that emerged from either my reflections or the TM feedback. These themes and trends were derived via content analysis and captured using a narrative style as prescribed by Greenwood and Levin (2007). The narrative format reflected the cyclical nature of the AR process. Each macrocycle was documented in a narrative style in the format: plan, act, evaluate, reflect and findings. This allowed for structured thinking about the AR process and the outcomes. During this narrative, the focal and instrumental theories were used as guides. In terms of focal theory, Kolb's (2014) experiential learning theory and Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework were used to reflect on the extent to which the current macrocycle complied with widely used coaching meta-frameworks. Two questions were relevant:

- To which extent did the macrocycle contribute to the overall experiential learning process of the TM?
- Was the macrocycle still within the parameters of a formulation framework?

Throughout the microcycles (individual coaching sessions), the instrumental theories were used as tools to ensure the ultimate aim of the AR process and the TTC framework, namely facilitating transformative learning, was not lost. Mezirow's perspectives and three types of reflection (Mezirow, 1994) were used to help identify the TMs' problematic perspectives. Hoggan's evaluation of transformative learning (Hoggan, 2016) was used to explain to TMs the nature of transformative learning and to assess to which extent they have transformed their problematic perspectives. The TTC tools that were identified in the foundation phase (section 3.6.3) were used throughout the coaching process.

In AR, the insiders (in this case me, the coach) and outsiders (TMs) are treated as having equal integrity because both are expected to behave in accordance with their backgrounds and knowledge bases and both have an equal right to be heard (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). This equality was taken into account when performing the data analysis in the application by ensuring input from the TM and my own reflections were taken equally seriously. The outcome of AR should support the participants' interests so that the knowledge produced increases their ability to control their own situation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). The ultimate test for inclusion of new knowledge into the TTC framework was therefore whether it was of benefit to the TM in assisting him or her to transform in order to transition successfully.

### 3.5 RESEARCH QUALITY ASSURANCE

In research, quality assurance during the research process influences the final quality of the result. In qualitative social research specifically, the researcher faces challenges around objectivity which, in turn, may influence the validity and reliability of the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The fact that I coached the TMs in the application phase may also raise questions about my impartiality. This section aims to address this and other questions around research quality.

Aspects relating to the objectivity, validity and reliability of the research are (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995):

- Transferability: to what extent can the findings be applied to other contexts and participants?
- Dependability: to what extent will the findings of the research be similar for similar participants and a similar setting?
- Credibility: how accurately are the participants' views captured and conveyed?
- Confirmability: to what extent are the findings a result of the research as opposed to the researcher's opinion, and can this be confirmed by other studies and literature?

Practical steps to address the above aspects are described in detail by both Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Marshall and Rossman (1995), and their application to this research is discussed here.

**Transferability** and **dependability** were addressed through triangulation and following the prescribed grounded theory and CAR instructions. Triangulation, which is the use of multiple methods, methodologies or paradigms to research the same phenomenon, is considered one of the best ways to enhance validity and reliability in

qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In this research, triangulation was built into the research process by virtue of the two-phased approach that used different methodologies (grounded theory and AR) and methods (grounded theory data analysis and content analysis) to study the same phenomenon, namely the capacity of coaching to facilitate transformational learning during a leadership transition. Both grounded theory and CAR provide clear instructions on the data gathering and analysis process, and these instructions were adhered to as far as possible. In the case of CAR, a rigorous checklist was constantly consulted and eventually completed to indicate the level of compliance with the CAR process (see section 5.9).

**Credibility** was addressed through the review of captured data. During the research, extensive field notes were taken to facilitate critical reflection on the part of the researcher (see for example Appendix C). Member checks, where the transcribed field notes and interview data were shared with the participants for them to check the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation, were employed where possible, although not all participants in phase one complied with the request to review their interviews.

**Confirmability** was addressed through the process of reflexivity, which entails a constant and conscious awareness of the effect of the researcher on knowledge construction during the research (Ortlipp, 2008). It was of particular importance given the potentially intimate and subjective nature of the AR in phase two where I coached the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the researcher keep a dairy to reflect on decisions made during the research process, specifically around logistics and the role of the researcher's own values and interests. I kept a researcher journal in both research phases. In phase one, the process of writing memos became an implicit journaling technique where I could record my research direction, decisions and often also unresolved dilemmas (Charmaz, 2014). In the application phase during the reflection steps of the AR cycle, the recording of my thinking in my journal greatly assisted me to keep the AR process aligned with the focal and instrumental theories.

### 3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics in research is concerned with the procedures that should be applied for protecting those who participate in the research (Flick, 2014). Any kind of research in general and qualitative, social research involving human subjects in particular, could potentially present ethical issues due to the tension between the researcher's aims and motives and the participants' rights to privacy (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden,

2000). An ethical theory consisting of four principles should inform the research process (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001:399):

- Non-maleficence – researchers should avoid harming participants;
- Beneficence – research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake;
- Autonomy – research participants' values and decisions should be respected; and
- Justice – all people should be treated equally.

In addition to the above, informed consent and voluntary participation are cornerstones of ethical research (Flick, 2014). These concepts refer to the notion that research participants must be fully informed of the research methods, aims, risks and benefits, and they must volunteer to participate with the full knowledge of what is involved (Orb *et al.*, 2000).

To comply with the suggested ethical considerations, this research was cleared by the University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB) ethics screening committee for both phases independently. In addition, the researcher, as a professional coach subscribes to COMENSA's ethical code of conduct (Coaches and Mentors of South Africa [COMENSA], 2013) that was adhered to during the research and specifically the coaching process in phase two. A letter of consent explaining the purpose of the research and the process that would be followed, as well as an outline of the consequences of participation was signed by each research participant, thereby ensuring informed consent (see Appendix D). Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were adhered to by not revealing the names of the participants or their organisations, and care was taken when quoting participants directly to avoid compromising their anonymity as suggested by Orb (Orb *et al.*, 2000:95).

During the application phase where I coached the participants, there was potential for researcher bias. By its nature, qualitative research – especially AR – implies researcher involvement via data collection, analysis, interpretation and raising the findings to a conceptual level. To remain as objective as possible, I selected the data collection and analysis methodologies, i.e. Charmaz's (2014) constructive grounded theory and Davison *et al.*'s (2012) canonical AR based on the clear guidelines they provide. These guidelines introduced a level of abstraction between the data and my handling of the data. In addition, I found that the sheer amount of data collected made it difficult to maintain a subjective view and I constantly attempted to allow the data to speak for itself.

My primary goal was to add knowledge, not to pass a judgment, and by keeping this in mind throughout the research, I was able to distance myself from potential preconceived ideas. The most prominent technique that I employed to address researcher bias was the keeping of a research journal. As a coach, I am trained and acutely aware of reflective practice. I used this skill to reread my researcher's diary regularly with the aim of reflecting on my level of researcher bias. One aspect in particular that required constant attention was the fact that, as an experienced coach, I have already developed my own coaching framework. I had to remind myself constantly that the aim of the application phase was to develop and refine a novel coaching framework and not to superimpose my own coaching biases onto this new framework. By making this a conscious theme of reflection in my diary, I was able to remain aware of this potential hazard.

### **3.7 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented an overview of the research methodology by providing a rationale for the selection of a two-phased research approach, giving a brief overview of the specific instances of grounded theory and AR used in this research as well as the data collection and analysis procedures followed in each phase. Research quality and ethical issues were also addressed. The next chapter presents the findings of the foundation phase of this research.

## CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS FROM THE FOUNDATION PHASE

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Having explained the research design in the previous chapter, this chapter presents the findings of the foundation phase of this research project, which followed grounded theory principles. The findings will be discussed in terms of the research questions. This research posed one main and five sub-questions.

The main objective was captured in the following research question:

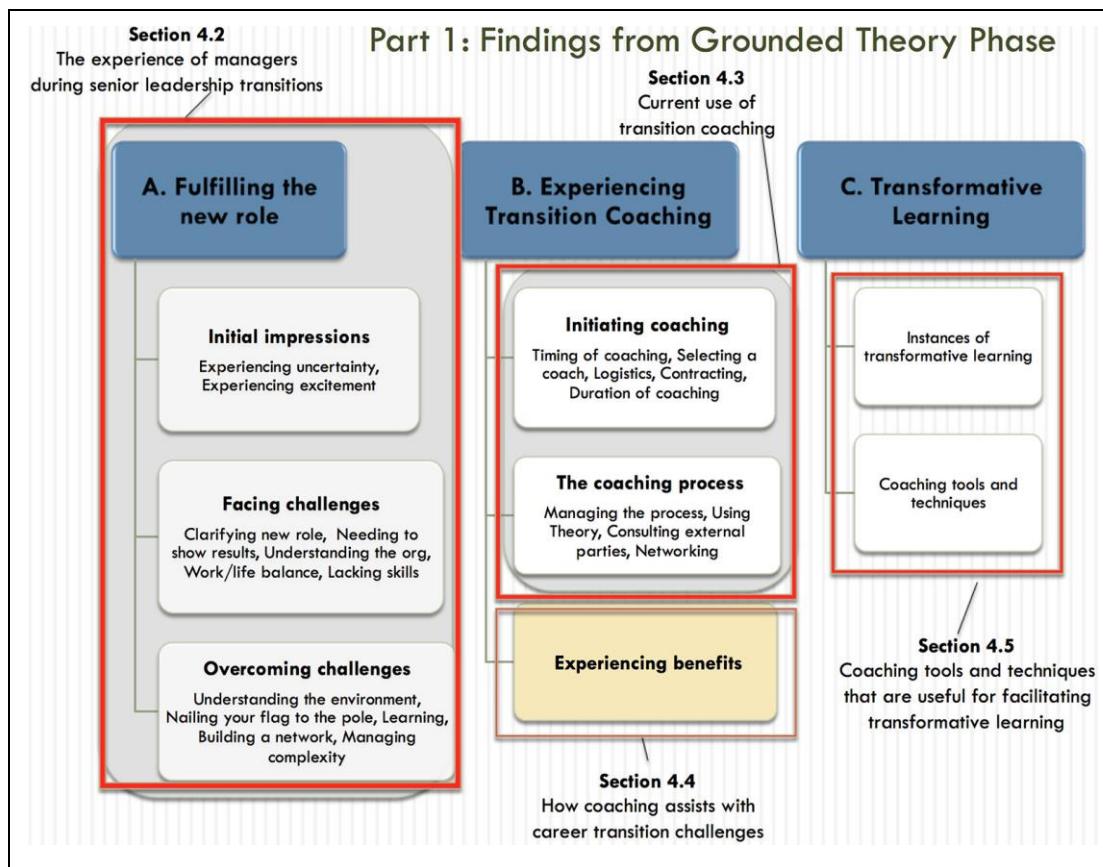
*How can the coaching process be designed to facilitate transformative learning during senior leadership transitions?*

The sub-questions were captured by the following:

- What are the experiences of managers during the transition into senior leadership?
- How is transition coaching currently used?
- How does coaching assist in overcoming challenges faced during a transition
- Which coaching tools and techniques are useful in facilitating transformative learning?
- How can transformative learning be applied in the transition coaching process?

The foundation phase answered the first four research sub-questions, while the fifth sub-question was realised during the application phase (see Chapter 5). Figure 4.1 presents a conceptual map of the findings of the foundation phase, how these findings relate to the first four research sub-questions and in which sections of this chapter the findings are presented. As indicated, the first sub-question (The experience of managers during senior leadership transitions) is discussed in section 4.2 and is fulfilled by the main theme (A. Fulfilling the new role) and its three categories (Initial impressions; Facing challenges; Overcoming challenges). The second sub-question (Current use of transition coaching) is discussed in section 4.3 and is answered by two categories (Initiating coaching; The coaching process) of the second main theme (B. Experiencing transition coaching). The third sub-question (How coaching can assist with career transition challenges) is discussed in section 4.4 and is realised by the 'Experiencing benefits' category of theme B. Finally, the fourth sub-question (Coaching tools and techniques that are useful for facilitating

transformative learning) is discussed in section 4.5 and is answered by the two categories of the third main theme (C. Transformative learning).



**Figure 4.1: Findings from foundation phase linked to research sub-questions**

Source: Author's own compilation

The results are discussed as per the groupings indicated in Figure 4.1. Refer to Table 3.2 to view the relationship between participant labels (P1 to P8; C1 to C5; HR1, H2 and M1) and their demographics.

## 4.2 THE EXPERIENCES OF MANAGERS DURING SENIOR LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS<sup>4</sup>

The aim of sub-question one was to explore the experiences of leaders when they transition into senior roles and the level of support that they receive from their organisations. For the participants interviewed in this research, the process of fulfilling the new position can be distilled into three sub-categories, as illustrated in Figure 4.2. Please note that all quotations by participants are reflected verbatim and unedited.

---

<sup>4</sup> The content of this section was published in a journal article (Terblanche, Albertyn & Van Coller-Peter, in press).



**Figure 4.2: Key aspects of fulfilling a senior leadership role**

Source: Author's own compilation

Participants had initial impressions of what the role entailed. After taking up the position, they faced actual challenges and finally employed certain strategies in an attempt to overcome the challenges.

#### 4.2.1 Initial impressions

The initial impressions of participants are divided into two sub-categories as illustrated in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Initial impressions**

Sub-category	Key insights
1. Experiencing uncertainty	Transitioning leaders had a sense of anxiety about what the new role entailed
2. Experiencing excitement	The new position was seen as a reward and achievement and elicited a sense of excitement in the transitioning leader

Source: Author's own compilation

Promotion into a senior leadership position can be thrilling and gratifying but also stressful as it deconstructs how we have come to know ourselves (Weinstock, 2011).

The initial impressions when stepping into a senior position were described by a newly promoted leader participating in this research as “somewhat paradoxical” (P1). On the positive side, being promoted is seen as a personal and professional achievement, a milestone reached, associated with social prestige: “I think that is how we’re taught to recognise achievement in corporate life” (P1). It also affords leaders the opportunity to spread their wings and explore (P2), and it provides an opportunity to reshape relationships, build new networks and receive recognition (P3).

On the negative side, many participants expressed a sense of anxiety relating to the unknown territory that came with the new position, “that’s nice to be promoted but flip, now what am I supposed to do?” (P1). This sense of foreboding stems from not knowing what is expected of them (P7), feeling uncertain about their level of competence and knowledge (P6), being unsure whether they will be able to fill the shoes of their predecessors (C3), and being unsure about the level of support they would receive from the organisation (P4). In some instances, promotion was accepted for prestige and financial gain even though the individual knew that she was not “cut out” for the new job (C1).

The anxiety experienced by some of the participants led to a lack of self-confidence and fear, as is evident from this statement from P6:

*I think my self-confidence was a bit shaken. Yes. Because it was totally something new and it included looking after a totally new environment, which I have never dealt with in the past ... So, I had a lot of questions going through my mind to say “Will I make it?” And I had fears. (P6)*

The fear, anxiety and self-doubt expressed by the participants are common among high achievers and can be attributed to a fear of failure (Argyris, 1991). The notion of receiving support from the organisation featured prominently in a recent survey conducted by McKinsey & Company (Martin, 2015). The results showed that executives who successfully transitioned into the role received more support and resources from their organisations and were better able to spend their time and energy understanding the issues that they could influence as a result of their unique position (Martin, 2015:1). It is thus clear that organisations have a role to play in micro-level support to ensure sustainability and, as was shown in Chapter 2, coaching is one of the strategies used to support transitioning leaders.

#### 4.2.2 Facing challenges

The challenges faced by participants comprised five sub-categories as illustrated in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Facing challenges**

Sub-category	Key insights
1. Clarifying new role	Participants were unsure of the detailed job descriptions of their new roles.
2. Needing to show results	Participants felt the pressure to show results fast.
3. Understanding the organisation	Many participants, especially those promoted from outside their new organisation, felt that they did not understand the intricacies of the new environment.
4. Work-life balance	For some participants, the increased time demanded from their new role had a negative influence on their personal lives and health.
5. Lacking skills	Most participants felt that they did not have the right skills required by the new position.

Source: Author's own compilation

The anticipation and speculations associated with the new leadership position soon turned into the harsh reality of performing in the new role when the incumbents realised that the realities of their situation differed considerably from their expectations (Freedman, 2011). Failure in senior management positions is not uncommon, and fulfilling the objectives of the role may be equally difficult, with one survey showing that less than one third of transitioning executives reported having met *all* their objectives after 18 months in the position (Martin, 2015). The main challenges faced by the participants in this study can be summarised as clarifying the new role, needing to show results, understanding the organisation, finding work-life balance, and lacking skills.

One of the perhaps surprising findings of this research was that participants stated that they did not know exactly what was expected of them in the new role. When asked whether they knew exactly what was expected of them, they responded:

*No. No it was, listen, this is the strategic direction, your role profile is sort of this, go and sort it out yourself. (P4)*

*So that was part of the stress of taking on that particular role and maybe that is so for many of the executives you'll interview that there's an expectation that you will define your agenda. (P1)*

C1 thought that newly promoted senior leaders are often expected to familiarise themselves with the new position, while C2 believed that organisations' intentions to support newly promoted leaders are good, but that they lack understanding of the challenges that the new leaders have to face.

While this expectation from organisations may be common, Kegan (1994) asserts that people are capable of managing only a certain level of complexity and that they require assistance to master the next level. Lack of support during transitions may result in emotional suffering (Kegan, 1994). In this research, it appeared that organisations were either not cognisant of this or ignored it. P7 expressed this lack of support as follows:

*When I talk to you about this I would never tell the outside world that this has been tough. Because hey, you don't cry about this stuff. You just knuckle down and somehow survive. (P7)*

HR2 described a very clinical process of handling newly promoted senior managers where, after the promotion, they "pick it up on some type of system", and then proceeded to present a list of leadership training courses to the incumbent. There was a lack of individual emotional support. HR2 ascribed this state of affairs to the output-driven nature of organisations. She felt that HR practitioners were not enabled by business to provide better support for transitioning leaders.

This struggle of newly appointed leaders to understand exactly what was expected of them could be attributed to the higher level of complexity that is associated with senior roles and the expectation of organisations that the incumbents should have the ability to find their own way. However, for most of the participants, the experience provoked anxiety. Hence, they felt that the organisation could have done more to support them and to provide clarity. One survey found that only 27% of transitioning executives who took part in that survey believed their organisations had the right resources or programmes in place to support their move into a senior executive level role (Martin, 2015:2), thus supporting the views expressed by the participants in this research.

Perhaps as a result of their uncertainty or in combination with highly successful people's need to show their mettle, most participants had the desire to show results. However, here too they faced challenges, such as not having access to the necessary resources (P4), focusing on the wrong goals (P1) and not doing enough to "harvest the low-hanging fruit or early wins" (P8). This is in line with research that found that identifying where to secure early wins is one of the most important

activities of a newly promoted senior leader (Watkins, 2009:49). However, one participant (C1) observed that some of her clients put pressure on themselves to show early results and, in the process, moved too quickly, not fully understanding the ecosystem, with negative political results.

To be effective in their new role, participants expressed the need to understand the systemic context of the role. They needed to understand the strategic intent of the organisation, the culture, politics, how decisions are made and where the power lies or “who’s who in the zoo” (P4). Distinguishing between theory and practice is key, as expressed in this quote:

*There's a theory of how we get things done in the business, how decisions are made through a steering committee or proposals or white papers and then there is the real way they get made and that's the politics. (P1)*

When a person is promoted from outside the organisation, understanding the culture of the new organisation is even more difficult. This may be compounded when the person came from a different industry. One study found that successful senior managers spend more time learning about the organisational culture than those who are not successful, but also warned that it is the most difficult aspect to understand (Martin, 2015).

An important view that emerged from this research is the distinction between transitioning within an organisation (internal promotion) and transitioning from another organisation (external promotion). Participants expressed pros and cons associated with both. An internal promotion has the advantage that the person has prior knowledge of the organisational culture and politics (P4), and knows where the power base is (P1). This inside-knowledge benefit extended to networking, with P8 indicating that relying on established relationships and networks is a way to get off to a flying start by depending strongly on existing relationships initially. However, having already established relationships may come at a cost. In their new role, leaders take on new responsibilities that may put strain on existing relationships and these new leaders may be seen as “the pebble in the shoe” (P2). M1 remarked that in certain instances, existing relationships could come across as favouritism and have destructive consequences. The challenge is to view the relationships from the perspective of the new role and to redefine relationships where necessary (Charan *et al.*, 2011).

Moving away from his former role was challenging for P7 since a replacement had not been appointed. He therefore straddled both old and new positions, unable to

devote the required time to either. According to C1's experience, newly promoted senior leaders often struggle with their peers now reporting to them, while C3 considered this challenge to be the most significant one faced by newly promoted senior leaders. In addition, internally promoted leaders are often neglected in terms of organisational support because the assumption is that they "know their way around" (C1).

For P1, being promoted externally brought with it the luxury of settling in over time or a "honeymoon period" of 60 to 90 days during which he was allowed to find his feet. He also experienced an element of forgiveness and the liberty to experiment, but this did not last indefinitely. Ultimately, the organisation has "an expectation that you'll bring new ideas" (P5). Building a new network and getting to grips with the organisational culture is also more of a challenge in external promotions (Watkins, 2003).

For many participants, stepping into a new role led to the insight that they do not possess the necessary skills to perform the job. This is to be expected since promotion is associated with the need to acquire new skill sets (Freedman, 2011). One caveat here, according to Watkins (2009), is that managers in transition who rely too heavily on skills and strategies that worked for them in the past are setting themselves up for failure. In this research, the skills gap reported by the participants took on a number of forms. The notion of technical versus non-technical skills played out in two ways. P6 was concerned that she now had to manage a group of engineers of whose world she had very little knowledge. P1 experienced the opposite in that he came from a technical background, but was now expected to manage people and "felt quite ill equipped to do that".

Part of managing people is the ability to delegate. Some participants, especially the ones who performed all the tasks themselves before, struggled with this. P6 struggled with the act of delegating whereas P3 struggled with the trust that is needed when delegating:

*Okay, so delegating is the easy part. It's staying out of it once you've delegated that I have a problem with [laughs]. (P3)*

According to Kets de Vries (2006), the need to develop advanced interpersonal and social skills is crucial to succeed at a senior level. In HR1's experience, the shift from being part of a team to leading the team and the interpersonal dynamics that accompany such a change were the most challenging aspects of a promotion. The

demand on interpersonal skills was illustrated by one participant who had to take a tough stand and struggled:

*I had my first such a difficult conversation with a director. I became emotional, and, umm, I nearly walked out of his office. But then, at the same time, you know, the little voice in your head telling you if you walk out now, you've lost the plot. So, stick around and get through it. (P2)*

It is imperative for senior leaders to produce long-range strategies (Charan *et al.*, 2011) and it is important to move from operational to strategic mode (Lombardo & McCauley, 1988). In the past, P7, though aware of the structural issues in the organisation, was able to ignore them. In the more senior role, he now felt responsible to fix these problems. C4 also observed her technically minded clients struggling to view the big picture. C1 and C2 identified the shift from operations to strategy as the most common problem in transitioning clients. HR2 cited the move from operational thinking to strategic thinking as the single biggest challenge faced by newly promoted senior leaders, and the lack of time to think as one of the reasons for this challenge.

Taking on a more senior position places demands on time availability. For P3, the new role led to longer working hours, which had a negative influence on the time she could spend with her family. For P5, this led to a measure of personal distress, noting that some things had suffered. Giving up on previously meaningful activities, such as exercising and losing one's routine, are examples of this (P1).

It is clear from these findings that transitioning senior leaders faced significant challenges, experienced anxiety and felt ill equipped and not well supported.

#### **4.2.3 Overcoming challenges**

Participants employed strategies to overcome the challenges they faced. These strategies emerged as the sub-categories illustrated in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Facing challenges**

<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Key insights</b>
1. Understanding the environment	Participants took a number of steps to clarify the uncertainty surrounding their new role.
2. Nailing your flag to the pole	Some participants acted fast to show quick wins in their new roles.
3. Learning	Participants engaged in formal and informal learning activities to fill their perceived skills gap.
4. Building a network	Participants set out to build new networks and were careful to target influential individuals.
5. Managing complexity	Complexity was managed by reducing the scope of problems to more manageable levels.

Source: Author's own compilation

Role transitions are accompanied by a range of dynamic shifts that have an influence on the leader's internal and external realities (Weinstock, 2011). A testimony to the resourcefulness of the participants in this research, and which arguably is partly the reason for their corporate success, was their ability to overcome the challenges presented by these shifting realities, despite the lack of organisational support in many cases. The individuals employed a number of different strategies: understanding the environment, 'nailing your flag to the pole', learning, building a network and managing the complexity.

The theme of facing challenges highlighted that many participants did not know what was expected of them and that they also had to make sense of how the organisation functioned. The importance of understanding the environment is highlighted by Watkins (2009) who asserts that executives in transition must gain a deep understanding of the situation at hand and adapt to that reality. To this end, P1 insisted on defining key performance indicators (KPIs) to gain insight into what was expected of him. P4 took matters in his own hands and through dialogue tried to understand what was expected of him. He described this process of managing upwards by having the following discussion with his manager:

*Listen, I know you don't know, but let's sit around the table and sort it out together ... "Oh, you don't know...", so tough luck, I will go and sort it out myself. (P4)*

Although valiant from P4, this lack of support and clarity from his manager could have been a devastating blow to his achievements since one of the most critical aspects of senior leadership success is organisation-wide alignment (Martin, 2015).

Some of the participants felt that to overcome their self-doubt and to prove to their managers that they were worthy of the new position, they had to show results quickly:

*It's important to nail your flag to the flag pole and say this is what I did in my first six months. (P8)*

One way of achieving this is to be clear on one's intent (P2). There is a window of opportunity to show results, but it is important to understand the system before acting (C1). The notion of early wins are often touted in literature (Watkins, 2009), but a recent survey showed that most of the transitioning executives who took part in the survey indicated that it took them longer than three months to determine the solutions they required (Martin, 2015). It would therefore seem that a balance between speed and patience is required.

To cope with their perceived or actual skills gap, participants set out to acquire knowledge. Learning and adaptability are considered the most important actions associated with career success at any level (Freedman, 2011). While learning is an important aspect of growth, Argyris (1991:99) asserts that most companies not only have significant difficulty addressing what he calls "the learning dilemma", they are often not even aware that it exists. According to M1, senior leaders must have sufficient domain knowledge, "if people think you don't know, then they are going to try it on". Newly promoted senior managers must be honest about their lack of domain knowledge and surround themselves with a set of trusted advisors in a transparent manner (M1).

For participants in this research, learning took on two forms: formal and informal. Of the eight newly promoted leaders, only one was exposed to a formal learning programme, which she claimed broadened her leadership capability (P6). A lack of formal learning opportunities was cited as a challenge by P1 who thought he might have benefitted from such an intervention. In terms of informal learning, it was mostly a case of "learning on the job" (P7). P8 explained that he did a significant amount of research before stepping into his new role. This research was focused on forming an idea of how top performers in the world managed a position similar to his. P1 employed a similar strategy:

*I tried to frame the work that I was doing against what a world-class executive would be doing ... I read a lot about what C-level people do and I read blogs, articles written by successful people. (P1)*

The strategies that P7 and P8 chose should bode well for them since executives with

the most successful transitions spend more time than others preparing for their roles, and they are 1.6 times as likely as others to report proficiency at the key skills for their jobs (Martin, 2015). While some of the learning was conceptual and based on principles and approaches, other learning was more content- and domain-specific (P2). P5 joined an informal group that facilitated his learning. This group engagement gave him the opportunity to meet people from different fields, grappling with similar ideas.

All the participants cited building a strong network of the right people as crucial in navigating the new environment that came with their promotion, as illustrated by these quotes:

*If you've whispered in the ear of the CEO and that becomes his pet project then the decision is really made and you go through the mechanics of it. (P1)*

*So, how do we make decisions, who's the key stakeholder in such and such a department, who shouts the loudest, who should I listen to when they shout and who should not? (P8)*

A network can span beyond the confines of the organisation. P2 found that enlisting the services of external experts, such as consultants, helped her to perform her job while P3 created a collegial network that she used as a sounding board. Deciding who to include in one's network should not be limited to senior people or people with important titles, according to P4. Instead, one should also consider who the informal influencers are. This phenomenon has been illustrated by using social network analysis (SNA) (Cross, Borgatti & Parker, 2002; Terblanche, 2014). The process of building a network was a very conscious effort for P5 who used mapping software to create a map of international contacts that he considered important for his collaboration efforts. P8 scheduled one-on-one sessions with his new team (previous peers) to address any concerns they had. M1 has observed how recently promoted senior managers head-hunted trusted subordinates from their previous organisations in order to create a strong network in their new environment. M1 also warned of the dangers of selecting the wrong mentors and support networks: When a newly promoted senior manager sides with a prominent senior person who gets side-lined or who leaves the organisation, the support structure effectively falls away leaving the newly promoted senior manager exposed.

In terms of network building and establishing a relationship with the new team reporting to the newly promoted senior manager, successful executives indicated that they rely heavily on their initial team and direct reports as a source of their

success (Martin, 2015). In building his team, P4 found that talking to the team was not sufficient. He actually had to listen to them in order to get to know them. Regular communication and obtaining the team's agreement and acceptance on his decisions assisted P6 to build a strong team who trusted him. When things went wrong, P3 took a hit for the team by being "the face of the non-delivery" and this helped to unite the team and deepen mutual trust. This process of clarifying the team's role within the larger organisational context is considered to be one of the primary tasks of a newly promoted senior leader (Freedman, 2011).

The levels of complexity that leaders have to deal with increase substantially in a senior role, and senior leaders' ability to cope at higher levels are linked to their ability to perceive and manage complexity (Rooke & Torbert, 2005). Participants employed various strategies to manage the higher levels of complexity, as illustrated below:

*So, the skill to acquire or learn is to see the complexity and reduce it to simplicity. (P1)*

*I use simple pictures to reduce complexity to simple terms. What I try to do is have people on my team that could deal with the complexity. (P3)*

The participants interviewed in this research faced significant challenges during their transition into the senior leadership roles. They employed various strategies to cope, often as a result of lacking organisational support. These findings are echoed by Freedman (2011) who asserts that greater structure and support are needed to help leaders cope with the challenges of upward transition.

#### 4.2.4 Concluding insight

When leaders are promoted into senior positions they are vulnerable and face the possibility of failure with negative implications at both micro- (individual) and macro- (organisational) level. For leaders to transition successfully, organisations need to understand the challenges transitioning leaders face in order to provide adequate developmental support.

The finding captured in the theme discussed in this section illustrates that participating transitioning leaders faced a plethora of challenges at personal and systemic level. These challenges included:

- Uncertainty regarding expectations from the company;
- Pressure to show early results;
- A lack of understanding of organisational politics if externally promoted;

- Disruption in work-life balance; and
- A lack specific skills demanded by the new role.

The participants felt ill prepared to face these challenges and were often disillusioned and overwhelmed. In this regard, their coping strategies included:

- Actively endeavouring to understand organisational functioning;
- Determining where power bases lie;
- Securing short-term successes;
- Learning new skills and acquiring domain knowledge;
- Building a strong network of trusted people; and
- Learning to manage higher levels of complexity.

When moving into a senior position within complex organisations, it would be reasonable to expect an individual to experience a degree of discomfort and to undergo learning. However, the general lack of organisational support and clarity on what is expected of newly promoted senior leaders seemed to have contributed disproportionately to the anxiety experienced by the participants in this research. This cements the case for active, tailor-made support interventions such as the TTC framework created from this research.

#### **4.3 CURRENT USE OF TRANSITION COACHING<sup>5</sup>**

The aim of sub-question two was to understand how transition coaching is currently used in organisations. The second main theme that emerged from the foundation phase was ‘Experiencing transition coaching’. This theme consisted of three categories as illustrated in 4.1 above. Two of these categories ‘Initiating coaching’ and ‘The coaching process’ provide an answer to research sub-question two, namely ‘How is transition coaching currently used?’ and is discussed in this section. Figure 4.3 below illustrates the two categories in more detail.

---

<sup>5</sup> The content of this section was published in a journal article (Terblanche Albertyn & Van Coller-Peter, 2017).

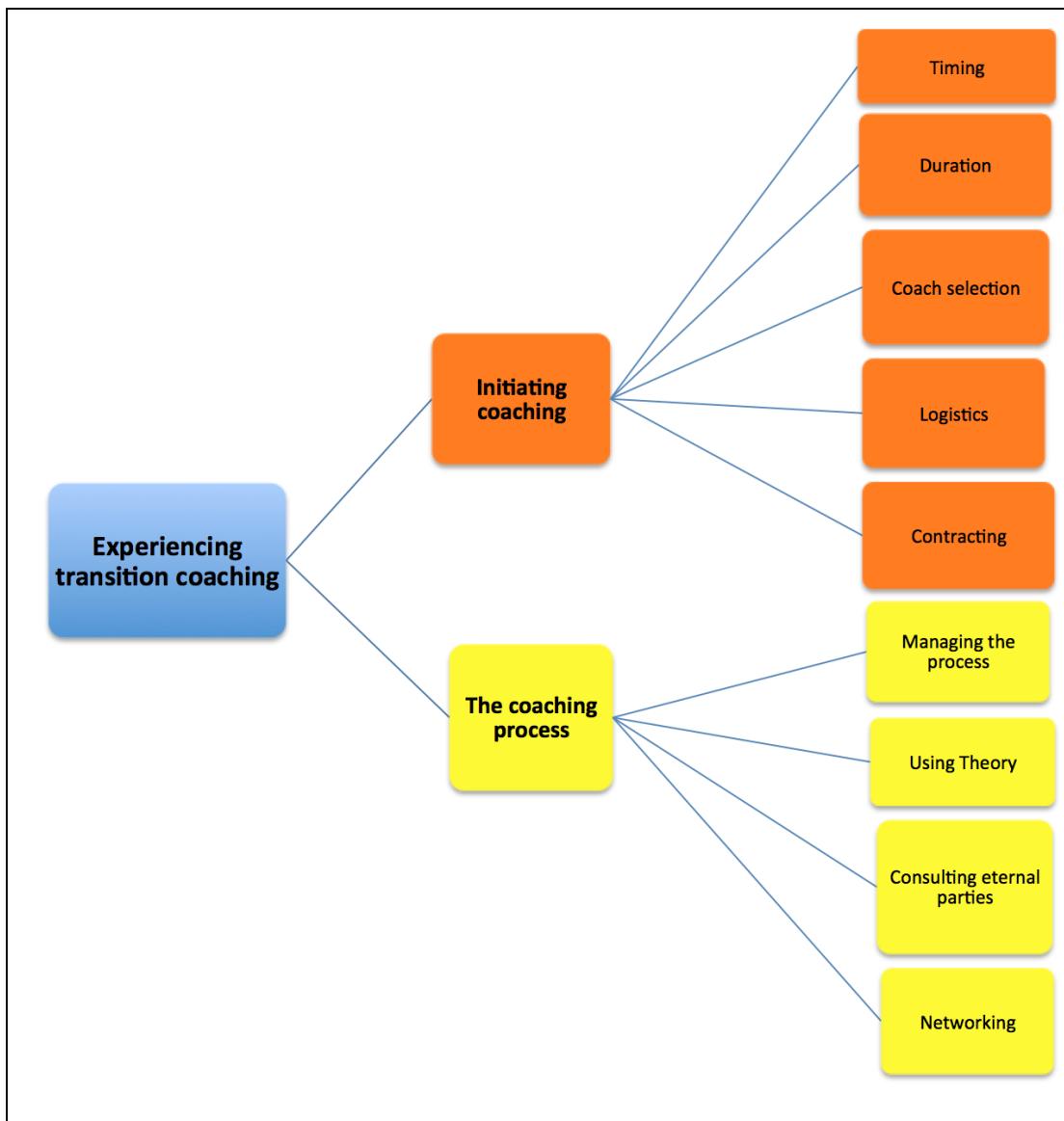


Figure 4.3: Experiencing transitions coaching

Source: Author's own compilation

#### 4.3.1 Initiating coaching

The process of initiating transition coaching contains five sub-categories as summarised in Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4: Initiating coaching**

<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Key insights</b>
1. Timing of coaching	Coaching starts too late; no explicit transition coaching; coaching used for remedial effect; coaching should start before the transition
2. Duration of coaching	Interventions are too short (< 6 months); coaching is expensive; more frequent coaching immediately after transition; less frequent sessions for up to 18 months to three years later on
3. Selecting a coach	Coachee should be given options; personal connection between coach and coachee important
4. Logistics	Off-site (away from office) coaching is preferable; coach and coachee must be pragmatic and flexible
5. Contracting	Three-way contract between coachee, coach and organisation needed; Coach–coachee confidentiality is important to the exclusion of the organisation

Source: Author's own compilation

#### **4.3.1.1 *Timing***

Irrespective of whether the idea of coaching was initiated by the recently promoted senior leader (P1, P5) or their line managers (P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8), in all instances it was done when the incumbent had already shown signs of distress in the new role. This points to the fact that transition coaching is not something that organisations take seriously and apply in a pre-emptive manner. It seems to be used for remedial effect. C1 notes that the transition coaching she has done has been almost accidental as part of a 'brushstroke' approach by organisations to coaching their leaders, not specifically aimed at transitioning leaders. This is especially true for internally promoted senior leaders. In one instance, C2 only became involved six years after a promotion when issues of the person not adjusting to the new role reached crisis levels, "It is not front of mind for a company to say we are promoting you; therefore, we think you should get the support" (C2). HR1's company had no specific process for assigning a coach to newly promoted senior leaders. Instead the business could request a coach at any time, so it was up to the line manager to decide whether the incumbent needed a coach. Alternatively, if a person was nominated for a leadership development programme they might encounter coaching as part of the design, but this was not necessarily linked to a promotion.

The question of whether to initiate the coaching before or after the promotion drew varied responses. On the one hand, P4, P6, C3 and M1 felt that coaching should start before the promotion. These participants agreed that there should be between one and five sessions before the promotion, a number of sessions in short

succession shortly afterwards, and then fewer and more spread-out sessions for on-going support for up to two years (M1, P1, P5, P6). C3 warned that transition coaching must be pre-emptive, “We tend to only look for help when there’s a burning platform” (C3). This was echoed by M1:

*If you are going to put your feet wrong – you are going to do it right there in the early stages where you want to set the agenda. You want to set the scene. You do not want to make mistakes before you have even started.*

Those who thought that coaching should only start after the candidate had entered the role (P7, C1, HR2), had different reasons for stating this. P7 felt that the candidate needed to spend a few months in the new position to determine with what he or she is struggling in order to optimise the coaching. C1 was concerned that transition coaching before a promotion could be confused with career coaching, while HR2 was worried that transition coaching before a promotion could have legal implications should the promotion not materialise. C3 provided a pragmatic solution to this, “Coaching should start as soon as the news is broken.”

#### **4.3.1.2 Duration**

While the interviewed participants were all unanimous that transition coaching should continue for an extended period of time of up to three years (HR2), only one participant experienced such an extended intervention of 18 months, which he considered to be very beneficial to his learning process:

Most of the participants reported interventions ranging between six and ten sessions over a period of less than a year. It was felt that this was inadequate:

*Typically we sort of put a 12-week intervention or maybe put a 6-month intervention in but we never talk about the 2-year and 3-year period. Unfortunately, I think coaching is great and it has its place, but I think we still think too tactically about the learning journey. (HR2)*

*Behaviour doesn't change in 12 months. (M1)*

The reasons for these limited interventions were cited as cost and a misunderstanding of the transition and transformation process. In HR2’s experience there was a perception from line managers that if the incumbent has not “made it after six months on the job as a leader then we shouldn’t have promoted him”.

Suggested solutions included initial frequent coaching sessions (every two weeks) for the first three months to assist with immediate issues and then less frequent

sessions of once a month or even two months for up to at least 18 months, but preferably up to three years.

#### **4.3.1.3 *Coach selection***

The process of selecting a coach varied between organisations. In most cases, the coachee was given a choice of coaches either through an interview process or a so-called ‘chemistry session’ (P3, P5), or by reviewing coaches’ CVs (P8). HR2’s organisation used a panel of coaches and assigned a coach based on a specific skill set needed in the intervention. The importance of coach selection was highlighted by P7 (an actuary) who stated that it was very important to him that his coach had the ability to think analytically and conceptually. The coach he had selected was an engineer.

#### **4.3.1.4 *Logistics***

The issue of where and at what time coaching should take place elicited varied responses. P1 preferred a location far away from work in a relaxed environment, such as a restaurant or hotel, and at a time of day that was convenient for both the coach and coachee. The neutral location energised him sufficiently to allow him to engage in the coaching. P2 on the other hand was coached at her office, but she felt that it would have been better to be coached away from the office as she would have felt more free to talk about what was bothering her. P4 concurred that even though he was coached at the office he would have preferred to be out of the ‘buzz’ of the office. P5 and P7 experienced both in and out of the office scenarios and both preferred the off-site location.

It would appear from the responses that off-site coaching is preferable, but C1 summed it up well when she stated, “it is up to the coachee to make the call on what suits them and for the coach to be flexible and accommodating.”

#### **4.3.1.5 *Contracting***

All the coaches reported going through a contracting phase. In all cases, there was at least one session at the start where an organisational representative provided input into the coaching process. There were some variations. C1 had two sessions with the organisation: one at the start of the coaching intervention to set goals and one at the end of the coaching intervention to provide feedback, although she had observed that for executive-level coachees, the organisations seemed to be less involved in the coaching process.

The importance of confidentiality during the contracting phase and throughout the intervention was emphasised:

*The client might think you are in cahoots with the organisation and they might want to use you to do performance management. (C2)*

*I never meet – except for the first conversation that they ask me they want me to coach so and so. After that I never meet alone with any of the organisational representatives. Never. That creates suspicion. The minute you talk it creates suspicion. (C4)*

The most prominent finding of this sub-question was that transition coaching is not yet seen as a distinct coaching sub-discipline by organisations, despite the fact that the coaching fraternity considers transition coaching to be a specialisation of executive coaching (Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004). As a result, coaching is not used explicitly and pre-emptively to assist leaders during their promotion into senior leadership positions. For the participants in this research, transition coaching was not part of the default leadership development tools used by their organisations. Organisations use a number of methods to train new leaders such as mentoring and coaching, 360-degree feedback, leadership training, job assignments, self-other agreement, use of self-narrative and life stories, and action learning, among others (Day *et al.* 2014; Fleenor *et al.*, 2010; Ligon *et al.*, 2008). Of these, coaching is unique in that it is tailored to the individual and concentrates on behavioural change. Coaching puts into action the suggestion of change that other leadership development programmes profess (Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008).

There is a clear need for a more systematic approach to supporting new leaders, which includes both traditional leadership development programmes and personal coaching (Martin, 2015). This finding confirms the notion that coaching at key career transition points, such as a promotion into a senior position, is a powerful mechanism to help ensure the incumbent's success (Simpson, 2010).

This finding also suggests that to avoid getting off to a wrong start, coaching should commence before the promotion (as soon as the announcement is official) to help the new senior leader design an action plan. There should then be regular coaching sessions (every 2–4 weeks) for the first 6 months, after which less frequent sessions (every 2–3 months) should occur for up to three years. These results differ from the notion that coaching for senior leaders should only start after the first 90 days (Sutton, 2008), and concur that the results of the first 90 days in a senior position often set the tone for failure or success (Watkins, 2009).

The reason for transition coaching not being used more pervasively can be attributed to some extent to the high cost associated with the process. This was certainly the case for a number of participants in this research, and is in line with other research findings that suggest that coaching is often lumped together with expensive interventions, such as training programmes, without considering the unique individual benefits that coaching brings (Simpson, 2010). On the other hand, if the high cost associated with an unsuccessful promotion to both the individual and the organisation is considered (Martin, 2015; Watkins, 2009) together with the high likelihood of failure (Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004), perhaps the cost of a three-year long coaching intervention as suggested above is not as significant as is currently perceived.

An important part of initiating the coaching process is matching the coach and coachee. The fit of both the new leader and the organisation to the coach must be considered (Weinstock, 2011). The findings from this research suggest that the new leader must be given a choice of coaches to consider. This is particularly important since not all coaches may be skilled in the specialisation of transition coaching, and transition coaching is considered challenging for the coaching profession. New senior leaders are typically ambitious, intelligent, energetic and restless individuals, which implies that the coach must be able to cope with a wide range of issues and be able to move at a fast pace (Reynolds, 2011). A strong case can therefore be made to include a specific focus on transition coaching when training new coaches.

These research findings suggest that coaching sessions should ideally be conducted away from the office environment to create a space free from mental clutter. It is important, however, that pragmatism and flexibility be applied to customise the coaching progress to suit both coach and coachee. This is echoed by other research (Kaufman, 2006; Sammut, 2014).

#### **4.3.2 The coaching process**

The coaching process category yielded four sub-categories as summarised in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5 The coaching process**

<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Key insights</b>
1. Managing the coaching process	Setting goals are important to keep coachees accountable; goal setting focuses the intervention; coaches should summarise coaching sessions to allow reflection and referencing; coaches should encourage coachees to reflect and experiment with different thinking and behaving in between sessions; coachee must reflect on experiments in sessions
2. Using theory	Frameworks, theory and models shared by coaches helped coachees understand their new roles and themselves; psychometric assessments help create self-awareness
3. Consulting external parties	Encouragement from line manager helps support the coachee; HR should keep an arm's-length distance but may intervene if coaching results not evident; involving a mentor is beneficial; involving the coachee's team helps the team understand the coachee change process
4. Networking	Explore the coachee's network; identify network improvements; expand coachee's network via formal and informal ways

Source: Author's own compilation

#### **4.3.2.1 Managing the coaching process**

Goal setting emerged as an important part of the transition coaching process. Coaching goals provided structure (P1, P4) and helped coachees stay accountable

*Once you kind of put it down on a piece of paper, even if it was only your piece of paper, it suddenly becomes much more tangible ... Just writing it down is incredibly powerful. (P5)*

C3 used goal setting as a standard practice to involve line managers indirectly in the coaching process:

*They [line managers] are the ones who see you dropping the ball in the areas you want to develop. So if you're lacking assertiveness and in the next Exco meeting you're not speaking up then they can hold you accountable. (C3)*

Two coachees felt strongly about the benefits of their coaches summarising the coaching sessions and sharing this with them. P5's coach created a two- to three-page typed summary after each coaching session. This was useful to him in that it allowed him to reflect on the coaching session between sessions, and it served as a reminder of coaching goals. Even after the coaching had ended, P5 was using the coaching summaries (comprising some 40 pages) to remind himself of his journey and his progress to date. For P7, the summaries acted as reference to books and resources he could consult.

Active experimentation emerged as a strong sub-theme (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8). P8 experimented with body and verbal language. P6 practiced in a mirror to overcome her public shyness. P7 provided another example:

*Go into a meeting and try and come out of it with the other party feeling: I love this guy. Or go into a meeting and try and get the guy at the end going you really struck me as someone with very high EQ [emotional intelligence]. (P7)*

Reflection was used in various ways including obtaining clarity of thinking (P3), identifying alternative solutions (P4), feeling unjudged (P5), and creating awareness of positive thoughts (P6). C1 distinguished between assisted reflection, led by the coach, and self-reflection, performed by the coachee outside of the coaching sessions. C4 used reflection to close the active experimentation learning loop.

In general, there seemed to be a pattern of the coaching creating awareness in the client of the need to change, encouraging the client to practice and to experiment with different behaviours to see what works, and finally to reflect back in the coaching session on what worked or did not work and the reasons for it (C1, C2, C3, C4).

#### **4.3.2.2 Using theory**

A number of participants valued the inclusion of theoretical models and frameworks in the coaching process by their coaches. Coaches shared cognitive behavioural theory (P1), leadership theory (P4), video clips (P5) and the leadership pipeline model (C1). For P7, as a technically minded individual, it was crucial that his coach provided him with theoretical frameworks to allow him to understand the process he was undergoing. Socratic questioning (Carey & Mullan, 2004) helped him to listen to people instead of telling them what to do.

A number of participants reported using psychometric assessments as input into the coaching process. This included 360-degree review, Enneagram, Myers–Briggs, Insights, Organic scorecard and repertoire grid to name a few. The benefits of these assessments range from “comfort that my coach knows me” (P7) to increased self-awareness (P8, C3, C5) and getting the coaching ‘unstuck’ (C4).

#### **4.3.2.3 Consulting external parties**

The classical three-way meeting between the coach, coachee and line manager at the start of the coaching process to align goals and at the end to provide feedback, was present in a number of instances (P1, P3, P5, C1, C3). For C3, “If the line manager does not enforce the shift to the desired behaviour it probably won’t happen.” HR1 felt it is sufficient to receive occasional feedback from the coach while

HR2 said that the organisation should take a backseat since the results of the coaching should be visible. If not she would intervene:

*I am not seeing the behaviour. I am not seeing the values demonstration. I am not seeing the strategic thinking. I am not seeing the connectedness with people, whatever the case may be. Those tell-tale signs should then say – okay coach I need to check in.*

While being coached, some coachees found it useful to have a mentor. For some, this was a formal process (P2) where their line manager appointed an internal mentor to support their transition, while for others it was an informal process. It would appear that using a mentor at the same time as being coached is not standard practice, but for those who did have a mentor, the effect was positive.

An interesting phenomenon that emerged from this research was coaches C2 and C3 who involved the newly promoted leader's team in the coaching process. For C2, this was almost out of frustration since the transformation that her client underwent was met with suspicion by her team. It was only after three facilitated sessions with the leader and her team that trust was restored to some extent. For C2, "there is no other way of coaching people who are being groomed for leadership" than to involve their teams at some point, while for C3 involving the team was a way to bring in the systemic aspect of a senior corporate position.

#### **4.3.2.4 Networking**

P1 and his coach spent some time analysing his network:

*we spent quite a bit of time to draw a picture of the people in my work life: who are the people that stress me out, who are the players, the actors in this great play at work.*

C1 and C4 reported using a similar approach with their clients to help them build new relationships.

P3 expanded her network at senior level, P5 spent time on his international network, and P6 focused on building networks outside of her regional office. All three participants found this exercise helpful in their new role. C1 advised her clients to build networks by meeting face to face either formally (using work as an excuse to introduce yourself) or informally (dropping in and introducing yourself as the new person).

Once the coaching process is underway, a number of key elements must be present to help guide the transition coaching process to success. The first such element as

revealed by the findings is the importance of managing the coaching process by setting goals, encouraging active experimentation in between coaching sessions, and constant reflection.

Due to the inherently complex and unstructured nature of the new role and the challenges that senior leaders face (Peltier, 2010), it is crucial that goals be set to enable the incumbent to focus and to develop his or her current capacity (Grant *et al.*, 2010). These goals enable the newly promoted leader, his or her team and line manager to identify critical issues that need addressing and to find alignment (Freeman, 2011, Whitherspoon & Cannon, 2004). This research showed that goal setting during transition coaching is a crucial step, and that the coaching goals must take into account the organisational needs (Gray, 2006; Kahn, 2011). This research also showed that setting transition coaching goals and sharing this with a wider audience helps to keep coachees accountable not only to themselves, but to their team and line managers.

Reflection during and between coaching sessions and active experimentation by the new leader between coaching sessions appeared to be important elements of a successful transition coaching intervention. New leaders often have incomplete, biased and irrelevant mental models when they take up the new position. They also often underestimate the complexity of the new role they take on and this causes them to focus selectively on problems they feel comfortable to tackle (Freeman, 2011; Hill, 2007). The role of the transition coach is to help create awareness of these limiting assumptions through reflection (Reynolds, 2011) and to encourage active experimentation to refute strongly held notions of what is possible (Schon, 1991). The importance of reflection and active experimentation is echoed by the findings of this research whereby all the coaches interviewed profess to use reflection and active experimentation in their transition coaching practice.

The findings further suggest that assessments and other theoretical frameworks were used frequently to provide a baseline and scaffolding within which the transition coaching was executed. Literature also suggests the use of assessments in transition coaching to determine coaching needs (Grant *et al.*, 2010; Kaufmann, 2006; Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004).

Involving third parties, such as line managers and mentors, emerged as an important contributing factor to transition coaching success. One use of this technique is for the coach to obtain feedback from others to help the new leader understand his or her limiting assumptions (Freeman, 2011). Mentors and line managers can also confirm

the coaching agenda by being made aware of the coaching goals and by providing support and guidance during the coaching intervention. Findings from this research even suggest that the new leader's team should be involved in the process to enable an understanding of the change process and to provide a systemic angle to the coaching.

Finally, this research shows that the transition coach should help the new leader identify and build a strong network of people relevant to the new role. This finding is in line with other research that shows the importance of building a strong network (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 1999; Terblanche, 2014).

#### **4.3.3 Concluding insight**

The main aim of research sub-question two was to investigate how transition coaching is currently used. This insight was needed in order to construct a draft coaching framework. Two main categories emerged from the empirical data: aspects to take into account when initiating the coaching process, and considerations when facilitating the coaching process itself. These findings provided practical suggestions for designing transition coaching interventions aimed at supporting leaders when they are appointed into senior leadership positions. This is elaborated on below.

A senior career transition is a uniquely challenging point in a leader's career with specific and well-known obstacles to overcome. The findings presented here suggest that the process of initiating and managing the transition coaching intervention could be designed specifically to address these known challenges. This insight gives impetus to the idea of promoting 'transition coaching' as a distinct coaching sub-discipline and for HR practitioners to take note of the potential benefit of such a tailor-made intervention.

HR practitioners should take note of:

- The timing of initiating coaching (as soon as possible after the appointment is official);
- The frequency of coaching (one or two sessions before the role take-up, six to 10 during the first 6 months and thereafter one session every two to three months for up to three years).

HR practitioners must also ensure that coach-coachee matching provides a number of options to the coachee, that clear coaching goals are set that consider the organisational goals, and that transition coaches employ reflection and active experimentation in their coaching model. Line managers, peers and team members

of the new leaders must also be involved in the coaching process through input (e.g. 360 assessments), mentoring and goal sharing.

These findings provided valuable, practical input to the draft coaching framework as will be shown in section 4.5.

#### **4.4 USING COACHING TO OVERCOME TRANSITION CHALLENGES**

The third research sub-question was to understand how coaching could be used to assist transitioning leaders. One of the categories of the second main theme (Experiencing transition coaching – Figure 4.1) provided the necessary insight to answer this third research sub-question. The sub-categories associated with the benefits of transition coaching as expressed by the participants are summarised in Table 4.6 and expanded on in this section.

**Table 4.6: Benefits of transition coaching**

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Coaching outcome</b>	<b>Description</b>
Psychological	1. Improved self-awareness	Becoming more aware of self
	2. Feeling more confident	Acting in a more self-assured manner
Cognitive	3. Improved thinking	The ability to identify alternatives
	4. New perspectives	Viewing situations from various angles
	5. Building relationships	Forming interpersonal connections with people
Behavioural	6. Being more balanced (work-life)	The ability to live a well-adjusted life
	7. Improved communication	The ability to communicate effectively in various mediums

Source: Author's own compilation

The benefits are grouped into three types: psychological, cognitive and behavioural.

##### **4.4.1 Psychological benefits**

Psychological benefits are improved self-awareness and feeling more confident, as elaborated on below.

###### **4.4.1.1 Improved self-awareness**

The most significant benefit experienced by coachees was the increased level of self-awareness, an aspect that was highlighted by a number of researchers (Brock, 2010; ICF, 2016; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). For P1, understanding himself better meant that he could see himself as less unique, which was positive:

*I understood, you know, that I was not some kind of freak, that this happens to people and the people of my personality type have ways of responding to stresses and stimuli in the business and that's OK. (P1)*

The theme of personality types was also present for P2. Through the coaching, she became aware of her own and, importantly, other people's personality types. This empowered her to change her interaction with people based on their personality types. Coaching helped P3 to become aware when she slipped into a mode of 'mothering' her team instead of empowering them and also when she moved into operations mode versus being more strategic.

P4 found coaching to be useful in helping him to understand his strengths and weaknesses. Coaching also helped him to become "less blunt and stuck in my ways" and to remain open to trying alternative approaches. P5 found the insights into his strengths through the coaching an important tool in helping him to redefine how to use these in his new role. This finding is in line with findings that indicated that coaching could assist with addressing derailing behaviour and improve individual performance (Kauffman & Coutu, 2009).

P7 repeated the theme of strengths and weaknesses by admitting that through his new self-awareness, he realised that his strengths that helped him achieve success were not, in the new role, his weaknesses. He describes awareness as follows:

*Once you identity something it's like see Subarus on the road. When I bought one, suddenly I started seeing lots of them on the road. As soon as you get that first hint of awareness, it's self-fulfilling. (P7)*

P8 states that increased self-awareness was the main benefit he derived from the coaching:

*I think the biggest thing is that it increases awareness, self-awareness and it makes you more mindful of your behaviour and how you impact on the people around you both at home and at work and how people experience you and it also affords me the opportunity to understand how the way I behave makes people react to me. (P8)*

His coach created this new awareness in P8 by asking questions. P8 saw the questions as a mirror in which he could identify his blind spots. C3 firmly believed that raising self-awareness is key to change. He used 360-degree interviews as a tool to accomplish this. This theme of mirroring and sound-boarding is in line with findings by Kauffman and Coutu (2009).

HR1 provided an interesting perspective. When asked what he thought the difference was between people who show lasting change due to coaching and those who do not, he put it down to the level of self-awareness that is created by the coaching and the coachee's willingness to embrace this awareness. HR2 echoed this perspective:

*Most certainly for me – the biggest benefit in both cases were better self-awareness. To me that is already achieving at least 40 or even 50% of the briefing. (HR2)*

She observed this particularly in how coachees were able to change their behaviour after coaching.

#### **4.4.1.2 Feeling more confident**

Coaching assisted a number of participants to feel more confident in their new roles, which in turn led to an increased level of assertiveness. This was illustrated by P2:

*The coaching helped me to become assertive about my beliefs and to push things out or away that is congruent with what I believe. From being the one who accommodates always and wanting to please everybody, to becoming the person who needed to take a stance and be assertive and sometimes say no and be unpopular, that is what the coaching helped me with. (P2)*

P3 had a fear that, in a senior position, if she does not agree with everything, she might lose her job. The coaching helped her to dispel this fear and to act with more confidence. P5 needed the confidence to know that he would be successful in his new position and the coaching assisted him with that through repetitive reflection and challenging his assumptions. P6 struggled with the confidence to speak in front of a large audience. Her coach suggested she practice in front of the mirror, and this boosted her self-confidence. This is in line with the findings of other researchers, which show that coaching leads to improved self-confidence and subsequent improved professional effectiveness (Grant *et al.*, 2010; Kilburg, 1996).

C3 described one of his clients, who was unhappy with his remuneration, but who lacked the confidence to address the issue. He attributed his ability to have the tough conversation to the coaching process. C4 had a client who struggled with boundary management in the new role. The coaching helped him to draw his boundaries firmly, and the reason he was able to do so, according to C4, was that the coaching gave him self-confidence.

#### 4.4.2 Cognitive benefits

The cognitive benefits experienced by participants were improved thinking, new perspectives and building relationships.

##### 4.4.2.1 Improved thinking

Coaching helped a number of the participants to improve their ability to think. This showed in a number of ways.

The ability to identify alternatives helped P2 to ask herself (when in a difficult situation) simply whether she can change the situation or not. If not, she tells herself to "stop fretting". P3 felt that, since the coaching had stopped, she has been in situations where she had to act differently to before, and she was able to do that. For P4, coaching allowed him to see a number of different options:

*All of a sudden I had a third and a fourth option to say listen, why don't we approach it like this, what about that?*

P6 discovered that when her proposals were turned down, the coaching helped her not simply to give up, but to try actively to find alternatives. This has a direct bearing on enhancing the individual's performance as well as goal-directed self-regulation (Theeboom *et al.*, 2013).

As an executive, M1 had observed the role that a coach could play in terms of helping clients with their thinking:

*I am grappling with this. I am thinking of doing X. I am thinking about the pros and cons. I don't expect the coach to give me the answer but help me with my reasoning. (M1)*

Reflecting helped P4 to identify better ways of tackling a problem. P5 mimicked his coach in his own reflective process to ask himself pertinent questions:

*Am I enjoying this, is this where I want to go, is it in line with my ethics and principles, does it build on my strengths? (P5)*

This helped him to shape his role around what he found energising. C1 found that her transitioning clients found great value in reflecting about the changes happening in their new context.

Challenging assumptions are important to help people gain new insights into their patterns of thinking. P3's coach challenged her on a discrepancy in her thinking:

*She challenged me: you can't say that in one breath to say you can't stand to have people under your shadow because they will never grow and yet, when*

*they are given the opportunity to stretch, despite the fact that they may fail, you still want to play mother hen. (P3)*

For P4, it was more about him challenging his own assumptions:

*So I started questioning myself with regard to, am I actually busy with the most important stuff in life? So that was the one thing that the coaching did for me to say listen go and sit under a tree and go and reflect. (P4)*

This helped him to take a step back and identify alternatives. P6 realised that before the coaching, she was limiting herself. By challenging the assumptions that constrained her she was able to believe in a sense of “I can even go beyond that and do what I want to do.” C3 also believed that challenging assumptions are important but that the coach should keep the ‘bigger picture’ in mind by challenging the context of the new role and the organisation.

#### **4.4.2.2 New perspectives**

P1 claimed that some of his perspectives on life had changed because of coaching, but importantly it also helped him to come to terms with what to do about these new perspectives, how to think and act differently to align with the new perspectives.

P3’s perspective on her need to be involved in the detail of the operational side of the business was changed during the coaching. It allowed her to trust her people and instead of constantly checking up on them rather to ask them how she could assist them in achieving their goals.

Coaching helped P4 to ask himself difficult questions about where he was in his life, what was really important and whether he was focusing on the important things in his life and work. As a result of this, “my mind, my character, me as a person changed over time”. According to P4, coaching was much more effective than “each December go and sit there under a tree with a glass of red wine and think, oh that time of year, how do I do stuff”. One of the insights and changes in his perspective was around the difference between adding value to the organisation (which was a core value and belief of P4) and the realisation that even so, it may not be the right place for him.

C1 had seen a perspective change in one of her transitioning clients through reframing the words she used. Her client stated that she hated ‘politics’ in organisations. C1 challenged her to think of an example of ‘positive politics’ and asked her to give it a name. She called it ‘positive influencing’ and through this change in wording, C1’s clients were able to engage in the act of politics in her new

role. For C3, the key to create a shift in perspective was the questions that the coach had asked.

#### **4.4.2.3 *Building relationships***

P6 found that coaching helped her to build strong relationships both at top level and with people below her in the organisation. The trigger was the fact that she was able to communicate better than before. For P5, coaching assisted him to stop fighting with his managing director (MD) and to move into a more productive space. P3 improved her relationships with top management, but it was very important to her not to compromise her values. Coaching helped her to define the boundaries and to distinguish between personal and professional relationships.

Both C2 and P3 stated that from a relationship perspective, coaching not only helped in the workplace, but also in their personal lives. C2 had observed how her clients improved their family ties while P3 reported a vast improvement in how she managed boundaries with her daughter.

### **4.4.3 *Behavioural***

Behavioural benefits reported by participants were having a more balanced work–life ratio and improved communication.

#### **4.4.3.1 *Being more balanced (work–life)***

Through coaching, P2 realised that “you don’t only exist to work”. This helped her to find balance and to spend more time with her family and husband. P5 managed to create space in his life outside of work. He changed from working until 10 o’clock at night and over weekends to a space where he has not worked over weekends for more than a year. He reported that this more balanced approach had a positive effect on his life. P6 realised that if she did not make an explicit plan, her new role and the pressured context of her organisation would cause her physical harm. Her coach helped her to define a few practical steps, such as not immediately switching on the TV when she arrives home but instead to sit and relax. She also started taking walks over weekends even though she said, “I still hate exercising.”

#### **4.4.3.2 *Improved communication***

Coaching during a career transition seems effective for improving people’s communication skills as revealed in the findings below.

Coaching helped P1 to deal better with conflict during meetings. It helped P2 to structure conversations better. It helped P3 to time her conversations better (when to

have the difficult conversation with a team member). P4 was able to have an “open and honest” discussion when he met resistance from one of his team leaders. For P5, the coaching taught him to communicate on an emotional level. This helped him to see the value in talking and led him to communicate more freely at work and in his personal life.

Improved communication was a meaningful event for P6:

*Umm, you know umm, I've always grown up knowing that I'm a shy person, that I, talking in public is one thing I've hated the most in my life and even in meetings, when I attended meetings, I would attend, even if I had something to say I would sit and keep quiet, but the coaching helped me to start talking. (P6)*

This new skill assisted her in building new relationships which was crucial for her to succeed in her new role. HR1 observed changes in coachees in the way they talked to people, changing from emotional outbursts to a more professional approach.

#### **4.4.4 Concluding insight**

The topic discussed in this section (experiencing the benefits of transition coaching) provided empirical evidence that coaching is a powerful mechanism to support typical challenges faced by transitioning leaders. The findings indicate that transition coaching could assist with a variety of psychological, cognitive and behavioural challenges faced by transitioning leaders. The case for conducting empirical research into a focused transition coaching framework, the aim of this research, was therefore ratified.

### **4.5 COACHING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES THAT ARE ABLE TO FACILITATE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING**

This section addresses the fourth research sub-question: Which coaching tools and techniques are useful in facilitating transformative learning? Ultimately, the purpose of this sub-question was to inform the main research objective, which was to propose a coaching framework to facilitate transformative learning during a career transition event. The preceding three research sub-questions related to the transition event, the current use of coaching during the transition, and the potential benefits of coaching during the transition. The rationale behind the fourth sub-question was an attempt to introduce transformative learning into the discussion. This section therefore describes the derivation of a set of coaching tools and techniques that had the potential to facilitate transformative learning.

Following the deductive and summative content analysis described in section 3.6.3, 13 coaching techniques were identified that appeared to facilitate transformative learning. Of the 13, five techniques were used more frequently than the rest. These five techniques were labelled as having the potential to promote transformative learning, and are illustrated in Table 4.7 below.

**Table 4.7: Coaching techniques identified that could potentially facilitate transformative learning**

Coaching technique	Description
Questioning	The coach asks incisive questions stimulating reflection and promoting alternative perspectives.
Reflection	Allowing the coachee to reflect in the coaching session, but also in between coaching sessions on the insights gained during the coaching session and the results of their active experimentation.
Active experimentation	Co-designing with the coachee behavioural experiments in between coaching sessions. These experiments should allow coachees to stretch themselves and to put into practice new behaviours to help them reach their coaching goals.
Frameworks and theories	Coachees value the acquisition of new knowledge in the form of theories and frameworks on how they are learning and changing and the challenges they face. Coaches share these theories and frameworks during the coaching sessions and suggest books and other resources.
Challenging views and providing different perspectives	Coachees like being challenged openly in a directive manner. This directive approach assists them in gaining alternative perspectives.

Source: Author's own compilation

How do these five techniques relate to adult, experiential and transformative learning theory? Mezirow (1995:58) states that for transformative learning to occur, critical self-reflection, rational discourse and exploring different roles are required. These three techniques identified by Mezirow can be linked to the reflection, challenging views and providing different perspectives, and active experimentation techniques identified in this research. The use of frameworks and theories could be linked to the need in andragogy for self-directed learning (Knowles, 1970; Merriam, 2001; Russel, 2006). It could be argued that transitioning leaders would be more engaged in their transition process if they were empowered with the knowledge of what they are likely to encounter and how to cope with possible challenges. Substantial research has already been conducted on the topic of career transitions as highlighted in section 2.4, which could be shared with transitioning leaders. This notion of sharing knowledge of career transitions was incorporated in the TTC framework.

From an experiential learning perspective, the five coaching techniques identified in this research also seemed to fit with the classical experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 2014). In Kolb's cycle, learning starts by understanding one's current reality through questioning and reflection. This is followed by a phase of conceptualisation and planning, which is facilitated through using theories and frameworks and actively challenging current views. Finally, the cycle of learning is completed only once the plans are put into action.

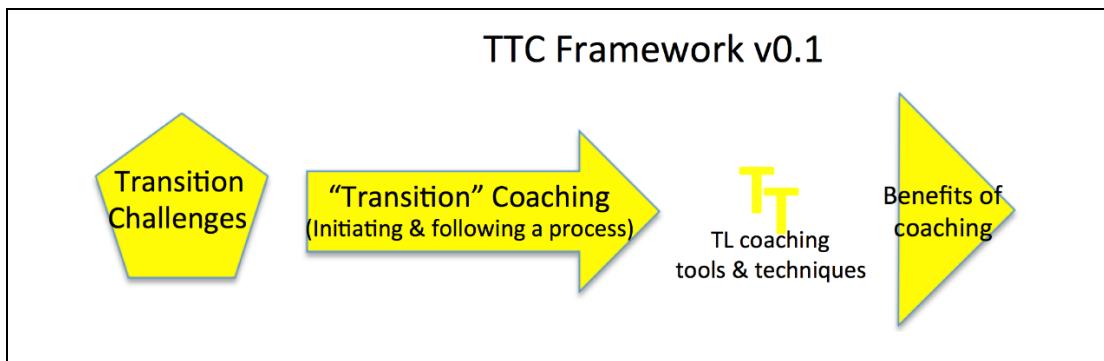
The five coaching techniques described in this section provided a connection between transformative learning and transition coaching through their potential to facilitate transformative learning. This was included in the final TTC framework.

#### **4.6 EMERGENT TTC FRAMEWORK AFTER THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

The findings of the foundation phase as presented in this chapter revealed a number of components that were deemed useful to the emerging TTC framework as illustrated in Figure 4.4 below. Firstly, the findings revealed that transitioning leaders face certain challenges during the transition as discussed in section 4.2. These challenges could serve as input to the coaching process by creating awareness and normalising the situation.

Secondly, the findings indicated that a rudimentary transition coaching process was followed. The word 'rudimentary' was chosen to indicate that the coaching received may not necessarily have been focused exclusively on transition coaching, but that it may have contributed to addressing issues faced by transitioning leaders. This 'transition' coaching intervention consisted of a number of steps to initiate the coaching and to follow a process as discussed in section 4.3.

Thirdly, the findings indicate that transitioning leaders experienced certain benefits from the coaching they received during their transition (section 4.4) and, finally, the deductive and summative analysis discussed in section 4.5 revealed that five coaching tools and techniques were used more frequently than others to facilitate transformative learning during transition coaching.



**Figure 4.4: TTC Framework v0.1 after the foundation phase**

Source: Author's own compilation

The four aspects that emerged from the foundation phase represent the first draft of the TTC framework that was taken into the application phase of this project.

#### 4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the foundation phase of this research project. Three main themes emerged and were able to answer the first four of the five research sub-questions. The findings indicated that there was a definite need for focused, tailor-made interventions such as transformative transition coaching to support transitioning leaders. The findings also provided clues about processes and techniques that could potentially be followed and used during a TTC process, and these suggestions were incorporated into a draft TTC framework, which was used as a starting point for the second research phase, which will be discussed next.

The next chapter presents the findings of the application phase of this research and demonstrates how the TTC framework evolved from the draft version construed in this chapter to the final product.

## Chapter 5

# FINDINGS FROM THE APPLICATION PHASE

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the second research phase, the application phase that followed an action research (AR) approach where I coached six recently promoted senior leaders (referred to as TMs) using the draft TTC framework that emerged during the preceding foundation phase.

At the outset of the discussion of the AR findings, it is important to state that the aim of the application phase was to answer the fifth research sub-question, namely to investigate how transformative learning can be applied in the transition coaching process. The first four research sub-questions addressed during the foundation phase and discussed in Chapter 4 covered general aspects of transition coaching, which formed the basis of the draft TTC framework. However, to answer the fifth research sub-question and the overall research objective (of creating a TTC framework), insights were needed on the application and operationalisation of transformative learning during the transition coaching process, and this was accomplished during the application phase.

The AR process followed during the application phase was based on the canonical actions research (CAR) approach as explained in Chapter 3. The main reasons for following a CAR-type approach were the rigour and structure that CAR provides as well as the explicit use of theory. In reporting on the findings of an AR process, it is recommended that a narrative style be used (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). The cyclical and iterative nature of AR, which is at the heart of both the knowledge generation and social change processes, is distinct from other forms of social science research. It is therefore important to *describe the process followed* when reporting on the findings of an AR process (Greenwood & Levin, 2007:109). Greenwood and Levin (2007) suggest that the rhetorical convention of the narrative style of reporting is ideal for an AR process where the text must have meaning, in the case of this research, to both the practitioner (the TM) and the researcher (me). They further state, “AR gains much of its power through narratives because narratives are inherently particular, revealing specific histories, processes, commitments, battles, defeats, and triumphs” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007:110), which was certainly the case in this research.

This advice is heeded in this chapter, and the findings will be presented through a narrative account of the five macrocycles with reference to the six microcycles contained within each. The structure followed is based on the CAR process (Davison *et al.*, 2004): plan → act → evaluate → reflect with a section at the end that summarises how each macrocycle contributed to the emergence of the TTC framework. Before describing the AR process, a brief summary of the focal and instrumental theories used during the AR process is provided.

## **5.2 FOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL THEORIES GUIDING THE EVOLUTION OF THE COACHING FRAMEWORK**

Following the guidelines of the CAR approach, a set of focal and instrumental theories was used during the AR process to help ensure rigour. A focal theory provides an intellectual basis for action-oriented change in a CAR project (Davison *et al.*, 2012:765) whereas an instrumental theory is used to explain phenomena (Davison *et al.*, 2012:766). Applied to this research, it can be argued that, since the primary aim of this research was to create a coaching framework, theories that inform conceptual coaching processes and approaches should be used as focal theories to form the ‘intellectual basis’ for the CAR process. In coaching literature, Lane and Corrie’s formulation framework (Lane & Corrie, 2007) and Kolb’s experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2014) provide two foundations within which a coaching process can be conceptualised. These theories were discussed in section 2.7.

The aim of this research, however, was not to propose a general coaching approach, but rather a coaching approach that would specifically help to facilitate transformative learning during career transitions. It can therefore be argued that the phenomena (in the words of CAR) at stake here are transformative learning and career transitions. Aspects of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory, which comprises the types of perspectives people hold (Kitchenham, 2008) and the three types of reflection that may help change perspectives (Mezirow, 1994), were used as one of the instrumental theories in this CAR process. Hoggan’s (2016) criteria for evaluating the level of transformative learning and the theory of leadership transitions (Charan *et al.*, 2011) served as the other two instrumental theories. In all three cases, these theories adhere to the requirement of CAR instrumental theories by explaining the phenomena involved in the CAR process, namely transformative learning and career transitions.

The focal and instrumental theories used in this CAR process are summarised below in Table 5.1 and will be referenced throughout the narrative describing the CAR process in this chapter.

**Table 5.1: Focal and instrumental theories used in the AR phase of this research**

CAR theory type	Theory name	Application
Focal theory	Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2014)	Guides the adult experiential learning aspect of the AR process.
	Lane and Corrie's formulation framework: perspective, process, purpose (Lane & Corrie, 2007)	Guides the overall meta structure of a coaching intervention.
Instrumental theory	Mezirow's eight transformative learning perspectives and three types of reflection (Mezirow, 1994)	Used to identify problematic perspectives and reflect on how to change these perspectives.
	Hoggan's transformative learning evaluation criteria (Hoggan, 2016)	Used to gauge the level of transformative learning.
	Leadership pipeline (Charan <i>et al.</i> , 2011)	Used to create strict boundaries and set the context for the AR process.

Source: Author's own compilation

The focal and instrumental theories were added to the TTC framework v0.1 from the foundation phase before the application phase commenced and resulted in the TTC framework v0.2 as shown in Figure 5.1. Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework was specifically added to the TTC framework to provide an intellectual basis (Davison *et al.*, 2012) for the coaching that was going to take place during the AR process, and transformative learning theory and career transition theory were included as instrumental theories to help explain the phenomena of transformative learning and leadership transitions. Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework (perspective, process and purpose) underpinned the emerging TTC Framework:

- The 'perspective' consists of the transition challenges identified in the foundation phase, and the two instrumental theories;
- The 'process' at this stage consisted of the results from the foundation phase on how to initiate the coaching, follow a rudimentary coaching process, and use ttc tools and techniques; and
- The 'purpose' at this stage contained the benefits from transition coaching as derived from the foundation phase analysis.

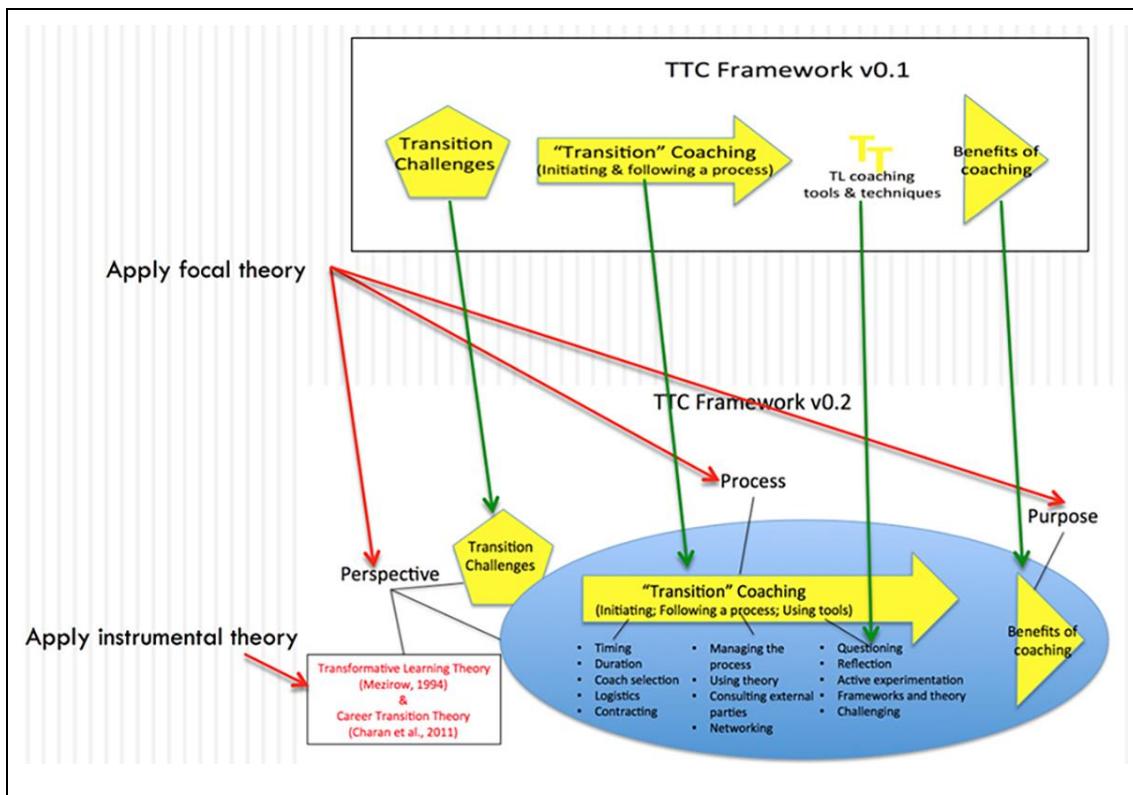


Figure 5.1: TTC Framework V0.2 before AR phase

Source: Author's own compilation

### 5.3 MACROCYCLE 1

The TTC framework v0.2 that emerged from the foundation phase and which includes the focal and instrumental theories as described above, was used as basis for the subsequent application phase and used as a starting point for the first macrocycle.

#### 5.3.1 Plan

The start of the first macrocycle also signalled the start of the coaching process. Following the lead from the two focal theories, it was important to establish and communicate the *perspectives* (first aspect of Lane and Corrie's formulation framework) that informed the coaching (Lane & Corrie, 2007) clearly as well as to establish *the current reality* (first step in Kolb's learning cycle) (Kolb, 2014) of the TMs. This basis, together with standard coaching best practices of rapport building and contracting and the results from the foundation phase, which provided guidelines on how to initiate a transition coaching process (section 4.3) seemed like a logical place to start the coaching process. Guided by these theoretical constructs, the plan for the first macrocycle was therefore to agree on the context for coaching, negotiate the contract and set the coaching goals.

### 5.3.2 Act

The six coaching sessions all followed a similar process, consisting of mutual introductions, explanation of the dual coaching and AR research process, and then going into more detail about transition and transformative learning theory. The results from the foundation phase suggested that applying theory and frameworks is useful during transition coaching. Relevant instrumental theories, such as the leadership pipeline (Charan *et al.*, 2011) and Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1994), were shared on a high level with the TMs. This helped to create the context for the session and the intervention. It was made explicit in the contracting that the coaching context is predefined: how to become more effective in your new role. This set a hard boundary, which delineated the coaching as 'transition' coaching. It was also made clear to the TMs that one of the aims of the coaching was to help them transform on a deep level in order to be more successful in their new roles.

Instead of coaching goals, current challenges were identified that TMs perceived to be hindering their ability to be successful in the new role. It was hoped that the identification of their main challenges could help TMs understand what they could change (transform) to overcome these challenges as the process progressed. The challenges per TM and their predominant categorisations into one of cognitive, behavioural, interpersonal, psychological and systemic challenges (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Freedman, 2011; Goleman, 1996) are illustrated in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2: Challenges faced by TMs**

<b>Transitioning manager</b>	<b>Current challenges (category)</b>
TM1	Create a new brand strategy (cognitive) Get people to buy into this new strategy (interpersonal) How to influence people (interpersonal) Time management (behavioural)
TM2	How do I shift away from operating at my previous level? (behavioural) How can I be more assertive? (behavioural) How do I balance business needs with the need to optimise the technical environment? (cognitive)
TM3	Effective time management (behavioural) Have I stepped up to the plate in my new role in terms of performance? (behavioural) Am I operating at a strategic level? (cognitive) How do I increase my level of EQ? (psychological)
TM4	How do I let go of my previous responsibilities and take on the new ones? (behavioural) How do I become a credible member of the executive team? (interpersonal) How do I turn strategy into execution? (systemic)
TM5	How do I most effectively appoint new people into the team? (systemic) How do I stay informed about what is happening in the organisation? (interpersonal) Time management (behavioural)
TM6	How do I manage the company in order to generate a profit? (systemic) How do I put the best people in the most appropriate position? (systemic)

Source: Author's own compilation

In total, 19 challenges were identified by TMs, and the most prevalent challenge appeared to be in the behavioural category with seven occurrences.

Significant time was spent to understand both the personal and work context of the TMs. This was accomplished by asking TMs to tell their life story (a technique alluded to by one of the coaches during the foundation phase) and to draw a network diagram of their work context that shows their relationships with peers, subordinates, superiors and clients (internal and external). This assisted both the TMs and me to have a clear picture of the context within which the new role is positioned.

The contracting included all of the above as well as the agreement of confidentiality. It was clearly indicated in the foundation phase that confidentiality, whereby the content of the coaching would not be revealed to anyone, including the organisation, was an important prerequisite for a successful transition coaching intervention.

### 5.3.3 Evaluate

The plan for the first macrocycle was to establish the coaching context and contract and to identify challenges faced by the TMs in their new role. In evaluating the outcomes of macrocycle one, the following emerged.

In terms of context setting, the explicit use of the instrumental theory assisted in setting boundaries for the intervention (to focus on career transitions and transformative learning). Within these outer boundaries, the personal and organisational contexts could be explored.

The challenges faced by the TMs provided a sharper focus on the specific needs they have in the new role. The contracting, which included the confidentiality agreement, concluded the agreement of what the AR process would entail. At the end of the first macrocycle, a base was laid for further exploration into the transformative learning aspects of the intervention.

### 5.3.4 Reflect

After the first coaching session of this first macrocycle, I was slightly apprehensive:

*I am concerned that I am just doing my normal coaching! How is what I do now different? How am I actually using the TTC framework? I am explaining transformative learning and transition theory to the client and I am trying to be aware of the different transformative learning perspectives, but it seems that I am just doing my normal coaching ... (Researcher's diary)*

On reflection, I realised that I might be rushing the process. By going back to the focal theory that guided this AR process, I realised that most coaching interventions start with a contracting, rapport building and goal-setting session. This stage was in line with Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework and the draft TTC framework from the foundation phase. What I was doing differently was that I explicitly included theory (transformative learning theory and career transition theory) in the process by explaining the essence to the TMs. This stage was important: to set the coaching boundaries and contexts. As this macrocycle progressed, I became more comfortable with this approach. The feedback from the TMs also confirmed that the first macrocycle was delivering results in terms of the specific focus on transition coaching and resulting goal setting:

*The session today helped me realise that I create obstacles for my own success. The new role is different but not significantly so, and all the tasks that I need to achieve I have done before and successfully so. Just writing*

*down/speaking about what I thought was standing in the way of me completing tasks helped me to realise that the issues were not significant enough to be holding me back. (TM1)*

*As it was our initial session, I am not sure I can pinpoint anything yet, but I can add that the session helped me to identify 3 areas which I'd like to focus on in order to be more successful. So just the fact that I have 3 things down on paper is already a good start. (TM2)*

*The coach helped with some background to the process and helped me to narrow the context of the discussion to my new role. (TM4)*

On reflecting at the end of the first macrocycle, I was comfortable that the focal theories were adhered to by the approach and the outcomes of the individual coaching sessions of this cycle. The use of instrumental theories helped narrow the context of the coaching to transformative learning and transition coaching, in line with the objectives of the TTC framework. It still was not clear to me how actual transformative learning would be facilitated, and that was the question on entering the second macrocycle.

### **5.3.5 Influence on TTC framework**

This macrocycle highlighted the importance of setting the context for coaching to include explicitly career transitions and transformative learning, agreeing on a contract and identifying current challenges faced in the new role. While this was not new in coaching, the focus of these three steps was on incorporating the need for transformative learning and taking into account the context of career transitions. The TTC framework v0.3 after the end of macrocycle 1, is illustrated below in Figure 5.2. The dashed boxes indicate the aspects of the evolving TTC framework that emerged from this macrocycle (context, contract and challenges).

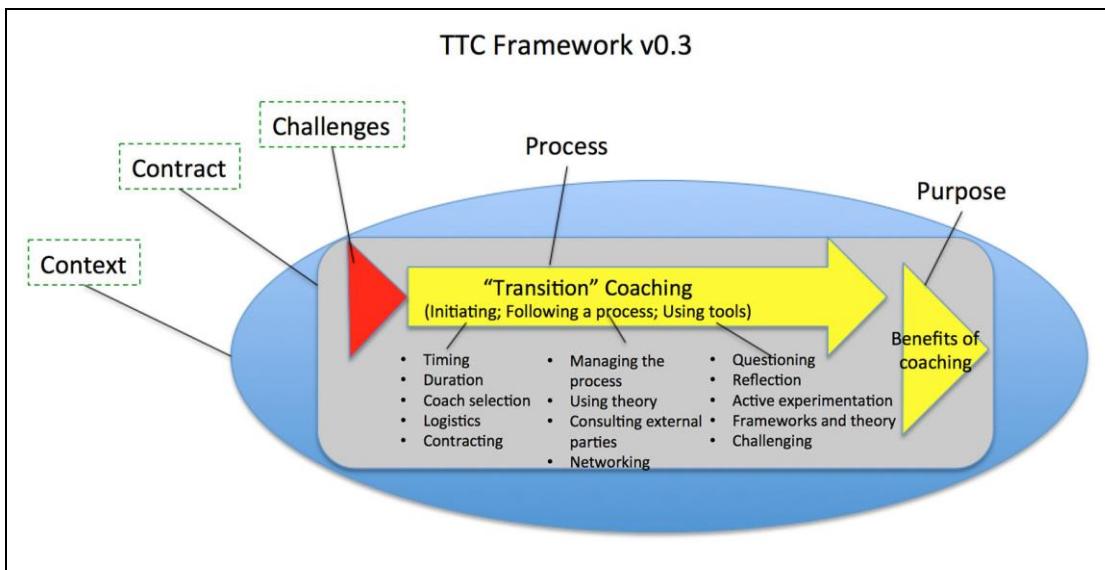


Figure 5.2: TTC Framework v0.3 after AR macrocycle 1

Source: Author's own compilation

## 5.4 MACROCYCLE 2

On entering the second macrocycle, the context for the intervention was established and the TMs had identified the most pressing challenges faced in their new roles. The focal theories suggested engaging in an actual *process* of change (second aspect of Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework) by reflecting on the current reality (Kolb's [2014] second step). To inform these focal theories, the relevant instrumental theories were used to focus the process of enquiry.

### 5.4.1 Plan

In planning this macrocycle, I wanted to explore ways in which the process of reflection (as suggested by the focal theories) could introduce the notion of transformative learning. I decided to use one of the instrumental theories, Mezirow's eight perspectives (Kitchenham, 2008), as reflective tool in this cycle. I planned to ask TMs questions that would help them understand their current perspectives and identify the perspectives that may be preventing them from overcoming the challenges they identified in the first macrocycle.

The planning involved creating an initial list of perspective awareness questions (see Table 5.3 below) that I intended using in the coaching sessions in this macrocycle.

**Table 5.3: List of coaching questions to determine current Mezirow perspectives**

<b>Transformative learning perspective</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>How to determine it relative to new role</b>
Sociolinguistic	Language and how it is used in social settings. Social norms, cultural expectations, the way language reflects these norms and expectations	<p>Are you aware of the language you use on a day-to-day basis in your new role? In what way?</p> <p>How would you describe the language you use in your new role?</p> <p>How is the language you use different to the language used by other people in the organisation?</p> <p>Should you use language in a different way? How?</p> <p>Is there someone in the organisation who sets a good example of how language should be used? How do they use language?</p> <p>Are you aware of how often you ask questions versus how often you state opinions? How optimal is this in your new role?</p> <p>Are you aware of the mediums of communication you use (e.g. email, in person, group discussions, phone, SMS, WhatsApp)? How appropriate is this in your new role, or should you use more or less of a certain medium of communication?</p> <p>How would you describe the culture of the organisation?</p> <p>How do you resonate with the culture of the organisation?</p>
Moral-ethical	Involving conscience, moral norms and values	<p>What are your values?</p> <p>What are the values of the company?</p> <p>What is expected of you in the new role from a values perspective?</p> <p>To what extent are there clashes between your values and those of the company?</p> <p>Are there any clashes between your values and those of some of your colleagues? Explain.</p> <p>Is there a need for you to soften your stance on some of your values (not change them) in order to be more effective in your new role?</p>

**Table 5.3: List of coaching questions to determine current Mezirow perspectives (continued)**

Transformative learning perspective	Definitions	How to determine it relative to new role
Epistemic	Knowledge and how we acquire knowledge	<p>What knowledge do you require in the new role?</p> <p>How do you go about acquiring this knowledge?</p> <p>Do you have to acquire knowledge from sources you did not consult in the past to be more effective in your new role? Please elaborate.</p> <p>Are you engaging with the right people to obtain the knowledge you need in the new role? Explain.</p>
Philosophical	World view, political view, religious doctrine	<p>What is your world view (e.g. money, success, capitalism, religion, equality, religion)?</p> <p>How might your world view be preventing you from being more effective in your new role?</p>
Psychological	Self-concept, inhibitions, anxieties and fear, emotional response patterns, how people view themselves	<p>How would you describe yourself?</p> <p>Do you have any fear or anxieties about the new role? Please elaborate.</p> <p>Have you had any unusual emotional responses since being in the new role? Please explain.</p> <p>What role(s) do you take on in a group at work? Is this the most appropriate role, given your new position?</p> <p>How empathetic (really understanding other people's feelings) are you towards others in your new role? Is this appropriate in your new role? Please explain.</p>
Health	View on approach to health, interpreting health problems	<p>What is your perspective on your health?</p> <p>To what extent has the new role influenced your health?</p> <p>Are you doing enough to stay healthy given the demands of your new role? What else could you do?</p>

**Table 5.3: List of coaching questions to determine current Mezirow perspectives (continued)**

Transformative learning perspective	Definitions	How to determine it relative to new role
Political	Informal, unofficial, and sometimes behind-the-scenes efforts to sell ideas, influence an organisation, increase power, or achieve other targeted objectives	<p>What is your view on politics and influencing people in your new role?</p> <p>In which way do you participate in politics (influencing people and decisions) in your new role?</p> <p>How does your view of authority and hierarchy influence your ability to influence people and decisions?</p> <p>Think of someone who is a master at playing the political game (influencing people and decisions). To what extent are you operating at their level?</p> <p>Do you currently have the right network of people, given your new role? Who else should be included?</p> <p>How do you go about building networks of people? Is this approach optimal, given your new role?</p>
Aesthetic	Taste, attitude, standards, judgments about beauty and the insight and authenticity of aesthetic expressions, such as the sublime, the ugly, the tragic, the humorous, the drab	<p>Are you aware of your appearance?</p> <p>Do you 'look' your new role or do you still 'look' your old role? What would you change?</p> <p>How does your appearance compare to those of your peers?</p> <p>What do your subordinates think of your appearance?</p>

Source: Author's own compilation

#### 5.4.2 Act

The process I followed in this macrocycle was to explain briefly to each TM what each of the transformative learning perspectives meant, and then to ask questions relating to the perspective as per the question sheet. I recorded the responses, and we then reflected on what the actual perspective was they held for each category. The perspective was recorded as a short narrative. As an example, TM2's political perspective was recorded as: "It is wrong to play the political game. Working hard is sufficient to help me succeed." In this manner, a number of perspectives per category and per TM were recorded.

The next step was to ask the TMs to reflect on their perspectives in relation to the challenges they faced in their new role as identified in the first macrocycle. They were asked to identify the perspectives they thought needed to change for them to

overcome these challenges. We did not attempt to resolve anything in this session, but merely tried to expose the problematic perspectives. Following this process led to a list of potentially problematic perspectives held by each TM.

During the fourth coaching session (with TM4) in this macrocycle, I tried something different. I first asked the TM to tell me what he thought he needed to change to be effective in the new role before I used the perspective questions. The result was interesting:

*I was sceptical of the framework of perspectives – it seemed very weighty – but the approach of letting me free-wheel for a while and then using the framework to cover off specific questions was helpful. TM4*

Using the perspective question sheet worked well for five of the six TMs, but TM6 was unable to articulate his perspectives clearly and he was unable to identify any perspectives that needed change. I noted in my reflective journal:

*This was VERY frustrating. We did not record a single aspect that needs change. I suspect it is the inability of the coachee to reflect. (Researcher's diary)*

The list of perspective questions evolved with each new coaching session per TM in this macrocycle as I thought of more questions at that moment and as TMs suggested questions of their own as per my invitation. As an example, I had no idea how an aesthetic perspective was relevant in the corporate world for a TM, until TM2 suggested that perhaps it is linked to a person's physical appearance, such as dress code and hairstyle. He realised that, as a senior IT manager, he was still dressing rather informally like he used to as a technical specialist and that perhaps this was inappropriate in his new senior role. This immediately struck a chord and I included a set of questions on the topic to use in further sessions.

#### **5.4.3 Evaluate**

The plan for the second macrocycle was to explore whether it would be useful for TMs to understand what their current perspectives were and how this may influence their level of success in their new roles. The results at the end of the second macrocycle were affirmative. All of the TMs (except TM6) identified their current perspectives within the eight Mezirow perspective categories and indicated which perspectives were potentially problematic given the challenges they faced in their new roles. The list of perspective questions proved useful and the TMs were able to

add their own questions to the list. The feedback from TM2 illustrates the usefulness of the structured questions:

*The tool the coach used enabled me to think about various aspects of my life, both work and personal. The coach would probe a bit and in two instances he also challenged my way of thinking which led to some of the hidden barriers surfacing. I definitely wouldn't have surfaced those barriers on my own and they would have remained 'hidden' for a very long time. I would also have focused on the wrong barriers. TM2*

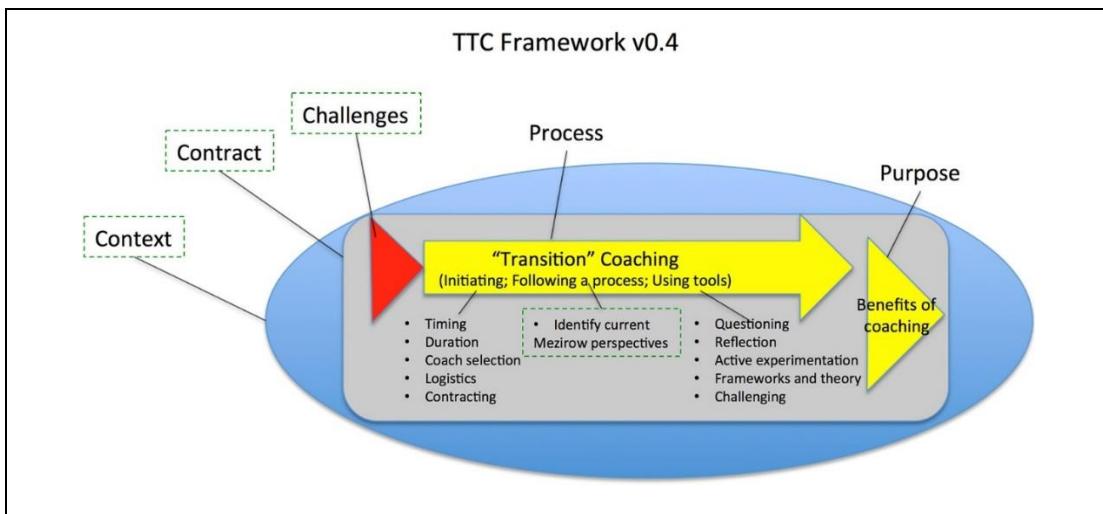
This quote confirmed that the structured perspective questionnaire helped to unearth deeper reflection. It also incidentally confirmed that two of the coaching tools identified in the foundation phase (using framework and theory and challenging assumptions) are useful during transformative transition coaching.

#### **5.4.4 Reflect**

The unsuccessful attempts with TM6 were at the top of my mind during the reflection process after this cycle. It is not uncommon for coaching sessions and even entire interventions not to yield acceptable results. Perhaps this was just such a case, but what could I learn from this experience and how could this influence the TTC framework? I did not arrive at a conclusive answer at this stage, but in retrospect and with the entire outcome known, I now understand that the challenges I experienced with TM6 had a significantly positive influence on the evolution of the TTC framework, which I realised after macrocycle four.

#### **5.4.5 Influence on TTC framework**

This macrocycle did not significantly change the TTC framework, but suggested that there was a very necessary step in the *coaching process*, guided by the instrumental theory (Mezirow's [1994] eight perspectives), which needed to be included. This step is to create awareness in the TMs of the current perspectives they hold and how these influence their ability to be successful in the new role. This new process step is indicated in Figure 5.3 below as "Identify current Mezirow perspectives".



**Figure 5.3: TTC framework v0.4 after macrocycle 2**

Source: Author's own compilation

## 5.5 MACROCYCLE 3

At the end of the second macrocycle, all but one (TM6) of the TMs had identified a number of perspectives they held according to the Mezirow (1994) categories and, through reflection identified which of these perspectives were potentially problematic given the challenges they faced in their new role. The focal theories suggested continuing with the coaching *process* (the second aspect of Lane and Corrie's [2007] formulation framework) by *conceptualising* an action plan and then engaging in active experimentation in order to *learn* (Kolb's third and fourth steps). As in the previous macrocycle, the instrumental theories would be used to ensure the focus of both the coaching and the AR process remained in line with the main research objective, which was to facilitate transformative learning curing career transitions.

### 5.5.1 Plan

In planning for the third macrocycle, I wanted to introduce particular steps into the coaching process to help transform the potentially problematic perspectives identified in the previous macrocycle. Mezirow (2008) suggests that reflecting critically on the assumptions that support perspectives is needed in order to transform these perspectives and to allow for the interpretation of life in a different, more helpful way (Kitchenham, 2008). The revision of perspectives, typically initiated by a disorienting dilemma, such as a career transition, is usually followed by a series of learning strategies involving critical reflection, exploration of different roles and options, and negotiation and renegotiation of relationships (Taylor, 1997). Transformative learning occurs through "identifying problematic ideas, values, beliefs and feelings, critically

examining the assumptions upon which they are based, testing their justification through rational discourse and making decisions predicated upon the resulting consensus" (Mezirow, 1995:58).

As is evident from the above, the instrumental theory (of Mezirow, 2008) suggests that critical reflection is needed on potentially problematic perspectives. The instrumental theory (of Kolb, 2014) suggests that these reflections should be turned into action to create learning. The plan for this macrocycle was therefore to guide the TMs through a process of deep reflection and to identify actions they could take to address the problematic perspectives.

Taking into consideration that the focal theory of Kolb (2014) suggests 'action' as a next step, I reviewed the tools and techniques derived in the foundation phase (see section 4.5) for an indication of which coaching techniques may be useful to help change perspectives.

### 5.5.2 Act

In the first coaching session of this macrocycle, TM1 and I worked on identifying an experiment (a new behaviour or way of thinking) for each of her problematic perspectives. We soon realised that it would take far too long to work on all the perspectives, and TM1 remarked that not all of them have an equally significant influence on her new position. In that session, we decided to focus on the most problematic perspective, and we proceeded to design an experiment around changing this perspective between this session and the next one.

In the second coaching session in this macrocycle, I proceeded directly to ask TM2 to identify his most problematic perspective so that we could design a change experiment. He had difficulty in selecting the most problematic perspective. I decided to apply Mezirow's three levels of reflection (see 2.6.1) in an attempt to deepen his understanding. The first level of reflection (content) asks the question, "What are you assuming?" The second level of reflection (process) deepens the enquiry by asking, "How did you come to hold this assumption?" while the third level of reflection (premise) engages on a meta-level by asking, "Why does this assumption matter?" Content and process reflection may lead to the transformation of meaning *schemes*, whereas premise reflection may lead to the more profound transformation of meaning *perspectives* (Mezirow, 1995). This structured deepening of the reflective process seemed to assist TM2 to get to the root of his problematic perspectives and assisted in elevating the most important problematic perspective.

On reflecting after this coaching session with TM2, I decided to follow this process with the rest of the TMs in this macrocycle:

- Review current challenges identified in macrocycle 1;
- Review all perspective identified as problematic in the macrocycle 2;
- Reflect on the problematic perspectives using mezirow's three levels of reflection (instrumental theory);
- Ask the tm to rate the problematic perspectives in order of significance; and
- Agree on an active experiment to try and address the problematic perspective.

I used this approach with the other four TMs, and all were able to identify one perspective they considered the most problematic given their current career challenges.

### 5.5.3 Evaluate

At the end of this macrocycle and by analysing my field notes and considering the feedback from the TMs, the process below emerged.

Given the problematic perspective you want to change –

- Tell me more about this perspective you hold by reflecting on the three levels (content, process, premise).
- What would happen if you do not change this perspective?
- What are the advantages of changing this perspective?
- What is your action plan?
  - Conceptually: what do you want to do in principle to change this perspective?
  - Practically: what are your next practical steps to change this perspective in the next few weeks?

This process worked well as reflected on by TM2 (note that TM refers to 'goals' instead of 'perspective changes'):

*I was able to rank/prioritise the goals and the coach kept probing and allowed me to think about it, with the end result that I had a list of four goals, ranked in order of importance. Through the questions and time to think, I was also able to link two or three goals together, or actually to identify the interdependence between them, e.g. by playing the political game better (G1), I would be forced to interact with people more and give my opinion (G2), and by networking, I would have to re-assess my dress style (G3). TM2*

Table 5.4 below provides a summary of the TMs' most problematic perspectives and the experiments they designed to address them.

**Table 5.4: Most problematic perspectives, three-level reflection and experiments to address them**

Transitioning Manager	Old perspective	Reflection			New perspective	Actively experiment to change old perspectives
		Content reflection (What was assumed?)	Process reflection (How did you come to hold this assumption?)	Premise reflection (Why does this assumption matter?)		
TM1	<p><b>Psychological</b></p> <p>It is important for me to achieve success. I am a perfectionist. I don't like criticism and conflict. As a result, I avoid situations or procrastinate when I'm faced with scenarios where I think I am likely to fail.</p>	I have to be an expert in something before I act or share my thoughts with the world.	The need to achieve success and fear of failure.	In this senior position, I cannot know everything. I need to trust other people and manage them	I don't have to only rely on myself to succeed. I don't have to know everything before I act; I can rely on other people.	<p>Conceptually:</p> <p>Form alliances with people who have the knowledge I don't have.</p> <p>Practically:</p> <p>Have one-on-one meetings with everyone in my team to understand their skill set.</p> <p>Create a trusted relationship with the one team member who is very knowledgeable.</p>
TM2	<p><b>Politics</b></p> <p>It is wrong to play the political game. Working hard is sufficient to help me succeed.</p>	I don't need to play the political game at work since all my previous promotions 'came to me'.	As a child, I was always told to mind my place.	I've observed that at senior levels, people manoeuvre and influence to get what they want. If I don't, then I'll get left behind, become frustrated and maybe quit my job	I am naive to think that politics are bad. Politics can expose me to influential people from whom I can learn, whom I can influence and as a result grow my career.	<p>Conceptually:</p> <p>Connect with people who are active 'politicians'.</p> <p>Be careful not to connect with the 'wrong' politicians.</p> <p>Read books on the topic of corporate politics.</p> <p>Practically:</p> <p>Talk to my manager about incorporating another team into my team.</p> <p>Ask my mentor to introduce me to his or her network.</p> <p>Introduce myself to two influential business heads.</p> <p>Draw up a list of people to connect with</p>

**Table 5.4: Most problematic perspectives, three-level reflection and experiments to address them (continued)**

Transitioning Manager	Old perspective	Reflection			New perspective	Actively experiment to change old perspectives
		Content reflection (What was assumed?)	Process reflection (How did you come to hold this assumption?)	Premise reflection (Why does this assumption matter?)		
TM3	<b>Psychological</b> If people are 'slow', I will provide them with the correct answer. I have a low EQ. I don't have much empathy with people. I give opinions rather than listen to people.	I am an expert and expected to give an expert opinion. Why should I care about others' opinions?	My training as a lawyer engrained this belief in me.	In my new senior role, I need to hold the big picture view. The details are not that important, but relationships are.	By being empathetic and listening to people I obtain their buy-in and build stronger relationships. I may also learn from other people.	Conceptually: Be more aware of how much I empathise, listen and give my opinion.  Practically: Listen more in meetings that I chair. Practice empathy and listening specifically with troublesome GM [general manager] that reports to me.
TM4	<b>Sociolinguistic</b> I need to be polite and likeable. I must avoid conflict and confrontation.	I need to please everyone, keep the peace and stay out of trouble.	As a Jehovah's Witness, I was picked on at school. I therefore try not to confront people or cause confrontations.	In my new role and given the culture of the organisation (male, A-type) I need to be more assertive at times else I won't be respected and accepted by the leadership team.	It is completely acceptable to come across with strong conviction and be confrontational at times.	Conceptually: Become aware of specific triggers and situations where I feel I need to be empathetic but should not be.  Practically: Be firmer with one of the suppliers. Be stricter with one of my subordinates. Take tougher stance in Exco meetings when technology decisions are questioned.

**Table 5.4: Most problematic perspectives, three-level reflection and experiments to address them (continued)**

Transitioning Manager	Old perspective	Reflection			New perspective	Actively experiment to change old perspectives
		Content reflection (What was assumed?)	Process reflection (How did you come to hold this assumption?)	Premise reflection (Why does this assumption matter?)		
TM5	<b>Psychological</b> I need to rescue people who are in distress.	I have to help people at work who seem to be in emotional distress.	(not clear)	Being overly emotionally involved at work detracts from my focus at work. The result is sub-standard performance.	I need to distance myself emotionally from people in a work environment.	Conceptually: Question situation more critically before I decide to become emotionally involved.  Practically: Ask my line manager not to use me as an emotional sound-board.
TM6	<b>Psychological</b> I need to be confident and self-assured to be successful.	(Not clear)	(Not clear)	As the MD, I need to be respected by people. By being arrogant, they may not respect me.	I need to be less arrogant and more tactful in certain situations.	None identified.  While TM6 apparently understood cognitively that there were perspectives he needed to change, he was not ready to engage in active experimentation to change these perspectives.

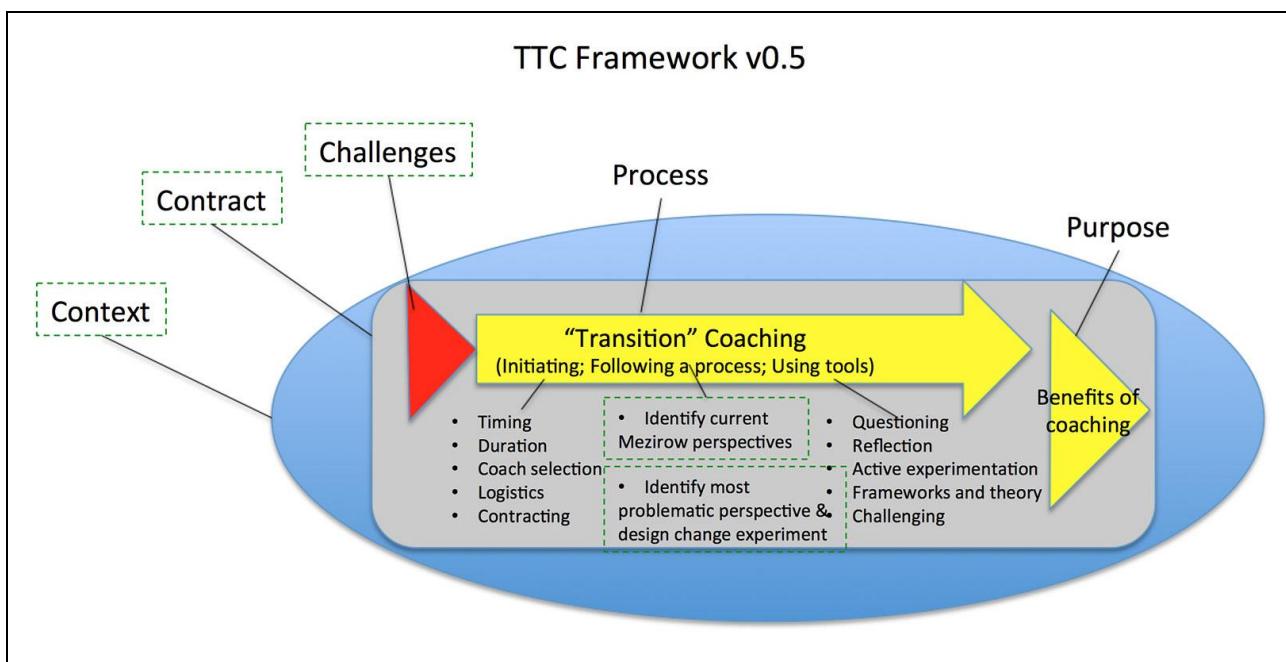
Source: Author's own compilation

### 5.5.4 Reflection

TM6 presented another challenge during this cycle. Since we did not identify any perspectives that he thought he needed to change, I repeated the previous coaching session (macrocycle 2) with him during this third macrocycle, but again he could not identify a single perspective he wanted to change, even though he expressed the desire and need to improve in some way or another. The combination of unease and expectation I had after macrocycle 2 grew stronger: in which way was TM6 informing the TTC framework?

### 5.5.5 Influence on TTC framework

Guided by the instrumental theory (Mezirow's [1994] perspectives) and focal theory (Kolb's [2014] active experimentation step), this macrocycle added a definite step aimed at facilitating transformative learning. The new process step 'Identify most problematic perspective and design change experiment' was added to the evolving TTC framework as illustrated in Figure 5.4 below.



**Figure 5.4: TTC framework v0.5 after macrocycle 3**

Source: Author's own compilation

## 5.6 MACROCYCLE 4

From a focal theory perspective, the start of macrocycle 4 signalled the continuation of the *process* step in Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework and the completion of one cycle of Kolb's (2014) experiential learning cycle. In macrocycle 3, some of the TMs agreed to undertake actions aimed at addressing their most problematic perspectives. This implied that the outcome of these actions needed to be reviewed in macrocycle 4.

### 5.6.1 Plan

The plan for this macrocycle was to guide the TMs to reflect on the outcome of their action experiments and to gauge the level of transformative learning they experienced as a result of the actions. It was anticipated that instrumental theories would be used once more to explain and examine the phenomena of transformative learning. A number of steps in Mezirow's ten phases of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978) as summarised in Table 2.8 refer to change through action:

- Step 5 – exploration of options for new roles, relationships and action;
- Step 6 – planning of a course of action; and
- Step 8 – provisional trying of new roles.

Ultimately, though, for transformative learning to occur, these changes needed to be reintegrated into the life of the learner (step 10). This raised the question of how to assess the level of transformative learning. A useful instrumental theory to address this question emerged in the form of Hoggan's criteria for transformative learning (Hoggan, 2016). As discussed in section 2.6.2, Hoggan presents three criteria that must be met for learning to be classified as transformative:

- Depth – evidence of deep influence;
- Breadth – evidence of influence on multiple levels; and
- Relative stability – evidence that change is not temporary.

The main aim for this macrocycle was therefore to assess the level of transformative learning as a result of the change experiment by applying Hoggan's (2016) criteria and then to decide on a further course of action.

### 5.6.2 Act

The coaching in this macrocycle revolved around reflection on the action experiments that the TMs executed between this and the last macrocycle. The results varied as is illustrated by three examples.

TM2 (attempting to change his view that playing the political game was 'wrong') was not able to perform all the actions agreed on in the last macrocycle due to time constraints. His new awareness of wanting to be politically active in the corporate world did however lead him to identify a potentially lucrative opportunity. A corporate restructuring was under way, and he identified an opportunity to influence the situation by sharing his views on the new structure with the decision-makers. TM2 felt he could significantly strengthen his role and his department within the organisation. He proceeded to set up meetings with the important stakeholders even though it was not part of his original change experiment. He indicated that he surprised himself both by taking these actions and by the positive results it yielded. The rest of the session with TM2 was spent reflecting on the effect that this experiment had on his problematic perspective and how a new

perspective was emerging. I applied Hoggan's (2016) criteria to TM2's situation to assess the level of transformative learning he had experienced at that point.

- i) Depth: Yes, the effect of changing his political perspective would have a significant effect on his career and life. In his words, if he did not change this perspective he would "completely miss the bus".
- ii) Breadth: When probed as to whether there was evidence of an effect on multiple life contexts, he responded that since his new awareness, he started interacting differently with his 19-year-old son. His son was unsure of which life direction to take after completing high school. TM2 had tried to suggest options overtly, but his son met this with resistance. By applying his new perspective on subtle influencing, he convinced his son through indirect hints and suggestions as opposed to direct instruction, to sign up for a course as a computer technician. There were therefore initial signs of his new perspective on politics influencing and playing out in multiple areas of his life.
- iii) Relative stability: At this point, it was not possible to say whether the changes were only temporary. We agreed to schedule the next coaching session for one month later to assess the relative stability of the change.

The session with TM2 concluded by designing more advanced action experiments to imbed his new perspective further.

TM4 reported progress as well, but when applying Hoggan's (2016) criteria, he only passed the 'depth' criteria. While he agreed that changing his old sociolinguistic perspective (to be polite and likeable always and to avoid conflict) was crucial to his success in his new role, he still felt very uncomfortable when he executed his action experiments that involved actively engaging in conflict. There was also no evidence of his new sociolinguistic perspective in other aspects of his life. He agreed on in this session to commit to a few more action experiments at work and at home to imbed the new perspective.

TM1 presented an interesting case. She reported that she successfully executed her action experiments by being more flexible in her approach to the marketing strategy, but on further reflection, she realised that the most problematic perspective she identified in the previous macrocycle may in fact not be that important. We proceeded to review her list of challenges and perspectives identified in the previous cycles. She was able to identify a new most problematic perspective, that of always wanting to be an expert in something before acting or sharing her insights. After applying Mezirow's three levels of reflection, she designed a new action experiment to address this problematic perspective.

The coaching sessions with the other TMs followed a similar pattern:

- Reflect on the outcome of the action experiments;

- Assess to what level transformative learning has occurred by applying hoggan's (2016) criteria; and
- Design new action experiments to embed the changing perspective further or to revisit the insights from previous cycles to identify a new most problematic perspective.

### 5.6.3 Evaluate

In evaluating the outcome of this macrocycle, a crucial insight emerged as captured in my reflective journal:

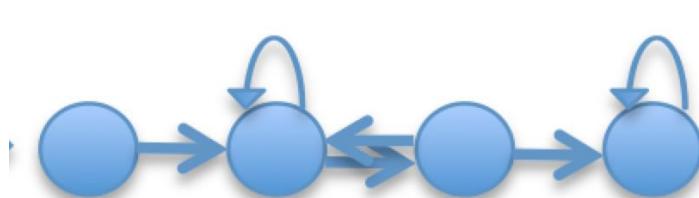
*BIG INSIGHT: It should be possible to 'repeat' certain sessions. E.g. in this 4<sup>th</sup> session of TM1 it was apparent that we have not identified a real deep perspective that needed changing. She was not ready to go there. So we in effect repeated the 3<sup>rd</sup> session and allowed her to uncover what truly is keeping her back. (Researcher's diary)*

This insight led the way for me to decouple coaching sessions from coaching stages. If coaching stages could be repeated, it implied a one-to-many relationship between coaching session and a TTC stage. In other words, a TM could stay in a particular stage for a number of coaching sessions. He or she could even revisit previous stages or cover more than one stage in a session. This insight also offered a reprieve for my concern about TM6: perhaps he needed more coaching sessions than the others and should repeat a number of the stages numerous times in order to arrive at a transformed state (if at all).

After four macrocycles, I could identify the following four TTC stages:

- Define context and identify challenges;
- Analyse current perspectives;
- Identify most problematic perspective, conceptualise new desired perspective, and design experiment to change perspective; and
- Reflect on progress, assess level of perspective transformation, and design new experiments to deepen perspective transformation.

The existence of multiple stages and the transition between stages can be represented as in Figure 5.5 below.



**Figure 5.5: TTC stages and transitions**

Source: Author's own compilation

In Figure 5.5, each circle represents a TTC stage and the arrows indicate transitions between stages.

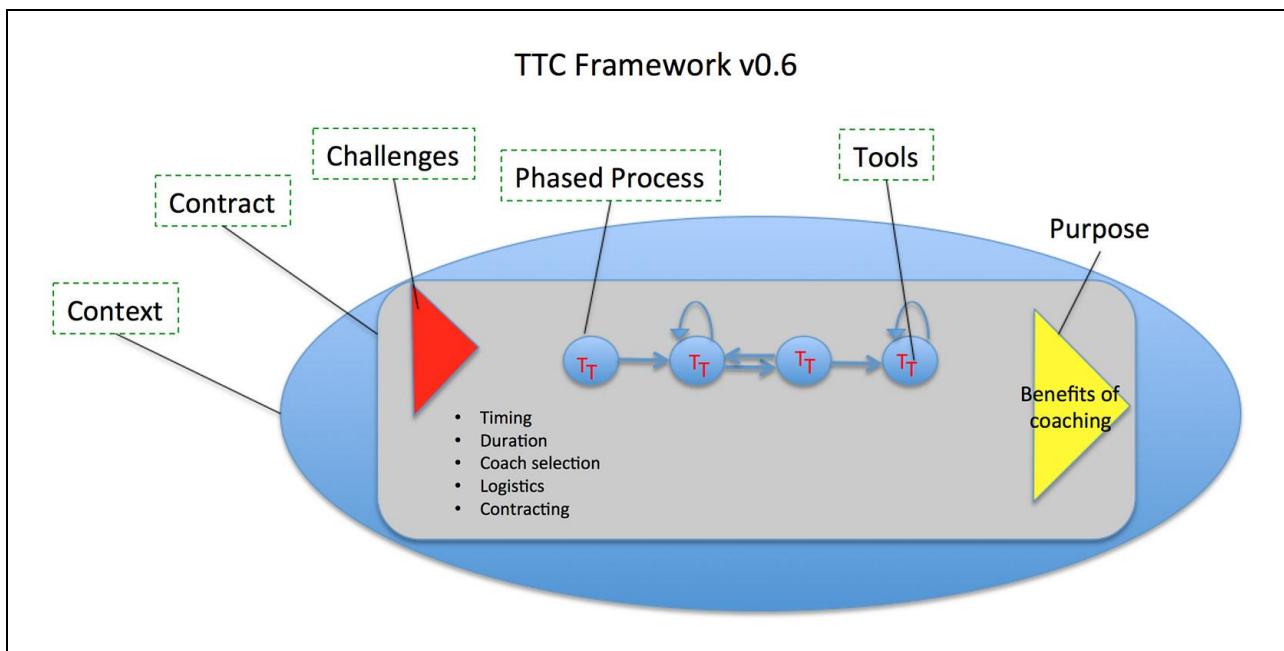
At this point, it was not clear how many more stages would be uncovered, but the awareness of the existence of TTC stages alerted me to be on the lookout for more and to be sensitive to the stages within which TMs found themselves as well as the possibility of TMs needing to revisit previous stages.

#### **5.6.4 Reflect**

The realisation of the existence of the TTC stages came as a great relief. Up to this point, I was concerned about the lack of structure in the TTC process. It seemed open-ended. The de-coupling of the coaching sessions and the TTC stages elevated the TTC process to a conceptual level, thereby potentially expanding the context of application of the framework. TTC stages also provided answers to questions relating to the apparent lack of progress from TM6. Furthermore, TTC stages were aligned with one of the focal theories (Kolb) that sets out an iterative approach of experiential learning rather than a linear, fixed-effort process. I was still concerned about how many stages there would be as this may potentially affect the duration of the AR process. I set out to answer this question in the fifth macrocycle.

#### **5.6.5 Influence on TTC framework**

From the foundation phase, it was clear that there was some sort of process to be followed when conducting transition coaching. Some of the steps in this process became apparent in macrocycles 2 and 3. The emergence of the concept ‘stages’ in this macrocycle implied that the four known stages could be represented as distinct steps in the process, with the possibility of transitioning between the stages. Now that the process was represented by distinct stages, it made sense from a notational perspective to indicate that coaching tools and techniques, such as the five derived during the foundation phase, should be used during the entire process. This insight led me to include the coaching tools and techniques in each stage. The TTC framework version 0.6 captures these changes as illustrated in Figure 5.6 below.



**Figure 5.6: TTC framework v0.6 after macrocycle 4**

Source: Author's own compilation

## 5.7 MACROCYCLE 5

At the start of macrocycle 5, most of the TMs had completed at least one Kolb (2014) experiential learning cycle (focal theory) and some showed evidence of perspective transformation. The notion of TTC stages had been uncovered, and since the AR exit criteria (to create a coaching framework that facilitates transformative learning) had not been met yet, there was the possibility that more TTC stages existed. The fifth macrocycle started against this backdrop.

### 5.7.1 Plan

The plan for this cycle was to attempt to uncover more TTC stages. The plan was also to use the relevant instrumental theories to continue the facilitation of the transformative learning process and to gauge the level of transformative learning achieved by the TMs.

The four TTC stages that were uncovered in the previous macrocycle allowed me to map the progress of each of the TMs against the four phases. During the coaching, I tried to be aware of the needs of the TMs, given the stage they were in. Should they remain in their current stage, move back to a previous one, or move to a new stage? If they were already in stage four and had to move on, what would this new stage be?

### 5.7.2 Act

Each session started with a reflection on the outcome of the action experiment agreed on in the previous session. During these reflections, it became apparent in which TTC stage each TM was. TM1, whom I judged to be in stage 4 (Reflect on progress, Assess level of perspective transformation, Design new experiments to deepen perspective transformation) reported only

moderate success on the outcome of her new experiment. When we applied Hoggan's (2016) criteria, we agreed that she still did not demonstrate an adequate level of transformative learning. She agreed to continue her experimenting. This implied that she was in effect repeating stage four.

TM2, whom I also judged to be in stage four, reported significant progress. His meeting with the decision-makers went well and it appeared that his newfound ability to influence was bearing fruit. When we applied Hoggan's (2016) criteria, he passed all three. He was confident that he had shifted his problematic perspective. It dawned on me that this could perhaps be the start of a new phase, a phase where the necessary steps are taken to cement a successful perspective transformation. I guided him to reflect on a longer-term strategy to ensure the new perspective remained transformed. This included setting stretch targets and reiterating the benefits of the new perspective. We agreed to meet again in two months' time to assess the continued progress and relative stability of the perspective change.

TM3, also in stage four, did not pass Hoggan's (2016) criteria mainly because he reflected that he still buckled under pressure and reverted back to his old perspective on needing to provide answers instead of listening to people. Applying the TTC stage concept, I realised that he needed to repeat stage four. We spent the rest of the session reflecting on the possible obstacles preventing him from using his new perspective and designed new action experiments to perform.

TM4 also reported progress, but felt unsure whether the change in perspective would be permanent. He expressed the need to continue with the experimentation. Like TM3, he therefore remained in stage four, and we proceeded to reflect and design more action experiments.

TM5 came as a surprise. When I applied the TTC stage concept to her progress, I judged her to have repeated a number of stages, some within a single coaching session. During this session, however, she demonstrated a noteworthy shift in embracing her new perspective (distancing herself emotionally from the work environment). Reflecting on the outcome of the active experiments from the last session, she reported success. She was able to focus on her work and declined an invitation from the superior who wanted to complain about the turmoil in the organisation. She described herself as not being a 'rescuer' anymore and professed to be far less emotionally involved. On a personal front, she had also become less involved in school activities except where her own children were involved, and she changed certain house rules to make her life more bearable. She was determined that she would not be abused anymore and, in fact, she labelled herself (much to my surprise) as being "un-f\*\*k with-able"! This was a drastic turnaround (and choice of words) for someone who held a strong psychological perspective of having to rescue people. She passed all three of Hoggan's (2016) criteria, and we agreed to meet again in two months' time to assess permanence of the change.

Applying the TTC stage concept to TM6 revealed that he was at best still in stage three. We attempted to identify possible problematic perspectives, but again there was no clear suggestion

from him at the end of the session regarding which perspective he needed to change in order to be successful in his new role. I concluded that this session also left him in stage three.

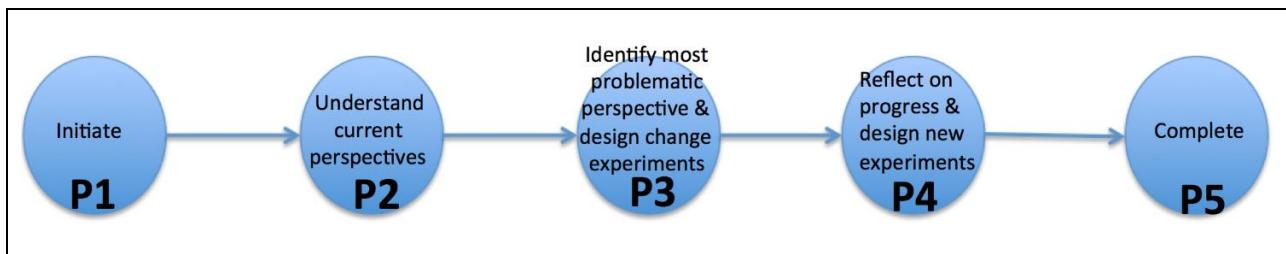
### 5.7.3 Evaluate

The results of this macrocycle revealed the existence of a new TTC stage, the 'Completed' phase. Both TM2 and TM5 reached this new phase during this macrocycle. They both demonstrated acceptable levels of perspective transformation according to Hoggan's (2016) criteria. By setting stretch goals and reflecting on the benefits of the new perspectives they held, I was hopeful that the perspective change was completed. The follow-up in two months' time would provide an indication of the success of the perspective change.

After this macrocycle, there were now five TTC stages:

- Initiate: define context and identify challenges ;
- Understand: analyse current perspectives;
- Identify and design: identify most problematic perspective, conceptualise new desired perspective, design experiment to change perspective;
- Reflect and redesign: reflect on progress, assess level of perspective transformation, design new experiments to deepen perspective transformation; and
- Completed: Hoggan's (2016) criteria fulfilled, define long-term strategy to retain new perspective.

I plotted the five stages as illustrated below.



**Figure 5.7: Five TTC stages**

Source: Author's own compilation

Looking at this graphic, I realised that I could plot the progress of each of the TMs according to these stages by overlaying the stages with the coaching session progression. This is illustrated below.

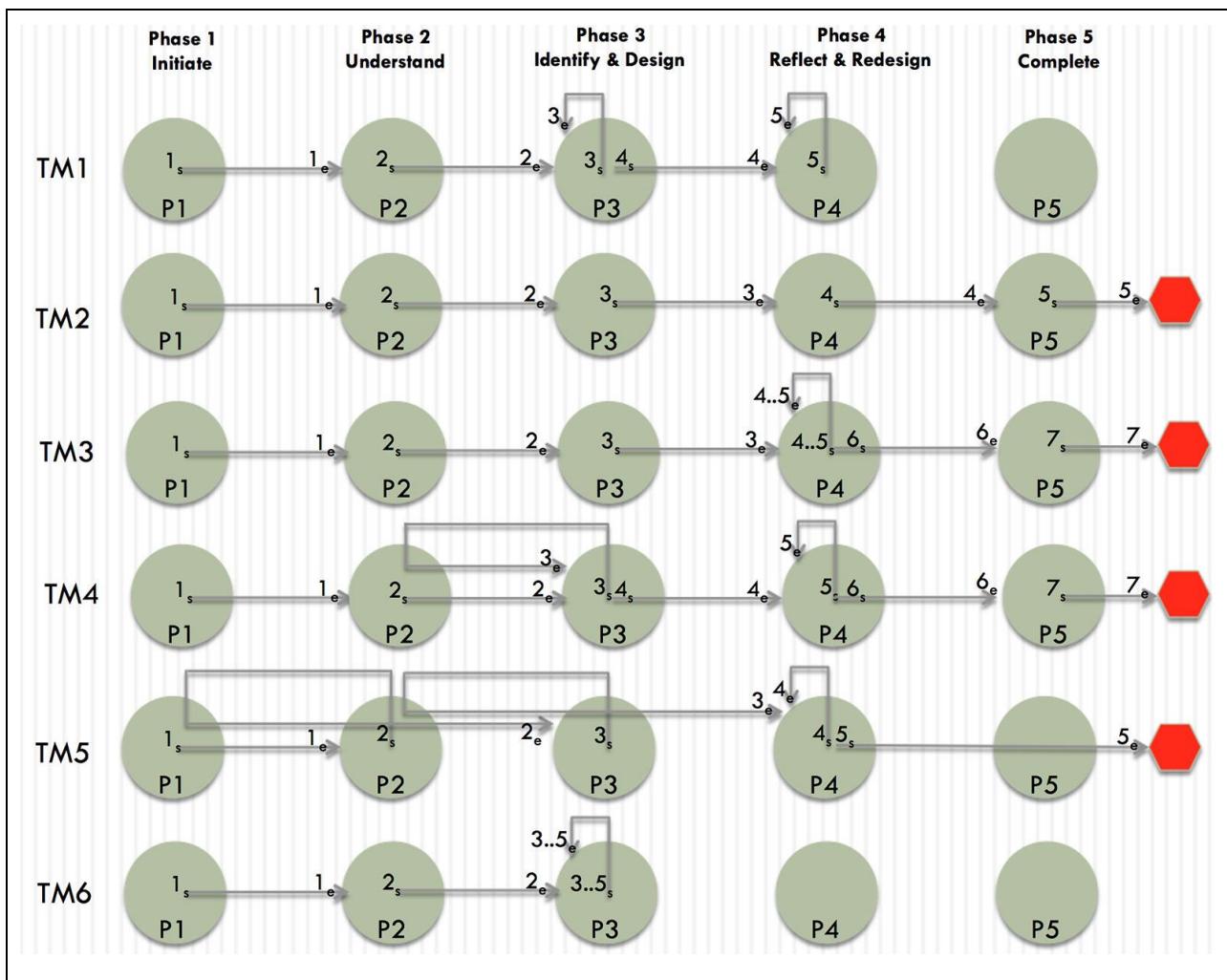


Figure 5.8: Coaching state transition notation applied to TTC stages

Source: Author's own compilation

In this diagram, the circles labelled P1 to P5 represent the five TTC stages. Each arrow represents one coaching session. The numbers indicate the start and end of a particular session. For example, 1<sub>s</sub> indicates the start of the first session and 1<sub>e</sub> indicated the end of the first session. The diagram shows that certain stages could be repeated (e.g. TM1 repeated stage four during her fifth session), or that within a single session, multiple stages could be covered (e.g. TM5's second session revisited stage one and completed stage two). The diagram also shows that TM2 and TM5 completed all five stages in the five sessions of the five macrocycles. TM3 and TM4 received two more coaching sessions before completing the five stages (explained in the 'Reflection' section below). All four TMs therefore completed their perspective transformations for their most problematic perspectives.

The emergence of the 'coaching state transition notation' (as I called it) was a major insight. This model provided a convenient graphical method to keep track of a TM's TTC progress. It was not one of the objectives of this research to create such a notation tool, so it came as a windfall that could potentially find application outside the scope of transformative transition coaching. This is suggested in Chapter 6 as an area for further research.

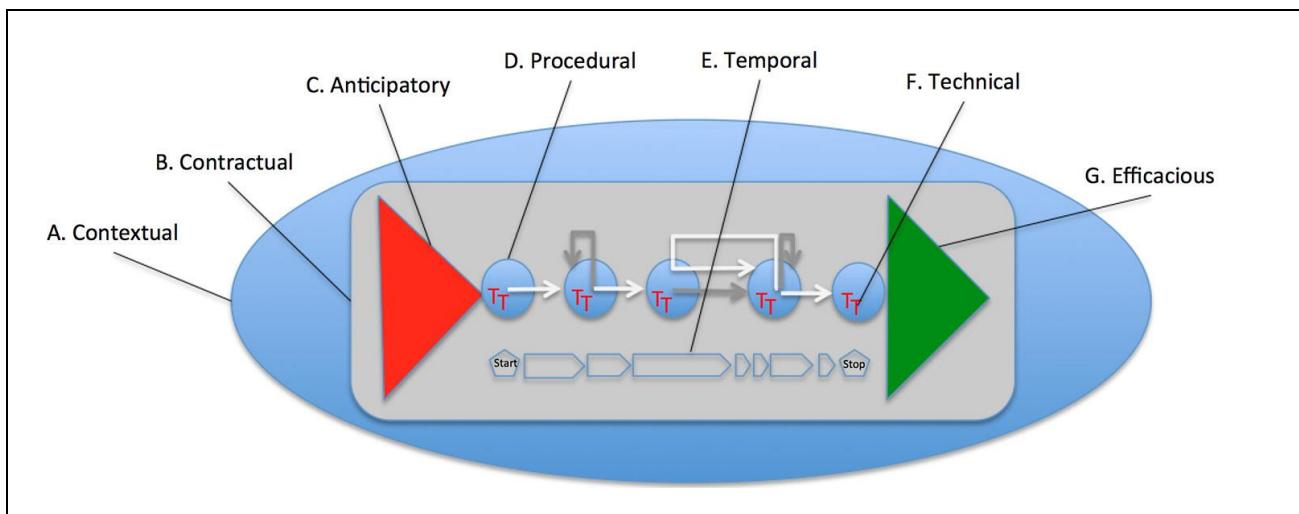
#### 5.7.4 Reflect

The major reflection at the end of this macrocycle was the question of whether the emergence of the fifth TTC stage meant that the TTC process was defined sufficiently to meet the AR exit criteria, and whether it was necessary to perform more macrocycles. Recall that the purpose of the application phase of this research was to answer the fifth research sub-question: How can transformative learning be applied in the transition coaching process? Furthermore, AR has two aims: to help improve the situation of the participants, and to add to scientific knowledge (Greenwood & Levin, 2007), and Davison *et al.* (2012) state that a CAR project may be considered complete when there is strong evidence to indicate that the problem that the project set out to solve has indeed been solved.

Reflecting on the state of the TTC framework at this point, I concluded that both the AR aims of improving the participant's situation and contributing to scientific knowledge had been met. In addition, the research sub-question that this AR process set out to solve (to apply transformative learning in a transition coaching process) had been answered. Two of the TMs had indicated that they had successfully transformed their most problematic perspectives, and therefore met Hoggan's (2016) criteria. In the process, after this macrocycle, the TTC framework seemed robust and appeared to contain sufficient detail to meet the main research objective of this research project, namely the creation of a coaching framework that could facilitate transformative learning during a leadership transition. I decided not to embark on another macrocycle, but rather to use the current framework and five TTC stages with the remaining TMs to see whether they could also reach stage five. TM3 and TM4 were coached for two more sessions before they reached the final TTC stage. Note that TM1 and TM6 were unable to continue their participation in the research due to work commitments.

#### 5.7.5 Influence on TTC framework

At the end of the fifth macrocycle, the final TTC framework emerged as illustrated in Figure 5.9. The major changes between this final version and the previous version (Figure 5.8) comprised the addition of a 'Temporal' aspect, which captured the time-related characteristics of a TTC intervention, as well as renaming the other aspects to be more conceptual in nature. The final TTC framework is discussed in detail in the next section.



**Figure 5.9: Final TTC framework**

Source: Author's own compilation

## 5.8 THE FINAL TTC FRAMEWORK

The main objective of this research was to create a coaching framework that could facilitate transformative learning during career transitions. This framework, the TTC framework, started as a draft coaching framework derived from the findings of the foundation phase of this research. This draft framework was used as a basis during the application phase of this research and evolved through five macrocycles of coaching as described in this chapter. The final TTC framework is presented in this section, and an attempt is made to relate the framework to existing theory and literature to underscore its theoretical basis and relevance.

### 5.8.1 Seven aspects of the TTC framework

The final TTC framework (Figure 5.9) consists of seven aspects, which guide a coach in coaching transitioning leaders in a manner that may facilitate transformative learning during the career transition process. The seven aspects are summarised in Table 5.5 below, and is elaborated on in the rest of this section.

**Table 5.5: Seven aspects of the TTC framework**

<b>TTC aspect</b>	<b>Description</b>
A. Contextual	Set clear coaching boundaries (career transition and transformative learning)
B. Contractual	Three-way contracting between coach, coachee and organisation (line manager and/or HR) Confidentiality
C. Aspirational	Set goals relating to being more successful in the new role
D. Procedural	Five TTC stages: Initiate Understand Identify and design Reflect and redesign Complete
E. Temporal	Coaching must start before the promotion takes effect (2–3 sessions a few weeks apart) Frequent coaching (every 2–4 weeks) for the first 6 months Less frequent coaching (every 1–3 months) for another 1 to 2 years Duration of each coaching session is minimum one hour but should be flexible regarding maximum time to allow for crucial insights
F. Technical	Questioning Reflection Active Experimentation Frameworks and Theory (about career transitions and transformative learning) Challenging views and assumptions
G. Efficacious	Perspective transformation occurs if (Hoggan, 2016): Evidence of deep influence Evidence of change on multiple levels (e.g. work and home) Evidence of permanence of change

Source: Author's own compilation

#### **5.8.1.1 *Contextual***

The context and focus of the coaching must explicitly be set to be 'transformative transition coaching', dealing with supporting the transitioning leader by facilitating transformative learning. This notion of context in coaching is mentioned by Cox *et al.* (2014) in their structural analysis of a coaching engagement (see Figure 2.6) where they mention environmental factors, organisational agenda and culture and relevant discourses as being part of the context for coaching.

To set a firm context, frameworks and theory about career transition and transformative learning must be shared with the coachee. In terms of career transitions, the leadership pipeline model (Charan *et al.*, 2011), and Jaques' (1996) stratified systems theory were received well by TMs. These models assisted TMs with awareness of the typical challenges that they faced and how to addressed them. The coach should also create awareness of transformative learning in TMs by sharing Mezirow's theory and specifically highlighting the concept of different types of perspectives and the three levels of reflection (Mezirow, 1994).

Context creation is a continuous process throughout a TTC intervention. In some cases, explicit reference is made to theory, such as in the second TTC stage, while in other cases, the coach should introduce theory as and when necessary to focus the context. A coaching framework has structure, process and an underlying philosophy (Stout-Rostron, 2012). This explicit use of focused theory informs the underlying philosophy of the TTC framework and is also in line with what Brock (2010) refers to as a contextual mutual learning process.

#### **5.8.1.2 Contractual**

A contract to guide the coaching intervention and to manage the expectation of all parties involved must be agreed upon between the coach, transitioning leader and his or her organisation. This contract must spell out the rules of engagement, and emphasis should be placed on the confidential nature of the coaching, to the exclusion of the organisation. This idea is in line with other research, which indicates that formal contracting is one of six generic stages of a typical coaching intervention (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011:76), and that contracting, which includes the organisation, assists in making the leadership development process visible (Sparrow, 2007). Kahn (2011) also mentions the importance of contracting in outlining boundaries, fees, timelines and expectations.

#### **5.8.1.3 Anticipatory**

Coaching goals must be agreed upon and recorded in collaboration with the organisation. These coaching goals must relate to challenges faced by the transitioning leader in his or her new role. This goal setting is to help ensure the focus of the coaching remains within the context of the career transition. Goal setting in coaching is listed as one of the six generic stages of coaching (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011) and appears to play a prominent role in various definitions of what coaching is (Grant & Stober, 2006; Kilburg, 1996; Maltbia *et al.*, 2014).

#### **5.8.1.4 Procedural**

This research revealed that there are five distinct stages involved during a TTC intervention as follows:

- i) **Initiate:** Define the context for the coaching, agree on the contract and identify the most pressing challenges faced by the transitioning leader.
- ii) **Understand:** Analyse the current perspectives held by the transitioning leader by using the perspectives questionnaire (Table 5.3) to assess his or her view on all eight of the Mezirow perspectives (Mezirow, 1994): sociolinguistic, moral-ethical, epistemic, philosophical, psychological, health, political, aesthetic.
- iii) **Identity and design:** Identify the most problematic perspective from the list in the previous step, reflect on the reasons for and influence of this perspective on success in the new role using Mezirow's (1994) three levels of reflection (content, process, premise), conceptualise

the desired new perspective and then design a behavioural experiment in an attempt to change the problematic perspective.

- iv) **Reflect and redesign:** Reflect on the progress with transforming the problematic perspective by using Hoggan's transformative learning criteria (Hoggan, 2016) and design a new behavioural experiment to deepen the transformative process.
- v) **Complete:** This state is reached when the transitioning leader shows an acceptable level of perspective transformation according to Hoggan's criteria. A strategy is defined to secure the transformation, make sure stretch goals are set and that a decision is made to terminate the coaching or select a new problematic perspective to transform.

Note that these five TTC stages are not singularly linked to individual coaching sessions, meaning that a coachee could remain in one stage for more than one coaching session. Stages could also be revisited or multiple stages covered in a single coaching session. The coaching state transition notation captures these dynamics (see sections 5.6.3 and 5.7.3).

A key element of the Procedural aspect of the TTC framework from a theoretical perspective is the explicit inclusion of transformative learning theory in the coaching process. This is achieved by using Mezirow's perspectives and three levels of reflection (Mezirow, 1994) and Hoggan's (2016) gauge of the level of transformative learning in the coaching model. This use of theory is an attempt to include theory explicitly from adult learning into coaching in line with what Theeboom *et al.* (2013:13) suggest.

#### **5.8.1.5 *Temporal***

Coaching must start before the promotion takes effect (two to three sessions a few weeks apart), followed by frequent coaching sessions (every two to four weeks) for the first six months after the promotion and less frequent coaching (every one to three months) for at least another one to two years. The duration of each coaching session is minimum one hour but should be flexible regarding maximum time to allow for crucial insights.

Research into the efficacy of coaching versus the number of coaching sessions reveals that the robustness of the coaching results increases with the number of coaching sessions (Theeboom *et al.*, 2013) and it is known that in transformative learning, deeper levels of learning occur when adequate time is available for critical reflection and active experimentation (Mezirow, 1991). Leadership development theory states that there is a time delay of between four and eight months before new leaders demonstrate new learning (Hirst *et al.*, 2004). It is therefore crucial to provide more intense support in the form of coaching during this period as suggested by this aspect of the TTC framework.

#### **5.8.1.6 *Technical***

This research found that the main coaching techniques that promote transformative learning are questioning, reflection, active experimentation, using frameworks and theory (about career

transitions and transformative learning), and challenging views and assumptions. These techniques can be used together with the coach's standard techniques and tools, but since this research found empirical links between these five techniques and transformative learning, effort must be made to use these techniques.

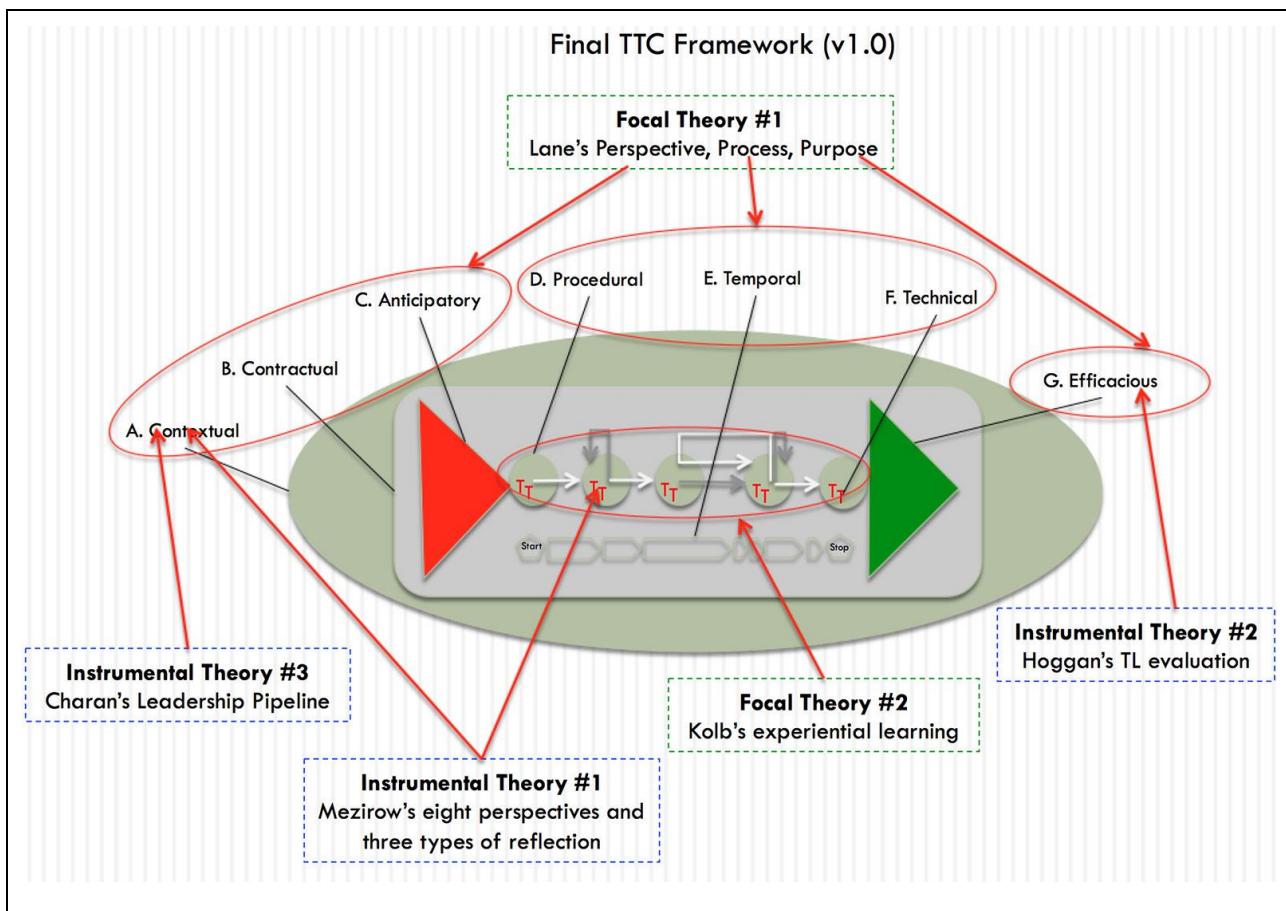
The coaching literature mentions the importance of using psychometric assessments (Bond & Naughton, 2011; Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008), which can be related to using frameworks and theory. Questioning and listening are fundamental coaching techniques professed by a number of coaching scholars (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Peltier, 2010), as is reflection (Kolb, 2014). The notion of challenging coachees is not generally advocated by the humanistic, non-directive school of coaching (Whitworth *et al.*, 2007), but in what is referred to as the 'third-generation coaching', the coach and coachee work together via a narrative collaboration to generate new meaning, which may include challenging assumptions (Stelter, 2013).

#### **5.8.1.7 *Efficacious***

The ideal end result of transformative transition coaching is the transformation of one or more problematic perspectives held by the transitioning leader and evidence of the transitioning leader being more successful in the new role. Using Hoggan's (2016) three criteria for transformative learning, is an attempt at evaluating the level of transformation and hence, to an extent, the success of the transition coaching intervention. This addresses a criticism levelled at transition coaching and held as a reason for limited use of transition coaching: the lack of measure of coaching success (Bond & Naughton, 2011). The Efficacious aspect of the TTC framework attempts to apply a measure of coaching success, which is to the advantage of both the individual and the organisation. The benefits of coaching to the individual and their organisation have been widely researched and discussed (Bachkirova *et al.*, 2014; Grant *et al.*, 2010; Kahn, 2011; Kauffman & Coutu, 2009; Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008; Kilburg, 1996; Theeboom *et al.*, 2013).

#### **5.8.2 Mapping of focal and instrumental theory to TTC framework**

During the application phase, the evolution of the TTC framework was guided by the use of a number of focal and instrumental theories as prescribed by the CAR process (Davison *et al.*, 2012) and discussed in section 5.2. The mapping of the focal and instrumental theories to the final TTC framework is illustrated in Figure 5.10 below.



**Figure 5.10: Mapping of focal and instrumental theories to the TTC framework**

Source: Author's own compilation

Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework encapsulates the TTC framework and provides an overarching theoretical basis for the framework. The 'Perspective' element relates to the Contextual, Contractual and Anticipatory aspects of the TTC framework. The 'Process' element, which entails the process that is followed during an intervention, relates to the Procedural, Temporal and Technical aspects of the TTC framework and the 'Purpose' element relates to the Efficacious aspect of the TTC framework. The second focal theory, Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2014) is captured in the cyclical nature of the five stages of the TTC process.

The three instrumental theories relate to the TTC framework as follows. Mezirow's eight perspectives and three types of reflection (Mezirow, 1994) are contained in the tools and techniques used in the TTC framework as well as in setting the context for the coaching. Coaches are encouraged to share Mezirow's (2008) theory with the transitioning leaders. Similarly, Charan *et al.*'s (2011) leadership pipeline is used to set the context for the coaching and acts as another source of knowledge to be shared with the transitioning leader to sensitise him or her to the phenomenon he or she is experiencing. Finally, Hoggan's transformative learning evaluation criteria (Hoggan, 2016) are used in determining the outcome of the coaching intervention.

It is trusted that the direct use of theory during the application phase as illustrated above provides a concrete base for the TTC framework and adds to the rigour and creditability of this research.

## 5.9 ADHERENCE TO CAR PRINCIPLES

The application phase of this research as reported in this chapter followed a CAR approach as described in section 3.6 (Davison *et al.*, 2004; Davison *et al.*, 2012; Susman & Evered, 1978). CAR prescribes five principles and 44 criteria to help the researcher maintain rigour during the AR process. The adherence to these criteria during this research is detailed in Table 5.6 below.

**Table 5.6: Adherence to CAR principles**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Was this criteria met?</b>
P1: The principle of a researcher-client agreement	C1a Did both the researcher and the client agree that CAR was the appropriate approach for the organisational situation?	Yes. The TMs understood that they needed to be coached to improve their situation and to assist in the research. I explained the basics of CAR (e.g. using theory). They all agreed to participate in this process.
	C1b Was the focus of the research project specified clearly and explicitly?	Yes. All TMs signed informed consent forms that explained the research. (Appendix D)
	C1c Did the client make an explicit commitment to the project?	Yes. All TMs signed informed consent forms that indicated their willingness to participate.
	C1d Were the roles and responsibilities of the researcher and client organisation members specified explicitly?	Yes. All TMs signed informed consent forms that explained the research.
	C1e Were project objectives and evaluation measures specified explicitly?	Yes. The project objectives and evaluation measures were explained in the informed consent forms and verbally explained in the first coaching session. The objectives were to help the TMs be more successful in their new role and to create a coaching framework.
	C1f Were the data collection and analysis methods specified explicitly?	Yes. It was explained in the informed consent form.
P2: The principle of the cyclical process model	C2a Did the project follow the cyclical process model or justify any deviation from it?	Yes. There were five macrocycles as explained in Chapter 5. Each macrocycle consisted of six coaching sessions, one for each of the TMs.
	C2b Did the researcher conduct an independent diagnosis of the organisational situation?	N/A. The 'problem' to be solved was known at the start of the CAR process, namely to help the TMs become more successful in their new roles.
	C2c Were the planned actions based explicitly on the results of the diagnosis?	Yes, in as much as the problem was already known.
	C2d Were the planned actions implemented and evaluated?	Yes. The TMs implemented the actions (new behaviours needed to change perspectives) identified during the AR cycles.
	C2e Did the researcher reflect on the outcomes of the intervention?	Yes. Formal reflections were recorded in the researcher's diary and were discussed in Chapter 5 for each of the five macrocycles.
	C2f Was this reflection followed by an explicit decision on whether or not to proceed through an additional process cycle?	Yes. After each macrocycle, the question was asked whether the TTC framework had evolved sufficiently to fulfil the research objective, and whether the TM had shown sufficient levels of transformative learning.
	C2g Were both the exit of the researcher and the conclusion of the project due to either the project objectives being met or some other clearly articulated justification?	Yes. The cycles stopped once the main research objective had been met. The TTC framework seemed to be able to facilitate transformative learning.
	C2h How was the independent diagnosis of the organisational situation conducted?	N/A. The problem was defined upfront in accordance with the aim of the research project.

**Table 5.6: Adherence to CAR principles (continued)**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Was this criteria met?</b>
	C2i Which instrumental theories did the researcher use?	Mezirow's eight TL perspectives and three types of reflection (Mezirow, 1994) Hoggan's TL evaluation (Hoggan, 2016) Leadership pipeline (Charan <i>et al.</i> , 2011)
	C2j How were these theories selected?	Instrumental theories illustrate a phenomenon (Davison <i>et al.</i> , 2012). The phenomena at stake were transformative learning and leadership transitions, which were covered by these theories.
	C2k How did these theories support the identification of the focal theory used to guide the changes?	N/A. It was known at the start of the CAR process that coaching would be used, therefore the focal theories: Kolb's (2014) experiential learning theory and Lane and Corrie's formulation framework (perspective, process, purpose). Lane and Corrie (2007) were selected to guide the coaching process. The instrumental theories did not lead to the identification of the focal theories.
	C2l After the intervention, did the researcher reflect on the instrumental theories used and their suitability?	Yes. The applicability of the instrumental and focal theories to the final TTC framework were mapped (see Figure 5.10).
P3: The principle of theory	C3a Were the project activities guided by a theory or set of theories?	Yes. There were two focal theories (see point C2k) and three instrumental theories (see point C2i). This is summarised in Table 5.1.
	C3b Were the domain of investigation and the specific problem setting, relevant and significant to the interests of the researcher's community of peers as well as the client?	Yes. This entire research project was based on the notion that no formal coaching framework exists for facilitating transformative learning during career transitions, hence the novel contribution to the research community. The clients (TMs) reported benefitting from going through this process since it helped them become more effective in their new roles.
	C3c Was an instrumental theory used to derive the causes of the observed problem?	Yes. Mezirow's eight perspectives (Kitchenham, 2008) were used to identify what kept TMs from being successful in the new roles.
	C3d Did the planned intervention follow from this instrumental theory?	Yes. The whole point of the intervention was to derive a way in which to transform perspectives.
	C3e Was the focal theory used to evaluate the outcomes of the intervention?	Yes. Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework was satisfied by the final TTC framework: there was a clearly defined Perspective, Process and Purpose to the TTC framework.
	C3f Did a focal theory emerge from the situation or during the problem diagnosis?	Yes. The objective of the CAR process was to create a coaching framework. The two focal theories (Kolb [2014] and Lane and Corrie [2007]) were deemed ideal to guide a coaching process.
	C3g Was this focal theory acceptable to both client and researcher?	Yes. The clients (TMs) agreed to be part of the coaching process and the two focal theories were explained to them at the start of the CAR process.
	C3h Which role did instrumental and focal theories play with respect to the diagnosis and the action planning?	Both focal and instrumental theories were used extensively and explicitly as described in Chapter 5.

**Table 5.6: Adherence to CAR principles (continued)**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Was this criteria met?</b>
	C3i Were these theories evaluated for their applicability to the organisational context, considering current organisational practices?	Yes. This research focused on individuals, not organisations. In terms of the individuals (TMs), all the theories used have been used extensively to coach and facilitate transformative learning in individuals.
	C3j Did both the researcher and the client undertake this evaluation?	No. The clients did not take part in the selection of instrumental or focal theories.
	C3k Were theoretical explanations for the current organisational problem situation evaluated and reflected upon?	Yes (for the individuals). I reflected on what was needed to help TMs be more successful in their new roles (the problem) given the fact that the research was about coaching and transformative learning. The focal and instrumental theories selected were able to explain the problem.
	C3l Did the researcher reflect on the focal theory used and its ability to predict the change outcomes?	Yes. Kolb's (2014) experiential learning and Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework explained the structure of the TTC framework. This was reflected upon in Figure 5.10.
P4: The principle of change through action;	C4a Were both the researcher and client motivated to improve the situation?	Yes. The research was motivated by wanting to help the TMs improve their situation (being more successful in their new roles) and by wanting to create the TTC framework. The clients (TMs) participated voluntarily and expressed the wish to be more successful in their new roles.
	C4b Were the problem and its hypothesised cause(s) specified as a result of the diagnosis?	Somewhat. The overall problem (to create the TTC framework and help TMs be more successful in their new roles) were a given based on the research problem. The specific problems (e.g. how to identify problematic perspectives) were diagnosed during the AR macrocycles.
	C4c Were the planned actions designed to address the hypothesised cause(s)?	Yes. Overall, the entire CAR process was aimed at addressing both the research and TM's problems. In each macrocycle, the actions taken were aimed at addressing the specific issue in that cycle.
	C4d Did the client approve the planned actions before they were implemented?	Yes. Actions taken by the TMs in between coaching sessions were identified by the TMs themselves and they committed to performing these actions.
	C4e Was the organisation situation assessed comprehensively both before and after the intervention?	Yes (for the individuals). To participate in this CAR process, the TMs had to meet certain criteria (should have been promoted less than two years ago into a senior position without receiving any coaching). At the end of the CAR process, the TMs were interviewed to obtain their views on the process.
	C4f Were the timing and nature of the actions taken clearly and completely documented?	Yes. The CAR process was documented via research notes during coaching sessions, structured reflection from the TMs, reflections in the researcher's journal, and post-CAR interviews with TMs.
P5: The principle of learning through reflection	C5a Did the researcher provide progress reports to the client and organisational members?	Not formally. Informal feedback was given during the reflection that happened at the start of each coaching session to evaluate the progress made from the last session as well as the overall progress on transforming the problematic perspectives.

**Table 5.6: Adherence to CAR principles (continued)**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Was this criteria met?</b>
	C5b Did both the researcher and the client reflect upon the outcomes of the project?	Yes. The researcher reflected on the evolution of the TTC framework and the level of transformative learning in the TMs. The TMs reflected on the project outcome during the final interview.
	C5c Were the research activities and outcomes reported clearly and completely?	Yes. The nature of a PhD project ensured that the activities and outcomes were reported in detail as explained in Chapter 5.
	C5d Were the results considered in terms of implications for further action in this situation?	Yes. A detailed account is provided in section 6.5.2 (further research).
	C5e Were the results considered in terms of implications for action to be taken in related research domains?	Yes. A detailed account is provided in section 6.5.2 (further research).
	C5f Were the results considered in terms of implications for the research community (general knowledge, informing/re-informing theory)?	Yes. Summarised in Chapter 6 (Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation).
	C5g Were the results considered in terms of the general applicability of CAR?	The applicability of CAR for this research was considered at the onset as explained in section 3.2.

Source: Adapted from Davison *et al.* (2012)

## 5.10 SUMMARY

This chapter reported the results of the application phase of this research, which followed a canonical action research (CAR) approach and which set out to answer the fifth research sub-question: How to apply transformative learning in a transition coaching intervention. A narrative style was used to recount the events that unfolded during five macro- AR cycles, which consisted of six microcycles (coaching sessions). The plan → act → evaluate → reflect sequence was described for each cycle with a summary of how each macrocycle helped to develop the TTC framework. Specific attention was given to the use of focal and instrumental theories during the AR cycles in order to demonstrate the theoretical rigour of the process. The final TTC framework was presented and linked back to existing coaching literature, including a mapping of the focal and instrumental theories to the TTC framework. This chapter concluded with a checklist indicating to what extent the AR process followed adhered to the CAR principles.

## CHAPTER 6

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this research was to create a TTC framework that could potentially facilitate transformative learning during senior leadership career transitions. This final chapter summarises the essence of the findings of this research. First, a summary of the research findings relative to the research questions is presented and conclusions are drawn. The summary includes an account of how the seven aspects that constitute the TTC framework evolved during the research. This is followed by an overview of the contributions that this research claims to make on both pragmatic, organisational and scholarly levels. Next, the limitations of the research are discussed, and the chapter ends with recommendations for implementing the results of this research as well as directions for further research.

### 6.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

To achieve the main research objective of creating a TTC framework, five sub-questions were identified:

- What are the experiences of managers during the transition into senior leadership?
- How is transition coaching currently used?
- How does coaching assist in overcoming challenges faced during a transition?
- Which coaching tools and techniques are useful in facilitating transformative learning?
- How can transformative learning be applied in the transition coaching process?

These five sub-questions investigated the concepts of career transitions, transition coaching and the potential role of transformative learning with the aim of first creating a draft TTC framework based on existing transition coaching principles, and then incrementally refining and evolving the TTC framework through the inclusion of transformative learning theory.

The research followed a two-phased design. In the first phase, referred to as the foundation phase, grounded theory principles were used to analyse 16 interviews conducted with transitioning leaders (TMs), coaches, HR practitioners and line managers. Three main themes and several sub-categories emerged during the analysis process, and these were used to answer the first four research sub-questions as indicated in Table 6.1. The findings from the foundation phase also led to the creation of a draft TTC framework.

**Table 6.1 Foundation phase findings mapped to the first four research sub-questions**

Main themes (identified in the foundation phase)	Sub-categories (of main themes)	Research sub-question
Fulfilling the new role	Initial impressions	1. What are the experiences of managers during the transition into senior leadership?
	Facing challenges	
	Overcoming challenges	
Experiencing transition coaching	Initiating coaching	2. How is transition coaching currently used?
	The coaching process	
	Experiencing benefits	3. How does coaching assist in overcoming challenges faced during a transition?
Transformative learning	Instances of transformative learning	4. Which coaching tools and techniques are useful in facilitating transformative learning?
	Coaching tools and techniques	

Source: Author's own compilation

In the second phase, referred to as the application phase, an AR process was followed where I coached six recently promoted senior managers using the draft TTC framework developed in the foundation phase. The AR process refined and developed the draft TTC framework, in the process answering the fifth research sub-question of applying aspects of transformative learning during a transition coaching intervention. The combination of the foundation and application phases achieved the main objective of this research by creating a TTC framework consisting of seven aspects that appear to facilitate transformative learning during senior leadership transitions. These aspects, which will be explained in the rest of this summary, are: Contextual, Contractual, Anticipatory, Procedural, Temporal, Technical and Efficacious.

The summarised results of the research are presented in this section grouped by research sub-question. For a detailed discussion of these findings, refer to Chapter 4 (foundation phase findings) and Chapter 5 (application phase findings).

### **6.2.1 Experiences of managers during senior leadership transitions (sub-question 1)**

Initial impressions, facing challenges and overcoming challenges captured the experiences of managers during their transition process. For many of the participants, the initial responses after receiving the news of the promotion were a combination of excitement and uncertainty. They were excited because a promotion is seen as a reward for hard work, but at the same time, not knowing what lies ahead, generated anxiety which affected their self-confidence. This finding is in line with other research, which identified psychological challenges, such as uncertainty, anxiety, feelings of isolation and loss of identity during career transition (Argyris, 1991; Dotlich *et al.*, 2004; Elsner & Farrands, 2006; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008; Sutton, 2008).

After the ‘honeymoon period’ (first ± 90 days) had subsided, transitioning leaders faced significant challenges:

- They were unsure what was expected of them within the subtleties of the new unknown organisational culture;
- They felt an urge to show results fast;
- They realised they lacked certain skills; and
- They felt their work–life balance slip.

The challenges identified in this research are aligned with other findings (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Elsner & Farrands, 2006; Freedman, 2011; Martin, 2015; Watkins, 2003).

Research participants employed a number of strategies to counter the challenges they faced:

- They set out to understand the new work environment;
- They aimed to show results fast;
- They acquired new skills;
- They built new networks; and
- They managed the higher levels of complexity.

These results concur with other findings (Bebb, 2009; Freedman, 2011; Hill, 2007; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008; Watkins 2003).

The three transition phases identified in this research (initial impressions, facing challenges, and overcoming challenges) relate to similar results from other research:

- Trigger event, downtrend, redefinition, starting over (Hyatt, 1990);
- Releasing, learning, adapting, adjusting (Bebb, 2009) and
- Arriving (getting to know the organisation), surviving (standing up and standing out) and thriving (showing success by mining experience and getting on with the job) (Elsner & Farrands, 2006).

These findings suggest that transitioning leaders face similar challenges. Awareness of the typical transition challenges may therefore empower transitioning leaders to take control of their transition process by normalising the situation through creating an understanding that what they face is not new or unique. These findings were included in the TTC framework as part of the ‘Contextual’ aspect (explained in section 6.2.6), which requires coaches to share theory and frameworks of career transitions with the transitioning leader.

In sum, the first research sub-question (the experience of managers during senior career transitions), was answered by identifying the challenges faced and strategies employed to overcome these challenges, and was included in the ‘Contextual’ aspect of the TTC framework.

### 6.2.2 Current use of transition coaching (sub-question 2)

The current use of transition coaching emerged as one of the main themes from the analysis of the interviews of the foundation phase and was captured as ‘Experiencing coaching’ (Table 6.1). ‘Experiencing coaching’ contained two aspects: ‘Initiating coaching’ and ‘The coaching process’. The insights contained in these two aspects provided valuable practical input to the creation of the TTC framework in the sense that it exposed the basic process that transition coaches follow. This approach was incorporated in the draft TTC framework, and used as an initial strategy at the start of the application phase.

The first of the two aspects, ‘Initiating coaching’ provided insights into the timing of coaching, the duration of coaching, the importance of selecting a coach, the logistics around the coaching event, and the importance of the contracting phase. Of specific importance to the TTC framework was the finding that the participants interviewed in the foundation phase did not see transition coaching as a distinct coaching approach, contrary to what is espoused in literature (Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004). Coaching during career transitions seems to occur by chance either as part of a general leadership development programme or worse, when the incumbent is already in trouble. Participants recommended that transition coaching should start before the leader takes up the new role, continue for six months with frequent coaching sessions (every two weeks) and then less frequent sessions (once a month) for up to one to two years. These findings were included in the ‘Temporal’ aspect of the TTC framework.

Although organisations use a number of interventions to support transitioning leaders, such as mentoring and coaching, 360-degree feedback, leadership training, job assignments, self–other agreement, use of self-narrative and life stories and action learning, among others (Day *et al.*, 2014; Fleenor *et al.*, 2010; Ligon *et al.*, 2008), coaching is unique in that it can be tailored to individual needs and behavioural change (Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008). By further tailoring the coaching process to address the needs of transitioning leaders specifically, the power of coaching may be enhanced. Some participants cited the cost of a coaching intervention as a reason for not using transition coaching more extensively, but a counterargument states that a failed senior transition can amount up to 24 times the annual salary of the individual (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008).

The second aspect, ‘Experiencing coaching’, captured how participants experienced the transition coaching process. This provided insights into how the coaching process is managed, the importance of using and sharing theory during coaching sessions, involving external parties and building the transitioning leader’s network. These findings provided a basic coaching process for the TTC framework, which was applied during the application phase. Of specific interest was that transitioning leaders insisted on being exposed to theories and frameworks relating to career transitions. They felt that this empowered them and directed their learning. This exposure to theory and frameworks goes against the purely non-directive forms of coaching (Whitworth *et al.*, 2007)

and is more in line with models of coaching that acknowledge the skills and background of the coach and the creation of a shared space where information can be shared (Cavanagh, 2006).

To summarise, it appears from the findings presented here that even though transition coaching seems to be applied on an ad hoc basis, the approaches currently followed have certain characteristics in common, including initiating the process and following certain steps. These two elements were included in the ‘Contractual’, ‘Temporal’ and ‘Anticipatory’ aspects of the draft TTC framework.

### **6.2.3 Overcoming challenges faced during senior leadership transitions (sub-question 3)**

The third sub-question dealt with the ability of transition coaching to support transitioning leaders. Seven coaching outcomes were identified: improved self-awareness, feeling more confident, improved thinking, new perspectives, building relationships, more balanced work–life and improved communication. There is a link between these perceived benefits of coaching as expressed by the participants, the challenges they faced and how they attempted to address the challenges (see section 6.2.1). Being unsure of what is expected of them and trying to understand the new environment could be addressed by improved communication and increased confidence. The acknowledgement that certain skills are lacking could be facilitated by increased self-awareness, and it seems that coaching was able to address the lack of work–life balance directly.

These findings are in line with previous research on the efficacy of coaching, and strengthens the case for a focused approach, such as transition coaching that addresses distinctive challenges faced during career transitions (Kauffman & Coutu, 2009; Reynolds, 2011; Sutton, 2008; Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004).

These findings contributed to the draft TTC framework by stipulating that a definite outcome or result of the transition coaching intervention was required, and was captured in the ‘Efficacious’ aspect.

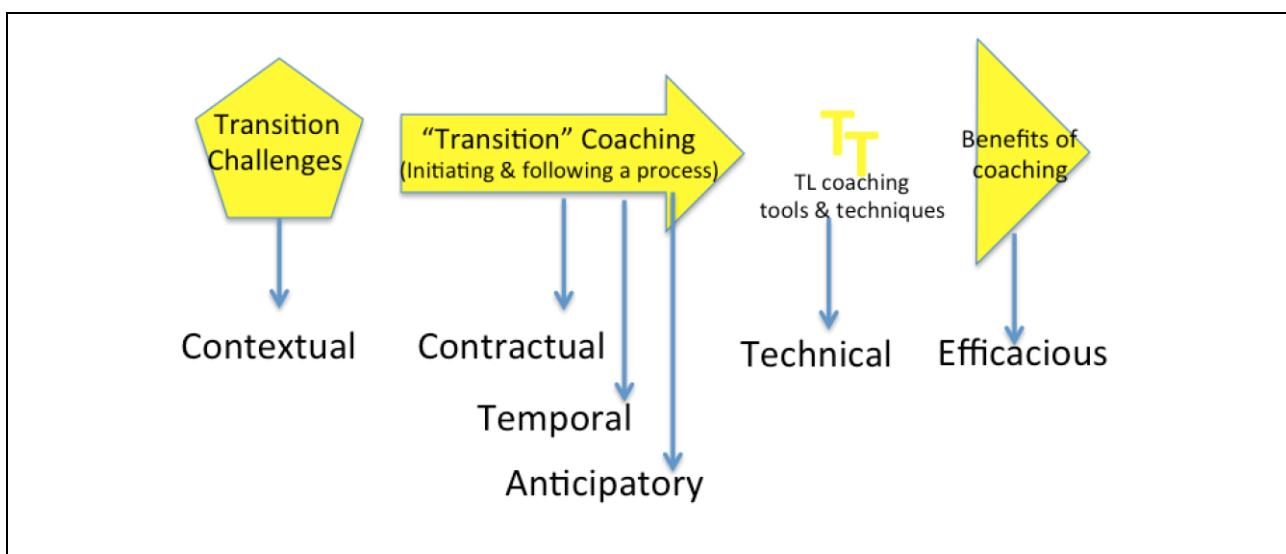
### **6.2.4 Coaching tools and techniques to facilitate transformative learning (sub-question 4)**

The aim of the fourth research sub-question was to identify the tools and techniques used by coaches that could potentially facilitate transformative learning. Deductive and summative content analyses were used to analyse the 16 interviews of the foundation phase. The result was the identification and enumeration of instances of reported transformative learning, as well as the tools and techniques used during such instances.

In total, 13 coaching techniques were identified and five techniques were found to be used more than the rest: questioning, reflection, active experimentation, using frameworks and theories, and challenging views and providing different perspectives. These five coaching techniques can be linked back to aspects of Mezirow’s (1995) process of transformative learning (critical reflection, rational discourse, trying out new roles), principles of andragogy such as self-directed learning (Russel, 2006), and Kolb’s (2014) experiential learning cycle.

The identification of specific coaching techniques that seemed to facilitate transformative learning during a transition coaching intervention provided associations between transformative learning and transition coaching. The five techniques were incorporated into the TTC framework's 'Technical' aspect.

At the end of the foundation phase, the draft TTC framework that emerged through satisfying the first four research sub-questions, contained four sets of findings: transition challenges, transition coaching process, transformative learning tools and techniques, and benefits of transition coaching. These findings formed the basis of the draft TTC framework that was refined and developed during the application phase and contributed to the final TTC framework by informing the 'Contextual', 'Contractual', 'Temporal', 'Anticipatory', 'Technical', and 'Efficacious' aspects of the framework as illustrated in Figure 6.1.



**Figure 6.1: Foundation phase findings mapped to TTC framework aspects**

Source: Author's own compilation

### 6.2.5 Applying transformative learning to the transition coaching process (sub-question 5)

The application phase followed a CAR approach where six recently promoted senior leaders (TMs) were coached by me using the draft TTC framework derived in the foundation phase. The aim of the application phase was to answer the fifth research sub-question of explicitly incorporating transformative learning concepts in a transition coaching intervention.

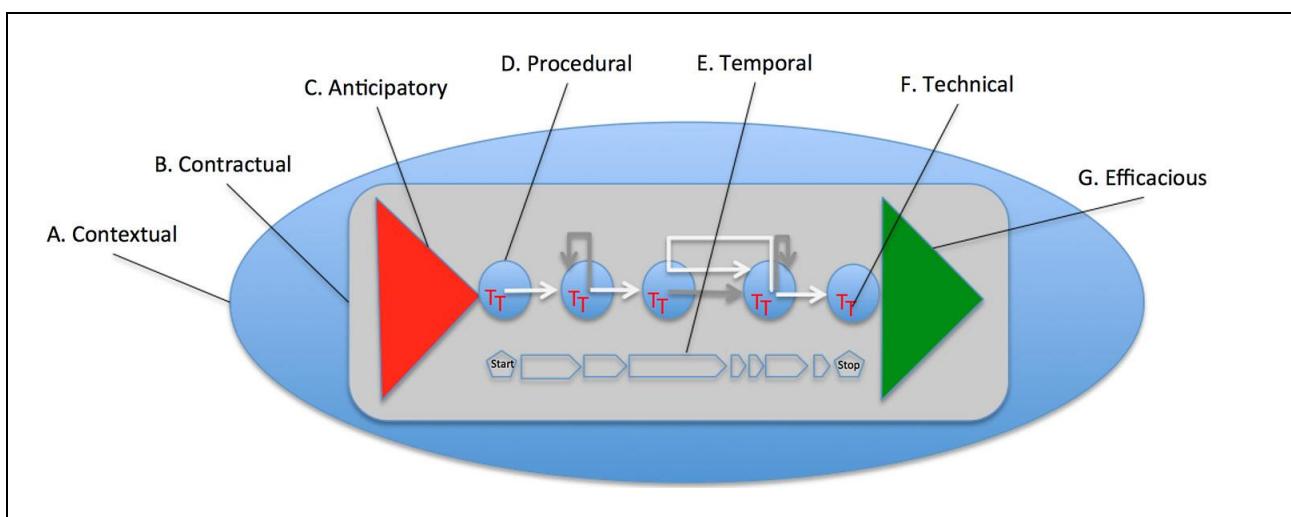
Focal and instrumental theories (explained in section 3.6.5 and throughout Chapter 5) as prescribed by CAR were used to collect and analyse data during five macrocycles, each consisting of six coaching sessions (one per TM). The findings revealed that three aspects of transformative learning theory could be applied during a transition coaching intervention. Firstly, eight of Mezirow's (1994) perspectives (sociolinguistic, moral-ethical, epistemic, philosophical, psychological, health, political and aesthetic) were used to map TMs current perspectives relative

to their new role. Secondly, Mezirow's (1995) three levels of reflection (content, process, premise) were used to help TMs identify the most problematic perspective that prevented them from being successful in their new role. The three levels of reflection were also used to help TMs design behavioural experiments to alter the problematic perspectives. Thirdly, Hoggan's (2016) transformative learning criteria (depth, breadth, stability) were used to determine the level of transformative learning of each TM and were also used as a measure of completion of the coaching process.

During the application phase, it emerged that TMs undergo five transformative transition stages: Initiate, Understand, Identify and design, Reflect and redesign, and Complete. (These stages are explained in the next section as part of the overview of the final TTC framework.) Establishing these five stages led to the creation of the coaching state transition notation (see section 5.7.3). This notation is a mechanism to track different stages of a coaching process by graphically illustrating the progress of a coachee in relation to the coaching stages. This notation proved to be valuable in tracking the progress of the six TMs through the five TTC stages as illustrated in Figure 5.8. Using the notation tool in this research showed that four of the six transitioning leaders were able to show adequate signs of transformative learning using the TTC framework. It is anticipated that this conceptual notation model could be applied to coaching interventions beyond the TTC framework by coaches to communicate coaching progress to coachees and sponsors.

### **6.2.6 Creation of a coaching framework to facilitate transformative learning during senior leadership transitions (main objective)**

The primary objective of this research project was to create a coaching framework that could facilitate transformative learning when applied during a senior leadership transition. The result is the TTC framework. This framework developed throughout the foundation and application phases of this research as explained in the preceding sections of this chapter. The final TTC framework is illustrated in Figure 6.2 below and summarised in this section.



**Figure 6.2: The transformative transition coaching framework**

Source: Author's own compilation

The TTC framework consists of seven aspects:

#### **6.2.6.1 *Contextual***

Findings from the foundation phase indicated that the focus of the coaching must explicitly be set to be 'transformative transition coaching', and its purpose must be to support the transitioning leader by facilitating transformative learning. To achieve this, frameworks and theory about career transition and transformative learning must be shared with the coachee. Eliciting 'life stories' and drawing organisational network diagrams assist in creating the necessary context for the coaching intervention.

#### **6.2.6.2 *Contractual***

From the foundation phase, it emerged that a contract to guide the coaching intervention and to manage the expectation of all parties involved must be agreed upon between the coach, the transitioning leader and his or her organisation. This contract must spell out the rules of engagement, and emphasis must be placed on the confidential nature of the coaching, to the exclusion of the organisation.

#### **6.2.6.3 *Anticipatory***

The foundation and application phases revealed that coaching goals must be agreed upon and recorded with the input of the organisation. These coaching goals must relate to challenges faced by the transitioning leader in relation to the new role.

#### **6.2.6.4 *Procedural***

The application phase revealed that there are five distinct stages involved during a TTC intervention:

- i) **Initiate:** Define the context for the coaching, agree on the contract and identify the most pressing challenges faced by the transitioning leader.
- ii) **Understand:** Analyse the current perspectives held by the transitioning leader by using the perspectives questionnaire (Table 5.3) to assess the leader's view on all eight of Mezirow's perspectives (Mezirow, 1994): sociolinguistic, moral-ethical, epistemic, philosophical, psychological, health, political and aesthetic.
- iii) **Identity and design:** Identify the most problematic perspective from the list in the previous step, reflect on the reasons for and influence of this perspective on success in the new role using Mezirow's (1994) three levels of reflection (content, process, premise), conceptualise the desired new perspective and then design a behavioural experiment in an attempt to change the problematic perspective.

- iv) **Reflect and redesign:** Reflect on the progress with transforming the problematic perspective by using Hoggan's transformative learning criteria (Hoggan, 2016) and design a new behavioural experiment to deepen the transformative process.
- v) **Complete:** This state is reached when the transitioning leader shows an acceptable level of perspective transformation according to Hoggan's (2016) criteria. A strategy is defined to secure the transformation, stretch goals are set and a decision is made to terminate the coaching or select a new problematic perspective to transform.

#### **6.2.6.5 *Temporal***

The foundation phase findings indicate that coaching must start before the promotion takes effect (two to three sessions a few weeks apart), followed by frequent coaching sessions (every two to four weeks) for the first six months after the promotion and less frequent coaching (every one to three months) for at least another one to two years. The duration of each coaching session is minimum one hour but should be flexible regarding maximum time to allow for crucial insights.

#### **6.2.6.6 *Technical***

The main coaching techniques that promote transformative learning as derived during the foundation phase are questioning, reflection, active experimentation, using frameworks and theory (about career transitions and transformative learning), and challenging views and assumptions. These techniques must be used together with the coach's standard techniques and tools.

#### **6.2.6.7 *Efficacious***

The ideal end result of the coaching is the transformation of one or more problematic perspectives held by the transitioning leader, and evidence of the transitioning leader being successful in the new role. The need for a definite result of the coaching emerged in both the foundation and application phases.

Of the six TMs, two reached the final stage after five coaching sessions, two reached the final state after seven coaching sessions, while two TMs failed to reach the final stage. The fact that four of the six TMs reached the final 'Completed' stage of the TTC process was interpreted as an indication of the potential of the TTC framework to facilitate transformative learning during a transition coaching intervention and thus, a fulfilment of the main research objective.

The seven aspects of the TTC framework described in this section potentially reach beyond the scope of transformative transition coaching and could also be applied as a conceptual framework for other coaching interventions.

### **6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

This research contributes on various scholarly and practice domains. From the outset, the aim of this research was to develop a coaching framework that both added to the current academic

knowledge and also offered a pragmatic solution to assist people involved in corporate career transition processes. With this in mind, the scholarly contributions are discussed first, followed by contribution to practice.

### **6.3.1 Scholarly contributions**

Three theoretical fields (and their three sub-fields) underpinned this research: leadership development theory (leadership transitions), adult learning theory (transformative learning), and coaching (transition coaching).

In terms of leadership development, this research confirmed that leadership transitions present unexpected challenges on a personal and systemic level to transitioning individuals and importantly, that they do not receive adequate support from their organisations. This lack of support was reported not only by transitioning leaders, but also by HR representatives, coaches and the line managers of transitioning leaders and specifically in the South African context.

The contribution of this research to adult learning theory is the application of transformative learning theory outside of the traditional domain of adult education. This research incorporated transformative learning theory into leadership development through a coaching approach, thus adhering to the call for more research into the application of transformative learning in the workplace (Choy, 2009; Taylor, 2007).

The most significant contribution of this research is arguably in the domain of coaching theory. Coaching is an emerging academic discipline that requires more research to evolve into a fully-fledged academic discipline (De Haan & Duckworth, 2013; Grant *et al.*, 2010; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). This research demarcated a new sub-genre of coaching, which I named ‘transformative transition coaching’. Transition coaching has been defined and described before (Bond & Naughton, 2011; Reynolds, 2011; Witherspoon & Cannon 2004), but not with the intention of facilitating transformative learning. Even on its own, transition coaching has not been well researched (Bachkirova *et al.*, 2016). This research created the TTC framework that makes explicit use of transformative learning theory in the form of Mezirow’s perspectives and three levels of reflection (Mezirow, 1994) and Hoggan’s (2016) transformative learning evaluation criteria.

Coaching relies on other fields of research for its theoretical justification. Transformative learning, as an instance of adult learning, is seen as one of the primary theoretical fields underpinning coaching (Cox *et al.*, 2014). This research contributes to the strengthening of the theoretical links between coaching and transformative learning by indicating how aspects of transformative learning can be applied to a coaching process.

The research contributes to coaching theory beyond the scope of transformative transition coaching. Some of the findings can be applied on a conceptual level and could potentially be applied to a wide spectrum of coaching interventions:

- i) The seven aspects of the TTC framework (Contextual, Contractual, Anticipatory, Procedural, Temporal, Technical and Efficacious) when viewed on a conceptual level, could be used as a meta-framework to potentially model other coaching approaches. This meta-framework builds on generic frameworks such as Lane and Corrie's (2007) formulation framework (perspective, process, purpose) but adds significant coaching-specific details. It is anticipated that the TTC framework can be used as a meta-framework to verify the comprehensiveness of other coaching frameworks.
- ii) The coaching state transition notation provides a graphical method to track the progress of coachees through coaching interventions. By identifying the coaching stages for a particular type of intervention, coaches can graphically track the progress of their coachees through the stages using this notation. This tracking may assist in bringing transparency to the coaching process for all parties involved.
- iii) The identification of the five coaching techniques that could potentially facilitate transformative learning (questioning, reflection, active experimentation, frameworks and theories, challenging views and assumptions) provides empirical impetus for the use of these techniques during coaching interventions aimed at facilitating lasting change.
- iv) In terms of research design, the combination of grounded theory principles and AR provides a template for other coaching research. This two-phased approach may be useful in coaching research situations where novel coaching approaches need to be researched theoretically first before being applied in practice. In addition, it was shown that the use of focal and instrumental theories, as prescribed by the CAR approach, adds structure and rigour during coaching research.

### 6.3.2 Contributions to practice

The main aim of this research was to deliver a practical coaching framework for use during transition coaching. This was accomplished via the TTC framework. The TTC framework benefits all parties involved in leadership transitions:

- i) **Coach:** The TTC framework provides guidance to coaches in the form of seven aspects that must be considered when coaching transitioning leaders with the aim of facilitating transformative learning. The framework provides practical guidance on the level of perspective identification, coaching techniques, coaching stages as well as a mechanism to evaluate the level of transformative learning. The TTC framework can be used as a meta-framework, which implies that coaches can still employ some of their default coaching approaches alongside the TTC framework. To my knowledge, the TTC framework is the first coaching framework that aims to facilitate transformative learning during career transitions. The coaching state transition notation provides coaches with a tool to communicate the progress of the transitioning leader to the leader and to the sponsors if necessary.

- ii) **HR practitioners:** Those responsible for managing leadership transitions in organisations, such as HR practitioners, could use the TTC framework as a reference when purchasing transition coaching services. It cannot be expected that all transition coaches will use the TTC framework or that their aim would be to facilitate transformative learning. HR practitioners could, however, be empowered to ask informed questions about the level of specialisation of coaches by comparing transition coaches' frameworks to the TTC framework.
- iii) **Coachees:** The main benefits to coachees (transitioning leaders) exposed to the TTC framework is the potential to transform deeply held and often hidden perspectives that other methods of coaching may not uncover. This could lead to substantial behavioural changes as opposed to merely learning superficial behaviours to cope with the new role. The TTC framework also empowers transitioning leaders with factual knowledge about their transition and transformative learning process to help them make sense of what they are experiencing.

In addition to the practical value of the TTC framework, in this research, awareness was created around the need for transition coaching to be regarded as a specific and necessary intervention that could offer significant support to transitioning leaders. This awareness was created by presenting the findings of this research at two international and one local conference, and through the publication of two articles in academic journals. One article describes the design of a transition coaching intervention (Terblanche *et al.*, 2017) and the other describes the challenges faced by transitioning leaders (Terblanche *et al.*, in press). A third article, describing the application of the TTC framework, has been submitted to the African Journal of Business Ethics, and is currently under review.

#### **6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

This research has a number of limitations as discussed in this section.

The TTC framework requires further refinement through more exposure to real-life coaching situations. In this research, the TTC framework evolved through being used for 34 hours of coaching conducted by me. The result was deemed sufficient, given the scope of this research project in that the framework met the main objective set out for this research: to facilitate transformative learning in transitioning leaders. Four of the six transitioning leaders complied reasonably with Hoggan's (2016) criteria for transformative learning. To strengthen the TTC framework further, more transitioning leaders should be coached for longer using the framework, and the framework could be used by coaches other than myself. This would allow the framework to evolve its conceptual and pragmatic nature further.

Hoggan's (2016) three conditions for transformative learning stipulate that the change must not be temporary. This implies a longitudinal evaluation. Given the scope of this research project, it was

only possible to assess the permanence of the perspective transformation two months after the coaching had stopped. It would have strengthened the findings if a longer interval was possible.

The application of Hoggan's criteria for transformative learning relied on participants' self-report. It has been argued that, although self-report is very commonly used in both coaching (Theeboom *et al.*, 2013) and transformative learning (Cranton & Hoggan, 2012) research, it suffers from bias. It would have added to the reliability of this research if more objective sources were used to assess the criteria, such as the opinion of peers, subordinates and line managers of the coachees (see suggestions for further research in section 6.5).

During the foundation phase of this research, interviews were conducted with transitioning leaders, coaches, HR practitioners and line managers of transitioning leaders. The scope could have been extended to subordinates and peers of the transitioning leaders to obtain even richer perspectives of the career transition phenomenon. Since the main focus of this study was the development of a coaching framework, the first phase of the research was seen as a foundational inquiry only, and the results obtained from the participants were deemed sufficient to answer the research sub-question required to inform the creation of a draft coaching framework for phase two.

## 6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this research, recommendations are made on two levels. Firstly, suggestions are made on how to operationalise the TTC framework and other findings of this research in practice and secondly, guidance is provided on further research that could build on the findings of this study.

### 6.5.1 Using the TTC framework and other findings of this research in practice

The findings from the foundation phase of this research and, in particular, the first sub-objective suggest that leaders earmarked for promotion could be assisted by their organisations in the following ways:

- Being made aware of the types of challenges they are likely to face;
- Being provided with the relevant information needed to navigate the new role;
- Receiving training via tailor-made leadership development programmes;
- Experiencing emotional support through coaching and mentoring;
- Being provided with clarity on role expectations; and
- Being assisted to set realistic expectations of delivering early results.

Literature indicates that there are significant challenges faced by newly promoted senior leaders. The cost of failure is high to both the individual and the organisation. Transition coaching has been shown to be a valuable support for leaders in transition. This research provided empirical evidence of the need for transition coaching and the lack of its use at present. Practical suggestions are

made to assist HR practitioners and coaches to design coaching interventions specifically aimed at assisting transitioning leaders. These are:

- Starting transition coaching as soon as the appointment is official;
- Continuing for at least two years with a session every two to three weeks for the first six months and a session every two to three months thereafter;
- Allowing coaching to happen outside the office environment;
- Clear coaching goals must be set which take into account the organisational needs;
- The coach's model must include reflection and active experimentation;
- Assessments and theoretical frameworks must be used during the coaching intervention to help create self-awareness;
- Mentors, line managers and the new leader's team must be involved in the coaching process; and
- Building a new network must be an explicit part of the coaching process.

The TTC framework can be used as a teaching tool by coach training institutions to expose new and experienced coaches to a meta-framework they could use when dealing with career transition clients. The TTC framework and the coaching state transition notation can also be used by coaches, coach training institutions and HR practitioners as a template to gauge and evaluate existing coaching frameworks and coaching progression.

### **6.5.2 Further research**

This research laid the foundation for a new sub-field of coaching I call transformative transition coaching. This foundation was accomplished by practically linking certain elements from transformative learning theory into a coaching process. To further cement transformative transition coaching, more empirical research is required into other ways to include transformative learning theory into coaching intervention.

The focus of this research was the facilitation of transformative learning in the context of career transitions. Further research is required into how the transformative learning coaching aspects identified in this research could be applied to other types of coaching.

The TTC framework could benefit from more exposure. A future research project could see a number of coaches trained in the TTC framework and applying it in their practice. The feedback from these coaches could be used to develop and refine the TTC framework further.

A longitudinal study of the ability of the TTC framework to create lasting perspective transformation would assist in increasing the validity of the framework. This could be achieved by tracking the continued level of perspective transformation of transitioning leader who were coached using the TTC framework over a period of time.

Finally, the robustness of the TTC framework could be enhanced if the criteria used to assess the level of perspective transformation is expanded to include the perceptions not only of coachees, but also of other people with whom they interact or even a behavioural instrument that could measure specific attributes of the desired behavioural change before and after the TTC intervention.

## 6.6 A FINAL WORD

Transitions into senior leadership positions in the corporate environment are challenging and many who attempt the shift fail, with negative consequences for the individual and his or her organisation. This research set out to create a new transition support mechanism by incorporating transformative learning theory into a transition coaching intervention. The original contribution in this study is reflected in the novel TTC framework. This framework shows the potential to use the career transition event to uncover problematic world views and perspectives held by transitioning leaders, and to facilitate a process of redesigning more helpful, inclusive world views and perspectives. Coaching could provide effective support for leaders. If customised for career transitions as suggested in this research, transformative transition coaching may be able to provide a humane way to support ambitious, talented individuals with the challenges they face during promotions into senior leadership positions. I trust that the foundations laid by this research will encourage further exploration into the power of transformative learning during career transitions and coaching interventions.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Adler, P. & Kwon, S. 2002. Social capital: Prospects for a new concept. *Academy of Management Review*, **27**(1):17–40.
- Anderson, D.A. 2001. *Beyond change management*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.
- Argyris, C. 1991. Teaching smart people how to learn. *Harvard Business Review*, **May–June**: 99–109.
- Atwater, L. & Waldman, D. 1998. 360 degree feedback and leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **9**(4):423–426.
- Atwater, L.E. & Yammarino, F.J. 1992. Does self-other agreement on leadership perceptions moderate the validity of leadership and performance predictions? *Personnel Psychology*, **45**(1):141–164.
- Avolio, B. & Hannah, S. 2008. Developmental readiness: Accelerating leader development. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, **60**(4):331–347.
- Avolio, B.J. & Gardner, W.L. 2005. Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **16**(3):315–338.
- Babbie, E. & Mouton, K. 2001. *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press South Africa.
- Bachkirova, T., Cox, E. & Clutterbuck, D. 2014. Introduction. In E. Cox, T. Bachkirova & D. Clutterbuck (eds.). *The complete handbook of coaching*. Second edition. London: Sage, 1–20.
- Bachkirova, T., Spence, G. & Drake, D. 2016. Introduction. In T. Bachkirova, G. Spence & D. Drake (eds.). *The Sage handbook of coaching*. London: Sage, 41–71.
- Barkema, H., Baum, J. & Mannix, E. 2002. Management challenges in a new time. *Academy of Management Journal*, **45**(5):916–930.
- Bear, S., Benson-Armer, R. & McLaughlin, K. 2000. Leadership transitions: An agenda for success. *Ivey Business Journal*, **May/June**: 8–13.
- Bebb, S. 2009. The structure of role transition: A phenomenological study of successful executives from five countries. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, **4**(2):223–243.
- Bennett, N. & Lemoine, G. 2014. What VUCA really means for you. *Harvard Business Review*, **January**: 27.
- Bettin, P.J. & Kennedy, J.K. 1990. Leadership experience and leader performance: Some empirical support at last. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **1**(4):219–228.

Bettis, R.A. & Hitt, M.A. 1995. The new competitive landscape. *Strategic Management Journal*, **7**(13):7–19.

Bolman, L. & Deal, T. 2015. Think or sink: Leading in a VUCA World. *Leader to Leader*, **201**(76):35–40.

Bond, A. & Naughton, N. 2011. The role of coaching in managing leadership transitions. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, **6**(2):165–179.

Boyce, L.A., Zaccaro, S.J. & Wisecarver, M.Z. 2010. Propensity for self-development of leadership attributes: Understanding, predicting, and supporting performance of leader self-development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **21**(1):159–178.

Boyd, N.G. & Taylor, R.R. 1998. A developmental approach to the examination of friendship in leader–follower relationships. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **9**(1):1–25.

Bradford, J. 1995. Role change: Are you wasting talent? *Management Development Review*, **8**(6):9–12.

Bridges, W. 2003. *Managing transitions*. Second edition. New York, NY: Perseus Books.

Brock, V. 2010. *The secret history of coaching*. European Mentoring and Coaching Conference, Dublin. [Online] available: <http://www.vikkibrock.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/emcc-2010-secret-of-coaching-history-paper-brock.pdf> [Accessed 3 May 2017].

Brookfield, S. 1995. Adult learning: An overview. In A. Tuinjman (ed.). *International Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 375–380.

Brookfield, S. 2001. Repositioning ideology critique in a critical theory of adult learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, **52**(1):7–22.

Brookfield, S.D. 2012. Critical theory and transformative learning. In E. Taylor & P.A. Cranton (eds.). *The handbook of transformative learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 131–146.

Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. 2007. What can grounded theorists and action researchers learn from each other? In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (eds.). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. London: Sage, 398–417.

Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D. & Maguire, P. 2003. Why action research? *Action Research*, **1**(1):9–28.

Bunker, K., Kram, K. & Ting, S. 2002. The young and the clueless. *Harvard Business Review*, **80**(12):80–87.

Carey, T.A. and Mullan, R.J. 2004. What is socratic questioning?. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, **41**(3):217.

Casey, G. 2014. Leading in a VUCA world. *Fortune Magazine*, 7 April: 75–76.

- Cavanagh, M. 2006. Coaching from a systemic perspective: A complex adaptive conversation. In D. Strober (ed.). *Evidence based coaching handbook*. NJ: Wiley, 313–354.
- Charan, R., Drotter, S. & Noel, J. 2011. *The leadership pipeline*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley.
- Charmaz, K. 2014. *Constructing grounded theory*. London: Sage.
- Cheney, R.S. 2010. Empirical measurement of perspective transformation, 1999–2009. Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.
- Choy, S. 2009. Transformational learning in the workplace. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 7(1):65–84.
- Ciporen, R. 2015. The emerging field of executive and organizational coaching: An overview. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 148:5–15.
- Clutterbuck, D. & Megginson D. 1999. *Mentoring executives and directors*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Collins, J. 2001. *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap and others don't*. New York, NY: Harper Business.
- COMENSA (Coaches and Mentors of South Africa). 2013. *Code of ethics*. [Online] available: [http://www.comensa.org.za/PROFESSIONAL\\_PRACTICE/Portfolio\\_Committees/Ethics\\_Portfolio\\_Committee/Code\\_of\\_Ethics.aspx](http://www.comensa.org.za/PROFESSIONAL_PRACTICE/Portfolio_Committees/Ethics_Portfolio_Committee/Code_of_Ethics.aspx) [Accessed 2 June 2014].
- Coughlan, D. & Brannick, T. 2001. *Doing action research in your own organisation*. London: Sage.
- Coughlan, P. & Coghlan, D. 2002. Action research for operations management. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 22(2):220–240.
- Cox, E., Bachkirova, T. & Clutterbuck, D. 2014. Theoretical traditions and coaching genres: Mapping the territory. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 16(2):139–160.
- Cranton, P. 1994. *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. 2005. Transformative learning. In L. English (ed.). *International Encyclopedia of Adult Education*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 630–637.
- Cranton, P. 2006. *Understanding and promoting transformative learning*. Second edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. & Hoggan, C. 2012. Evaluating transformative learning. In E. Taylor & P. Cranton (eds.). *The handbook of transformative learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 520–535.
- Crawshaw, L. 2010. Coaching abrasive leaders: using action research to reduce suffering and increase productivity in organizations. *International Journal of Coaching in Organizations*, 29(8):1.

Creswell, J. 2009. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V.L., Gutmann, M.L. & Hanson, W.E. 2003. Advanced mixed methods research designs. *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*, 209, 240.

Cross, R., Borgatti, S.P. & Parker, A. 2002. Making invisible work visible: Using social network analysis to support strategic collaboration. *California Management Review*, **44**(2):25–46.

Crotty, M. 1998. *The foundations of social research*. London: Sage.

Dai, G., Tang, K.Y. & De Meuse, K. 2011. Leadership competencies across organizational levels: A test of the pipeline model. *Journal of Management Development*, **30**(4):366–380.

Davison, R., Martinsons, M. & Kock, N. 2004. Principles of canonical action research. *Information Systems Journal*, **14**:65–86.

Davison, R., Martinsons, M. & Ou, C. 2012. The role of theory in canonical action research. *MIS Quarterly*, **36**(3):763–786.

Day, D. & Antonakis, J. 2012. *The nature of leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Day, D., Fleenor, J., Atwater, L., Sturm, R. & McKee, R. 2014. Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **25**(1):63–82.

De Haan, E. & Duckworth, A. 2013. Signaling a new trend in coaching outcome research. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, **8**(1):6–20.

Denton, J. & Van Lill, J. 2006. Managerial derailment. *Vilakshan, XIMB Journal of Management*, August: 231–250.

Dick, B. 2000. *Cycles within cycles*. [Online] available: [http://www.uq.net.au/action\\_research/arp/cycles.html](http://www.uq.net.au/action_research/arp/cycles.html) [Accessed 14 April 2014].

Dick, B., Stringer, E. & Huxham, C. 2009. Theory in action research. *Action Research*, **7**(1):5–12.

Dirkx, J.M. 2006. Engaging emotions in adult learning: A Jungian perspective on emotion and transformative learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, **2006**(109):15–26.

Dotlich, D.L., Noel, J.L. & Walker, N. 2004. *Leadership passages*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley.

Dreher, M. 1994. Qualitative research methods from the reviewer's perspective. In J. Morse (ed.). *Critical issues in qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 281–297.

Drucker, P. 1998. Management's new paradigms. *Forbes*, **162**(7):152–170.

Eagly, A.H. 2005. Achieving relational authenticity in leadership: Does gender matter? *The Leadership Quarterly*, **16**(3):459–474.

- Elo, S. & Kyngas, H. 2008. The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, **62**(1):107–115.
- Elrod, P. & Tippett, D. 2002. The “death valley” of change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, **15**(3):273–291.
- Elsner, R. & Farrands, B. 2006. *Lost in transition: How business leaders can successfully take charge in new roles*. London: Marshall Cavendish & Cyan Communications.
- Facteau, C.L., Facteau, J.D., Schoel, L.C., Russell, J.E. & Poteet, M.L. 1998. Reactions of leaders to 360-degree feedback from subordinates and peers. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **9**(4):427–448.
- Fleenor, J.W., Smither, J.W., Atwater, L.E., Braddy, P.W. & Sturm, R.E. 2010. Self-other rating agreement in leadership: A review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **21**(6):1005–1034.
- Flick, U. 2014. *An introduction to qualitative research*. Fifth edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Freedman, A. 2011. Some implications of validation of the leadership pipeline concept: Guidelines for assisting managers-in-transition. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, **14**:140–159.
- Gardner, H. 1983. *Frame of mind*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gardner, W.L., Avolio, B.J., Luthans, F., May, D.R. & Walumbwa, F. 2005. “Can you see the real me?” A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **16**(3):343–372.
- Gibbs, G.R. 2010. *Five short videos from a lecture on grounded theory*. [Online] available: [http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/movies/Grounded\\_Theory/index.php#Part1](http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/movies/Grounded_Theory/index.php#Part1) [Accessed 21 August 2013].
- Glaser, B. 1998. *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussion*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. 1967. Grounded Theory: The discovery of grounded theory. *Sociology The Journal Of The British Sociology Association*, **12**:27–49.
- Glaser, B.G. 1978. *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Goleman, D. 1996. *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Goulding, C. 2002. *Grounded theory: A practical guide for management, business and market researchers*. Londong: Sage.
- Grant, A., Passmore, J., Cavanagh, M. & Parker, H. 2010. The state of play in coaching today: A comprehensive review of the field. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, **25**:125–167.
- Grant, A. & Stober, D. 2006. Introduction. In D. Stober & A. Grant (eds.). *Evidence based coaching: Putting best practices to work for your clients*. New York, NY: Wiley, 1–14.

- Gray, D.E. 2006. Executive coaching: Towards a dynamic alliance of psychotherapy and transformative learning processes. *Management Learning*, **37**(4):475–497.
- Greenall, P. 2006. The barriers to patient-driven treatment in mental health: Why patients may choose to follow their own path. *Leadership in Health Services*, **19**(1):11–25.
- Greenwood, D.J. & Levin, M. 2007. *Introduction to action research*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guillen, L. & Ibarra, H. 2009. Seasons of a leader's development: Beyond a one-size fits all approach to designing interventions. *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, **2009**(1):1–6.
- Gummesson, E. 2000. *Qualitative methods in management research*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Habermas, J. 1996. *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Henderson-Loney, J. 1996. Tuckman and tears: Developing teams during profound organizational change. *Supervision*, **57**(5):3–6.
- Henfridsson, O. & Lindgren, R. 2005. Multi-contextuality in ubiquitous computing: Investigating the car case through action research. *Information and Organization*, **15**(2):95–124.
- Hill, L. 2007. Becoming the boss. *Harvard Business Review*, **85**(1): 49–56.
- Hirst, G., Mann, L., Bain, P., Pirola-Merlo, A. & Richter, A. 2004. Learning to lead: The development and testing of a model of leadership learning. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **15**(3):311–327.
- Hitt, M. & Ireland, R. 2002. The essence of strategic leadership: Managing human and social capital. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, **9**:3–14.
- Hogan, J., Hogan, R. & Kaiser, R.B. 2010. Management derailment: Personality assessment and mitigation. In S. Zedeck (ed.). *American Psychological Association handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*. Vol. 3. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 555–575.
- Hoggan, C. 2016. Transformative learning as a metatheory: Definition, criteria, and typology. *Adult Education Quarterly*, **66**(1):57–75.
- Hooijberg, R., Hunt, J.G. & Dodge, G.E. 1997. Leadership complexity and development of the Leaderplex Model. *Journal of Management*, **23**:375–408.
- Horney, N., Pasmore, B. & O'Shea, T. 2010. Leadership agility: A business imperative for a VUCA world. *People & Strategy*, **33**(4):32–38.
- Hsieh, H. & Shannon, S. 2005. Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, **15**(9):1277–1288.

Hyatt, C. 1990. *Shifting gears: How to master career change and find the work that's right for you*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

ICF (International Coach Federation). 2013. *2013 ICF Organizational Coaching Study*. [Online] available: <https://www.coachfederation.org/files/FileDownloads/2013OrgCoachingStudy.pdf> [Accessed 3 May 2017].

ICF (International Coach Federation). 2016. [Online] available: [https://www.coachfederation.org/files/FileDownloads/2016ICFGlobalCoachingStudy\\_ExecutiveSummary.pdf](https://www.coachfederation.org/files/FileDownloads/2016ICFGlobalCoachingStudy_ExecutiveSummary.pdf) [Accessed 3 May 2017].

Ilies, R., Morgeson, F.P. & Nahrgang, J.D. 2005. Authentic leadership and eudaemonic well-being: Understanding leader-follower outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **16**(3):373–394.

Illeris, K. 2008. What is special about adult learning? In J. Crowther & P. Sutherland (eds.). *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts*. London: Routledge, 15–23.

Isopahkala-Bouret, U. 2008. Transformative learning in managerial role transitions. *Studies in Continuing Education*, **30**(1):69–84.

Jackson, M. 2003. *Systems thinking: Creative holism for managers*. Chichester: Wiley.

James, E.A., Slater, T. & Bucknam, A. 2011. *Action research for business, nonprofit, and public administration: A tool for complex times*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jaques, E. 1956. *Measurement of responsibility: A study of work, payment and individual capacity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Jaques, E. 1996. *Requisite organisation*. Gloucester, MA: Cason Hall.

Johansen, B. 2013. Navigating the VUCA world. *Research-Technology Management*, **56**(1):10–15.

Kahn, M. 2011. Coaching on the axis: An integrative and systemic approach to business coaching. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, **6**(2):194–210.

Kaiser, R. 2011. The leadership pipeline: Fad, fashion, or empirical fact? An introduction to the special issue. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, **14**:71–75.

Kaiser, R., Craig, S., Overfield, D. & Yarborough, P. 2011. Differences in managerial jobs at the bottom, middle, and top: A review of empirical research. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, **14**(2):76–91.

Katz, D. & Kahn, R.L. 1978. *The social psychology of organizations*. Second edition. New York, NY: Wiley.

Kaufman, B. 2006. The role of executive coaching in performance management. *Handbook of Business Strategy*, **7**(1):287–291.

- Kauffman, C. & Coutu, D. 2009. The realities of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review*, **87**(1):6–7.
- Kegan, R. 1994. *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kember, D., Leung, D.Y., Jones, A., Loke, A.Y., McKay, J., Sinclair, K., Tse, H., Webb, C., Yuet Wong, F.K., Wong, M., Yeung, E. 2000. Development of a questionnaire to measure the level of reflective thinking. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, **25**(4):381–395.
- Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. 2000. Participatory action research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (ed.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 567–605.
- Kets de Vries, M.F.K. 2006. The spirit of despotism: Understanding the tyrant within. *Human Relations*, **59**(2):195–220.
- Kilburg, R.R. 1996. Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, **48**(2):134–144.
- King, K. 2004. Both sides now: Examining transformative learning and professional development of educators. *Innovative Higher Education*, **29**(2):155–174.
- King, K. 2009. *The handbook of the evolving research of transformative learning based on the learning activities survey*. Tenth edition. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Kitchenham, A. 2008. The evolution of John Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, **6**(2):104–123.
- Knowles, M. 1970. *The modern practice of adult education*. Vol. 41. New York, NY: New York Association Press.
- Knowles, M. 1989. *The making of an adult educator: An autobiographical journey*. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kock, N. 2004. The three threats of action research: A discussion of methodological antidotes in the context of an information systems study. *Decision Support Systems*, **37**(2):265–286.
- Kolb, D.A. 2014. *Experiential learning: Experience as a source of learning and development*. Pearson: FT Press.
- Kombarakaran, F., Yang, J., Baker, M. & Fernandes, P. 2008. Executive coaching: It works! *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, **60**(1):78–90.
- Kübler-Ross, E. & Kessler, D. 2005. *On grief and grieving: Finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Lane, D. & Corrie, S. 2007. *The modern scientist-practitioner: A guide to practice in psychology*. Oxford: Routledge.

- Leihan, D. 2011. Public opinion polls: Useless in our volatile society? *Huffington Post*, 19 June 2011. [Online] available: [www.huffingtonpost.ca/donald-lenihan/public-opinion-polls\\_b\\_879785.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/donald-lenihan/public-opinion-polls_b_879785.html) [Accessed 10 April 2017].
- Lewin, K. 1952. Group decision and social change. In G. W. Swanson, T. M. Newcomb & E. L. Hartley (eds.). *Readings in Social Psychology*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.
- Ligon, G.S., Hunter, S.T. & Mumford, M.D. 2008. Development of outstanding leadership: A life narrative approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **19**(3):312–334.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. 1985. *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lombardo, M. & Eichinger, R. 1995. *Preventing derailment: What to do before it's too late*. Greensboro: Centre for Creative Learning.
- Lombardo, M. & McCauley, C. 1988. *The dynamics of management derailment*. Greensboro: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Lombardo, M.M. & Eichinger, R.W. 2002. *The leadership machine: Architecture to develop leaders for any future*. Minneapolis, MA: Lominger.
- Luthans, F. & Avolio, B.J. 2003. Authentic leadership: A positive developmental approach. In K. Cameron, J. Dutton & R. Quinn (eds.). *Positive organizational scholarship*. San Francisco, CA: Barrett-Koehler, 241–261.
- Maltbia, T.E., Marsick, V.J. & Ghosh, R. 2014. Executive and organizational coaching: A review of insights drawn from literature to inform HRD practice. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, **16**(2):161–182.
- Manderscheid, S. 2008. New leader assimilation: An intervention for leaders in transition. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, **10**(5):686–702.
- Manderscheid, S. & Ardichvili, A. 2008. A conceptual model for leadership transition. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, **20**(1):113–129.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. 1995. Data collection methods. *Designing Qualitative Research*, **2**(8).
- Martin, J. 2015. *Ascending to the C-suite*. McKinsey.
- Martin, J. & Gentry, W. 2011. Derailment signs across generations: More in common than expected. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, **14**:177–195.
- McCall, M. & Lombardo, M. 1983. *Off the track: Why and how successful executives get derailed*. Greensboro: Center for Creative Leadership.
- McLaughlin, M. 2013. Less is more: The executive coach's experience of working on the telephone. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, **7**:1–13.

- McMorland, J. 2005. Are you big enough for your job? Is your job big enough for you? Exploring levels of work in organisations. *University of Auckland Business Review*, **7**(2):75–83.
- Merriam, S. 2001. Andragogy and self-directed learning: Pillars of adult learning theory. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 89:3–13.
- Mezirow, J. 1978. Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, **28**(1):100–110.
- Mezirow, J. 1985. A critical theory of self-directed learning. In S. Brookfield (ed.). *Self-directed learning: From theory to practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 17–30.
- Mezirow, J. 1990. *How critical reflection triggers transformative learning: Fostering critical reflection in adulthood*, 1:20.
- Mezirow, J. 1991. *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. 1994. Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, **44**(4):222–232.
- Mezirow, J. 1995. Transformation theory of adult learning. In M. Welton (ed.). *In defense of the lifeworld*. New York, NY: SUNY, 39–70.
- Mezirow, J. 1997. Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, **74**:5–12.
- Mezirow, J. 2008. An overview on transformative learning. In J. Crowther & P. Sutherland (eds.). *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts*. London: Routledge, 24–38.
- Mezirow, J. & Associates. 2000. *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mumford, M., Marks, M.A., Connelly, M.S., Zaccaro, S.J. & Reiter-Palmon, R. 2000. Development of leadership skills: Experience and timing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **11**(1):87–114.
- Mumford, M., Zaccaro, S.J., Johnson, J.F., Diana, M., Gilbert, J.A. & Threlfall, K. 2000. Patterns of leader characteristics: Implications for performance and development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **11**(1):115–133.
- Mumford, M.D., Zaccaro, S.J., Harding, F.D., Jacobs, T.O. & Fleishman, E.A. 2000. Leadership skills for a changing world: Solving complex social problems. *Leadership Quarterly*, **11**:11–35.
- Mumford, T.V., Campion, M.A. & Morgeson, F.P. 2007. The leadership skills strataplex: Leadership skill requirements across organizational levels. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **18**(2):154–166.
- Murphy, E. & Dingwall, R. 2001. The ethics of ethnography. In P. Atkinson & A Coffey (eds.) *Handbook of ethnography*. London: Sage, 339–352.
- Murphy, M. & Fleming, T. 2008. The application of the ideas of Habermas to adult learning. In J. Crowther (ed.). *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts*. London: Routledge, 48–57.

- Neenan, M. 2009. *Developing resilience: A cognitive-behavioural approach*. London: Routledge.
- Newman, M. 2012. Calling transformative learning into question: Some mutinous thoughts. *Adult Education Quarterly*, **62**(1):36–55.
- O'Connell, P. 2014. A simplified framework for 21st century leader development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **25**(2):183–203.
- Olivero, G., Bane, K.D. & Kopelman, R.E. 1997. Executive coaching as a transfer of training tool: Effects on productivity in a public agency. *Public personnel management*, **26**(4):461-469.
- Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L. & Wynaden, D. 2000. Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, **33**(1):93–96.
- Ortlipp, M. 2008. Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process. *The qualitative report*, **13**(4):695-705.
- Passmore, J. & Fillery-Travis, A. 2011. A critical review of executive coaching research: A decade of progress and what's to come. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, **4**(2):70–88.
- Peltier, B. 2010. *The psychology of executive coaching: Theory and application*. Second edition. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Perlman, D. & Takacs, G. 1990. The ten stages of change. *Nursing Management*, **21**(4):33-38.
- Petrock, F. 1990. Planning the leadership transition. *Journal of Business Strategy*, **11**(6):14–16.
- Piaget, J. 1972. Intellectual evolution from adolescent to adulthood. *Human Development*, **16**:346–370.
- Porter, L. & McLaughlin, G. 2006. Leadership and the organizational context: Like the weather? *The Leadership Quarterly*, **17**:559–576.
- Poutiatine, M.I. 2010. What is transformation? Nine principles toward an understanding of the transformational process for transformational leadership. *Journal of Transformative Education*, **7**(3):189–208.
- Reason, P. 1999. Integrating action and reflection through co-operative inquiry. *Management Learning*, **30**(2):207–226.
- Reynolds, G. 2011. Exploring the meaning of coaching for newly appointed senior leaders in their first twelve to eighteen months in role. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, Special issue, **5**:39–53.
- Rich, G.A. 1998. Selling and sales management in action: The constructs of sales coaching: Supervisory feedback, role modelling and trust. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, **18**(1):53–63.

- Rodriguez, A. & Rodriguez, Y. 2015. Metaphors for today's leadership: VUCA world, millennial and "cloud leaders". *Journal of Management Development*, **34**(7):854–866.
- Rooke, D. & Torbert, W. 2005. Seven Transformation of Leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, **83**(4):66–76.
- Russel, S.S. 2006. An overview of adult-learning processes. *Urologic Nursing*, **26**(5):349–370.
- Sammut, K. 2014. Transformative learning theory and coaching: Application in practice. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, Special issue, **8**:39–53.
- Scandura, T. 1992. Mentoring and career mobility: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, **13**(2):169–174.
- Scandura, T.A. & Lankau, M.J. 1996. Developing diverse leaders: A leader–member exchange approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **7**(2):243–263.
- Schachter, C.L., Teram, E. & Stalker, C.A. 2004. Integrating grounded theory and action research to develop sensitive practice with survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In K. Hammell & C. Carpenter (eds.). *Qualitative research in evidence-based rehabilitation*. Edinburgh: Harcourt, 77–88.
- Scharmer, C. 2009. *Theory U: Learning from the future as it emerges*. San-Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Schein, E. 1995. Process consultation, action research and clinical enquiry, are they the same? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, **10**(6):14–19.
- Schön, D.A. 1991. *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Schwab, K. 2016. *The fourth Industrial Revolution*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.
- Seifert, C.F. & Yukl, G. 2010. Effects of repeated multi-source feedback on the influence behavior and effectiveness of managers: A field experiment. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **21**(5):856–866.
- Shamir, B. & Eilam, G. 2005. "What's your story?" A life-stories approach to authentic leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **6**(3):395–417.
- Simpson, J. 2010. In what ways does coaching contribute to effective leadership development. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, **4**(10):114–133.
- Snyder, C. 2008. Grabbing hold of a moving target: Identifying and measuring the transformative learning process. *Journal of Transformative Education*, **6**(3):159–181.
- Sparrow, S. 2007. Leading the leaders. *Training & Coaching Today*, July/August: 22–23.
- Sparrowe, R.T. 2005. Authentic leadership and the narrative self. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **16**(3):419–439.

- Stacey, R. 2011. *Strategic management and organisational dynamics: The challenges of complexity*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Stelter, R. 2013. Third generation coaching. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, **8**(2).
- Stern, P. 1994. Eroding grounded theory. In J. Morse (ed.). *Critical issues in qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 212–223.
- Sternberg, R.J. 2008. The WICS approach to leadership: Stories of leadership and the structures and processes that support them. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **19**(3):360–371.
- Stiehm, J.H. & Townsend, N. 2002. *The U.S. Army War College: Military education in a democracy*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Stober, D.R. & Grant, A.M. 2006. Toward a contextual approach to coaching models. In D.R. Stober, & A.M. Grant (eds.) *Evidence-based coaching handbook*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Stout-Rostron, S. 2012. *Business coaching-wisdom and practice: Unlocking the secrets of business coaching*. Randburg: Knowres.
- Stout-Rostron, S. 2014. *Leadership coaching for results: Cutting-edge practices for coach and client*. Randburg: Knowres.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. 1990. *Basic qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Susman, G. & Evered, R. 1978. An assessment of the scientific merits of action research. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **23**(4):582–603.
- Sutton, J. 2008. Coaching leadership transitions. *The 2008 Pfeiffer Annual Leadership Development*. Wiley, 199–207.
- Taylor, E. 1997. Building upon the theoretical debate: A critical review of the empirical studies of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, **48**(1):34–60.
- Taylor, E. & Snyder, M. 2010. A critical review of research on transformative learning theory, 2006–2010. In E. Taylor & P. Cranton (eds.). *The handbook of transformative learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 37–55.
- Taylor, E.W. 2001. Transformative learning theory: A neurobiological perspective of the role of emotions and unconscious ways of knowing. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, **20**(3):218–236.
- Taylor, E.W. 2007. An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999–2005). *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, **26**(2):173–191.
- Teram, E., Schachter, C. & Stalker, C. 2005. The case for integrating grounded theory and participatory action research: Empowering clients to inform professional practice. *Qualitative Health Research*, **15**(8):1129–1140.

- Terblanche, N. 2014. Knowledge sharing in the organizational context: Using social network analysis as a coaching tool. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, **12**(2):146–164.
- Terblanche, N.H.D, Albertyn, R. & Van Coller-Peter, S. 2017. Designing a coaching intervention to support leaders promoted into senior positions. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, **15**:1–10.
- Terblanche, N.H.D, Albertyn, R. & Van Coller-Peter, S. 2017. Developing leaders by supporting their transitions into senior positions. *South African Journal of Business Management*. [in press]
- Theeboom, T., Beersma, B. & Van Vianen, A. 2013. Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, **9**(1):1–18.
- Tolliver, D.E. & Tisdell, E.J. 2006. Engaging spirituality in the transformative higher education classroom. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, **109**:37–47.
- Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R. & McKelvey, B. 2007. Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **18**(4):298–318.
- Van Velsor, E. & Leslie, J. 1995. Why executives derail: Perspectives across time and cultures. *Academy of Management Executive*, **9**(4):62–72.
- Volberda, H.W. 1996. Toward the flexible form: How to remain vital in hypercompetitive environments. *Organization Science*, **7**(4):359–374.
- Wastell, D. 2001. Barriers to effective knowledge management: Action research meets grounded theory. *Journal of Systems and Information Technology*, **5**(2):628–639.
- Watkins, M. 2003. *The first 90 days*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Watkins, M.D. 2009. Picking the right transition strategy. *Harvard Business Review*, January: 47–53.
- Weinstock, B. 2011. The hidden challenges in role transitions and how leadership coaching can help new leaders find solid ground. *Holistic Nursing Practice*, **25**(4):211–214.
- Whitworth, L., Kimsey-House, K., Kimsey-House, H. & Sandahl, P. 2007. *Co-active coaching: New skills for coaching people to success in work and life*. Second edition. Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black.
- Wild River, S. 2005. Enhancing the sustainability efforts of local governments. *International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development*, **1**(1/2):46–64.
- Willis, J.W. & Jost, M. 2007. *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. London: Sage.

Witherspoon, R. & Cannon, M. 2004. Coaching leaders in transition. In A. Buono (ed.). *Creative consulting: Innovative perspectives on management consulting*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age, 201–227.

Witherspoon, R. & White, R. 1996. Executive coaching: A continuum of roles. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, **48**(2):124.

Wright, J. 2007. Stress in the workplace: A coaching approach. *Work: Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation*, **28**:279–284.

Zaccaro, S.J. 2001. *The nature of executive leadership*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Zaccaro, S.J., Wood, G. & Herman, J. 2006. Developing the adaptive and global leader: HRM strategies within a career-long perspective. *The human resources revolution: Why putting people first matters*. 277–302.

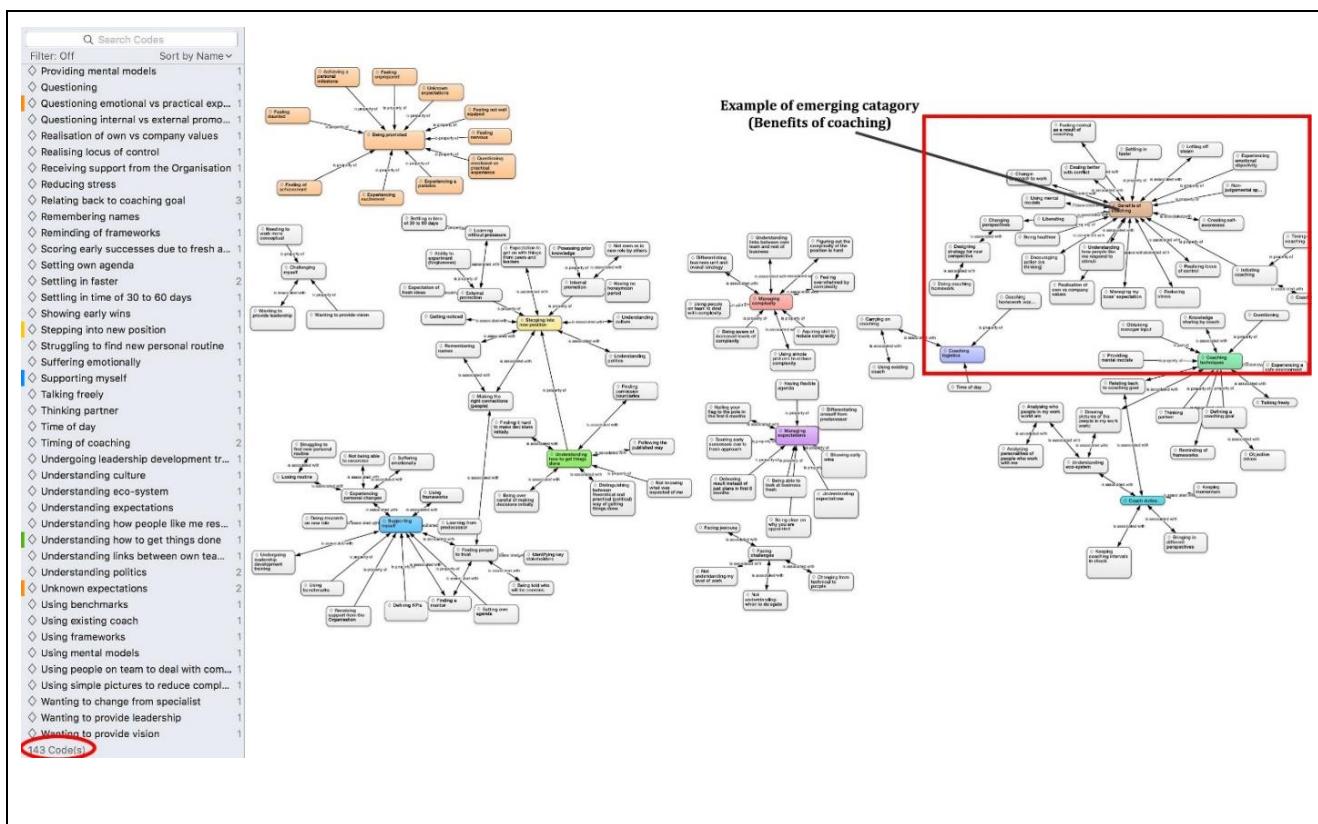
Zaleznik, A. 1992. Managers and leaders: Are they different? *Harvard Business Review*, March/April: 126–1133.

Zuber-Skerrit, O. 2001. Action learning and action research: Paradigm, praxis and programs. In S. Sankaran, B. Dick, R. Passfield & P. Swepson (eds.). *Effective change management using action learning and action research: Concepts, frameworks, processes, applications*. Lismore: Southern Cross University. 1–20.

## APPENDIX A

### ILLUSTRATION OF THE GROUNDED THEORY CODING PROCESS

This appendix illustrates the process of category reduction and theme identification (using grounded theory principles) during the foundation phase, via a set of ATLAS.ti network topologies and a specific example. Figure A.1 illustrates that after the initial coding of the first interview, 143 codes were identified (red circle, bottom left). The codes were grouped into initial clusters based on common themes. One such emerging cluster of codes labelled 'Benefits of coaching' is indicated by the red square and a detailed view is illustrated in the subsequent diagram (Figure A.2).



**Figure A.1: Network view after coding of interview 1**

Source: Author's own compilation

After the first interview, a number of potential categories emerged. 'Benefits of coaching' (Figure A.2) is an example of such an emerging category.

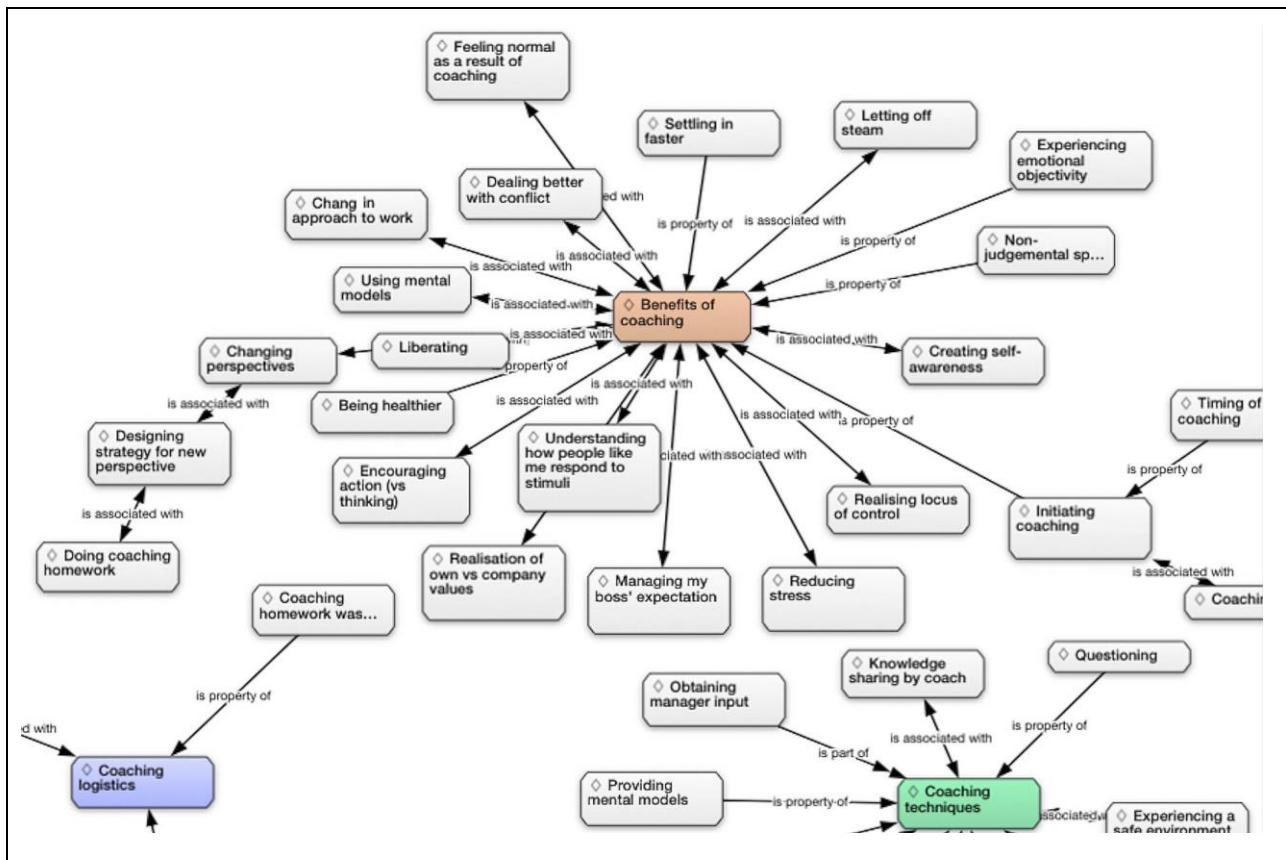
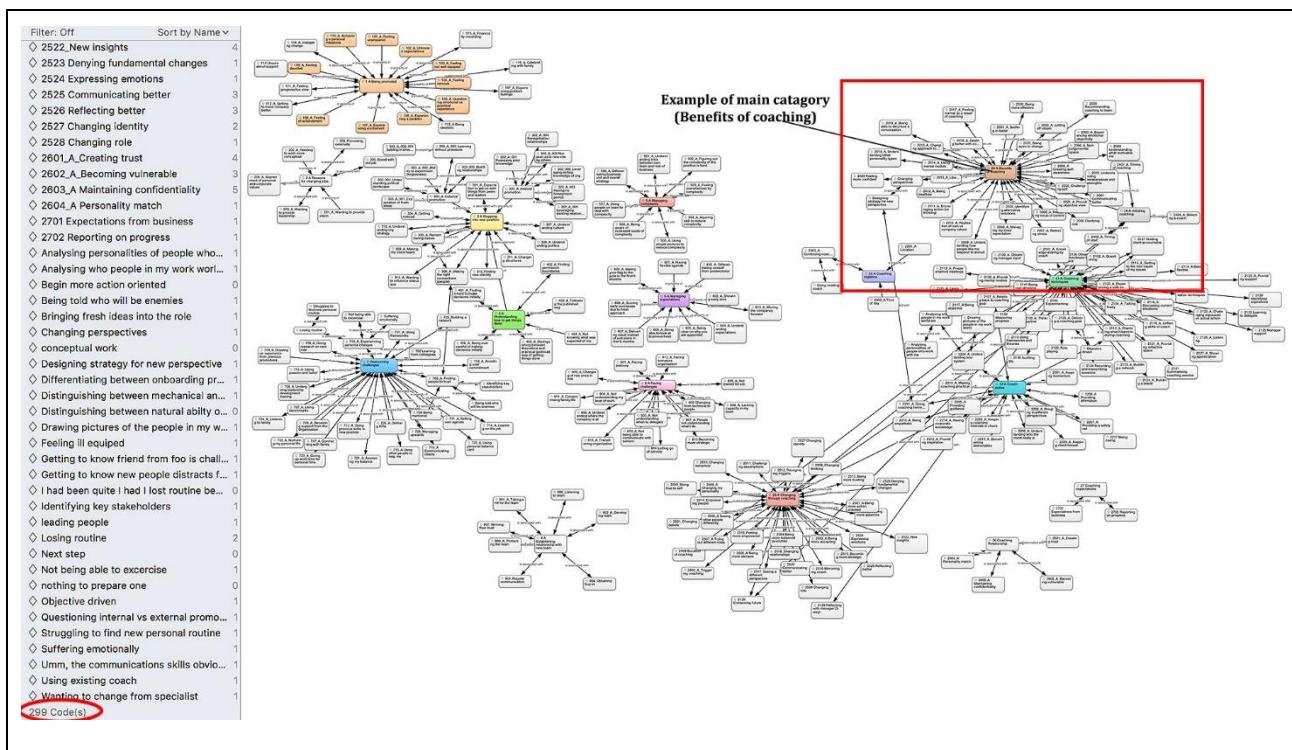


Figure A.2: Detailed view of emerging category 'Benefits of coaching' after interview 1

Source: Author's own compilation

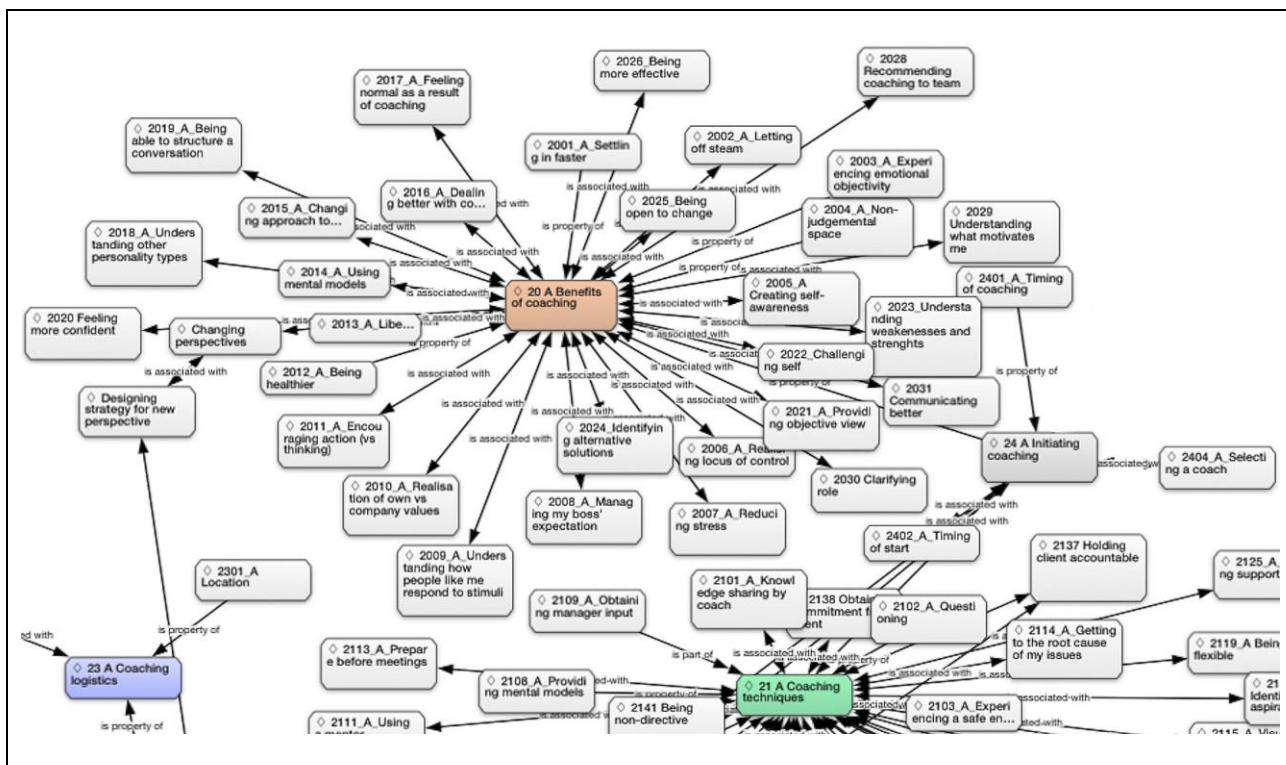
Figure A.3 indicates that after the coding of interview 6, there were 299 codes (red circle, bottom left). The increased data richness is illustrated in the detailed view (red square) of the 'Benefits of coaching' category in Figure A.4.



**Figure A.3: Network view after coding of interview 6**

Source: Author's own compilation

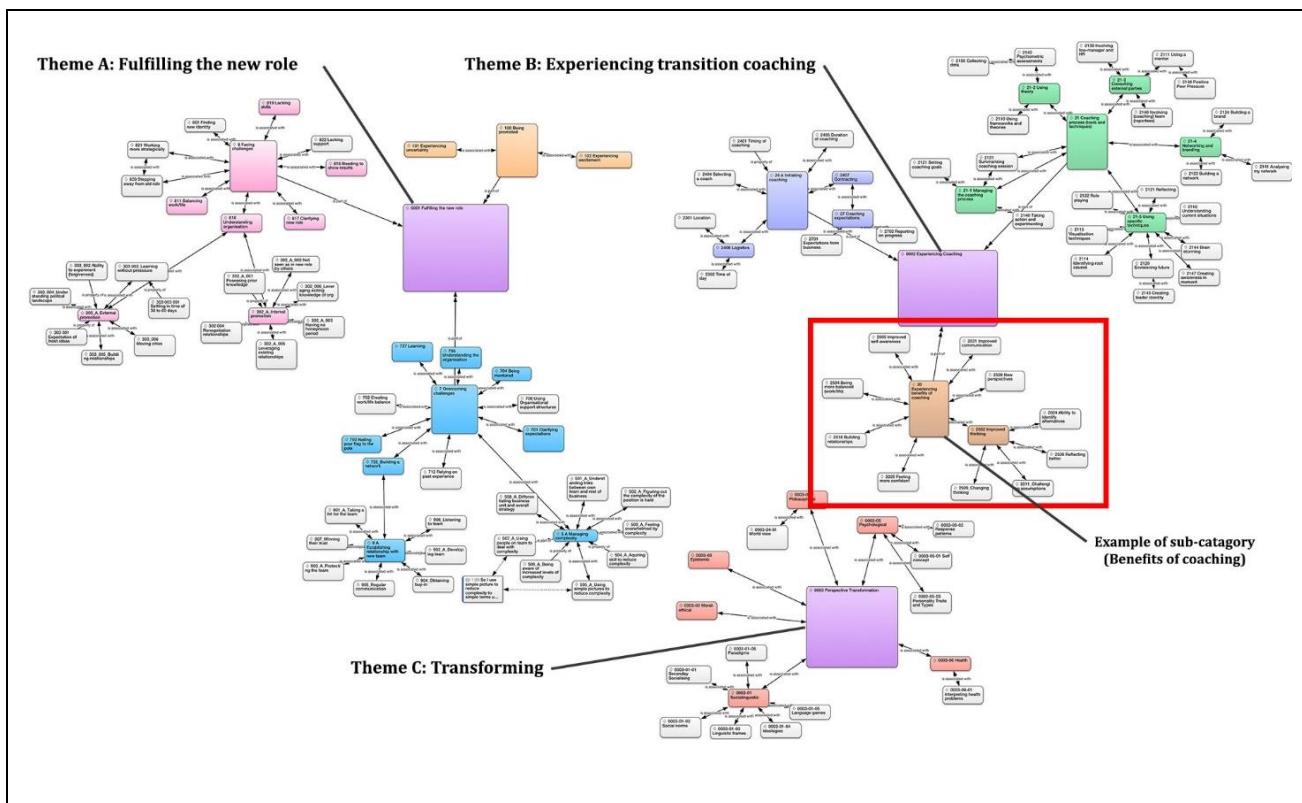
Figure A.4 below shows that after interview 6, the emerging category 'Benefits of coaching' contained more codes compared to after the first interview (Figure A.2). At this point initial coding was still in progress and no attempt had been made to combine or reduce codes.



**Figure A.4: Detailed view of emerging category 'Benefits of coaching' after interview 6**

Source: Author's own compilation

After the sixteenth interview and the application of focussed and theoretical coding, the final set of three main themes and their sub-categories emerged as illustrated in Figure A.5 below. The three themes 'Fulfilling the new role', 'Experiencing transition coaching' and 'Transforming' are indicated in Figure A.5. Each theme contained a number of sub-categories (detailed view in Figure 3.3). The red square continues the example of the previous diagrams and indicates how the emerging category 'Benefits of coaching' eventually became a sub-category of the theme 'Experiencing transition coaching'. The detailed view is provided in Figure A.6.



**Figure A.5: Network view after final coding sequence**

Source: Author's own compilation

'Experiencing benefits of coaching' (detailed view below) indicates how category reduction through focussed and theoretical coding yielded the essence of the sub-category. This progression is clear when comparing Figures A.2, A.4 and A.6. A similar process was followed to derive all other sub-categories. The final result is illustrated in Figure 3.3 in Chapter 3.

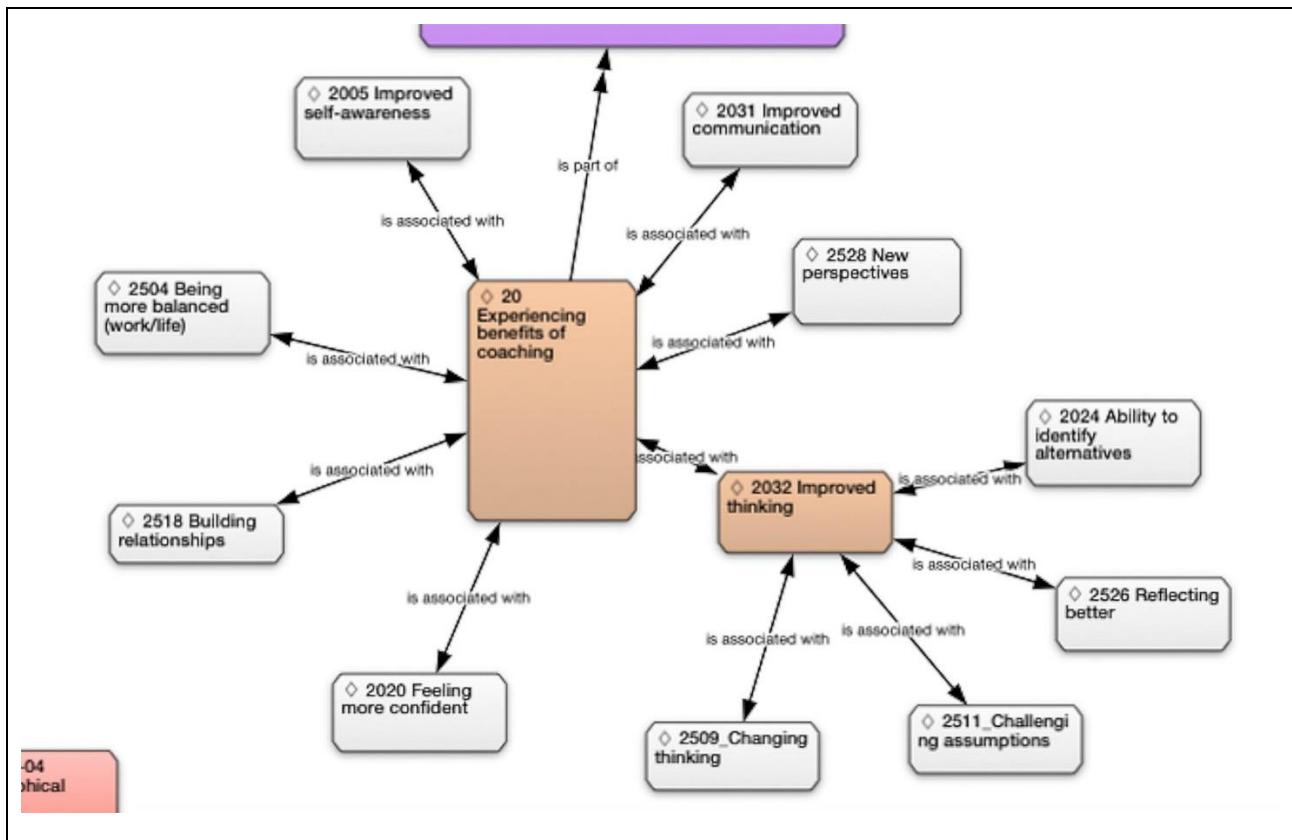


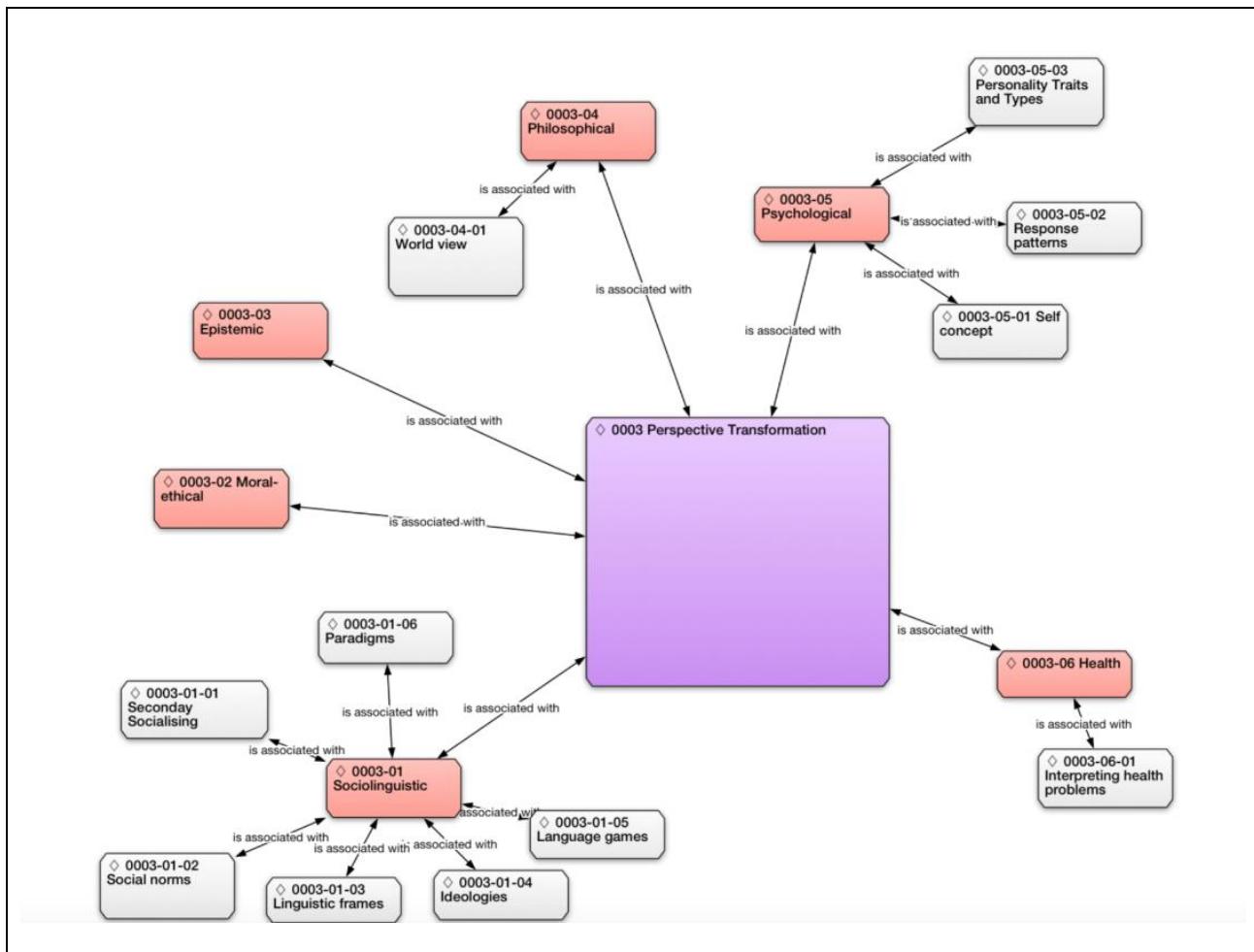
Figure A.6: Detailed view of sub-category 'Benefits of coaching' after final coding

Source: Author's own compilation

## APPENDIX B

### EXTRACT FROM DEDUCTIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS FOR INSTANCES OF PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION

During the foundation phase, the 16 interviews were subjected to deductive and summative content analysis. Figure A.1 below captured the instance in the interviews where participants referred to 'deep, lasting, permanent' changes in their worldviews.



**Figure B.1: Instances of possible transformative learning after deductive content analysis**

For each potential transformative learning instance, the text was analysed to attempt to identify a specific coaching technique used by the coach. The combination of types of perspective changes (rows) and types of coaching techniques used (columns) was captured in the spreadsheet below.

		TL Coaching Technique														
		Listening	Questioning	Reflection	Goal setting	Active experimentation	Frameworks and theory	Assessments	External parties	Networking and branding	Current situation	Future vision	Coachee commitment	Challenging views and providing different perspectives	Unclear	
TL Perspective	Socio-linguistic	3	8	8	1	15	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	11	3	
	Secondary Socialising					1	1							1	1	
	Social Norms	1	1	2			1							2		
	Linguistic Frames	1	3	4		7	2							6		
	Ideologies						1									
	Language Games	1	1		1	4	3							1	1	
	Paradigms		3	2		2	1				1			1	1	
	Moral ethical	1	1	1		1	1							2		
	Epistemic		2	3		4	2									
	Philosophical	0	4	4	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	
Psychological	World View		4	4	1	4	1							2	1	
	Self-concept	5	22	13	3	16	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	5	
	Response patterns	1	11	6	2	7	2							8	1	
	Personality Traits and type	2	5	1	1	2	1							1	2	
	Theories	2	6	6		6	1							2	1	
	Scripts						1								1	
Health		0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Aesthetic															
Learning styles		9	37	29	5	41	17	0	0	1	0	0	1	27	9	
TOTAL																

**Figure B.2: Matrix of perspective transformations and coaching techniques used**

The highlighted cells indicate the most prevalent coaching techniques. The table below provides a detailed account of the classification and mapping of possible instances of transformative learning and coaching techniques used. The numbers in brackets refer to the TM and the line in the interview, e.g. (2:222) refers to TM2's interview at line 222.

**Table B.1: Detailed account of potential transformative learning instances and coaching techniques used**

Transformative learning perspective	Example of potential transformative learning instance from interviews	Coaching technique used by coach ( ? = unclear)
Sociolinguistic		
Secondary socialising	1. Experimenting with different roles in new job. (2:222)	Active experimentation
	2. Starting to act like a coach at work, mirroring the coach through seeing the value in a coaching approach. (3:325, 326)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	3. Changing roles from being a teacher to a coach. (3:345)	?
	4. Feeling confident to teach other people what I learnt in the coaching.	Frameworks and theory
Social norms	1. Changed relationships with daughter – not telling her what to do but asking questions instead. (3:353)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	2. Realising that people think differently to the way I thought they think. (2:221)	Reflection
	3. Realisation that I don't have to compromise my core values to be in a senior position (e.g. being a corporate bully). (3:332)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	4. Using different language to define boundaries, e.g. I won't stand for that; This is not acceptable; I will do this. (12:13)	Listening, questioning, reflection, active experimentation
Linguistic frames	1. I want my voice to be heard – learnt to speak up instead of keeping quiet. (2:240)	Frameworks and theory, active experimentation
	2. Expressing emotions. (5:514)	Questioning, reflection, challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation
	3. Saying the right things at the right time without having to change my personality. Speaking instead of writing when communicating (introvert). (6:555)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation
	4. Believing that I am a good speaker. (6:583)	Active experimentation

	5. Keeping quiet and allowing people to explain their view even though I already know the answer so as not to make them feel stupid. (7:23)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation
	6. Change in tone of voice, using appreciative language. (8:23)	Questioning, challenging views and providing different perspectives, reflection, active experimentation
	7. Reframing the word 'politics' which had negative associations for her to 'positive influencing'. (9:38)	Reflection, challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation
	8. Using more positive language when engaging with clients. (10:22)	Frameworks and theory, listening, reflection
	9. People expressing themselves differently. (11:24)	Questioning, challenging views and providing different perspectives
Ideologies	1. Now I agree with the majority that EQ has a bigger bearing on business success than IQ. This allows me to develop the EQ of people who report to me. (7:34)	Frameworks and theory
Language games	1. Learning to talk about feelings. (5:513)	Questioning, listening
	2. Having frank conversations earlier than in the past. (3:348)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	3. Improved non-superficial communication. (5:522)	Active experimentation
	4. Switching on and off the ability to listen vs. the ability to provide brutally frank opinions. (7:19)	Frameworks and theory, active experimentation
	5. Using stock phrases to resist saying the wrong thing, e.g. "that's an interesting view; tell me more." (7:22)	Frameworks and theory, active experimentation
	6. Being less disruptive in meetings by using new language. (13:11)	?
	7. Changing the way they talk to people. (14:11)	Goal setting
Paradigms	1. Having a more balanced life. (2:242)	?

	2. Being more open and honest with self about other approaches.	Questioning, challenging views and providing different perspectives, frameworks and theory
	3. Being able to separate my identity from that of the organisation and my job. (5:520)	Questioning, reflection
	4. The ability to build relationships and networks. (6:587)	Networking and branding
	5. Improved my tolerance for people who don't perform at my level – focusing more on the people side and not just the result. (8:18)	Active experimentation
	6. Accepting what I cannot change and learning to live with it. (13:21)	Reflection, questioning, active experimentation
<b>Moral-ethical</b>	1. Losing my moral compass due to needing to change my values to fit in at a senior level – realising this is not true. I have the power to decide. (3:351)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	2. Realising that while honesty is a core value of mine, I am not being honest with myself! (4:436)	Listening, questioning, challenging views and providing different perspectives, reflection
	3. Accepting people with their flaws, e.g. being homosexual, not being the sharpest tool in the shed. (8:16)	Frameworks and theory, active experimentation
	4. Questioning the meaning of his job, whether it is morally justifiable and ultimately resigning and joining another company where his values felt aligned. (9:56)	Questioning, reflection
	5. Changing her views on the company's moral health during a personally difficult time for her and when a line manager lost a close family member and "not even a call from his manager." (13:13)	Active experimentation
<b>Epistemic</b>	1. I always thought it was better to put things down in writing, but through the coaching I learnt that I can voice my opinion and that people will listen. (6:582)	Frameworks and theory, active experimentation, reflection
	2. Realising that knowing more than other people and telling them so can cause people to feel threatened. (7:23)	Frameworks and theory, active experimentation, reflection
	3. Changing views on what options are available to her to solve a business problem (moving from academic to private industry). (11:25)	Questioning, active experimentation

	4. Changing ways in which we view the system, how we make sense of the system and using that to sometimes act in ways that we consider uncharacteristic of how we see ourselves, but with the aim of aligning with the system of preventing abuse from the system, e.g. taking a firm stand against someone wanting to erode my area. (12:18)	Reflection, questioning, active experimentation
<b>Philosophical</b>	1. Better at accepting the perspectives of others. (8:21)	Questioning, active experimentation
	2. Finally realising the impact that his expat life had on his social and personal life. Re-evaluating priorities in life and make a change by exiting the expat life. (13:19)	Questioning, reflection, active experimentation
World view	1. Questioning whether I am busy with the most important things in my life. Asking where I am in life. (4:410), (4:435)	Questioning, reflection
	2. Asking myself coaching questions like "Am I enjoying this, is this where I want to go, is it in line with my ethics and principles, does it build on my strengths?" (5:515)	Frameworks and theory, goals, questioning, reflection
	3. If I try something and it does not work, it's not the end of the world. Life has to continue. (6:585)	Active experimentation
	4. I now understand that there are different personalities; people have different values to me and a different way of working. (8:18)	?
	5. Letting go of the old role and taking on the responsibilities of the new role. (9:42)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	6. Changing world view and how I view the organisation based on where I am at in my life [life stage]. (9:56)	Reflection
	7. Being able to fulfil a 10-year dream of starting her own company. (11:27)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation
<b>Psychological</b>		
Self-concept	1. My personal values are important and I need to build my responses at work around that. (1:145)	?
	2. My personality needed to take a different shape in the new role. It's almost like I needed to take the good of the one personality and combine it with other techniques to	Goals, listening, questioning

	become what was needed for this role. (2:226))	
	3. My opinions, my approach to life and the corporate is not what it should be. (4:424)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	4. Am I really being honest with myself? (4:437)	Reflection, challenging views and providing different perspectives
	5. Stop being personally identified with the organisation (e.g. feeling personally insulted if someone criticises the organisation) and identify with other things that are important to me. (5:499), (5:520)	Questioning, challenging views and providing different perspectives
	6. The ability to express my emotions which leads to better communication. (5:514)	Questioning, reflection, active experimentation
	7. Knowing what I like and dislike and shaping my career around what I'm good at. (5:518)	Frameworks and theory, goals, questioning, reflection
	8. Realising that I have the ability to voice my opinion, not just someone who can communicate via written format. (6:532)	Questioning, challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation
	9. Understanding where I want to be in the next 5 years. (6:581)	Questioning
	10. There is nothing I cannot achieve if I put my mind to it. (6:590)	Questioning, active experimentation
	11. Toward the second half of my coaching it became clear to me that the things I considered my strengths, the things that had gotten me through the system for many years were actually the things that were weaknesses. (7:11)	Frameworks and theory, active experimentation
	12. Realise that as a senior manager my success is not dependent on me alone, I need others. I can be unforgiving on myself and drive myself hard, but if I do that to others they will be unhappy. Now instead of giving 100% to the task, I give 100% to the team. (8:22)	Questioning, reflecting, active experimentation
	13. Realising that she needs to let go of her staff so that they can grow [delegation]. (9:42)	Questioning, frameworks and theory
	14. Feeling more confidence and feeling more in control, e.g. woman was so scared of being asked a question and not knowing answer – she was so busy with this internal chatter that when she was asked a question she was unprepared. (9:53)	Questioning, reflection
	15. His whole body language changed. He has a slightly angry aggressive tone and stance. But when I saw him on Friday he was smiling, sitting straight, his sense of self	Questioning, challenging views and providing different perspectives

	shifted significantly. And for someone in their 50s that's significant. (11:23)	
	16. Belief that she can do it. (11:29)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation, coachee commitment
	17. More self-belief. (12:14)	Reflection, challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation
Response patterns	1. Acting in a much more assertive way. In the past I would have run across regions helping people, now I say "I cannot help you now." I don't get emotional or angry anymore. Being more assertive, begin more real in the face of conflict. (2:238)	Goals, listening, questioning
	2. I recognise the feeling of not allowing people reporting to me their space, and then I remind myself to let go (3:318), (3:320)	Questioning, challenging views and providing different perspectives
	3. I feel that if I respond in a way that is different to how I normally respond, it is now my choice, not something forced on me. This is empowering and changed my view on corporate politics. (3:351)	?
	4. I changed my belief that it is better to come up with answers fast rather than slower in order to allow others to buy in. (7:22)	Frameworks and theory, questioning
	5. Coaching made me a softer person, a more sympathetic leader. Before coaching it irritated me if someone was not as structured as me. (8:28)	Questioning, active experimentation
	6. It is almost like she would create more of a gap between her – the trigger situation – and the response. She was able to almost reframe some of the trigger issues from her typical ways of viewing them. Not being triggered by the Australian in the room. (13:12)	Questioning, listening, reflection, active experimentation
	7. For example, in the past, the person would have lost their temper quite quickly. Would have been agitated or frustrated or would have used a language that wasn't appropriate, and as the person grew in self-awareness you could see that sort of fizzled out and the person start taking control of behaviour. (15:13)	?
Personality traits and types	1. Able to push for an answer whereas before I would have just sat back and waited to see what happens. (2:239)	?

	2. Resist micromanagement of people, now allowing them to grow. (3:349)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	3. Being able to delegate more easily. (3:350)	Active experimentation
	4. Becoming more balanced, not working until 10 p.m. at night or over weekends. (5:516)	Reflection, questioning
	5. Becoming more talkative. (6:531)	Active experimentation, frameworks and theory
	6. Become a lighter person, not serious about everything. (8:13)	Questioning, reflection
	7. Becoming a softer person, more empathetic. (8:28)	Questioning, reflection, active experimentation
	8. Not being 'Mr Nice' all the time but being more assertive. (12:15)	Question, reflection, challenging views and providing different perspectives, active experimentation
	9. Showing less ambition, treading on fewer toes. (13:20)	Questioning, listening, reflection, active experimentation
	10. Being less confrontational. (13:23)	Questioning, listening, reflection, active experimentation
Theories	1. It's ok to let people fail, don't always have to be a Band-Aid for them. (3:352)	Challenging views and providing different perspectives
	2. Understanding that people have different personality types and ways of work. (8:18)	Active experimentation
Scripts	1. Improved personal relationships outside of work setting with family and friends. (6:591)	?
Health	1. Doing exercise [walking] and not going to sit in front of TV when arriving home. (6:584)	Frameworks and theory, active experimentation

## APPENDIX C

### EXTRACT OF REFLECTIVE LOG USED DURING THE APPLICATION PHASE

After each coaching session, the TM and I completed a reflective log. I obtained the TM's feedback via email. Below is an example for TM2. It was his second coaching session and overall the seventh session in the application phase. In total, 34 such reflective logs were captured and analysed during the application phase. All text below is reflected verbatim and unedited.

Coachee: TM2

Session 7 (2): 12 May 2016

Location: XXX

#### **What did I try?**

The idea is to start using the 5 main tools/techniques that were identified in phase 1 (questioning, reflection, active experimentation, challenging views, and providing alternative perspectives) from the second coaching session onwards. First I want to experiment with Questioning.

I want to try apply Questioning as tools/techniques to create awareness in the coachee of their Mezirow perspectives as well as for me to start documenting these. I need to create two perspective sheets, one with questions and one blank one where I can record what I hear. The aim is to identify the problematic perspectives for now.

#### **What worked – why?**

This worked very well! The process is to explain briefly what each TL aspect is, then ask the questions on the TTC sheet. I try and identify what needs to change and write this down. We reflect briefly, but no attempt to solve the issue. Just go through the list and record the changes they need in each perspective.

Also helped in that this coachee even suggested a new question to ask under aesthetics – he linked it to appearance and dress code. AR is very useful!

#### **What did not work – why?**

Perhaps I need to delve deeper than just questioning. This coachee was able to reflect quite well on his own and got to insights, but I suspect that in some cases I would need to challenge or provide more structure to deepen the reflection. Perhaps I should try Mezirow's three levels of reflection on the session with the next coachee ...

#### **FROM THE COACHEE:**

**How did today's coaching session help me to become more successful in my new role (if at all)**

In the session I identified some of the barriers preventing success in my role. It was nice to be able to think about it and in some ways I was surprised that some of those ‘barriers’ only surfaced after the coach probed & challenged a bit (more under question 2 below).

**What did the coach do to facilitate this?**

The tool the coach used enabled me to think about various aspects of my life, both work and personal. The coach would probe a bit and in two instances he also challenged my way of thinking which led to some of the hidden barriers surfacing. I definitely wouldn’t have surfaced those barriers on my own and they would have remained ‘hidden’ for a very long time. I would also have focussed on the wrong barriers.

Overall, a useful session again.

## APPENDIX D

### EXAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

#### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

---

**Title of research project** : A coaching framework to facilitate transformational learning during senior leadership transitions.

**Researcher** : **Nicky Terblanche**

**Research supervisor** : **Dr Ruth Albertyn and Dr Salome van Coller**

**Department** : **University of Stellenbosch Business School**

**Qualification** : **PhD in Business Management and Administration**

May I request you to participate in this research study? You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you hold a senior management position in a corporate, have been promoted into that position less than two years ago and received at least 6 coaching sessions during the last two years from an external coach.

#### **1. Purpose and benefits of the study**

The purpose of this research is to understand the challenges a person faces when they are promoted into a senior leadership position, the role that coaching plays (if any) in overcoming some of these challenges and specifically if and how coaching facilitates learning during the process.

This research will benefit senior leaders transitioning into a new role by providing insight into the process and possible support mechanisms which are needed. HR practitioners who are often tasked to create support programmes for transitioning leaders will also benefit. Coaches who need to design interventions aimed at supporting transitioning leaders may gain insight into how to structure such interventions. Finally, organisations in general will benefit when the company's valuable asset (senior leaders) succeed in their new roles.

#### **2. Procedures**

Should you volunteer to participate in this study, we would request from you to participate in an in-depth interview where you will be asked to tell us about your personal experiences during your recent promotion

into a senior leadership position. You will also be required to complete a short survey regarding your learning process during coaching.

The interview will be approximately 1h to 1h30min in duration and will be conducted at a venue convenient to you. The interview will be voice recorded on a digital recording device to allow the research to transcribe the interview and analyse the content. In line with the specific research design being followed I would like to ask if you would be prepared to take part in further follow up interviews should the need arise. The conditions under which this may be necessary may be that during the course of the investigation I need to gain clarification on related issues which arose during analysis of data.

### **3. Potential risks and discomforts**

Participation in the study is voluntary and the information you provide will be treated as confidential and anonymous. You have the right not to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with and you may decide what level of detail you provide. Should you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the interview you are welcome to terminate the session without having to provide a reason.

### **4. Confidentiality and protection of participants**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of safeguarding the digital voice recording of the interview and the subsequent transcription thereof on the researcher's password protected computer. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Data will be deleted and destroyed after dissemination of results.

No names will be linked to the data to ensure anonymity. In documenting the results of the research, reference to the content of the interviews will be done anonymously. The participants have the right to request a copy of the audio recording or transcription of the interview should they so wish.

### **5. Payment for participation**

No payment or any other compensation will be made to the participants.

### **6. Participation and withdrawal**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

### **7. Contact detail**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher (083 461 9470, [nicky@flipside.co.za](mailto:nicky@flipside.co.za)) and/or the Supervisors (Dr Albertyn: 021-808 2278, [rma@sun.ac.za](mailto:rma@sun.ac.za); Dr van Coller: 021-852 3056, [salome.vanroller@usb.ac.za](mailto:salome.vanroller@usb.ac.za)), or the Chair of the USB Departmental Ethics Screening Committee Prof Piet Naude, [piet.naude@usb.ac.za](mailto:piet.naude@usb.ac.za), tel 021-918 4221.

### **8. Rights of research subjects**

Should you decide to withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation, you do this without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne

Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the University of Stellenbosch Division for Research Development.

---

#### **DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

The information above was explained to me by [*name of relevant person*] in clear terms. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *my* satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of subject or  
participant:

Signature:

Date:

---

#### **DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER**

I declare that I explained the information provided in this document to \_\_\_\_\_ [*name of the subject/participant*]. [He/she] was encouraged, and given ample time, to ask me any questions.

Signature:

Date:

---