

**TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS OF A POSTMODERN GROUP-BASED LEADERSHIP  
COACHING PROGRAMME**

by

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## **SUMMARY**

### **TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS OF A POSTMODERN GROUP-BASED LEADERSHIP COACHING PROGRAMME**

The postmodern organisation and its leaders are faced with relentless turbulence and change and a compelling economic drive for success. The recent exponential rise in the popularity of coaching can be ascribed to the business need for the development of leadership bench-strength. Appreciative inquiry (AI) claims to be a source of untapped strength for organisations in the postmodern world and a source of sustainable solutions and genesis for energy. However, the scarcity of evidence of coaching linked to a postmodern stance, incorporating AI principles, as well as using group-based coaching methods, provided an opportunity for this study to respond to the challenges and contribute to the theory and practice of leadership coaching in the organisational setting by investigating the transformative effects of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme (LCP) on leaders' personal and professional perspectives. The premises suggest that postmodern group-based coaching is a practical and cost-effective methodology in multi-cultural international organisations. Furthermore, postmodern coaching in groups can transform the personal and professional perspectives of leaders, specifically in transforming future plans, goal-directedness, confidence, resilience, hope, subjective well-being and empowerment as a leader, as well as broadening life outlooks. Key transformative themes were identified: self-knowledge, appreciation of others, broader vision, self-control and work-life integration. This applied study has made a valuable contribution to the body of research in the area of postmodern and group-based coaching. Replication of the study in other industries, setting and with different levels of leadership, training of postmodern coaches and robust follow-up coaching were identified as opportunities for further exploration.

Key terms: postmodern coaching, coaching psychology, appreciative inquiry, transformative learning, frame of reference, perspective transformation, positive psychology, strengths, positive organisational behaviour, confidence, hope, resilience, subjective well-being.

## CHAPTER 1

### ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research is about the transformative effects of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme, with reference to leaders' personal and professional perspectives. The research presents a longitudinal qualitative study, in which certain principles of appreciative inquiry (AI) are linked to postmodern coaching in a group-based coaching process. In this chapter, an overview of the research is given through providing a context and rationale for the study, stating the problem, confirming the research objectives and model and defining key concepts. Using an integrated model for social sciences, the intellectual climate and market of intellectual resources is outlined, including the theoretical and methodological assumptions for the research, and ending with a description of the research process. A justification for the soundness of the research is presented. The chapter closes with an overview of the terms and definitions which are relevant to this research.

Because postmodern coaching as well as AI is directed towards achieving the creation of new meanings, and because both are applied in a group setting (Cooperrider and Srivasta, 1987; McMahon, 2007), this study also introduced and examined the use of a group-based coaching approach, as opposed to the accepted approach of individual coaching between a coach and coachee (Ting, 2006). Group-based coaching has previously been reported in the literature in leadership coaching, but here the systems psychodynamic approach was used (Kilburg, 2004b). This approach did not account for coaching using appreciative or positive dimensions or coaching within the positive psychology paradigm. Another contribution of this study is then to investigate a new methodology using group-based coaching as a unique method, different to individual-based coaching. This provides the organisation and coach with the opportunity to offer coaching to more people in a shorter time-frame, with associated cost and efficiency savings for the organisation. By conducting the group-based coaching among groups of international managers, the research will possibly also be able to contribute insights and

postulations as to the dynamics, characteristics and return on investment (ROI) relating to coaching in multi-cultural groups, which then presents opportunities for international organisations and business schools, particularly within the hyper complexity of the postmodern world (Stelter, 2009).

With these outcomes in mind, a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme designed along certain of the principles of AI was proposed as a response to the requirement to provide a scientifically robust, alternative coaching programme relevant to the professional coaching setting. The Leadership Coaching Programme (LCP) is rooted in and designed within postmodernism and uses elements of AI and positive psychology paradigms and principles. The AI and positive psychology principles have therefore been chosen and used as the appropriate lens through which to conduct this research, with the outcome of determining the transformative effects of the LCP on leaders' personal and professional perspectives. By applying certain of the AI principles to leadership coaching, this study will determine whether postmodern coaching is able to transform and liberate the personal and professional future perspectives of leaders, and in so doing, make a further valuable contribution as an applied study to the body of research in the area of postmodern coaching.

In summary, this study presents a qualitative examination of the transformative effects of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme (LCP) for leaders' personal and professional perspectives in an organisational setting. It is grounded in the positive possibilities offered by AI, as well as in the challenges associated with leadership in the postmodern world. This research therefore provides a response to these possibilities and challenges for the disciplines of AI, as well as coaching, and for the researcher as a psychologist.

## **1.2 CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY**

This section outlines emerging themes in the current coaching landscape, which provide the context for the study. The list of themes is as follows: shifts in the global organisational arena, leadership challenges, the rapid expansion of leadership coaching,

shifts and challenges in coaching theory and practice, and the rise of positive psychology and AI.

### **1.2.1 Challenging perspectives and shifts in the global organisational arena**

The global economy and business landscape have been characterised by extreme uncertainty over the past two decades, experiencing rapid swings between booms and recessions and a general state of financial instability, resulting in new rules for business trading and stringent corporate governance regulations aimed at stabilising the economic system (Peus, 2011). Profound environmental and social changes, such as global warming, global terrorism, the rise of multi-culturalism and diversity, and the demands to build sustainability into the current business model, have created more complexity and the requirement for agility within the organisation system (Kirkbride, Durcan, & Obeng, 1994). Defining themes in the current social and work context are change, ambiguity and uncertainty, as a result of mergers, acquisitions, business restructuring, downsizing, retrenchments and volatile business operating conditions (Yunnus, 2010). During the Davos World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in 2010, Yunnus, a banking executive, was quoted as saying:

*“It is not only the Great Recession, I think, it is a bundle of crises, not one crisis, in the same period. The food crisis, the financial crisis, the global warming crisis... They're all, I think, rooted in the same cause ... All of these crises have emerged from the misinterpretation of human beings in the conceptual framework that we have built around us.”*

Perpetual change also characterises the workplace, and continues at a rapid, exponential pace – this profoundly affects the employment contract for leaders who work in an organisation (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, organisations were 'holding areas' for people's lives; once formal employment was activated, the employee would rely on the organisation to create their career plan – a 'grand narrative' that decided whom the employee would work with, where they would work, what they would eat, where they would stay, when they would move up the career ladder and numerous other direct and subtle paternalistic behaviours (Savickas, 2007).

Savickas (2007) explains that the world of work now requires considerably more effort and personal investment by individuals than in the modern industrial era. Jobs have been replaced by assignments, organisations with networks and even healthcare and pension schemes are now employee-managed. Employees have become disappointed in leaders and resent their failure to live up to their idealised notions for authority figures (Hirschhorn, 1997). Employees must rely more on their own personal authority by bringing more of themselves to work, being more psychologically present and by showing courage (Buckingham, 2007).

The reality is that the postmodern psychological experience of many employees is that of ambivalence, disengagement, desensitisation, dependency and even shame at their lack of competence in coping with change (Czander, 1993; Hirschhorn, 1997). This requires a new response to authority and leadership. Instead of 'investing' or projecting the idealised moral authority figure onto leaders, employees now have to learn to internalise their own authority and maintain their own robust internal gyroscope (Hirschhorn, 1997).

### **1.2.2 Leadership challenges and perspective transformation**

Poor institutional leadership, along with nuclear threats, pandemics and tribalism hold the greatest risks for world sustainability, according to Bennis (2007). Leaders in the global context are expected to respond to the current world of work by simultaneously displaying cultural fluency, managing volatile markets and currencies, operating across time zones and geographic locations, working effectively in multi-cultural teams (Rosinski, 2003) and managing their own career development, all without compromising business results (Albertyn, 2010; Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2001).

As leaders are required to become more responsible for their own lives, more competent in their technical skills and accountable for constructing and holding their individual 'signature' brand during times of increasing discontinuity and ambiguity, they are required to be resilient in their ability to take up their own leadership in their personal and professional lives (Savickas, 2007). Despite the mental demands of modern life, leaders are also required to constantly redefine themselves (Kegan, 1994). They need to be agile and relevant and remain resilient, independent, bold, purposeful and collaborative

(Stamp, 2001) while living with authenticity in taking up their leadership roles (Kets de Vries, 2005). They need to display both character as well as competence (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005) in a transforming landscape. In addition, managers should display leadership maturity and emotional intelligence (Bar-On, Maree, & Elias, 2007; Goleman, 1998), which includes self-management; social and organisational savvy; the ability to tolerate and effectively manage increasing levels of complexity, accountability and responsibility; interacting effectively with others; and dealing with anger and internal anxiety appropriately, whilst maintaining a strong grip on reality (Kets de Vries, 2007).

Hirschhorn (1997) explains that the increase in employee dependency has in turn increased the requirement for leaders to contain conditions associated with psychological insecurity and anxiety for their employees, families and peers. This search for the containment of anxiety, resulting from increasing demands and complexity, plays out in a time when leaders and their teams are becoming more physically and socially isolated due to globalisation (Hirschhorn, 1997).

Furthermore, leaders in the global context are now expected to manage virtual teams, and can no longer rely on traditional face-to-face methods of social interaction (Phatak, Bhagat & Kashlak, 2005). The use of email, web meetings and a plethora of information technology tools are used to facilitate communication in the virtual team leadership situation (Solomons, 2010). In order to balance this high tech approach, there is a stronger requirement for the 'human touch' in leadership, increasing interaction between the leader and others and a brand new set of interpersonal skills (Chapman & Cilliers, 2008). 'Think global, act local' has become a rallying call in the business environment (Albertyn, 2010).

All of these factors then combine to create conditions of heightened and incessant levels of anxiety, risk, uncertainty and change for leaders and organisations. Being a leader can be likened to a double-edged sword: either the source of magnificent energy, excitement and fulfilment and/or the source of deep anxiety, discontent and illusion (Carr, 2001). The leader's unspoken mantra may read: 'Think global, act local, panic internally'.

In turn, organisations should support and mobilise their leaders, at all levels, to respond appropriately under these rapidly changing conditions to ensure continued growth and sustainability (Conger & Fishel, 2007; Goldsmith & Lyons, 2006).

The normal leadership maturation process spans the whole career of an individual: between 20 to 50 years in duration (Charan, et al., 2001). However, under these new challenges, organisations are compelled to re-design and accelerate the leadership maturation process to ensure that leaders are ready to take up their roles more quickly and with a faster transition time (Denton, 2010; Goldsmith & Lyons, 2006; Hollenbeck, 2002; Kets de Vries, 2005; Landau & Thomas, 1985; O'Neill, 2000; Phatak et al., 2005; Silzer, 2002). This creates a 'pressure cooker' situation, and at times new managers are thrust into roles for which they are ill prepared.

### **1.2.3 Rapid expansion of leadership coaching**

Leadership coaching has emerged as a burgeoning industry within the postmodern organisational context (Knott, 2012). This is in response to the organisational and individual challenges previously described (Goldsmith & Lyons, 2006; International Coaching Federation [ICF], 2010; McCluskey, 2008; Palmer & Whybrow, 2006; Peltier, 2010; Ting & Scisco, 2006).

Leadership coaching has been explained as a formal relationship with clear purpose, boundaries and methodologies, all with the intention of improving individual and organisational satisfaction and effectiveness (Kilburg, 2004a). It is these challenges which drive the exponential growth in demand for personal leadership coaches, who are able to provide a personalised and confidential sounding board (Kets de Vries, 2005; Kilburg, 2007).

Leadership coaching is directed at three different levels of intervention: performance coaching, development coaching and purpose-driven coaching (Denton, 2010). It has been reported to be an effective intervention for many situations in a participant's personal life, career, corporate or business life, and is a well-established practice among business and management executives (Caplan, 2003; Goldsmith, 2005; O'Neill, 2000). Leadership coaching is, however, not a new phenomenon, and has existed in various



forms for thousands of years. Ancient leadership coaches include the biblical legend Joseph, in his trusted advisory role to the Pharaoh, and the Greek philosophers Aristotle and Socrates, to whom important men in commerce and society turned in order to learn the secret of knowledge and achievement (Hollenbeck, 2002). It was Socrates who coined the phrase; “The unexamined life is not worth living” (Williams, 2008). The quest for self-actualisation and exceptional performance, which is, as Freud stated, fulfilment in both “love and work” (Kets de Vries, 2007), has become equally relevant, and perhaps more pressing, for the modern leader.

The growth in popularity of leadership coaching as a tool for personal and professional development indicates the compelling challenge in empowering leaders to construct their own reality and create their own sense of meaning and purpose (Crocket, 2007; Henwood 2007; Martin, 2001, McCluskey, 2008). Leadership coaching is used as a tool to assist the leader to remain psychologically healthy, to build self-esteem and to develop the leader’s ability to take up his/her own personal authority (Hirschhorn, 1997; McIntosh, 2003).

Laske’s (1999) study on the transformative effects of coaching on individuals’ personal and professional perspectives recommended a longitudinal design for further research, and this study will take this into account in the research design stage.

#### **1.2.4 Shifts and challenges in coaching theory and practice**

Coaching research is a relatively new phenomenon, with the first peer-reviewed article on coaching appearing in 1955 in *The Harvard Business Review* (Campone, 2008) and the first life coaching article appearing in 2003 (Grant & Zackon, 2007). The research can be divided into different themes over time (Campone, 2008). Between 1955 and 2003, the overriding theme was of “staking out the coaching territory and boundaries”. Between 2003 and 2008, coaching theory experienced an “infusion of theories and models from psychology”, moving out of the corporate context into life coaching, and undergoing the formalisation of coaching research through the International Coaching Federation’s inaugural research symposium (Campone, 2008).

This trend has continued until now, with a stronger emphasis on positive psychology in coaching (Linley & Joseph, 2012). Research between 2009 and 2012 relates to new and alternative forms of coaching. Coaching-focused journals include the *Coaching Psychology Journal*, the *International Coaching Psychology Review* and the *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching*. Current and emerging issues include the lack of empirically documented coaching models to provide theoretical underpinnings to practice (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007a), building a deep pool of research questions, building a more inter-disciplinary approach and reviewing the use of the internet for research purposes (Campone, 2008). This points to a wide scope for further research and exploration of the applied possibilities of alternative methods of leadership coaching in the organisational setting (Schmidt, 2002), especially in a global multi-cultural setting, where there is an opportunity to introduce new and diverse worldviews and interactions.

Research in coaching psychology should rest on empirical, scientifically robust studies, providing sound and reliable data to demonstrate value to clients, to maintain credibility and set professional boundaries and standards (Campone, 2008). In addition, the outputs of research should match pace with the pace of growth of coaching practice and there is a requirement to continue to grow the body of knowledge in coaching psychology (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007a; Brunning & Roberts, 2007).

Leadership coaching is a rapidly growing global consultancy phenomenon, with an expanding conceptual and operational identity (Cilliers, 2005). Consultants and coaches work in this field to enable leaders to clarify their roles and empower themselves to use their personal and profession authority effectively (Peltier, 2010). Various models are used, with scant research evidence of the effect of the different approaches on the outcomes of the coaching and limited evidence of the effect of the use of various helping models (Campone, 2008). The rise in coaching as a profession demands an equal contribution of research to balance and support coaching theory and practice. As a rapidly growing profession, it is clear that leadership coaching requires additional scientific rigour and research to expand the body of knowledge of this relatively recent academic field (Grant, 2004; Hawksley, 2007; Hayes, 2006; Lafaille & Fulder, 1993).

The shift from modern leadership coaching to a postmodern leadership coaching approach creates the requirement to further explore the applied possibilities and relevance of newer approaches to leadership coaching, taking the important role of the positive psychology movement into account (Kets de Vries, 2005; Kilburg, 2007; McMahon, 2007; McMahon & Watson, 2008; Schmidt, 2002). As coaching practice expands beyond the positivistic model to more dynamic models, coaching research will also need to respond with less mechanistic, more constructionist (qualitative) positions. There is a requirement to examine and understand leadership coaching in its complexity, wholeness and uniqueness, rather than to only explain or predict. This approach to research will free space for the exploration and operationalisation of more human and less directive forms of psychology and psychological research.

### **1.2.5 The rise of positive psychology and appreciative inquiry**

The positive psychology paradigm is of prime importance within the field of leadership coaching, because, according to Peltier (2010), leadership coaching has provided an ideal opportunity to bring the positive potential of psychology into the workplace, influencing mental health, making the workplace more humane, with a positive bottom-line impact.

The field of positive psychology, founded by Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) has grown in popularity over the past several years and has developed into a strong and flourishing movement in psychology (Linley & Joseph, 2012; Snyder & Lopez, 2007; Snyder & Lopez, 2010). This is borne out in the recent study by Rusk & Waters (2013) in which over 1.7 million document in 700 *PsycINFO*<sup>®</sup> journals indicate an exponential growth in the field of positive psychology. As a result, related topics such as leadership coaching is becoming less rigid and more dynamic. Seligman (2008) has proposed a new field of science: positive health based on a new medical model based on the Copenhagen-Medici model of science. Seligman argues that we have the right to enjoy “well-being - positive emotion, engagement, purpose, positive relationships, positive accomplishment as one of our best weapons against mental disorder” (p.5).

This trend in working with strengths (Coetzee & Cilliers, 2000) rather than weaknesses holds true for the coaching profession. In a recent article, positive psychology was seen as the “backbone of strengths-based coaching”, an emerging stream in the coaching profession (Lueneburger, 2009, p.8).

The theory of positive organisational behaviour has emerged as a solid piece of knowledge within the positive psychology paradigm, and of note are four critical constructs relating to positive transformative outcomes: hope, subjective well-being, resilience and confidence (Hodges & Clifton, 2004).

Appreciative inquiry has emerged as an important organisational development (OD) process (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Indeed, a method such as AI makes provocative claims that it can produce a generative metaphor that compels new action and change of the second order, which is revolutionary and which “creates new possibilities for actions that people had not previously considered (Binkert, Orem, & Clancy, 2007; Bushe & Coetzer, 1995; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Gordon, 2008a; Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011). It can do so whilst providing a flexible and pragmatic process for operationalising transformative learning and paradigm shifts amongst leaders (Bioss, 2010; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Gordon, 2008a).

Subsequently, AI has demonstrated strong potential to be utilised as a vehicle for moving leaders towards a positive transformation in their personal and professional perspectives, specifically in a postmodern context, and deserves further investigation (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

The point of departure for most coaching research is either the behaviouristic or humanistic paradigm, with a focus on wellness and strengths flowing out of the positive psychology paradigm (Drake, Brennan & Gortz, 2008). However, there are limited studies that scientifically examine postmodern coaching based on AI principles or that examine the transformative effects of postmodern coaching, using AI principles (Davis, 2005).

Initially used as an inquiry-based organisational development process, the application of AI has spread to use within other professional settings and its transformative outcomes

for individuals are purported to lead to a perspective that is more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective (Bushe & Coetzer, 1995; Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Bushe, 2011; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Gordon, 2008a).

Whilst AI has become progressively more popular as an organisation-level transformation method, there has been a dearth of published research examining it as a method for coaching (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). A single research study was provided by Stavros and Torres (2005) applied AI to the enhancement of daily living and Gordon (2008b) applied AI to the enhancement of teamwork in the Sri Lankan cricket team. Gordon (2008b) recommended that those people in charge of coaching and leadership development programmes should continue this trend to apply postmodern coaching to the workplace setting, and this research is a response to this articulated recommendation.

A meta-analysis of AI transformation (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) also suggested further exploration of the ability of AI practice to effect transformational change in a system. In the original study conducted by Bushe and Kassam (2005), 20 AI cases were examined to identify transformational change, as well as to classify each AI inquiry according to how well it aligned to the seven principles of AI. These cases were all large-scale processes used for changing social systems, i.e. the organisational system. The coding rules were considered robust enough to use for individual data and the procedure for determining outcomes according to the rules, as well as the agreement rates between coders. This was then replicated as a method in this study.

Bushe and Kassam (2005) identified a key finding that differentiated AI from other established OD processes by changing how people think, rather than how they do things. What is interesting is the finding of Bushe and Kassam (2005) that a spontaneous, unprepared approach to change leads to greater transformational change than the traditional OD approach of planned change.

There were a number of limitations identified in the Bushe and Kassam study (2005). The first was with respect to the nature, length and complexity of the published cases

that they analysed as part of the meta-analysis. Obviously, this was due to the fact that the cases were not written up specifically for the meta-analysis and certain foregone conclusions and shortcomings were identified as a result of the inconsistencies.

Bushe and Kassam (2005) identified the need for more empirical assessments of AI practice as an important consideration for OD scholars, and this particular study provides a further exploration of the contribution of AI for transformational change in postmodern coaching.

### **1.2.6 Expanding industrial and organisational psychology through pioneering postmodern coaching models and group-based methods**

As an applied profession, industrial and organisational psychology has a responsibility to remain relevant, to transform as organisations shift and change, to take the opportunity to expand beyond the traditional modernistic and positivistic mental models, and to redefine the field (Schmidt, 2002). Furthermore, the predominant form of coaching in organisations is traditional, focused on helping leaders deal with transitions and personal issues related to work such as work-life stress issues (Morgan, Harkins & Goldsmith, 2005). The recent exponential rise in popularity and use of coaching can be ascribed to the increased demand for relevant leadership development in the organisational context within which leaders must work (Kets de Vries, 2005; Kilburg, 2004a). However, the growth of coaching as a discipline has not necessarily been followed by the development of new models that are more relevant to the postmodern context (McMahon & Watson, 2008; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007), and so there is a challenge to grow the discipline of coaching together with the development of new practices, methods and models.

The currency in AI is in idea creation and in transformational change (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). AI claims to provide life-giving affirmation to organisations through the collaboration of individuals and groups within the system (Whitney, 2010). AI also asserts that it provides a source of untapped strength in the postmodern world and is the basis for sustainable solutions and the genesis for energy within the organisational context (Cooperrider, Whitney, Stavros & Fry, 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001) because it

is built on the principle of being positive (Cooperrider et al. 2008), which in turn helps generate new metaphors and meanings (Bushe, 2011; Kelm, 2005).

Therefore, if one builds from the proposition that AI is able to create new possibilities and worlds through using thoughts and words differently (Kelm, 2005), then if certain AI principles are applied to postmodern coaching, the premise is that it will be able to add value by offering a different, appreciative and positive dimension to traditional methods of coaching (Canine, 2007). This has been tested in a sports team on a previous occasion, but not specifically in an organisational setting (Binkert et al. 2007).

So, instead of conventional coaching, which deals with problems and the closing of developmental gaps (Brunning & Roberts, 2007; Charan, 2009), the proposition of this research is that AI offers a new positive perspective to the postmodern coaching process, as well as the addition of another new aspect to the leader's coaching experience. By linking certain AI principles to postmodern coaching and by examining the transformative effects of such an inquiry, this research will provide a new innovation to the field of coaching. In doing so, this research will have contributed to postmodern coaching literature, and also contributed to AI as an approach that can be utilised in coaching, by examining the use of AI in a postmodern context. The research would also contribute to coaching as a discipline, because it provides an additional positive and appreciative dimension to coaching through the introduction of AI principles to coaching in the organisational context.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

As is made evident from the above discussion, there seems to be a lack of empirical research that links and investigates the application of postmodern coaching, using AI principles in group-based leadership coaching in the organisation.

Firstly, industrial psychology and leadership coaching should modify the current modern, positivistic and mechanistic mental model to one that allows an exploration and operationalisation of more human; less directive forms of learning and uncovers a sense of meaning in work. (Schmidt, 2002; Watson & Kuit, 2007). It is by appreciating what is

and letting go of the need to intervene that the work of the coach becomes more powerful (Watkins & Mohr, 2007).

A review of leadership coaching models indicates that, in many cases, they are predominantly output driven and individually focused. Examples include goal-focused coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007), solutions-based coaching (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006), the constructive-development approach (Kegan, 2009), evidence-based coaching (Kemp, 2005), and solutions-focused coaching (Walter & Peller, 1992).

For the most part, the coach plays a dominant and directive role, using a structured 'recipe-driven' process to develop leadership competencies: a) assessment; b) feedback; c) coaching, guiding, role-playing, action-learning; and d) post-evaluation (Kilburg, 2007; Ting & Scisco, 2006). This means that the modern approach has limitations, in that it may reinforce current dominant themes and patterns without challenging the underlying dynamics and drivers of the leader in various roles (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007; Schmidt, 2002) and so opening space for postmodern coaching methods.

Secondly, the use of AI principles in postmodern coaching had not previously been demonstrated in the organisational context, with a general lack of research in AI leadership coaching, especially in the organisational context (Sloan & Canine, 2007). Limited studies have been related to the use of postmodern coaching, using AI principles in contexts outside of the organisation (Gordon, 2008a; Nilsson & Holmberg, 2009; Sloan & Canine, 2007). So, AI principles emerged as a new and additional positive dimension of a postmodern coaching model that, if applicable, could demonstrate transformation and value creation both at the individual leader level and also for the organisation. This lack of literature and empirical research in the field of postmodern coaching, using AI principles indicates a lack of research that investigates and explores the application and linking of positive AI principles to postmodern coaching to provide a new facet to the discipline.

Thirdly, because AI is based upon a collaborative social process, this assumes the use of a group-based (rather than individual-based) approach in any proposed postmodern



coaching methodology. There is a lack of examples and published research examining the use of the social construction principles in narrative and biographic approaches for effective postmodern coaching in groups (Kilburg, 2007; McMahon, 2007; Watson & Kuit, 2007), and for investigating group-based leadership coaching (Gordon, 2008b). This research therefore needed to display and examine the use, consequences and impact of a group-based approach to leadership coaching.

Fourthly, the need for significant perspective transformation (Laske, 1999) and the purposeful co-construction of professional and personal life stories in leadership coaching was identified as a challenge for postmodern coaches (Kilburg, 2007; McMahon, 2007; McMahon & Watson, 2008; Morgan et al. 2005; Watson & Kuit, 2007). There was therefore a challenge for innovation in the form of a coaching model that would deliver positive transformative effects for its leader participants.

Finally, the recommendations of a meta-analysis of AI transformation (Laske, 1999) indicated that there was a lack of research into postmodern coaching using AI coaching principles, providing a practical and research-based response to coaching challenges in the industry.

The above overview of the contextual factors surrounding the field of leadership coaching presented specific opportunities for further research, namely, the lack of research about the transformative effects of a postmodern leadership coaching experience based upon AI principles, the use of a group-based approach, and also responding to the recommendation to use a longitudinal empirical design for further research on the transformative effects of leadership coaching.

In summary, the prospect of using and examining AI as a methodology therefore provided a challenging problem statement and a unique possibility for this research, which would build and expand upon the body of knowledge by combining AI principles and postmodern coaching (Bushe, 2011). The research primarily acts upon the question of whether AI principles can be successfully linked to postmodern leadership coaching using groups in an organisational context.

The following research questions can be formulated to resolve the problems stated above:

- What is meant by group-based leadership coaching?
- What is meant by postmodern coaching?
- How can AI principles be included in a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme?
- How can a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme be implemented in an international organisational setting?
- What are the transformative effects of participation in a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme on leaders' personal and professional perspectives?
- What recommendations can be made regarding leadership coaching that would benefit the field of industrial psychology and the discipline of coaching in the organisational setting?

In summary, the problem statement indicated that there is a requirement for further exploration of postmodern leadership coaching, group-based coaching and AI coaching in practice. This led to a number of research questions that will now be formulated into both broader and more specific research objectives.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

In formulating the research objectives, the problem statements and research questions have been synthesised into the following overall aim which is to examine the transformative effects of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme on leaders' personal and professional perspectives. In doing so, this study will have contributed significantly to the current body of knowledge in the field of coaching psychology through providing empirical research in the area of postmodern group-based leadership coaching.

To achieve this aim, the following detailed objectives are formulated:

#### **1.4.1 Objectives: Literature Study**

- To conceptualise group-based leadership coaching.
- To conceptualise postmodern coaching using AI principles.
- To present a postmodern group-based leadership coaching model that is based on AI principles.

#### **1.4.2 Objectives: Empirical Study**

- To implement a postmodern group-based leadership programme in an international organisational setting.
- To determine the transformative effects of the postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme on leaders' personal and professional perspectives.
- To make recommendations with regard to postmodern group-based leadership coaching, aimed at transforming the personal and professional perspectives of leaders and optimising their functioning in the context of psychology at work.

### **1.5 INTEGRATED MODEL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

This study is primarily based on the integrated model of social sciences research presented by Mouton and Marais (1990, p.22) which was adapted for the social sciences from Radnitzky's systems theoretical model for natural sciences. It refers to three subsystems – the intellectual climate, the market of intellectual resources and the research process itself. They interact with each other and with the research domain as defined in a specific paradigm. The first of these subsystems is the intellectual climate of the discipline, which refers to the meta-theoretical paradigm perspectives held by those practising, which include values, beliefs and assumptions about the nature of social reality (Mouton & Marais, 1990). These values and beliefs manifest as assumptions rather than definite provable premises. The second subsystem refers to the market of intellectual resources, which are collections of beliefs articulated as testable statements concerning the specific discipline. The two categories of intellectual resources are theoretical and methodological assumptions. The third sub-system is the research

process, and this consists of the research decision, steps and stages of the research itself. The following sections will detail and explain each of the three sub-systems as it relates to this study.

### **1.5.1 INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE**

The intellectual climate within which this research is placed consists of the field of study of industrial and organisational psychology; the field of positive psychology, with specific reference to positive organisational behaviour (POB); and the philosophy of postmodernism and its sub-field of social constructionism. The dominant assumptions in these fields relate to building optimal effectiveness and efficiency in organisations and leaders while remaining relevant to the demands of the current social and work contexts. All of the abovementioned fields of study have relevance and bearing on the intellectual climate of this study, and these will be discussed in the following section.

#### **1.5.1.1 Industrial and organisational psychology**

This qualitative research study has been designed and executed within the broad field of study of industrial and organisational psychology, a field of study devoted to the application of psychology to the organisation and workplace (Augustyn & Cillie, 2008). Industrial and organisational psychology is characterised by a balance between the study of the cognitive, emotional and will experiences of employees (science), and using this insight to improve the overall performance, effectiveness and efficiency of individuals, teams and the organisation (practice) (Augustyn & Cillie, 2008; Veldsman, 2009 ).

#### **1.5.1.2 Positive Psychology**

The field of positive psychology, defined as “the scientific study of optimal human functioning” was described by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) in a series of historic articles published in the *American Psychologist* as a reaction and adjunct to the prevailing medical/diagnostic model. This paradigm has since grown in popularity into a strong and flourishing movement in psychology (Hodges & Clifton, 2004; Kaplan, 2002;

Roberts et al., 2005; Sheldon, Frederickson, Rathunde, Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyders & Lopez, 2009).

For the purposes of this research, the definition is as follows:

Positive psychology, first proposed by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi in (2000) as a new and alternative paradigm for psychology, is a discipline that offers to develop humans to their greatest potential and enable them to thrive through the focus on core strengths and by building positive organisational behaviour evident in the individual at work, including, but not limited to, constructs such as resilience, hope, subjective well-being and confidence. In contrast, the traditional medical model of psychology offers a solution-based approach, where the role of the psychologist is to diagnose and then fix pathologies, at best to help the individual to cope with a difficult situation.

Furthermore, within this paradigm, recent attention has been applied within the organisational setting to the field of positive organisational behaviour (POB), defined as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s workplace” (Luthans, 2002, p. 695).

For the purposes of this research, POB is defined as follows:

Positive organisational behaviour relates to the study of specific strength-based behaviour as it manifests in the workplace and reflects how it is measured, developed and managed at the individual level, with the purpose of building performance effectiveness and efficiency.

“Strengths are defined as pre-existing capacities for particular ways of behaving, thinking, or feeling that are authentic and energising to the user, and enable optimal functioning, development and performance” (Linley, 2008, p.23). This definition will be used for the purposes of this study.

Four positive organisational behaviour constructs which are utilised in this research are hope, subjective well-being, resilience and confidence (Hodges & Clifton, 2004).

Confidence draws heavily from Bandura's (1997) work with self-efficacy, and it is defined as an "an individual's conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context" (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1988, p.124).

For the purposes of this research, confidence is defined as follows:

Confidence is a POB construct, primarily describing an individual's belief that they have inherent competencies and resources to be able to generate the necessary willpower, action-orientation and discipline to effectively fulfil either a goal or a specific task.

Hope is defined as "the perceived ability to produce pathways to achieve desired goals and to motivate oneself to use those pathways" (Snyder & Lopez, 2010, p. 323).

For the purpose of this research, hope may be defined as follows:

Hope is a POB construct that relates to the perception by an individual that they have the ability to create solutions and plans, as well as the necessary drive and discipline to achieve aspirational and desired outcomes.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as the "total sum of the cognitive and emotional reactions that people experience when they compare what they have and do in life with their aspirations, needs, and other expectations" (Bartels & Boomsma, 2009, p.605).

For the purpose of this research, subjective well-being may be defined as follows:

Subjective well-being is a POB construct that is a collection of responses that can be articulated along a continuum of positive to negative, and which are expressed as thoughts and emotions that an individual encounters when they compare their life circumstances and achievements with what their actual hopes, dreams, wants and needs are.

Resilience refers to "evidence of a psychological capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility" (Connor, Davidson, & Davidson, 2003, p.76).

For the purpose of this research, resilience may be defined as follows:

Resilience refers to the level of mental toughness which is displayed by individuals when faced with difficult and even traumatic experiences. It assumes a fundamental strength of character and a response of hardness of spirit which at its core is a belief in a positive outcome to the situation.

Coaching within the positive psychology paradigm has evolved into strengths-based coaching model (Lueneburger, 2009). Research has shown that strength-based coaching produces tangible results, including reports of increased job satisfaction; higher income levels, sales and revenue; higher levels of innovation and creativity; more focused energy and engagement and optimal leadership (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Buckingham, 2007; Hodges & Clifton, 2004; Roberts et al., 2005).

### **1.5.1.3 Post-modernism**

The postmodern condition is characterised by exponential change, mobility, instant access to the world through technology and a diffusion of family and traditional values (Watkins & Mohr, 2001) and hyper complexity (Stelter, 2009).

Post-modernism is a reactionary philosophy, questioning previous philosophies including the Newtonian stance as the only way to generate knowledge and understand the world. Instead of linear, sequential relationships and therefore 'one-best-way' approaches, postmodernism offers multiple connections or 'ripple effects', multiple possibilities, including modern theories and practices (Veldsman, 2009) – an epistemological pluralism (Hoffman, 2005).

This has had a profound effect on the world, including psychology as a profession. Shotter (1975) attempted to put a name to this new form of psychology – that which he hoped would herald a psychology which could assist man to enhance his humanity and to build dignity and self-respect so that we may become free to be more fully human. He argued that by restricting ourselves to the scientific rational scientific model, we risk

reducing the individual to a statistical generalisation, to an object with properties (for example, high dominance versus low dominance).

The postmodern paradigm suggests that the rules of business, and therefore being a manager in business, have changed. As an applied profession, industrial and organisational psychology has a responsibility to remain relevant, to transform as organisations transform, to take the opportunity to expand beyond the traditional modernistic and positivistic mental models, and to redefine the field (Schmidt, 2002).

The move to postmodernism is also evident in the coaching profession where “coaches, organizational consultants or coaching psychologists need to support and enlarge the cultural understanding of their coachees, both in organizational and personal contexts which are often interrelated (e.g., work-life balance) (Stelter, 2009, p.3).

In addition to the postmodern design, the fundamental design and outcomes of the LCP are based on certain AI principles as well as positive psychology.

#### **1.5.1.4 Social constructionism**

Social constructionism, used in narrative, group-based facilitation, is a sub-field of the postmodern philosophy, and is diametrically opposed to the positivistic research approach (Allan, Fairtlough & Heinzen, 2002; Schmidt, 2002; van der Haar & Hosking, 2004).

It advocates that knowledge is actively constructed in and reliant on the internal human perception of reality, appreciating it ‘as it is’ and as experienced through social experiences and interactions (Cochran, 2008; Maree, 2007; McMahan, 2007; Morgan, 2000; Savickas, 2007; Schmidt, 2002).

The postmodern coaching approach significantly restructures the roles of the coach and leader and moves towards a model of co-construction in groups. The preferred personal and professional life stories are generated through dialogue and the use of narrative (Morgan, 2000). The critical elements of any narrative approach in coaching include connectedness, reflection, meaning-making, learning and agency (McMahan, 2007).



This research will reflect the social constructionist approach in the application of a postmodern group-based approach to coaching, using peer reflection.

## **1.5.2 MARKET OF INTELLECTUAL RESOURCES**

The market of intellectual resources is the second sub-system in the integrated model of social sciences research (Mouton & Marais, 1990), consisting of collections of beliefs, values and convictions that determine the epistemic status of the discipline. The market of intellectual resources is firstly divided into theoretical assumptions, which consist of the constructs, theories and models making up the proven premises and substance of the discipline. Secondly, the methodological assumptions are made up of the research process, methods, and decisions with which the research is conducted. The following sections will cover both the theoretical assumptions, followed by the methodological assumptions of this research.

### **1.5.2.1 Theoretical assumptions**

The dominant theoretical assumptions, the application of AI principles and the process of transformative learning in postmodern leadership coaching, directed the research. These theoretical assumptions were applied to the literature review as well as in the presentation of the postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme.

#### **a) Appreciative inquiry**

Appreciative inquiry (AI), originally conceptualised by Cooperrider (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), has since grown into a strong and flourishing movement in psychology. It proposes a less interventionist approach to the traditional problem-solving diagnostic approach (Watkins & Mohr, 2001) and is firmly rooted in the positive psychology paradigm and the postmodern epistemological stance.

The AI movement (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Gordon, 2008a) was originally intent upon using the idea of positive strengths in organisations during organisational development facilitation. AI proposed a new and alternative model for building effectiveness and sustainability in organisations, through

the deliberate design of human systems processes based on affirmation and positivity (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The core principles of AI revolve around a strengths-based philosophy where the fundamental assumption is that, through appreciation of the past and what exists, possibilities are created. It also assumes that that by paying attention to what is right and on the positive core within the system, that an untapped reservoir of resources, possibilities and solutions are co-created in service of the creation of a compelling vision and purpose for change. A critical premise of AI is the relentless pursuit of positive potential in the system through unconditional affirmative questioning (Cooperrider, Whitney, Stavros & Fry, 2008). In so doing, AI claims to be a channel for unprecedented positive energy and transformation in the organisation. In fact, it claims to “liberate the human spirit and consciously construct a better future and supported by research, the transformative outcomes of AI has provided strong evidence for increased levels of inclusiveness, discrimination, openness, emotional capability of change, and reflection as a result of the AI process (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Nilsson & Holmberg, 2009).

Furthermore, this study accesses the AI model (science) as it applies to the application of a leadership coaching experience (practice). Appreciative inquiry, linked with a group-based approach, has been chosen as the preferred method for the design of the coaching programme, due to the potential transformative power of Appreciative Inquiry in coaching in the professional setting as a model for second order, revolutionary change in the human system (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). It is argued that transformation occurs under conditions of positive regard, appreciation, empowerment and mutuality (Kegan, 2009). This positive transformation is identified in the positive psychology literature as transformative outcomes, and includes the POB constructs of hope, subjective well-being, and confidence (Hodges & Clifton, 2004).

### **b) Transformative Learning**

“Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to

guide action. Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight” (Bushe & Kassam, 2011, p.161).

For the purpose of this research, transformative learning may be defined as follows:

Transformative learning is the process whereby the individual is able, through open and transparent discourse and dialogue with others, to take a radical departure from previous patterns of thinking, in which a completely new and different mindset and approach to the world or the specific focus point is created. This enables the individual to extend their meta-cognition about matters, expand their tolerance for dealing with ambiguity and integrate opposing thoughts more successfully into a new paradigm about the world, leading to a transformation in how they would make decisions and take action.

A frame of reference is a worldview or personal paradigm – “a structure of assumptions and expectations that frame an individual’s tacit points of view and influence their thinking, beliefs and actions” (Mezirow, 2000, p.10) and “higher order schemata, theories, propositions, beliefs, prototypes, goal orientations and evaluations (Mezirow, 2000, p.10).

For the purposes of this research a frame of reference is defined as follows:

A frame of reference is a specific set of beliefs and theories about the world which an individual holds, and which determine and influence the individual’s evaluation of and response to situations.

A perspective transformation is a positive worldview/paradigm shift obtained by reflecting on experience (Taylor, 2007, p.5). This definition will be used for the purposes of this research.

Transformation is required at a cognitive and intrapersonal level if we are to shift our deep underlying perspectives and methods for organising meaning from mere role consciousness to that of self-authorship in taking up leadership in professional and personal roles (Kegan, 2009). AI theory refers to changes in the identity of a system and

in the state of that being (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). At the core of this study is fundamental positive transformation as promised by AI as a discipline and applied to coaching.

Transformative effects are the outcomes of transformative learning (Laske, 1999), which refers to an awareness, “through reflection and critique, of specific presuppositions upon which a distorted or incomplete meaning perspective is based and then transforming that perspective through a reorganisation of meaning” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 6) which leads to “changes in the identity of a system and in the state of that being” (Bushe & Kassam, 2005, p.161).

For the purposes of this research, transformative effects are the outcome and process measurements of transformation, normally determined through qualitative methods and articulated by the individuals participating in the process, that determine the impact of that process on the individual experiencing it – in this case, as applied to coaching.

In addition, the transformative development effects of coaching were determined in research by Laske (1999). The findings of this applied qualitative research in the professional setting provided a method of operationalising and determining the transformative development effects of coaching on executives’ professional agenda. A key recommendation in his doctoral dissertation was that a longitudinal study is necessary to provide sufficient evidence for any long-term transformative effects of coaching (Kampa-Kokesch, & Anderson, 2001; Laske, 1999). This was duly noted and included in the design of this research study.

### **c) Leadership coaching in a postmodern context**

This research is conducted within the field of coaching psychology, which is a sub-discipline of psychology, including the industrial organisational, counselling and clinical streams of psychology. Coaching psychology is the translation of “psychological theory into practical executive coaching skills” (Peltier, 2010, xxiii).

Coaching psychology was also defined by the (British) Special Group in Coaching Psychology as a process “for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life

and work domains, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning and psychological approaches” (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007, p.2).

For the purposes of this research, coaching psychology is defined as a sub-field of industrial and organisational psychology in which the theory and discipline of coaching, based upon a range of different psychological models for different situations and clients, are offered to psychologists who provide coaching services, with the overall aim and purpose of building optimal performance for individuals in the organisation.

The focus area of theory and practice is concerned with leadership coaching which is conducted predominantly in the organisational setting (Kets de Vries, 2005; Kilburg, 2004a; Kilburg, 2004b; Kilburg, 2007). In support of the overriding goal of industrial and organisational psychology, the primary goal of leadership coaching is to facilitate the optimisation of the performance of leaders in their roles at work and their personal life (Kilburg, 2007; Silverstein, 2007). Leadership coaching has grown in use in response to the postmodern organisational demand for processes which drive leadership development, increased levels of self-actualisation, build exceptional leadership competencies and produce more effective and intentional leaders (Kets de Vries, 2005). The hope is that leadership coaching will unlock a new set of possibilities for leaders and their organisations and boost the overall business results of the organisation (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007).

With the possibility of linking AI principles and a group-based approach to postmodern coaching, this research was created to investigate the transformative effects of this coaching methodology on leaders in more detail. The methodological assumptions which influenced the design and process of the research will now be outlined.

### **1.5.2.2 Methodological assumptions**

The methodological assumptions which were used to design the research are a) applied field research; b) the use of a longitudinal design and c) the use of a qualitative methodology.

Firstly, this research is applied in that it works with a real-life work setting by linking AI theory as well as a group-based approach to coaching by proposing and executing a

postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme in an international organisation. The social setting, being the organisation, which is a large, international organisation in the fast-moving consumer industry, is typical of this industry and of the global and leadership challenges of similar organisations.

Secondly, the research design is longitudinal in design, based on the recommendations of Laske (1999) for conducting research on transformative effects. The LCP was conducted over three consecutive years, including a pilot in the first year. Qualitative data was collected, collated and organised over a six- to nine-month period for each coaching group. Multiple sources of data consisted of narrative notes, group notes, individual pre- and post-coaching journals and pre- and post-coaching drawings all related to the professional and personal perspectives of the leaders attending the programme. A time period of at least three months was provided before participants were asked for detailed written feedback on the programme, to ensure that the learning and transformation had time to transfer into the lives of participants.

Finally, the nature of the research design is qualitative. This was informed by the theoretical assumptions and methodologies associated in particular with AI (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Laske, 1999) and group-based leadership coaching (Charlotte and Boniwell, 2010; Joseph, Griffin, Hall & Sullivan, 2001; Kets de Vries, 2005; Oades, Crowe & Nguyen, 2009), and the qualitative work of Laske (1999) regarding the transformative effects of coaching, all of which influenced the decision to use a qualitative method of data collection and analysis. The design of the appreciative group-based based coaching methodology was influenced in particular by the use of methods such as narratives and peer reflection, which lend themselves to a qualitative investigation with the use of multiple sources of data, including drawings and written essays.

A broad definition of qualitative research is, "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). A qualitative design implies the use of rich phenomenological data obtained in the field (Golafshani, 2003; Mouton, 1990) and in natural, real-world settings, where the "phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally"

(Patton, 2001, p. 39). With respect to the qualitative methodology, this type of approach requires that the research connects deeply with the organisation or system (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); that the methodology uses “inquiry from inside” and also needs to be conducted according to a less directive form of engagement with the participants and process (Groenewald, 2004; Hoepfl, 1997). The qualitative approach has numerous benefits that include richer insights originating from within the organisation; more balanced and relevant published research, more relevant teaching, increasing levels of research contribution to the field by non-academics, richer conversation and deeper mutual respect between scientists and practitioners (Augustyn & Cillie, 2008; Schmidt, 2002).

With this in mind, and through a qualitative lens, the collection of data in this research is dominated by unstructured data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.8), consisting of multiple sets of data: written essays and drawings requested from participating leaders on the coaching programme before, during and after attending the programme. The only ‘structured’ survey used for data in this study was the biographical data sheet used to collect basic information. Furthermore, the researcher was directly involved in the events and process of research, as co-facilitator and in the use of a facilitator journal to record the process, while remaining prepared for the unexpected to happen (e.g. when the recording equipment broke down during the pilot study).

With regard to the use of drawings for this study, Paulus (2006) described art as a specific genre to improve the creation of stories and self-narrative in coaching. The use of drawings and written essays also provides a non-intrusive manner in which insight into the beliefs, understandings and experiences of the leaders on the LCP is gained. This unstructured data provided the researcher with a *Verstehen* phenomenological, first-hand and more accurate picture of the coaching experience, without being contaminated through the researcher’s perspective (Chapman & Cilliers, 2008; Groenewald, 2004). The analysis of the narrative and drawings used a *Verstehen* phenomenological approach, which will determine how sense is made of a topic or issue by the account-giver (the participant in the leadership coaching experience)

(Groenewald, 2004). The phenomenological method of analysis is based on three rules (Groenewald, 2004; Spinelli, 2005):

- Rule of epoché – the researcher should bracket all presuppositions about the individual;
- Rule of description – describe, do not explain – answer ‘what is’, not ‘why’;
- Rule of horizontals – suspend value judgements – treat all data and objects as having equal value.

This qualitative study also assumed holism, in that the context (both the personal and professional perspectives of the leaders) was taken into account. The use of qualitative and rich data from the participants was also critical to an understanding of the truth housed in the perceptions of the individuals participating in the programme (Mouton, 1990). It was therefore necessary to obtain information that was relevant to various attitudinal, situational and environmental factors perceived by the individuals, with the focus on the experiential states of the leaders and their perceptions of the coaching programme in relation to their professional and personal perspectives.

According to Mouton (2001, p.108), “The aim of qualitative analysis is to understand the various constitutive elements of one’s data through an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables, and to see whether there are any patterns and trends that can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in the data”. In this research, a qualitative data analysis technique was used to elucidate transformative themes through the use of AI transformation markers (Bushe, 2011) and by using key POB constructs (Luthans, 2002). This research began with specific observations and analysis (deductive reasoning), using the data, and builds towards general patterns or prevailing themes (inductive reasoning).

However, in order to be fully and properly explained, data ultimately needs to be ‘broken up’, analysed and interpreted (Mouton, 2001). A decision rules matrix (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) based on the theoretical principles of AI transformation and positive organisational behaviour transformation (Hodges & Clifton, 2004) was used as the coding structure for the individual written essays and drawings and applied by multiple



coders. This provided a systematic data analysis with robust boundaries and structure for establishing themes and connections (Czander, 1993).

This was followed by an inductive processing and interpretation of the data – “chunking up” or “synthesizing the information into larger coherent wholes” (Mouton, 2001, p.109), using transformation as the lens for synthesis. This provided an account of the observed patterns and trends as applied to the theoretical framework, in this case, AI and positive organisational behaviour. The transformative themes and POB constructs were used as the lens for the examination, thematic analysis and interpretation of individual data, the development of working premises and themes, and in seeking closure to the research questions and objectives.

## **1.6 MEASURES TO ENSURE THE QUALITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RIGOUR OF THE STUDY**

Since the tools of reliability and validity are common and rooted in a positivist perspective and epistemology, these need to be redefined for their use in this postmodern, qualitative, constructionist study (Golafshani, 2004). It is therefore crucial that this research should be judged on its quality, trustworthiness and rigour (Abrahams, 2005; Golafshani, 2003; Mouton, 1990). The reader is therefore provided with a justification for the soundness, trustworthiness, ethics and overall qualitative standards used in this research in this section.

It is important to note that the standards and principles by which the reader should measure any qualitative research, and this piece of research in particular, are summarised in a set of criteria which has been drawn from the work of various authors in setting criteria for qualitative research. This includes Lincoln's (1995) philosophical criteria, Creswell's procedural criteria (Creswell, 2003), the Marshall and Rossman canons (1999) and Richardson's participatory advocacy criteria in (Johns, 2010). The standards for sound qualitative research, based on these authors' contributions, have been clustered into five key areas by the author. These are: a) philosophical assumptions and philosophical credibility; b) criteria of soundness and trustworthiness; c) positionality; d) critical subjectivity and e) community.

### **1.6.1 Philosophical assumptions and philosophical credibility**

Firstly, the importance of testing the credibility of the philosophical assumptions of the research was advocated by Lincoln (1995) through a set of philosophical criteria. The first criterion of philosophical soundness seems to be obvious, but needs to be mentioned, and this is that the research remains consistent with the philosophical assumptions of qualitative research. This would mean, for instance, that the research should show an evolving design, that multiple perspectives are used, and that the work shows evidence of employing the tradition of inquiry through any number of qualitative methodologies; in this instance, using thematic analysis as a method (Lincoln, 1995). The use of rich and multiple perspectives through multiple sets of qualitative data and then the use of a crystallisation approach to analysis (Silva & Fraga, 2013) proves that the research intent and methodology were well grounded in the qualitative research and that the philosophy of the research is firmly based in the qualitative paradigm. Furthermore, the changes in design from the pilot session to the ensuing coaching sessions showed that the researcher was flexible and allowed an evolving design, both in the execution of the coaching programme as well as the data collection phase.

Then, in rounding off the case for the robustness of the philosophical foundation and assumptions, Creswell's procedural criteria highlight the importance of beginning the research with a central phenomenon and then working out from that point to any number of possibilities, showing a divergent thinking style (Creswell, 2003). The robustness of the theoretical assumptions and philosophical credibility (i.e., AI, transformative learning, postmodern leadership coaching and positive psychology) in this study has been provided in this chapter in the previous section, and is crucial for setting the stage and boundaries within which this study takes place.

### **1.6.2 Criteria of soundness and trustworthiness**

The canons of Marshall and Rossman (1999) outline a set of criteria for determining soundness and trustworthiness in qualitative research, and these will now be outlined in relation to this specific research.

### **1.6.2.1 Credibility**

Credibility in this context relates to evidence of layers of both paradigmatic and scientific credibility. Within the integrated model of social sciences (Mouton & Marais, 1990), a strong qualitative study requires paradigmatic and theoretical credibility, which is grounded in strong links to the philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions grounding the research. In this study, paradigmatic credibility was firmly established in the justification and design of the programme, which uses an AI philosophy and model, as well as being firmly rooted in positive psychology principles. The theoretical assumptions of postmodern coaching using AI principles was clearly stated and expounded upon, and this was carried through into the execution of the programme, as well as in the analysis of the data using a qualitative design and mirroring research (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). In addition, this research has stretched beyond the mere presentation of a case study by also including an investigation into and identification of the transformative effects of postmodern coaching using Bushe and Kassam's (2005) methodology.

Furthermore, scientific credibility has been established through the accurate manner in which the inquiry has been conducted, with a systematic identification of the subject matter and a full description of the area for exploration, as well as a rigorous approach to data analysis. The research, although conducted over a period of three years, maintained accurate records of process and data and stayed true to the original rules for inquiry. The research was conducted patiently and thoughtfully, with a robust and detailed overview of the field and specific phenomenon being explored.

The longitudinal design required scientific discipline and rigour to ensure that the original idea was followed through to completion in such a way that the threads in the exploration were sufficiently obvious to the reader and were carried through into the final conclusions. It is believed that this was achieved and is evident in the consistent flow between the research aims and final conclusions. This was achieved through the professional execution of the LCP, followed by an in-depth description of the complexities and variables and interaction with data.

Scientific credibility also requires that the research should work within the parameters of the intellectual climate, the theoretical assumptions, the setting, the population and theoretical framework – with firm boundaries placed around the study. It is believed that the paradigm of postmodern leadership coaching was clearly stated and that this was deployed successfully in the identification of the population, the execution of the coaching programme, as well as in the analysis method.

The simplicity of the empirical design also ensured rigour and replicability. In this case, only a single instruction/question was provided for the initial written essays and drawings and only three questions asked in the final written essay question, keeping the process of sharing uncomplicated for participants.

Furthermore, methodological reliability has been strengthened by using the same method of questioning and data collection, which is to be applied consistently over two groups and with all leaders on the programme. Attention was given to ensure that the risk of data capturing errors was mitigated, in that individuals were asked to write and draw their own responses. The analysis and interpretation used a well demarcated model for coding (Bushe and Kassam, 2005). Two additional data coders were also utilised to bring objectivity into the coding system.

In addition, the administration reliability was grounded in the credibility and experience of the researcher, who is a doctoral student and a qualified psychologist, with over two decades of psychological experience. Seasoned, international experience in psychological assessment, facilitation, coaching, group dynamics and leadership development, including the use of AI organisational development facilitation, provided a strong basis for administrative soundness in design and application of the research.

Denzin (1998) proposes that the greater the triangulation in a research design, the greater the confidence a researcher may have in his/her findings (Golafshani 2003). Qualifying checks and balances, including triangulation, have been built into the research design to strengthen the scientific rigour of this study. The combination of multiple methods of observations (using different tools in the observation process) also

ensured more reliable and diverse constructions of realities. These included written essays and drawings at various stages during the process. In addition, facilitator process notes, an observation journal and facilitator debriefing sessions held after each workshop were used to discuss any emerging themes, problems or suggestions.

However, the concept of triangulation is typically associated with more positivistic approaches to research. Triangulation is concerned with the sources of data collection whereas crystallisation is focussed primarily on the data analysis process utilised (Silva & Fraga, 2013). For the purposes of this research, the concept of crystallisation is therefore to be used when discussing data analysis. Crystallisation requires a deep immersion in the data, it is “less structured involving several reflective cycles until interpretation intuitively crystallizes” (Silva & Fraga, 2013, p.10). The analytic process used in this research design includes a deeply iterative process, with intimate immersion in the data by the researcher and coders. Rather than using an editing or template based process of analysis (Silva and Fraga, 2013), the research design used a crystallisation approach to the data.

Finally, the risk of a biased interpretation was ruled out because the analysis will not be trying to prove any premise, but rather to examine transformative themes that may or may not emerge in the data.

#### **1.6.2.2 Transferability**

Transferability is proved by the extent to which the study’s usefulness is strengthened through the use of multiple sources of data to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). In this study, the collection of data was balanced between written, oral and drawn information, providing a stronger triangulation design with richer sources of information and enough sources to corroborate an idea or theme in individual data sets until the point of saturation.

Secondly, the extent to which the central theoretical model guided data collection and analysis is tied into a body of theory, and so is also available to other researchers to use. The same parameters will guide the power of transferability in qualitative research (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). The use of previous meta-analysis research in this area

provides a strong theoretical link for the research in question and allows for easy transferability of the data analysis methodology to other situations.

Furthermore, having strong links to a theoretical model, in this case postmodern leadership coaching and AI principles, ensures that the findings can be used later in a variety of settings and are not limited to one organisation or one population, but used, in this case, to build a link to coaching theory. The detailed outline of the LCP as part of the research also provides the opportunity for other researchers to test and replicate this approach in their coaching practice. Secondly, it is argued that the research demonstrates adequate levels of generalisability, in that, whilst the study is limited to application in one organisation, the LCP can be, and has been, applied in numerous other settings not limited to a profit making organisation, such as academia and non-profit organisations.

However, whilst the case study approach enabled the exploration of the phenomenon in the bounded context of the organisation, this held the risk of reducing the ability to generalise. This was mitigated by using a longitudinal design using two groups over an extended period of two years, which provided an opportunity for a richer exploration and examination of the transformative effects of leadership coaching for the emerging premises and recommendations to be tested for generalisability by different researchers in different contexts at a later stage.

Furthermore, the question of the relevance of group-based coaching in a global context with leader participants was intriguing enough to test in this case-study situation as a departure point for replications in other industries.

In addition, the exploration was not only to determine the transformative effects of coaching, but to test whether in fact the postmodern approach to coaching, by using certain AI principles is relevant and practical in the organisation context. Delivering the coaching programme and seeing it through to conclusion on three occasions (first during the pilot study, and then again over the following two years in two different

groups), will prove that this was a viable option and this gives a sense of scientific credibility to the programme.

### **1.6.2.3 Dependability**

Dependability assumes that the world is constantly changing and that the changing conditions need to be described and acknowledged rather than contained (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). By allowing for peer-based reflection, a community of learning and open sharing amongst participants was established, and it is believed that this showed sufficient flexibility to allow for the group to coach itself, whilst still working within a broad framework and structure provided by the coaches.

Dependability also relates to the ability of the researcher to account for changing conditions in the phenomena chosen for study, as well as changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting. By running a pilot group in the year preceding the first programme, the impact of the data collection techniques on the coaching programme process were tested, and the changes could then be accommodated adequately. The dynamics of these changes are described in the findings.

### **1.6.2.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability criteria require that data is collected in an objective fashion for both recording purposes and during the analysis phase (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). In this study, the data was collected from participants by a third party (an administrative assistant) and recorded using the original data without transcribing any data.

The use of objective coders for data analysis also mitigated the risk of biased interpretation. In order to lessen the risk of confirmation bias from the researcher, two coders were appointed who had not been involved or exposed to the coaching programme, but who were qualified to assess the constructs through their prior training (as intern psychologists) and through a 'norming session'.

The use of the peer groups to conduct group discourses also provided further reduction of confirmation bias.

Finally, the author checked and rechecked the full data set numerous times to ensure that there was an in-depth analysis of the data and that all data was preserved and archived for re-analysis.

### **1.6.3 Positionality**

The third key area for qualitative standards relates to the positionality of the research, and particularly the text (Lincoln, 1995). Positionality refers to the fact that the text needs to be honest and authentic and perceived to be so by the reader (Lincoln, 1995). Richardson (in Johns, 2010) states that this is achieved through persuasive writing that is able to engage and keep the reader interested.

With content validity in mind, it is argued that the use of reflective written essays and personal drawings provides accurate (phenomenological) descriptions of the actual perspectives of the leaders participating in the programme, and that this is the reality at that point in time for each individual, because it is their own perspective, presented in both written and graphic form.

Furthermore, the text should have aesthetic merit for the reader, and this requires artistic shaping of the text to ensure that it does not come across as boring, but that the text needs to have an impact on the reader, affecting them emotionally and/or intellectually and moving the reader to action, as stated by Richardson (in Johns, 2010).

Equally important when dealing with the positionality of the text are the face value and perceived truthfulness of the data – this means that the expression of reality as provided in the text must seem true for the reader, as per Richardson (in Johns, 2010).

It was the intention of the author to balance two polarities in presenting this project, i.e. science and practice. In doing so, the research and findings have been written in such a manner as to be academically robust and to demonstrate rigour in research process and design, so that they are accepted by the scientific community. With this in mind, the author has attempted to write up the research and present the findings in a precise, yet unpretentious manner. This is in service of coaches from various fields and disciplines who may read the project in order to apply the findings into their practice, as well as



researchers who would scrutinise the findings and recommendations in order to build further theory within this field.

#### **1.6.4 Critical subjectivity**

The key area of critical subjectivity was set by Lincoln's philosophical criteria as an important test for any qualitative research (Lincoln, 1995). This assumes a high level of self-awareness on the part of the researcher, ensuring that the research shows evidence of reflexivity, according to Richardson (in Johns, 2010), in the process of conducting and reporting on the research. This is achieved through displays of adequate self-awareness and self-exposure to the reader, a phenomenon that is far removed from the cool, objective approach used by purely quantitative researchers.

Critical subjectivity is also enhanced and achieved through the correct mindset of the researcher, which should always be directed to using the research to create social transformation and the overall social benefits of the broader community. Because the researcher was not the founder of the programme, this gave a degree of objectivity with less emotional investment in the programme and less bias in the interpretation.

The researcher was also trained in other coaching methodologies, and so this enabled a stance of unbiased judgement and objectivity regarding the process and data. The author was conscious of the need to be proactively aware of the active and reflexive role that was required in the data collection and analysis (Ting and Scisco, 2006.).

Of no doubt, the rigour deployed during this research process should be used as another data point for judging critical subjectivity through evidence of rigorous data collection, using multiple forms of data collection, multiple levels of data analysis, the use of extensive data and the use of multiple strategies to confirm the accuracy of the text (Creswell, 2003).

#### **1.6.5 Community**

The fifth and final key factor which may be used as a measure of the soundness of qualitative research is the aspect of community (Lincoln, 1995), in which it is important that the study and text serve both the broader community's purposes as well as the

narrower reach of the community of participants and contributors to the research (Lincoln, 1995).

In terms of the broader community, the research should add value by making a substantive contribution to the community and by significantly broadening the understanding of social life (Johns, 2010). To this end, the intent of this research was to provide a postmodern approach, using AI principles to group-based coaching, and so its overall purpose is to do good and add value to the coaching community.

Community criteria also assume a strong level of reciprocity between the researchers and participants, both in terms of input and outcomes for both parties (Lincoln, 1995) and equally serving the purposes of both stakeholders. It is believed that the nature of the LCP and its positive outcomes provide cognitive, emotional and will benefits for both leader participants and coaches.

At the same time, the research must provide evidence of protection of the participants through maintaining the sacredness of the relationship by showing respect to participants and in sharing the benefits of the rewards or outcomes of the participants with them (Lincoln, 1995). The use of signed informed consent and transparency about the research provided a safe and protected space within which the research could be deployed.

Finally, the need to give space and permission for the voice of the participants to be heard in the text and research is also important, and a certain philosophical and practical stance of intentional openness and care on behalf of the researcher is required in order to achieve this (Lincoln, 1995). The use of a coding and thematic analysis technique allowed for the unexpected development of additional key insights and learnings about the process of coaching beyond the original intention to identify a set of emerging themes, and this proves that the data collection and analysis phase allowed for openness to hearing the voices of leader participants, which is reflected in the findings.

## **1.7 MEASURES TO ENSURE ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

With ethical research in mind, it has been important to consider ethical principles at three key points in the research design (Huysamen, 1994) – at Stage 1: the recruitment stage of participants; Stage 2: the collection of data (inquiry stage); and Stage 3: the release of findings. The “Ethical Safeguards Model” Silverman in (Cook, 2010) also provides safety measures for ethical practice. These all relate to managing the power relationship in research, understanding that the researcher is a critical element of the dynamics and using reflexivity to keep oneself and one’s internal processes of perception and subjectivity in mind (Cook, 2010).

These safeguards have been taken as the key criteria and integrated with other general tests of ethical research to highlight the risks and possible solutions for the data collection and analysis methods.

### **1.7.1 Ensure that people participate voluntarily**

Participation in the research, including the analysis and use of the written essays or drawings of the managers, was done with signed informed consent. To make it an optional activity (with no repercussions), leader participants were given the option to remove themselves from the study with no direct or indirect consequences and even had the choice to remove their story after the collection of data by way of an email to the researcher, with no need to provide a reason. All leaders on the LCP were given the opportunity to send in written essays and so no subjective choice of respondents is made.

### **1.7.2 Make people’s comments and behaviour confidential**

This study contained the collection of personal data (including personal written material and drawings), all likely to be of a very private and confidential nature. It is then important that nothing in the published material can be attributable to one individual. By using multiple sources of data, it can be expected that any analysis and premises that do emerge will not be attributable to one individual.

In order to put in a control for attribution (Cook, 2010), all participants have openly shared their 'stories' in the collaborative group as part of the programme, which would minimise the need to mitigate any risk of intra-group recognition.

Furthermore, confidentiality is assured during the LCP. Where deeper psychological issues requiring therapy emerged during the session, the coachees were reminded before, during and after the programme that referral was available in a confidential context. This has occurred once in the process. In addition, the co-facilitator is a trained psychologist and competent to manage the referral process.

A signed written informed consent research form was obtained from each leader participating in the programme.

### **1.7.3 Protect people from harm**

Thirdly, the research design is non-malevolent, in that the programme has already been tested over previous years in similar groupings in the organisation, receiving strong ratings for excellence and relevance to the delegates. The coaching process is rated by ex-participants as one of the highlights or 'treats' of the development programme. It seems to be, in its essence, non-malevolent. This anecdotal information needs to be explored and scientifically validated.

### **1.7.4 Ensure mutual trust between researcher and people studied**

Building mutual trust is a "key factor in the coaching relationship" (Cook, 2010) and it is important to stay congruent as one person as both coach and researcher. In the role of researcher, it was important that the power relationship with the participants was not abused in any way that could compromise the ethics of the research. In order to establish trust, the researcher provided an outline of the study in broad terms and asked for permission to do so at the beginning of the process. In order to stay grounded and close to the process, the researcher also participated in an individual coaching process, revisiting the cycle used in the coaching programme one month prior to the process. There is nothing that was asked of participants that the facilitators had not themselves experienced.

### **1.7.5 Ensure benefit to participants**

It is argued that the research is beneficial to the leaders participating in the programme because the essence and nature of this leadership coaching experience and research is grounded in appreciation and positive psychology, and focused entirely on the development of the individuals. It has as its primary outcome a positive transformation in the personal and professional life of the individuals. The nature of the leadership coaching experience is based on the principles of respect for the individual managers and building confidence in talents and strengths.

### **1.7.6 Ensure that the research is just to all involved**

Of critical importance in weighing up ethical research is the construct of being just to all involved. The design of this study paid particular attention to building this into the process – all managers in the talent development programme are allowed to participate in this process, with no exclusions.

### **1.7.7 Show respect to all**

Finally, it is argued that the research design shows respect for individuals and the autonomy of individuals within the research process, in that all individuals were given the choice to share or not to share within the group context, with no prejudice. This was painstakingly communicated at the beginning of the programme and at every junction where group work was required. Most work was done in small groups, with numerous plenary feedback sessions. A key characteristic of the LCP is that an additional communication workshop was held with all participants where they were provided with training and skills in essential communication practice. In this workshop they were provided with the essential skills of communication “with understanding” (Vansteenkiste, 2008) with a focus on listening at the cognitive, emotional and will levels. This was designed to enhance the empathy shown by all managers during the group discussions and peer reflection sessions.

The reader is encouraged to keep these values in mind when reviewing the chapters of this treatise and to use them to judge how well the research has been able to stay true to these important principles.

## **1.8 RESEARCH PROCESS**

The third sub-system within the integrated research model of Mouton and Marais (1990) relates to components of a) the research decision making principles, b) an outline of the phases of the research and c) the outline of the steps of the research. Beginning with the research decisions as they apply to the design, this research design is firstly bounded by the rules and principles of applied social research, with an emphasis on field work. Secondly, it deploys a qualitative methodology (Golafshani, 2003), with the aims of illuminating, increasing understanding and extrapolation (Hoepfl, 1997) of the proposed postmodern group-based coaching process. Finally, the research uses a longitudinal design. These three research design and decision-making principles will now be discussed before the presentation of the research phases and steps.

### **1.8.1 Research design and decision-making principles**

Firstly, this research is applied, in that it achieves its aims through a process of application and documentation of a group-based postmodern coaching process in an organisational setting. This is followed by a thematic analysis of the emerging data, so that the knowledge obtained can be extrapolated into themes and premises. The outcome of the research is to serve the theory and discipline of coaching, thus contributing to social research by documenting and reporting on the use of postmodern group-based coaching and making it available and relevant to other similar coaching situations (Hoepfl, 1997). The outcome of this is that these learnings will sufficiently move the reader to action and can be used in service of the interests of the coaching profession, as well as opening up possibilities for further research and practice.

This research is also designed within the principles and rules of the qualitative research methodology. This is because the theoretical and methodological assumptions of this research are grounded in the use of social construction, postmodernism and AI as

methods for making sense of reality and creating meaning and truth during coaching. Both of these assumptions use qualitative research techniques (Laske, 1999; McMahon, 2007), and so the qualitative design principles determine that the core aim of this research is, therefore, to create greater understanding about transformation during an appreciative group-based leadership coaching process (Hoepfl, 1997).

The design of this research is also congruent with the qualitative methodology in including open-ended text and drawing analysis as the source of data. In doing so, the research seeks to explore the different discourses (stories/themes) at the individual and group level that enables them to make sense of their world at the point in time of the coaching programme. This study used triangulation to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the analysis, by using individual narratives (written and drawing), group focus discussions and individual interviews, as well as facilitator observations, thus making use of multiple methods as well as multiple perspectives. A crystallisation approach was used in the data analysis by using various reflective and iterative cycles until data saturation was achieved so that themes could be categorised, salient issues identified, using a reflexive process until key premises emerged (Silva & Fraga, 2013).

Furthermore, the research process is geared towards an appreciation of the multiple data sets, including discourses, that are available and for examining how they are 'knowledged into being', what purpose they serve, which are dominant and which are hidden, without any pre-set postulations or expectations. Multiple perspectives for each theme are presented through the identification and documentation of the details, quotes, metaphors and analogies, and tensions and contradictions implicit in the data.

Furthermore, the unit of analysis used in the research design is geared to the individual level of leadership in the organisation and reflected as participants' personal and professional life perspectives. This is measured through a thematic analysis of the individual's written essays and drawing of their own personal and professional life and of the coaching experience. This is then clustered into emerging themes drawn from all the written essays and a composite summary of these is made.

Finally, this study was longitudinal in nature, because it captured progress and change over time. The study explored and described transformation over the time span of the programme (six to twelve months), using a time series design (pre- and post-test data collection).

### 1.8.2 Phases of the research

The research consists of a literature overview, as well as an empirical investigation set out below in the following phases:

#### a) Phase 1

A literature study and overview of:

- The field of group-based leadership coaching;
- The discipline of postmodern coaching, using AI principles as a transformative process in the organisational setting; and
- A postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme, which uses AI principles.

Phase 1 consists of the following steps:

PHASE 1	LITERATURE REVIEW
Step 1	A literature review defining and outlining group-based leadership coaching to provide a comprehensive overview of AI as a transformative process, with specific reference to coaching in the organisational setting. This will be conducted through a literature review of the recent body of knowledge – both academic research and more popular works.  Presented in Chapters 2 and 3.
Step 2	To present a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme (LCP), which links AI principles, postmodern coaching methods and a group-



	<p>based methodology. To describe the components and design of the LCP including the motivation for the design and rationale of the programme; its structure; requirements; and administration.</p> <p>Presented in Chapter 4.</p>
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## b) Phase 2

A qualitative empirical research study providing:

- A description of the implementation of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme in an international organisational setting;
- Findings related to the transformative effects of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme on leaders' personal and professional perspectives; and
- Conclusions and recommendations.

Phase 2 consists of the following steps:

PHASE 2	EMPIRICAL RESEARCH
Step 1	<p>An overview of the empirical study; including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a description of the participants in terms of demographics, biographical information and context;</li> <li>• a discussion of essays and drawings as measuring instruments;</li> <li>• an outline of the data collection procedure; and</li> <li>• a description of the data analysis techniques and methods.</li> </ul> <p>Presented in Chapter 5.</p>
Step 2	Implementation of the LCP in an organisational setting, using a global and

	<p>multicultural management talent development group.</p> <p>Presented in Chapter 6.</p>
Step 3	<p>Data collection – the longitudinal collection of qualitative data from participants.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Before the LCP begins, through individual drawings and written essays</li> <li>2. During the programme with individual drawings, group discussions and reflection on themes, and researcher observation notes</li> <li>3. After the LCP with written essays by participants</li> </ol> <p>The qualitative information gathered will relate to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the personal and professional perspectives (subjective experiences and complexities) of the participating managers on the LCP</li> <li>• the relevance of the LCP for transformation of personal and professional life experiences</li> </ul> <p>Presented in Chapter 6.</p>
Step 4	<p>Data analysis – a decision rules matrix using AI and positive organisational behaviour transformative indicators, to be used as the coding structure for each individual written essay and drawing and from which to connect and develop themes.</p> <p>Presented in Chapter 6</p>
Step 5	<p>Formulation of themes and connections – development and presentation of emerging themes and connections between the individual drawings and essay and then for the composite picture of themes for the group as a whole. The research question centres on the transformative effects of the postmodern group-based leadership coaching experience for managers.</p> <p>Presented in Chapter 6.</p>

Step 6	<p>Presentation, discussion and integration of the research findings. Discussion of these findings providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working premises which explain the transformative effects of the postmodern group-based leadership coaching experience.</li> <li>• A critical evaluation of the LCP in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the transformational power and relevance for leadership coaching.</li> <li>○ how to practically apply the LCP in a global organisational setting</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A link back to the research objectives and broader aims.</li> </ul> <p>Presented in Chapter 6.</p>
Step 7	<p>Formulation of conclusions with specific reference the research objectives and emerging themes.</p> <p>Presented in Chapter 7.</p>
Step 8	<p>Discussion of the shortcomings of the study.</p> <p>Presented in Chapter 7.</p>
Step 9	<p>Recommendations with regard to postmodern leadership coaching, aimed at transforming personal and professional life experience and optimising functioning in the context of psychology at work.</p> <p>Formulation of recommendations for industrial psychology, and more specifically for coaching psychology. Recommendations for further research areas.</p> <p>Presented in Chapter 7.</p>
Step 10	<p>Integration of the research and summary.</p> <p>Presented in Chapter 7.</p>

## **1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT**

Chapter 1 – Orientation of the Research

Chapter 2 – Group-based Leadership Coaching

Chapter 3 – The Postmodern Approach to Coaching

Chapter 4 – The Leadership Coaching Programme

Chapter 5 – Empirical study

Chapter 6 – Findings

Chapter 7 – Recommendations, Shortcomings, Integration and Conclusions

## **1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided a systematic overview of the planned research.

In this chapter, the value and unique contribution of the research to the science and practice of postmodern leadership coaching and the field of coaching psychology was provided. Background and motivations for the research were provided. These include transformation as a central theme for leadership in the postmodern world; shifts in the global arena; the exponential growth of leadership coaching as a response to these challenges; the expansion of coaching psychology from a traditional to postmodern approach; the lack of robust scientific research in the field of coaching psychology; the need for a postmodern approach to leadership coaching; and the rise of positive psychology and AI in coaching theory and practice.

The general aim of this research is to examine the transformative effect of an postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme on leaders' personal and professional perspectives. In doing so, this study will have contributed significantly to the current body of knowledge in the field of coaching psychology through providing empirical research in the area of postmodern group-based leadership coaching.

Specific objectives have been outlined to provide for: a deeper understanding and explanation of leadership coaching in the postmodern context; robust academic research evidence for the relevance of an LCP within the organisational context; and rich information about the transformative effects of the personal and professional perspectives of leaders.

The integrated model for social science research (Mouton & Marais, 1990) was used as the framework for the presentation of intellectual climate: made up of the fields of social constructionism and positive psychology; the market of intellectual resources: made up of theoretical (AI and postmodern leadership coaching) and methodological assumptions (applied social science research, qualitative methodology and longitudinal design). The last sub-system of the model relates to the research process, and to this end, the research design principles and processes and the research phases and research steps were presented. The terms and definitions which are relevant for this research were integrated into this discussion.

This was followed by a justification for the soundness of the research in question and the provision of a broad set of four key areas for judging whether the research has adequately met the ethical standards and practices for qualitative research.

A chapter layout is presented and a reference list provided.

In summary, the background to and the motivation for the research were presented. The research objectives for the research, including the literature review and the empirical research, were provided. The research paradigm, in terms of the field of study and a brief overview of the research design and methods, was provided. This was concluded with a layout of the chapters in the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **GROUP-BASED LEADERSHIP COACHING**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a conceptualisation of group-based leadership coaching as a specific field of coaching psychology as it is understood and practiced in the postmodern context. A description of the predominant approaches to coaching, leadership coaching and group-based coaching will be presented and integrated into a viewpoint on and description of group-based leadership coaching. The discussion on coaching will take the reader through coaching theory grounded in more positivistic assumptions, and then move onto coaching which is based upon the emerging strengths-based approach. The next section will provide a comprehensive overview and definition of leadership coaching and a comparison between coaching and therapy to clarify their differences, followed by a discussion of the purpose of leadership coaching, with specific reference to transformative learning as an outcome of postmodern leadership coaching, and then an overview of various approaches to coaching, including a model which is highly representative of the predominant approach.

#### **2.2 LEADERSHIP COACHING DEFINED**

Leadership coaching is a relatively new, but increasingly popular, method for helping leaders to improve, develop, learn new skills, find personal success, achieve aims and manage life change and personal challenges, such as work-related stress and achieving work/life balance (Morgan et al., 2005). Knott (2012) has reported that, currently, internal and external coaches are deployed across the organisation at all levels and across many diverse industries.

Leadership coaching is defined by the Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) as helping “leaders understand themselves more fully, drawing on strengths, use themselves more effectively and intentionally and identify development needs and develop untested potential” (Ting and Scisco, 2006, p.2.).

Kilburg uses the terms “executive coaching” and “leadership coaching” interchangeably, and leadership coaching is defined as “a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement” (Kilburg, 2007, p.203).

Peltier (2010, p. xxiv) also uses the term executive coaching, and describes this as “one-on-one services to top leaders in an organisation on the principle that positive changes can be leveraged to filter down and enhance the entire organisation”. Furthermore, the management coach provides “psychological skills and methods that are employed in a one-on-one relationship to help someone become a more effective leader or manager” (Peltier, 2010, p. xxiv). These skills are typically applied to specific present-moment work-related issues (rather than general personal problems or psychopathology) in a way that enables this client to incorporate them into his or her permanent management or leadership repertoire” (Peltier, 2010, p.xxiv).

According to Vansteenkiste (2011, p.2.), leadership coaching is a process for transforming the personal and professional agenda of delegates by increasing self-awareness through providing self-directed, reflective competences required to navigate their leadership journey through their career.

This research project uses the following definition for leadership coaching:

Leadership coaching is a facilitated process of empowerment of leaders through either an individual or group-based process, in which the perspective of leaders’ personal and professional lives is transformed through an appreciation for the leader’s experiences and talents, the creation of a broader purpose and meaning for the leader and the definition and clarification of aspirational and achievable short, medium and long-term goals.

## 2.3 COACHING VERSUS THERAPY

In any exposition on coaching, it is important to highlight the differences between coaching and therapy (Peltier, 2010). The following statements, all attributed to Peltier (2010), are made as generalisations, and it is acknowledged that in some cases there are exceptions.

In therapy the focus is on the past, whereas in coaching it is primarily on a present and future focus. This is a general statement, because as in AI coaching, the past is definitely also accounted for in the coaching process. Therapy tends to hold a passive orientation, using reflective listening, whilst coaching tends to be more action and outcome oriented. The presumptions of therapy are based upon intra-psychic pathology or issues, with client mental health and remediation of personality orientation as the aim, whereas the coach assumes mental wellness with no presence of psychopathology, with performance and/or development as the main aims. In coaching, if problems or issues exist, they are presumed to be as a result of the person-environment fit. Therapy therefore requires that the therapist is competent in mental health as a profession, whilst coaching requires the coach to be competent in facilitation and business skills.

In therapy, the sources of data come from the client and are kept in a legal, absolutely confidential manner with the client, who typically pays for the therapist's services. In coaching, data points outside of the client are regularly referred to, for example in psychometric 360° feedback, and information may sometimes be shared back, especially when there is some ambiguity about who the actual client is. In some cases, the client is viewed as the organisation that is paying the coach's fees. The therapy session is typically 50 minutes, within rigid boundaries and held in the therapist's rooms, whereas the coaching meetings have variable lengths, more flexible boundaries and include even social settings.

In many ways, coaching looks like solution-focused behaviour therapy, with a definite outcome and a structured time boundary (Kemp, 2005). Often, however, the coaching relationship is longer-term, with one problem or goal pursued after another, beginning with helping the client identify their values, visions, dreams, and purpose in life



(Gauthier & Giber, 2006; Goldsmith & Lyons, 2006). By finding meaning, the client is enabled to reassess their priorities in relation to time, energy, money, and resources, and then once priorities are established, the team (coach and client) establish desired goals and action steps (Peltier, 2010).

With regard to best practices in coaching, the following seven features of good practice were identified by participants who had participated in a coaching session (Simpson, 2010). They are: having a choice of coach; the coachee making a commitment to learn from their coaching; the coachee understanding the nature, purpose and potential of coaching; the skills of the coach, with particular value given to the ability to quickly develop trust and empathy, active listening skills, honesty, and the quality of their questioning and challenging skills; easy access to, and the well timed availability of, coaching; coaching being seen by all parties as a developmental rather than a remedial intervention; and coaching being available at several career points: at entry to the organisation, at career transition and for the most senior roles.

In concluding this discussion, coaching psychology is the application of psychological theories to coaching, primarily coaching conducted by psychologists, counsellors, social workers and psychotherapists, who seek to apply their clinical experience to the corporate workplace (Peltier, 2010). Through coaching they translate psychological theory into practical executive coaching skills, and the key differentiator between coaching and coaching psychology is that coaching psychology includes specific reference to the application of psychological theories (Peltier, 2010).

## **2.4 PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES OF LEADERSHIP COACHING**

Leadership coaching exists in service of the leader and organisation, which have expectations for transformation and a return on investment (Albertyn, 2010). The purposes and outcomes of leadership coaching will be outlined according to the expected return on investment from coaching at the organisational and individual levels. This is followed by a detailed overview of transformative learning theory and the transformative effects of coaching according to positive organisation behaviour constructs as well as AI principles.

### **2.4.1 Individual and organisational level return on investment from coaching**

Leadership coaching operates within the broader field of coaching and coaching psychology, which took its modern form in the twentieth century. Leadership coaching has rapidly grown in use in response to the organisational demand for processes that drive leadership development, increase levels of self-actualisation, build exceptional leadership competencies, and produce more effective and intentional leaders – the hope is that leadership coaching will unlock a new set of possibilities for leaders and their organisations (Kilburg, 2004). The primary objectives for leadership coaching are learning and development, focused remedial coaching, on-boarding, high potential talent development and succession planning (Knott, 2012). In practice, leadership coaching promises to facilitate optimal individual functioning, both at work and in personal and professional life (Byrne, 2005; Cochran, 1990; International Coach Federation, 2010; Zimmerman & Cochran, 1993) and to boost the overall business results of the organisation's respective business units (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007).

It has been argued that senior managers are, in general, more prone to have an over-inflated view of their emotional intelligence compared to middle and junior managers (Peltier, 2010). While coaching can play a useful role for highlighting development areas for these senior managers, as well as for 'problematic' individuals, current trends point to the use of leadership coaching for high-potential players (Peltier, 2010). Leadership coaching is now seen as a badge of honour, a rite of passage for promotion in the organisation and a methodology for accelerated progression up the hierarchy (Charan, 2009; Drake et al., 2008; Hunt & Weintraub, 2007; Peltier, 2010; Underhill, McAnally, & Koriath, 2007).

Leadership coaching may also be helpful for establishing realistic expectations for new roles and for transitioning into new roles. A Harvard business survey (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009) revealed the following statistics for the reasons for using coaching services: they develop capability or facilitate an upward transition (48%), act as a sounding board on organisational or strategic matters (26%), address derailing behaviours (12%), and enhance the interactions of a team (11%). Moreover, the

organisation also requires a return on their investment for coaching services through a sustainable change in the behaviour of their leaders (Albertyn, 2010).

The quality of leadership is widely seen as critical to the success of an organisation. Huczynski and Buchanan (2007) boldly state that “leadership appears to be a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness” whilst Handy (1999) states that the leadership of groups within organisations is always going to be a vital ingredient in the effectiveness of organisations. Even sceptics such as Bolden (2007), who claim there is relatively little evidence to support this view, nonetheless concede that the evidence that does exist generally supports a positive causal relation. Given these findings, it seems logical for organisations to invest in leadership development. Effectiveness is associated with opportunities for feedback, discussion and supportive management processes that ensure that development-related activities ‘fit’ with other HR and business strategies.

At the macro-level, findings also suggest that coaching is making a positive contribution to leadership recruitment and retention (Simpson, 2010); the enhancement of organisational morale, productivity and profits; the securing of more complex contracts and better management of risk (Simpson, 2010).

At an individual level, coaching is claimed to help managers establish clarity regarding motivations and aspirations, and to develop commitment to change (Ting & Scisco, 2006). It has been determined that leadership coaching also leads to high participant satisfaction and a positive impact on self-awareness; self-development; improved relationships with superiors, subordinates and clients; leadership effectiveness; teamwork; conflict reduction; commitment; satisfaction; performance and productivity (Peltier, 2010). Price (2004) described growth as a result of coaching in terms of wellness and strengths, but without giving a scientific and psychological conceptualisation of the nature of these terms.

Additional benefits of leadership coaching for the individual include a better work-life balance and better career planning and decision-making (Simpson, 2010). Coaching is

also reported to provide a critical and impartial friend in the organisational context, who provides an opportunity to talk, reflect, be vulnerable and challenge the leader to think differently (Simpson, 2010). In addition, leadership coaching is experienced as an important coping mechanism by providing an opportunity to explore and experiment, affirm strengths and derailers, learn and improve personal skills and enhance self-awareness (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Finally, increased self-confidence is recognised as an important intrinsic benefit of coaching (Simpson, 2010). According to Luthans (2002), leadership coaching is so effective that it should be seen as the foundation for improvement of overall leadership in the organisation (Luthans, 2002).

#### **2.4.2 The transformative effects of coaching using POB constructs**

Building up from the foundation of the positive psychology movement, recent attention has been paid to positive organisational behaviour (POB), a theoretical assumption based on measuring, applying and developing positive human strengths to improve workplace effectiveness (Luthans, 2002). POB is focused on the individual level of improvement in certain constructs that influence overall optimal functioning within the workplace context. While holding great promise, positive psychology processes may still be viewed by business sceptics as 'too emotional' for most managers and executive managers, with terminology such as happiness, flow, appreciation and love perceived to be irrelevant and inappropriate to the working language of business, which is normally accustomed to using terms such as return on investment, labour efficiencies and productivity (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Nonetheless, common sense prevails in the organisation and the concept of the mentally healthy or stable personality is well regarded as an important criterion for success amongst laymen and as a goal worth striving for (Peltier, 2010).

So what makes up a 'mentally healthy person'? According to Peltier (2010), it is someone who has good reality testing, positive energy, is highly engaged and passionate, has a capacity for empathy and accurate self-awareness, has adequate social skills, possesses integrity, flexibility, and humour, and displays resilience and stress management under challenging circumstances. These provide fairly broad

descriptions, and so in order to bring scientific rigour to this debate and to this study, it is crucial that we use specific constructs that can not only be measured with validity, but can also be developed through training programmes and performance management or self-development.

### **2.4.3 Transformative learning theory**

With a focus on the process of leadership coaching, the theory of transformative learning (Snyder, 2008) is used in this research for its ability to explain transformation as it may occur during coaching processes, specifically within a postmodern context. Therefore, a detailed overview of transformative learning with specific reference to how this is applicable to leadership coaching is provided.

Originally developed to explain and measure learning in education, the growth of transformative learning theory has been rapid, and it seems to be overtaking andragogy as a dominant educational epistemology (Taylor, 2008a). The application of transformative learning theory has now spread to various professional settings, including coaching (Backström, Hagström, & Göransson, 2011; Fisher-Yoshida, 2011; Johansson & Knight-McKenna, 2011; Lakse, 1999; Precey, 2011).

Learning is separated, in transformative learning theory, into two domains – “instrumental and communicative, both of which can experience transformation if a reflective assessment of premises and movement through cognitive structures” is deemed to have taken place (Mezirow, 2000, p.6).

Frames of reference are made up of “habits of mind (broad abstract habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting influenced by cultural, social, political economic codes) and points of view (constellation of beliefs and value judgments, attitude and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation)” (Mezirow, 2000, p.10). These help us rationalise the irrational and deal with the dynamics of the context in which we live (Taylor, 2008a).

The outcome of perspective transformation is always seen by Mezirow, (2000, p.10) as “a more fully developed (more functional) frame of reference ... that is more a) inclusive, b) differentiating, c) permeable, d) critically reflective, and e) integrative of experience”.

Grounded in a theoretical framework of social justice and emancipatory learning (Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2008b), transformative learning theory shares theoretical similarities with the humanistic and positive psychology paradigms (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) in having comparable wellness or salutogenic philosophies and aims (Mezirow, 2000).

The core proposition of transformative learning theory is that these profound and empowering shifts in our understanding of knowledge, the world and ourselves firstly transform existing beliefs, then shift frames of reference, and finally lead to more productive decision-making and action that is taken by individuals and communities for the betterment of the world and society (Taylor, 2008a).

The theory of transformative learning is based upon a number of key assumptions that include: working with the whole person (emotional, intuitive, thinking, physical and spiritual), centrality of experience, irreversible paradigm shifts, self-reflection, critical reflection of assumptions (CRA), use of journaling and reflective dialogue, disruptive experiences, rational discourse, critical engagement and dialogue with peers, and non-evaluative feedback (Fetherson & Kelly, 2007; Mezirow, 2000; Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 2008a). These will now be described in more detail.

Firstly, in working with the whole person, the context must be taken into account, both the literal as well as cognitive contexts, and the key is to make the experience as close to the real-life setting as possible and to ensure that it encourages application (Snyder, 2008).

Centrality of experience refers to the learner's experience as core to and the starting point for transformation; this is later reinforced through shared learning, which is socially constructed, for example in dialogue (Taylor, 2008a).

The key to achieving transformation is, according to Fetherson and Kelly (2007), self-reflection and the critical reflection of assumptions (CRA). Self-reflection is defined as "being aware and critical of our subjective perceptions of knowledge" (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004).

The critical reflection of assumption (CRA) refers to “the conscious and explicit reassessment of the consequence and origin of our meaning structures” (Taylor, 2008a, p.7). Techniques such as journaling, reflective dialogue and critical questioning are used to develop these skills (Taylor, 2008a).

As we move through adulthood and are faced with increasingly difficult circumstances that challenge the congruence of our worldviews, it is vital to continue to intentionally make meaning of our daily lives and develop a more critical worldview for our psychological health and in order to remain effectively functioning adults (Taylor, 2008a). Transformative learning facilitates this by requiring that the individual deliberately act and make a decision to negate an old perspective in favour of a new one (Taylor, 2008a).

This is dissimilar to other theories of adult learning, which use a stage and chronological approach (Lakse, 1999; Laske & Maynes, 2002; Taylor, 2008a). According to transformative learning theory, our meaning perspectives are obtained uncritically during our formative years through socialisation and experiences with parents, teachers and significant others, and it is only when we filter a new experience through our meaning perspective, and find that it is incongruent with our current paradigm, that we consider transformation (Mezirow, 2000). Depending on the level of congruency to our current perspective, we reinforce the perspective, stretch its boundaries, accommodate a changed perspective or reject the new experience (Taylor, 2008a).

Transformation is a process precipitated by experience(s), that provide cumulative exposure to new meaning schemes and broadening perspectives (Snyder, 2008) or as a result of acute, traumatic personal or social crisis (Taylor, 2008a) that disrupts current understanding (Fetherson & Kelly, 2007). It is through coaching that the coach creates space for critical engagement and dialogue and room for the client to act on new insights (Taylor, 2008a).

Rational discourse is a conversation characterised by sharing and reflection, and is seen as indispensable to the transformative learning process (Taylor, 2008a), or as “dialogue involving the assessment of believing, feelings and values” (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p.277).

In contrast to everyday discussions, discourse is used when we need to “challenge the truth of norms or authenticity of feelings” (Taylor, 2008a). Rational discourse is by nature objective, balanced and lucid: it promotes open questioning and discussion, forges understanding reached through weighing up evidence and measuring insight and strength of arguments, with the end goal of reaching mutual understanding (Taylor, 2008a).

Finally, relationships are critical in fostering perspective transformation, including the use of the peer dynamic, non-hierarchical relationships, non-evaluative feedback, voluntary participation, partner selection, authenticity and the establishment of mutual goals (Taylor, 2008a). The learner tries out new roles in an attempt to test and validate new frames of reference by engaging in discourse with others and then reflecting on that. In then playing out a new role, the learner can reintegrate the new learning and knowing in their previous understanding, reconciling the old and new.

Kegan's model of developmental consciousness provides clarity in the idea of learning, especially for the transformative learning process, as it is placed within the broader field of adult learning theory (Kegan, 2009). It advocates the idea that learning and development is lifelong, and it is interesting to link the dynamics in the final two stages of integration and self-actualisation with the work of the postmodern coach.

Kegan's model outlines five stages of learning, the first two stages taking place in childhood (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, 2009). These stages are as follows:

- Stage 1 – third order consciousness. The outcome is interpersonal balance once the learner recognises him/herself as a citizen within a social order (Kegan, 2009).
- Stage 2 – second order consciousness. The outcome is institutional balance, where the individual sees themselves as capable of agency within a social order (Kegan, 2009). According to (Kegan, 2009) this is where transformative learning and the capacity for transformation begins as the learner moves to higher levels of consciousness



- Stage 3 – abstractions. The outcome is theoretical balance, where the learner is able to work with “abstract forms of generalisation, hypothesis, values and ideals” (Kegan, 2009, p.50)... and is characterised by the ability “to reflect on the world and honour subjectivity but not yet able to systematically evaluate or critical reflect on one’s own perceptions” (Snyder, 2008, 160).
- Stage 4 – integration. The outcome is self-authoring, with the learner able to “integrate reflections into inferences” and with the ability to define and be comfortable with him/herself (Kegan, 2009; Snyder, 2008). This is an advanced stage, and Snyder states that it is difficult to reach, with not many adults operating in stage 4.
- Stage 5 – postmodern. The outcome is polarity management and mindfulness, which is the “awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p 143). For example, in a longstanding conflict with someone else, the individual would be able to use the conflict to see their own incompleteness and use this to transform and integrate both views to form a higher level of consciousness (Snyder, 2008). Obviously, this level of mindfulness is rare and unique only to a few individuals (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Snyders & Lopez, 2009).

The transactional process of transformative learning has been described according to 10 specific phases (Mezirow, 2000). These are well documented in theory and research and are referred to as Mezirow's phases. They can be reliably used and measured as a functional framework, “articulated through research in either spoken or written ways” (Snyder, 2008, 160).

These 10 phases are:

- Phase 1 – a disorientating dilemma;
- Phase 2 – self-examination with feelings of shame, fear, guilt or anger;
- Phase 3 – a critical assessment of assumptions;

- Phase 4 – recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
- Phase 5 – exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
- Phase 6 – planning a course of action;
- Phase 7 – acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans;
- Phase 8 – provisional trying of new roles;
- Phase 9 – building self-confidence and competence in new roles and relationships; and
- Phase 10 – reintegrating into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (Snyder, 2008).

These 10 phases may be broadly grouped into three clusters (Mezirow, 2000). The first cluster, the disorientating dilemma, is characterised by an immediate desire to learn something new, and an unsettled sensation. The second cluster, a new frame of reference, requires new learning and re-integration of information. The final cluster of transformative learning is that of meaning perspective transformation, a “change in one’s way of knowing.

Furthermore, Whitelaw, Sears, and Campbell (2004) expanded these to four levels of learning, which are useful for the identification and measurement of transformative learning. However, the phases of learning do not necessarily move smoothly, but are characterised by “fits and starts, failures and regressions” (Snyder, 2008, p.161). The first level, elaborating existing frames of reference, refers to the ability to “differentiate and elaborate the previously acquired meaning schemas that we take for granted, or learning within the structure of our acquired frames of reference” (Mezirow, 2000, p.10).

The second level, learning new frames of reference, refers to the creation of “new meanings that are sufficiently consistent and compatible with existing meaning perspectives to complement rather than by extending their scope” (Mezirow, 2000).

The third level of learning, transforming points of view, proposes a state of learning in which it is acknowledged that beliefs have become dysfunctional, causing us to

experience “a growing sense of the inadequacy of our old ways of seeing and understanding meaning” (Mezirow, 2000).

The fourth level, transforming habits of mind, is characterised by awareness, “through reflection and critique, of specific presuppositions upon which distorted or incomplete meaning perspective is based and then transforming that perspective through a reorganisation of meaning” (Mezirow, 2000).

The transformative effects of coaching can be measured in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, using a variety of measurement indicators based on the expectations set by the organisation and the client. At the organisational level, the perceived return on investment (ROI) measures that are relevant to leadership coaching include leadership effectiveness (Handy, 1999), recruitment and retention success of leaders (Simpson, 2010), and wellness (Price, 2004). At the individual level, indicators of success include numerous intrinsic improvements, in, for instance, motivation, commitment, well-being and decision-making (Price, 2004; Ting, 2006).

#### **2.4.4 The transformative effects of coaching using appreciative Inquiry principles**

The theory and praxis of AI has close theoretical linkages to the underlying principles of postmodernism and specifically to the theory of transformative learning, especially with regards to its constructivist stance and the construct of meaning-making (Laske, 1999). This literature review will now provide a detailed overview of the measurement of the transformative effects from an AI perspective.

Research in the field of transformative learning has been concerned with identifying and operationalising concepts of transformative learning and also in coding evidence of transformation, for the most part in the educational setting (Snyder, 2008).

When applied to coaching, transformative learning theory is used to make a contribution to a client’s adult development, requiring a conscious measurement at a point in time of their development level (both phasic, or age related, and constructivist or meaning-making-level-related) of the client, in order to fashion an appropriate coaching journey across the life span of the client (Laske, 1999; Laske & Maynes, 2002).

This development baseline is determined before coaching begins, and a follow up development level assessment is conducted no sooner than one year after the beginning of coaching. According to Laske & Maynes (2002), one cannot achieve a stage change in less than a year.

One of the available methodologies for measuring development levels is Laske's Developmental Structure/Process Tool (DSPT™) (Laske & Maynes, 2002). The DSPT™ assesses developmental levels from two complementary perspectives: 1) level of mental growth, and 2) process profile, distinguishing 16 different levels of mental growth in a client's life span from 25 to 100, linked to a "process profile" of the mental processes a client habitually engages in.

By focusing on coaching at the meaning-making level, rather than age-related level, the coach is assisted in understanding and creating clarity for the client's current experience on a cognition, affect and will level. It is the meaning-making level which determines the reference point of departure for development coaching, according to a client's mental model (Laske, 1999; Laske & Maynes, 2002).

Laske's findings indicated that a) in order to experience the transformational effects of coaching, one must be developmentally ready to experience them and; b) the development level of the coach must be such that it allows the coach to co-generate these effects in the coaching relationship (Laske, 1999).

Laske (1999) also found that there can be a discrepancy between an executive's focus in their present professional performance and functioning and their change story, and that changes reported by executives seemed to be transformational in nature versus merely adaptive.

The intellectual climate of this research project is based in the discipline of postmodernism, using certain AI principles and it was therefore imperative to identify measures for transformation which were grounded in postmodernism and AI theory.

Appreciative inquiry makes a number of ambitious claims relating to transformative outcomes, second-order change or "qualitative changes in the state of being of the

system” (Bushe & Kassam, 2005), and positive revolutionary change (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005), with characteristics that are distinctively different from other organisational development processes.

Firstly, AI claims to result in new knowledge described as “looking at old issues through a new lens” (Bushe & Kassam, 2005. p. 165). Having ‘new eyes’, allows individuals to have new paradigms and cognition regarding the human systems under discussion.

A second claim of AI is that it results in the creation of a new generative metaphor that compels the human system to action. A generative metaphor is “a saying or phrase that is in itself provocative and can create new possibilities for action that people had not previously considered... words whose juxtaposition evokes ways out of paradoxical dilemmas that causes social systems to be stuck” (Bushe & Kassam, 2005).

Thirdly, the outcomes of AI are applicable to the system in which the inquiry takes place and are validated through behaviours (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). This means that any new theories or models that are created need to be sufficiently compelling to the system members to provoke them into doing something differently.

Fourthly, whilst most OD analysis makes matters figural, AI is different in that it creates ground (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) referring to a different underlying map or structure (physical, emotional or semantic) that influences what people think and do. By focusing only on amplifying the ‘positive core’ of the organisation, (rather than changing organisational processes and structures), the AI process is able to create new ground and more possibilities for the way the people in the system think and act (Bushe & Kassam, 2005).

When examining indications that an inquiry has constructed new ground, Bushe and Kassam (2005) recommended that the researcher look for important issues emerging out of the interaction that had the possibility to re-invent a range of thinking and action as opposed to an inquiry that stayed focused on one or more key issues from start to finish.

Finally, AI is distinctive in its claims, because it avoids creating plans and processes for implementing agreed-upon changes, and rather creates plans and processes that will encourage and nurture improvised action by system members (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008). By creating space and freedom for building plans from the bottom up without having to serve the hierarchy, AI theorists argue that much more sustainable transformation is created (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Bushe (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) created a set of decision rules which can be used to examine transformation for every case under consideration in a meta-case analysis of AI transformation. These will be used as the framework for determining transformation for each individual case in this study, and are outlined in more detail in Chapter 5.

## **2.5 COACHING APPROACHES**

A review of the literature on coaching identified a plethora of coaching approaches. These included gestalt coaching (Allan & Whybrow, 2007), client-centric coaching (Bacon & Spear, 2003), postmodern coaching (Binkert et al., 2007), positive coaching (Biswas-Diener, 2009), systems psychodynamic coaching (Brunning and Roberts, 2007; Brunning 2011), executive coaching (Chapman & Cilliers, 2008; Douglas & Morley, 2000), experiential coaching (Cilliers, 2005), organisational role analysis coaching (Dempsey, 2007), career life coaching (Denton, 2010), behaviour-based coaching (Goldsmith & Lyons, 2006), and cognitive-behavioural based coaching (Green et al., 2006).

The leadership coaching field predominantly uses rational, objective approaches, underpinned by normative models, suggesting 'one best way' according to a particular model that is represented by the author's particular style, coaching process or assumptions, often commercialised through trademarks, embedded in a consultancy approach and often linked to the persona of the coach. It is therefore difficult for the reader or consumer of coaching services to determine which approach would be most suitable and which criteria to use in choosing a coach. For example, Dembkowski and Eldridge (2008) present a trademarked seven-step ACHIEVE Coaching Model™ as the prescribed process for coaching, whereas Underhill, McAnally & Koriath (2007) present

the High Impact Executive coaching model – the “definitive guide” to coaching, along with the CoachFinder database for all coaches who have been endorsed. The Destiny Coaching approach is another model of coaching offered through a consultancy proposition (Denton, 2010). The model consists of a number of key elements, which include business transformation, emotional intelligence development, corporate governance and character building, innovative problem solving, high impact authentic leadership development, talent review and recognition. Other varieties of coaching models include the cognitive coaching model (Green et al., 2006) and the systems psychodynamic coaching approach (Kets de Vries, 2005).

Finally, Marshall Goldsmith (Goldsmith, 2006a) claims to be one of the most cited and popular coaches in the public domain. His unique approach rests on the fact that he is only paid when the client gets 'better'. 'Better' is defined as “a measurable positive change in the pre-selected leaders' behaviour by a pre-selected group of key stakeholders” (Goldsmith, 2005, p.56). Goldsmith refuses to have more than 10 coaching clients at any point in time, and he then works with them for a period of about six months on average (Goldsmith & Lyons, 2006). The Goldsmith coaching model is based on the following premises: hold the client accountable; use cognitive restructuring with the client; focus on behaviour and results; leadership is about being in relationship; use feedforward (360° feedback from your team) instead of only feedback from peers and management (Goldsmith, 2006b). However, “what actually happens in coaching engagements remains quite mysterious” (Kilburg, 2004b, p2).

A basic assumption in most of the coaching models is that clients really have the answers, but may not know which questions to ask or how to access their inner desires, and that the person is responsible for his or her life, satisfaction in life, growth and development (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Biswas-Diener, 2009; Clerkin, 2007; Crockett, 2007; Garfinkle, 2005; Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2009; Kemp, 2005; Martin, 2001; McCluskey, 2008; Williams, 2008).

The research of the published works on coaching led to the choice of the CCL approach as the most representative of coaching models, requiring a more detailed description (Ting, 2006). The CCL model (Ting, 2006) was identified for a number of reasons.

Firstly, coaching was provided by CCL to the executive team of the organisation used in this research programme and it was therefore seen as endorsed by management as most relevant to this particular organisation. Furthermore, the organisation has a predisposition to using the CCL coaching methodology when accrediting its internal coaches through a local tertiary institution due to the international quality of certification. Secondly, the model is agnostic in philosophy, without a strong predisposition to any particular school of thought or philosophical paradigm, providing a form of objectivity and dispassion in approach. This suited the organisation, which operates globally in a multi-cultural context, requiring flexibility and cultural fluency. The principles of CCL coaching are to create a safe/challenging environment that allows risks and little damage to self; to work with the coachees; to allow the coachee to drive the process and decide on goals; to facilitate collaboration where the coach is not expert, with no recommendations or answers; to advocate self-awareness through recognizing behaviour and the impact of behaviour; to promote sustainable learning from experience through reflection, awareness and action; and to model what you coach (Ting, 2006).

In fact, CCL was found to provide a comprehensive, logical and systematic model of coaching, based on eclectic principles. It therefore provided a balanced view of a well-established modern and eclectic approach to coaching. Whilst many other models of a similar nature do exist, it was decided that the CCL connection to the organisation's overall strategy to build a coaching culture would warrant a detailed description of this form of coaching to provide a comparison to the postmodern model of coaching as proposed in this study. Having the most representative framework for general approaches to coaching, the CCL model will now be discussed in more detail.

The premise of CCL coaching is that the coach and coachee may work at any or all of the following three levels of behaviour: firstly, at the observable/nonverbal level (for example, presentation skills). Secondly, at the underlying values level, which will relate to factors such as personal style, preferences, orientation, culture, aspirations, motivations, mental models, values, beliefs, core needs and life experiences, (for example, a work ethic may cause longer working hours). Finally, at the root cause level,



life experiences, trauma, psychological disorders and unmanageable personal problems may be presented for referral where necessary (Ting & Riddle, 2006).

Supporting this is the whole-person approach to coaching, which advocates holism. For example, if a manager wants to be more effective, he/she will talk about his/her other aspects, such as family. In order to be effective, the leadership coach needs to understand and tap into the powerful unconscious and systems-level psychological dynamics that leaders use to manage their daily risks and challenges (Allan & Whybrow, 2007; Brunning & Roberts, 2007; Cilliers, 2005; Kilburg, 2004b).

The CCL Framework for coaching (Figure 2.1) bases successful results on three elements: assessment, challenge and support, all requiring a confidential, private coaching relationship. The CCL model pays much attention to matching a coachee to a coach based on previous life experiences and similarities, in order to forge a strong connection and a relationship of commitment and mutual collaboration. The CCL model for coaching assumes multiple roles for the coach, namely, that the coach is both an expert (note that this is very different from the AI approach), as well as a reflective thinking partner, feedback provider and interpreter, dialogue partner, practice partner, accountant, positive reinforcer, counsellor, historian and role model.



**Figure 2.1 CCL's Framework for Coaching (adapted from Ting, S. 2006)**

The assessment phase relates to the collection of data (quantitative and qualitative) and information on the person and their performance and context, for example, leadership style, organisational culture and norms (Ting & Scisco, 2006).

The challenge phase requires that the coach creates disequilibrium through questions and feedback, helping the coachee to set stretch goals and overcome obstacles (working around or through internal and external obstacles). The support phase requires motivation in the form of cheerleading or 'tough love', time for re-evaluation of goals, development of resources/strategies, being specific about the development plan, helping to celebrate wins and manage setbacks, and creating a sustainable learning agenda. The results expected from a CCL coaching process would be new behaviour, improved performance, and improved personal and professional development (Ting & Scisco, 2006).

Leadership coaching uses tools such as psychometric assessments and cognitive behavioural techniques, with the general recipe for leadership development being to: a) assess the leader against a competency model or set of traits; b) provide assessment feedback; and so c) build self-awareness; d) set up a development plan/goals; e) provide formal development interventions, normally derived from a menu which could include formal training, information gathering, role-playing or even action-learning; e) regular coaching sessions to review; and f) final evaluation of progress against the plan. Gauthier and Giber (2006) provide an example of this commonly used, process-driven approach to coaching leaders with the following sequential steps: a 360° assessment; an autobiographic interview; feedback; identification of potential development opportunities; setup of a development frame; setting of change goals; and construction of a blueprint for development.

The approaches to leadership coaching described above have become less relevant in the postmodern context, as they purely address the behavioural and cognitive level of leadership, but are less effective at the will and energy level (Kilburg, 2007) Problems at this level will manifest in situations when leaders are unwilling or unable to change or when dynamics within the individual or organisation are driving a poor fit or lack of performance (Kets de Vries, 2005; Peltier, 2010). While traditional methods and

techniques, such as the trait and cognitive-behavioural approach, including the CCL model (Ting, 2006) are moving towards a more dynamic lifelong developmental approach (Watson & Kuit, 2007), they still require highly professional, expert 'master coaches' who "show the way" and lead the participant in their journey to becoming a great manager (Hargrove, 2008). There is growing concern that the modern leadership perspective fails to accommodate and/or meet the challenges facing coaches working in a changing postmodern environment operating with different rules of business, including a) the redefinition of the psychological work and employment contract; b) the change from a hierarchical, non-relational culture to one that requires more teamwork and co-operation; and c) the increasing diversity of people at work, which challenges a single dominant worldview (DeLay & Dalton, 2006; Rosinski, 2003; Watson & Kuit, 2007).

Leadership development in the modern paradigm was characterised by a long 'apprenticeship', with promotion linked to tenure. This afforded leaders time to mature and build up seasoned experience, under the supervision and mentorship of older and wiser leaders (Charan et al. 2001). The postmodern scenario requires faster acceleration of managers through the leadership pipeline. Individuals are expected to manage and lead with higher levels of maturity a lot earlier in their careers than their predecessors. Furthermore, the reality of postmodern life requires that leaders constantly reinvent themselves; that they self-initiate, self-correct and self-evaluate; that they are guided by their own vision, take responsibility for what happens and master life, roles and careers in constant development and motion (Drath & van Velsor, 2006).

Organisations also actively recruit and then accelerate the development of young high-potential talent, usually at a graduate entry level. This group represents an entirely new generation, a group who bring with them new sets of values and expectations for self and career, and new challenges for their leaders in terms of how to engage and retain them (Harvard Business Essentials, 2004).

In summary, the literature points to an increasing use of leadership coaching in the organisational setting, a growing need for leaders to build optimal performance and functioning in the workplace through coaching, and more demands from the business for a tangible return on investment through effectiveness and efficiency improvements in

leadership behaviour as a result of coaching. There is also a trend to move away from viewing leadership coaching as a sign of failure, towards leadership coaching being seen as a value-adding benefit to leaders and an acknowledgement of having earned the right to a high-investment development process. Finally, the postmodern context has accelerated the criteria for successful leaders, who are under scrutiny from employees from a much earlier point in their careers, and have a shorter and steeper trajectory required to reach acceptable levels of performance as leaders. This circumvents the opportunity to mature with seasoned experience over time, as in previous generations, and leaders require coaching partners to assist them to navigate the journey to personal and professional fulfilment and to avoid derailment at critical points in their careers.

Finally, it has been argued that leadership coaching is an evolving, dynamic praxis, requiring new and innovative approaches to coaching. To this end, an alternative approach to coaching, the strengths-based approach, will be proposed and presented in this chapter in the following section, preceded by an overview of the competencies generally recommended in order to be an effective leadership coach.

## **2.6 COMPETENCIES REQUIRED BY THE LEADERSHIP COACH**

Helping and coaching skills, along with business experience, are highly valued in organisations, yet only three out of five coaches are formally trained or accredited in the profession (Knott, 2012). This stands to reason, as Knott argues, that there is still no single accreditation and standard body for coaching with contention regarding the requirements and criteria required for successful coaching (Knott, 2012).

Nevertheless, the leadership coach needs to hold a wide and comprehensive range of competencies, including relational skills such as rapport building (being open, respectful, empathic, attentive, straight, thought-provoking, and having ease and warmth) and having a mutually collaborative style (Ting & Scisco, 2006); as well as professional development and leadership development skills such as business acumen and a solid grounding in psychotherapeutic training, especially if the coach is involved in group-based coaching (Kilburg, 2007).

According to O'Neill (2000), the leadership coach must be able to use their own presence with the client and be comfortable with the 'force field' that surrounds leader clients. In addition, the effective leader coach will be naturally curious; competent in sharing conceptual frameworks, images, and metaphors; will have rigour in thinking and planning; be effective in challenging the client; able to contain anxiety; willing to bring their individual coach signature to the coaching process; and able to take a systems perspective.

Sloan (2007) refers to the ability to hold various realities in the mind at one time as an important competency for the postmodern coach, referred to as a "mosaic" in the mind of the coach. As many different stories and interpretations are offered during the coaching process, the coach needs to work with these, as they converge and diverge into meanings and guide the most helpful and generative interpretations for the client.

The wide range of competencies that the leader coach is required to possess has been integrated into Allan & Whybrow's (2007) leadership coaching range of competencies, illustrated in Figure 2.2.

The first competency is professional development, which implies that the coach is well versed and skilled in understanding and working with career progression, career history and career planning.

Secondly, the leadership coach should understand business in context, with a good knowledge of current workplace issues and business acumen. This will ensure that the coaching is relevant and pragmatic in the client's context.

Furthermore, the leadership coach should be competent in understanding and managing organisation dynamics, in order to assist the client to understand their current and future roles and performance in these roles.

The fourth competency cluster required by the coach is psychotherapeutic skills, which provide the leadership coach with the knowledge and skills to be able to move the client through personal development and personality issues. In addition, the leadership coach

requires counselling skills, in order to be able to work through the client's story and truly listen in a client-directed manner.

Finally, the credible leadership coach will come into the relationship with a set of formal coaching training qualifications and/or accreditation with a recognised coaching institute as an endorsement of their education and skills.



**Figure 2.2 Leadership Coaching ranges of competencies (adapted from Allan & Whybrow, 2007).**

Finally, the ideal leadership coach will demonstrate the following common competencies, which are cited by a wide range of authors (Garvey et al., 2009; Hargrove, 2008; Kemp, 2008; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007b; Passmore, 2010; Peltier, 2010; Starr, 2005; Ting, 2006; Williams & Menendez, 2007). These ideal competencies can be summarised as the following: being intentional, focused on performance and development, systematic, ethical, able to use their power and authority wisely,

responsible, challenging of own assumptions, disciplined and able to recognise when to seek help.

The following section will describe the newer approaches to leadership coaching, which are more relevant to the postmodern context and needs of leaders and organisations previously discussed. These are the strengths-based approach, which is grounded in positive psychology, as well as group-based coaching, rooted in the social constructionist paradigm, advocating a 'narrative' approach to coaching.

## **2.7 THE STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP COACHING**

The field of positive psychology is defined as “the scientific study of optimal human functioning” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon et al., 2000). The positive psychology paradigm implies that individuals live and experience life somewhere along a continuum of “total terminal illness or pathology” and “total wellness or salutogenesis” (Coetzee & Cilliers, 2000).

Positive psychology was described in a series of historic articles (Seligman, 2000) published in the *American Psychologist* as a reaction to the prevailing medical/diagnostic model, and it has grown in popularity over the past several years, developing into a strong and flourishing movement in psychology (Hodges & Clifton, 2004; Kaplan, 2002; Roberts et al., 2005; Sheldon et al., 2000; Snyders & Lopez, 2009).

Strengths are seen as both innate and acquired talents, those things that individuals are the best at doing and that they enjoy most (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Buckingham, 2007). Using these on a consistent basis allows us to tap into our full potential, drive peak performance, and find flow and success (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Anecdotal evidence of the popularity of positive psychology has been reported in the fact that Tal Ben-Shahar's course in “positive psychology is the largest class at Harvard” (Lueneburger, 2009, p.8).

Regardless of the theoretical orientation of the psychologist, coaching processes should be aimed at moving groups or individuals towards wellness through the development of personal strengths and fortitude. The “fortigenic” paradigm was coined by Strümpfer

(1990, 1995), and it refers to the origins of psychological strength in general, maintaining that not all stressors are necessarily bad and may even be required for individuals to maintain their position or to move along the continuum towards health or strength.

Then Peter F. Drucker (1999) published a classic management article in the *Harvard Business Review* in which he outlined the need to understand and develop strengths in order to achieve lifelong success. This paradigm has since grown in popularity into a strong and flourishing movement in psychology

Hodges and Clifton (2011, p.5) define strengths as “a natural capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a way that allows optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of valued outcomes”. Much of the work of Gallup and Clifton has been commercialised through the work of Marcus Buckingham (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Buckingham, 2007; Hodges & Clifton, 2004) and a popular taxonomy for strengths is the Clifton StrengthsFinder profile, listing 34 strength themes (Hodges & Clifton, 2004).

The character strengths and virtues (CSV) taxonomy was also proposed as a positive alternative to the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) (Seligman et al., 2005). The CSV was refined into a universal psychometrically sound list of virtues, categorised into six character strengths – wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence (Seligman et al., 2005).

Gallup has recently published their leadership competency model, which will prove to be a useful tool for the strengths-based leadership coach and a focus area for on-going research (Gallup, 2010). The four domains of leadership strength, are: executing (made up of the following clusters: achiever, arrangers, belief, consistency, deliberative, discipline, focus, responsibility and restorative); influencing (made up of the following clusters: activator, command, communication, competition, maximise, self-assurance, significance and woo); relationship building (made up of the adaptability, developer, connectedness, empathy, harmony, include, individuation, positivity, and relator clusters); and strategic thinking, (made up of the analytical, context, futuristic, ideation, input, intellection, learner and strategic clusters) (Gallup, 2010).



Strengths-based development involves the identification of talents and integration into self-awareness, resulting in a change in behaviour (Hodges & Clifton, 2004), as well as the trend to work with strengths, rather than weaknesses. This principle also holds true for the coaching profession (Linley & Haring, 2009), with positive psychology cited as the “backbone of strengths-based coaching”, and an emerging stream in the coaching profession (Knott, 2012; Lueneburger, 2009). The focus of the strengths-based psychologist, coach and researcher is a) to understand why some people thrive and live a life ‘beyond good enough’, despite life’s challenges, and b) to learn from their resilience/strengths to build thriving individuals, families and communities (Knott, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman et al., 2005).

Research has shown that strengths-based coaching produces tangible results, including reports of increased job satisfaction; higher income levels, sales and revenue; higher levels of innovation and creativity; more focused energy and engagement; and optimal leadership (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Buckingham, 2007; Hodges & Clifton, 2004).

In addition, further empirical research suggests that strengths-based developmental processes have a positive impact on positive psychological constructs (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

Positive organisational behaviour constructs have been identified, and those receiving recent attention are confidence, hope, subjective well-being (SWB), and resilience (Linley & Joseph, 2012). Research by Luthans (2002) supports the notion that the more confident the individual, the more likely they will be to welcome a challenge and get stuck into a task, the more effort and motivation will be made to finish the task and the more tenacity will be shown when obstacles are encountered.

Confidence can be developed through positive feedback, mastery experiences or performance attainments, vicarious learning, and physiological or psychological arousal (Bandura, 1997). In their meta-analysis, Stajkovic and Luthans (1988) illustrated a strong link between confidence and work-related performance with the suggestion that future research should explore relationships between strengths-based development and

other positive psychological/positive organisational behavioural constructs, such as resiliency.

The next construct under examination is hope, which refers to “a feeling or expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen” (Oxford Dictionary, 2011).

Hope refers to unique positive psychological capacity consisting of goal-directed determination and pathways, or plans. Hope can be developed, and suggestions for this include clarification of goals, simplifying the goals into smaller steps, developing alternative plans, taking pleasure in the process and being strategic in overcoming obstacles, but these are yet to demonstrate a strong relationship to performance (Luthans, 2002).

Furthermore, hope is differentiated from optimism by being initiated and determined through the self (agency/will) along with pathways (planning ways to meet goals), as opposed to enthusiasm, which is formed through others and forces outside of the self (Luthans, 2002).

The third construct under discussion is subjective well-being (SWB). Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith (1999) explained SWB as global judgments of life satisfaction, made up of the cognitive judgments that individuals ascribe concerning their own lives, while the emotional dimension refers to the negative and positive mood in one’s immediate experience, but with a high degree of consistency over time, as opposed to happiness, which fluctuates on a daily basis (Diener, Suh, & Smith, 1997).

It is important to consider SWB in the organisational context because emerging research suggests that workplace well-being and performance are “complimentary and dependent components of a financially and psychologically healthy workplace,” (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003).

The final construct under discussion is resilience, which initially was thought to be special talent only applicable to a few individuals, but it is now generally accepted that resilience is an everyday human strength, albeit more reactive than self-efficacy, and

with great potential for application in the organisation (Luthans, 2002). Resilience refers to the “psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002).

Finally, it is important to state that the strengths-based approach to coaching does not imply that we need to ignore weaknesses; a trained coach will work with management of the polarities of “both/and” (Johnson, 2005), having to work with developing strengths as well as managing psychopathologies, derailers, gaps or problem areas.

## **2.8. GROUP-BASED LEADERSHIP COACHING**

Executive coaching is predominantly seen as a process employed in a one-on-one relationship to help someone become a more effective manager or leader, applying skills that are helpful to the specific present-moment work-related issues so that the client is able to incorporate learnings immediately into his/her leadership repertoire (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Grant & Zackon, 2004; Peltier, 2010). It is also seen as a partnership (McCluskey, 2008) between two parties that equips them with the skills necessary to succeed (Douglas & Morley, 2000) or as one-to-one services to top level leaders in an organisation, based upon the principle that positive changes can be leveraged to filter down and enhance the entire organisation (Peltier, 2010).

However, the use of group-based leadership coaching has recently emerged as an alternative methodology to individual-based coaching in the organisational context (Kets de Vries, 2005; Kilburg, 2007; Schmidt, 2002). A recent study by Charlotte and Boniwell (2010) established that group-based life coaching had a significant impact on happiness and well-being. It was found that through structured, supportive peer coaching group-work, the positive elements that contribute to happiness and well-being were enhanced.

No clear definitions exist in the literature, and so for the purposes of this study the following definition is proposed:

Group-based leadership coaching is a form of coaching facilitated by a leader coach that utilises the group processes of social construction and learning, narrative work and peer reflection with the aim of high engagement and feedback for leader participants' perspective transformation.

Leadership coaching in groups and the use of peer coaching (Joseph, Griffin, Hall, & Sullivan, 2001) and dialogue (Schapiro, Wasserman, & Gallegos, 2011) as a tool in transformative learning and in leveraging the power of the therapeutic relationship between coach, client and group members is growing rapidly in popularity, particularly within the business community.

Group-based coaching is strongly advocated by Kets de Vries as a powerful tool for leadership coaching (Kets de Vries, 2005; Kets de Vries, Carlock, & Florent-Treacy, 2007), whilst Oades, Crowe, & Nguyen, (2009) argue for collaboration as a transformation tool for coaching psychology.

Group-based leadership coaching is a viable, low-cost process (Oades et al., 2009), which is effective as a process to create sustainable change, conflict resolution, commitment, accountability and business results (Joseph et al., 2001; Kets de Vries, 2005). It holds cost benefits for the organisation by offering coaching to larger groups, thus saving time and the cost of individual coaching hours because coaching occurs within the group.

Group-based coaching has also been found to strengthen perceptions of well-being and hope (Green et al., 2006). It is argued that this is due to the dynamics of the group-based coaching situation, which provides an opportunity for corrective emotional and cognitive learning experiences in a context of positive regard, unconditional support, challenge, holding, and willingness to maintain boundaries and accountability (Kets de Vries, 2005).

Limiting the coaching process to only dealing with change at the cognitive level is insufficient; the coach is also required to impact on both the cognitive and emotional levels (Kets de Vries, 2005). Lawrence, Bain & Gould (1966) argue that this is so important that all aspiring leadership coaches need to undergo clinical psychological

training to prepare them to work through the psychological processes that could derail the leadership coaching session. While being aware of the basic group dynamics and processes, the leadership coach will also need to take on a different style and process when compared with individual coaching techniques, as outlined in Table 2.1, adapted from Ogne (2011).

**Table 2.1 Individual and group-based coaching comparison**

<b>Individual coaching</b>	<b>Group coaching</b>
Requires listening in a one-on-one fashion between coach and client.	Listening happens together and the coach needs to ensure that group members hear each other. The coach should create a safe place for all group members to be heard and should assist the group to prioritise concerns and achieve consensus.
The coach is responsible for meeting the needs of the client.	The coach helps group members to care for each other and meet needs, and facilitates pairing that is useful for group members.
The coach celebrates achievement through personal affirmation.	The group celebrates for achievement of individual and/or group goals. This group celebration builds relationships, increases respect, affirms and motivates.
The coach and client strategise by planning together.	The group strategises through dreaming about created futures, and this fuels vision and hope through the dynamic of group synergy. Shared planning in the group increases individual ownership and responsibility.
A two-way exchange of knowledge	A multiple exchange of knowledge,

between client and coach.	drawing on the intelligence of the group and encouraging shared learning by capitalising on the specific skills within the group.
Use of the client's value system as model and standard for the individual e.g. The Holy Bible.	The coach's role is to reinforce character traits, linked to positive psychology, and universal standards to guide and govern the group behaviour. The coach includes both inward values (how the group treats one another) and outward values (how they treat others outside of the group).
The coach challenges the individual through confrontation or motivation.	The coach motivates the group through a visionary challenge at each meeting and through confrontation of negative behaviour, especially when behaviour is damaging to the primary goals and values of the group or when it harms individuals within the group.

Transformative groups in coaching are categorised in terms of the development outcomes that they are designed to achieve (Schapiro et al., 2011), namely a) for personal growth and awareness, b) for building relational empathy across differences, and c) to develop critical systemic consciousness or a combination of all three forms.

Coaching in groups uses various methods. One approach is to work with each individual on a one-to-one basis with the coach in the context of other group members with minimal interaction between members (Silverstein, 2007).

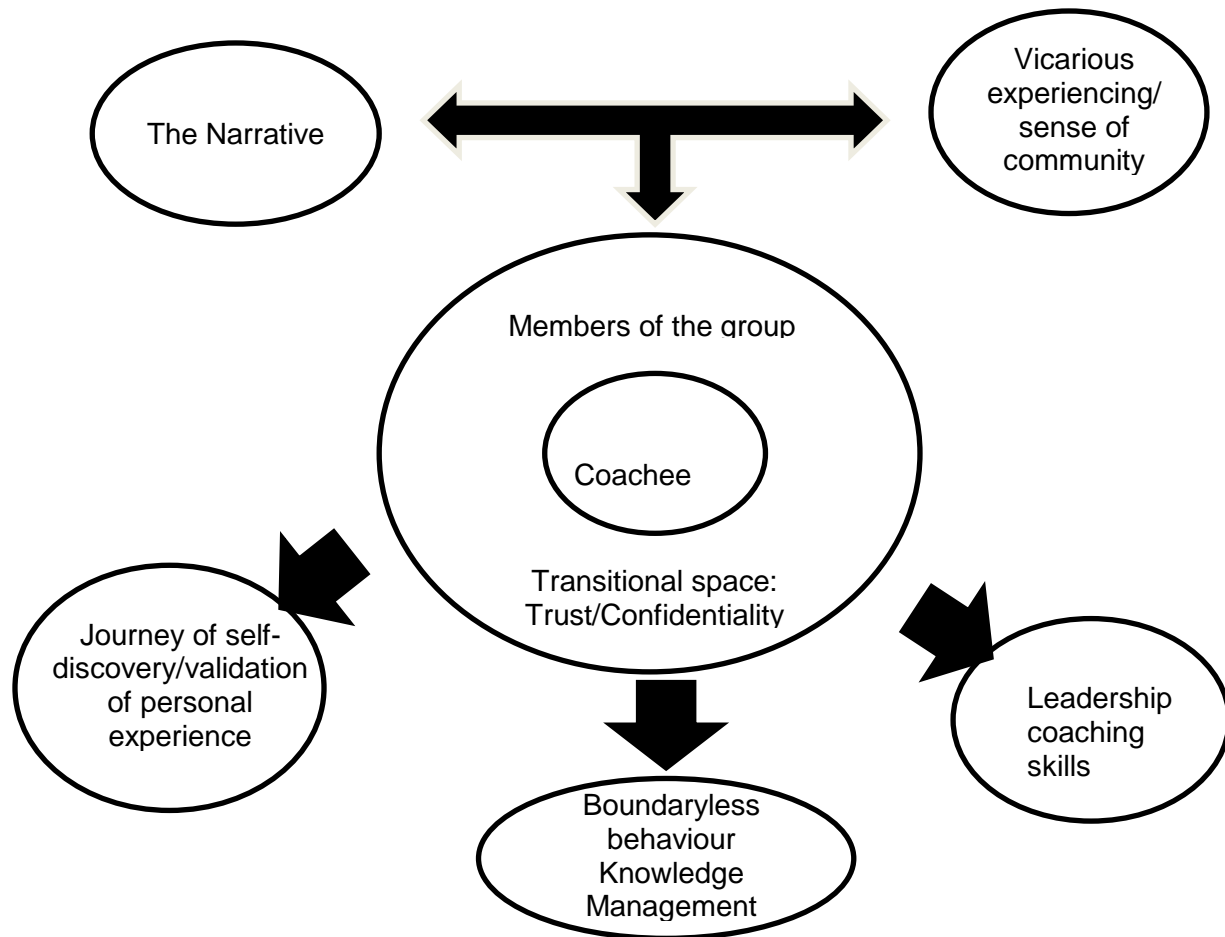
A second method of group coaching involves the coaching of one person at a time by the whole group or by taking turns coaching in pairs, with participants having learned some basic principles of coaching. For example, in a coach training group, the members practice coaching with each other in the context of the group, getting input and feedback

from the whole group, whilst the leader offers structure and gate-keeping (Silverstein, 2007).

A third form of coaching in groups involves working in appreciation for an issue that is significant and important for the individuals in that group. Without imposing rigid structure or exercises, and rather guiding the conversation, the coach pays particular attention to values, wishes, strengths and accomplishments and allows the mature group to do the work of coaching (Vansteenkiste, 2008), with group members acting as peer reflectors.

Schapiro et al. (2011) go on to identify and outline five factors for consideration by the leadership coach when constructing a group transformative learning process: a) the basis for group membership and relationship; b) using experiences that are in the past and/or outside the group or experience in the here and now of the group itself; c) the locus of change in the habits of mind and being on which the transformative learning is focused – intra-personal; inter-personal, inter-group; organisational, and societal; d) the form that reflection takes on in the group; and e) the dialogic processes that are associated with each group, including individual sharing, listening, feedback, communication of differences, collaborative inquiry in search of shared meaning, and analysis (Schapiro et al., 2011).

The group-based leadership coaching process is outlined by Kets de Vries (2005) and illustrated in Figure 2.3. It must be noted that his model is based on systems psychodynamic theory, in contrast with the model of AI group-based coaching proposed in this research project. However, the Kets de Vries model (2005) clearly outlines the universal principles of group-based coaching that apply regardless of the intellectual climate and theoretical assumptions of the coaching method. It was therefore decided to use the model (Figure 2.3) to describe the core components of group-based coaching.



**Figure 2.3 Leadership coaching in groups** (adapted from Kets de Vries, 2005)

The core principles of group-based leadership coaching are described in the model displayed in Figure 2.3. Firstly, leadership coaching in groups works well when the coach is able to create a safe space for the narration of stories and mutual exploration (Kets de Vries, 2005). Because coaching is highly intimate and personal, this requires creating a space which is secure and in which individuals in the group feel sufficiently comfortable with the coach, the peers in the coaching programme, as well as the integrity of the coaching process.

Secondly; group-based leadership coaching must be able to fully engage the person being discussed in learning about themselves on a deeper level (Kets de Vries, 2005). This means that the rest of the group are able to learn vicariously from the experience and model their own leadership coaching skills (Kets de Vries, 2005).



Trust is rare and difficult to achieve in groups operating in a competitive environment, and this requires a willingness to look beyond self-interest (Kets de Vries, 2005). The group members are required to hold and display “openness, honesty, active listening, communication, consistency, competence, fairness, and mutual respect” (Kets de Vries, 2005) in order for trust to exist. Through the process of vicarious experiencing, the group becomes caught up in the journey and action plan of the individual, making commitment to transformation and behaviour change more likely and sustainable. The challenge is to bring this to life and to create a replicable model for leadership coaching in groups.

Leadership coaching in groups requires skill and mastery in order to deal effectively with the complexities and possibilities in moving from the individual level of coaching to the group level (Kets de Vries, 2005).

In conclusion, leadership coaching provides a powerful process for leaders in the postmodern context to connect with their own personal and professional agenda, and in so doing take up their leadership more effectively and efficiently. The use of alternative postmodern techniques in coaching, such as the narrative approach and group coaching, will continue to challenge the usefulness of traditional methods of coaching (Kets de Vries, 2005; Kets de Vries et al., 2007), and it is clear that enabling coaching clients to manage polarity (Johnson, 2005) by holding new mental models for reflection and judgement, while still being and working in the world, will create space for transformation during the leadership coaching process (Mezirow, 2000).

This brings the overview of leadership coaching to a conclusion.

## **2.9. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Leadership coaching is a facilitated process of empowerment of leaders through either an individual or group-based process, in which the perspective of leaders’ personal and professional lives is transformed through an appreciation for the leader’s experiences and talents, the creation of a broader purpose and meaning for the leader and the

definition and clarification of aspirational and achievable short, medium, and long-term goals. Group-based leadership coaching is a form of coaching facilitated by a leader coach that utilises the group processes of social construction and learning, narrative work and peer reflection with the aim of high engagement and feedback for leader participants' perspective transformation.

This chapter provides a comparison between coaching and therapy and an overview of the purpose and outcomes of coaching, with specific reference to the role of transformative effects in examining leadership coaching. This is followed by a discussion of various forms of coaching, including a detailed account of the CCL framework. The competencies required by leadership coaches is described, followed by an overview of group-based leadership coaching and a description and comparison of traditional coaching and strengths-based coaching. A chapter summary highlighting major discussion and elaboration points is provided.

The following chapter will provide a detailed overview of AI coaching.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE POSTMODERN APPROACH TO COACHING

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the theory and praxis of the postmodern approach to coaching, taking into account the influence of AI principles and the positive psychology paradigm on postmodern coaching as a methodology. Postmodern coaching is defined and AI theory and key constructs in positive organisational behaviour are explained. The chapter will firstly introduce postmodern leadership coaching and provide a definition, followed by an outline of AI principles as tools for individual transformation in postmodern coaching, followed by outlining the key principles and processes of AI. It will then present various models of postmodern and AI coaching, concluding with an overview of critical reviews of AI as a discipline with recommendations for further research.

#### 3.2 POSTMODERN COACHING

It has been argued that within the postmodern context that the traditional approach of leadership coaching should be challenged in favour of leadership coaching characterised by a wider repertoire of theory and practice – a more integrative approach, with a new and appropriate set of tools and techniques, such as the narrative biographic approach, to address this challenge (Cochran, 1992; McMahon, 2007; Savickas, 2007). Various authors have stated that a new and alternative method of preparing and strengthening managers through leadership coaching is required (Goldsmith & Lyons, 2006; Goldsmith, 2006; Kets de Vries, 2005; Kilburg, 2004a; Kilburg, 2007).

In addition, the current generations of emerging leaders in organisations are not looking for 'best solutions', but for answers, dynamic solutions and new virtuous cycles that are relevant to their own unique experience of life and work (Bolden, 2007). It is proposed that this only happens when the meaning, purpose and deep perspectives of the individual leader are fundamentally transformed during the coaching process and in

relationship with the coach (Laske, 1999). Post-modern leadership coaching has as its ultimate aim the facilitation of optimal functioning of leaders, through perspective transformation of their personal and professional agenda (Laske, 1999).

Furthermore, the organisation requires a tangible return on their investment for coaching and lasting and sustainable change in behaviour; moreover, leaders demand to be “active agents in the production of their careers” (McMahon & Watson, 2008, p.280).

In order to meet the needs of the postmodern leader, it is proposed that the prevailing leadership development paradigm is shifted to include or be replaced by a social constructionist ‘narrative’ approach. This is more appropriate for postmodern leaders, because through the use of techniques such as narration, storytelling, drawings and biographical work, it provides a richer, more personalised, leader-specific coaching experience (Morgan, 2000). Research by Joseph, Griffin, Hall & Sullivan (2001) also points towards the use of the group-based (narrative) approach to coaching as holding specific opportunities for meeting the demands for an alternative approach in the leadership coaching context. Likewise, group-based leadership coaching is outlined and described by Kets de Vries (2005) as a powerful collaborative tool for coaching. More recently, group-based coaching has been reported to be a viable, low-cost intervention for use in the business context (Oades, Crowe & Nguyen, 2009).

The methodologies used in postmodern leadership coaching are many and varied, and depend upon the philosophical approach, professional training, personal style and experience of the specific coach. In general, the predominant coaching methodology is strongly influenced by positive psychology, which aims to enable intense and timeless happiness through “meaningful and purposeful endeavours and relationships” (Silverstein, 2007, p. 5), to seek, find and nurture genius and talent, and to make normal life more fulfilling. It aims “to build thriving in individuals, families and communities”, not simply to treat mental illness (Csikszentmihalyi 2002, p.13). Likewise, the focus of this research is on leadership development, inquiry into ‘talents’ and the construction of a ‘personal created future’.

In contrast to the traditional method, the postmodern coaching approach significantly restructures the roles of the coach and leader and moves us towards a model of co-constructing preferred personal and professional life stories through dialogue and the use of narrative as a process of meaning-making and for restoring personal agency (Kilburg, 2007; McMahan, 2007; McMahan & Watson, 2008; Morgan et al., 2005; Watson & Kuit, 2007) and perspective transformation (Laske, 1999). In the postmodern approach to coaching, instead of assessing, the coach is a co-author, and instead of interpreting test scores, the coach will interpret and shift client stories (McMahan, 2007). The use of group work or coaching in groups also becomes more prevalent in this approach (Silverstein, 2007).

In addition, the concept of leadership in the postmodern approach expands beyond the business definition to include both personal and professional life themes (Savickas, 2007). There is a need to incorporate the postmodern approaches to coaching as a discipline. It is suggested that, due to AI's promise of providing a new co-operative search for the best in people (Sloan & Canine, 2007), linking AI principles to coaching will fulfil these abovementioned requirements to add a new positive dimension to the field of coaching.

Being rooted in epistemological pluralism (Veldsman, 2009), the postmodern coach will use an integrative, rather than a selective, approach to understanding and creating meaning for clients (Hoffman, 2009). Consequently, the coach working in the postmodern paradigm should be open to multiple methodologies and possibilities in their practice with clients (Hoffman, 2009; Veldsman, 2009). There is also a growing argument for a controversial new flexible 'both/and' approach in science and in psychology (Johnson, 2005): a new philosophical perspective which may represent an eclectic merger and collaboration between the two modalities (Savickas, 2007). The multiple foci of leadership coaching (Allen, Maguire, & McKelvey, 2011; Kilburg, 2007) include individual, organisational and relational points of reference, requiring the leadership coach to be skilled in both business and organisational dynamics, as well as group facilitation and organisational development facilitation. In fact, it is argued that most leadership executive coaching is already atheoretical or eclectic (Douglas &

Morley, 2000). For example, the CCL defines the executive/leadership coach as “a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods” (Ting & Scisco, 2006).

Stelter (2009) states that the complexity of the postmodern situation requires a new approach to coaching. The core objective of postmodern leadership coaching is to build reflective ability as well as an ability to appreciate hyper complexity and “multiversality” (Stelter, 2009, p.9). This means that the outcomes of the coaching dialogue will be a more agile leader in their ability to invite and ultimately integrate diversity in its broadest sense as an attitude to life and work, within a strong value system.

Secondly, the ability to make meaning of the complex and changing life circumstances will broaden and strengthen the leader’s scope and range on a personal and professional level (Stelter, 2009). Finally, the use of narrative processes will enhance the coaching dialogue so improving the coherence of self-identity and the ability to integrate past, present and future by the leader (Stelter, 2009).

For the purposes of this research, the definition of postmodern leadership coaching is as follows:

A reflective dialogue which opens spaces for the unfolding of narratives that strengthen the agility of leader’s to make meaning of social, personal and professional life experiences, so that the leader is able to unlock an authentic value based self-identity and from this create breakthrough opportunities for growth within conditions of ever-increasing complexity.

However, Watson and Kuit (2007), proponents of the postmodern approach, warn against missionary zeal either for or against the modern and postmodern approaches, because this has polarised psychology and research into either/or viewpoints, whether subjective or objective. By being forced into choosing an epistemology, the researcher and psychologist is able to construct a clear identity and boundaries, but may then be limited by a narrower worldview (Savickas, 2007). An integrative approach therefore also suggests that the psychologist is not ‘strait-jacketed’ into one school of thought – while remaining centred in a specific foundation of practice, he/she will also draw

thoughtfully from other theories to strengthen research and practice (Peltier, 2010). This discussion is relevant to this research in that, whilst certain principles of AI and positive psychology are used, the prime determinants of the contents and process of the proposed coaching process are postmodern. At the same time the researcher was also able to mix and integrate a more conventional approach to coaching in a section of the coaching programme where it was necessary and relevant to the flow of the process. Whilst incorporating certain principles of AI, these are not the only defining features of the programme. The proposed coaching programme is in its essence embedded in postmodernism. The postmodern group-based design is described in more detail in Chapter 4 in the discussion of the components and design of the programme. The process and role of AI in postmodern coaching will now be outlined in the following section.

### **3.3 THE APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH TO COACHING DEFINED**

By breaking down AI into its linguistic components, we are able to build up to a definition of appreciative inquiry. According to the (Oxford Dictionary, 2011), to appreciate is “to recognise or understand that something is valuable, important or as described; recognise the full worth of; be grateful for (something); rise in value or price”, whereas to inquire is to “ask for information understand (a situation) fully; grasp the full implications of” (Oxford Dictionary, 2011).

The definition for AI can be broken down into two parts, one relevant for an organisational development context: “a form of transformational inquiry that selectively seeks to locate, highlight, and illuminate the life-giving forces of an organisation’s existence” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.130). The second definition is more appropriate for a group-based coaching process, in that “Appreciative Inquiry is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations, and the relevant world around them” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3).

It involves the discovery of what gives ‘life’ to a living system when it is most effective, alive, and constructively capable of, in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to

apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. The inquiry is mobilised through the crafting of the “unconditional positive question”, often involving hundreds or thousands of people. AI focuses on “the speed of imagination and innovation instead of the negative, critical, and spiralling diagnoses commonly used in organisations; the discovery, dream, design and destiny model links the energy of the positive core to changes never thought possible” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3).

For the purposes of this research, AI is defined as:

A revolutionary theory, in which a pragmatic inquiry process, based upon an appreciation for and a focus on the positive core and strengths of a human system, is proposed as a solution in which entirely new meanings and shared images are collectively generated, providing previously untapped sources of strength and solutions with a powerful call to action.

Appreciative coaching (AI coaching) is the practical application of AI principles to the process in which a trained coach is engaged by a person to function as a counsellor and advisor, through a process of co-creative partnership between the client, the coach and the relevant client’s social system (Sloan & Canine, 2007, p.1).

AI is an approach to coaching that is founded in Appreciative Inquiry, using a “discovery process for clients to discover the positive possibilities within them” (Orem, Binkert, Clancy (2011, p.xiv).

For the purposes of this research, appreciative coaching and AI coaching are used interchangeably. The definition for AI coaching is:

AI coaching is the linking of the AI principles to coaching, characterised by a conscious positive stance and appreciative inquiry throughout the coaching process, with the aim of co-constructing new worlds and meanings for the client previously not available to them in service of mobilising a dramatic transformation in the possibilities, purpose and resolve of the client.



### 3.4 APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

In order to ensure the success of organisations, AI provides an approach which “consciously designs processes for human organizing through an affirmative life giving lens” (Whitney, 2010, p.1), and in so doing, ensuring the on-going sustainability of enterprises and the collaborative effort of all stakeholders of the enterprise.

Appreciative inquiry is a pragmatic and hopeful theory, and according to Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney (2005), and Cooperrider et al. (2008), it has enormous possibilities for triple bottom-line results, namely people, profit and planet applications.

Appreciative inquiry proposes that the positive core of people and organisations is an untapped source of strength in the postmodern world, and the traditional model of organisational development, which uses a problem solving inquiry model seems to have limitations if we wish to mobilise sustainable solutions and create energy through organisational development processes (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). By approaching problems from “the other side” (Cooperrider et al., 2008), it is proposed that AI is creating a positive revolution in change management and transformation.

Appreciative inquiry developed within the domain of organisational development (OD) and more recently has been incorporated into the positive organisational scholarship (POS) epistemological stance. It offers a compelling and alternative model to transformation for individuals and organisations (Davis, 2005), presenting a myriad of organisational development possibilities, including coaching (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Taking a conscious positive, social-constructionist meta-cognitive stance, the central premise of AI is that behaviour depends upon the world as it is constructed, rather than as it is in reality (Cooperrider et al., 2008; van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). Instead of investigation and intervention, the AI theory (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001) lets go of the need to intervene, and rather through using inquiry, the work of the coach can be more powerful (Gordon, 2008a; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). At its core

are five key elements – a positive focus, stories, story theme topics, shared images of the future and innovation (Gordon, 2008a).

Cooperrider initiated AI theory during a doctoral study at Case Western Reserve University in 1980 on the success stories of physician leadership (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Watkins & Mohr, 2001), and presented an organisational analysis of the results using AI, leading to the development of a scholarly logic and a new form of action research.

Whilst AI is relatively young as praxis, it has grown in stature and scientific standing to the point that serious debate regarding the scientific robustness of AI theory and practice is largely avoided (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Appreciative inquiry offers an alternative to the traditional problem-solving approach to development in organisations (Cooperrider et al., 2008). In its essence, AI is built on three core premises – a) that people are drawn towards the positive, b) that thoughts and words create worlds, and c) that you create the world that you pay attention to (Kelm, 2005). AI looks at possibilities rather than problems (Sutherland, 2010). By focusing on the underlying strengths and the positive core, AI is able to “facilitate self-discovery, confident that the answers lie within the system or individual” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p11).

The aims of AI are to transform attitudes, behaviours and practice through appreciative conversations and interaction by exploring and discovering the core energy in the best of “achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul, and visions of valued and possible futures” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3).

In doing so, AI is based on a number of premises. The first states that that possibility should begin with appreciation. Cooperrider et al. (2008) believe that all organisations have some element, no matter how small, that works, and that it is by inquiring into

these systems that the organisation and individuals are inspired to actively work towards solutions.

Appreciative inquiry is distinctively different from other visioning methodologies in that the images of the created future are birthed within the positive past of the human system (Cooperrider et al., 2008). It is the positive stories that help us to link the reality with the possible future, and it may be that other best practice examples from other systems are brought into the exploration in order to create a generative metaphor for circumventing common resistances to change (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

A second critical premise of AI theory is that human systems will develop in the direction that we doggedly pursue through positive questioning, and that by using the “unconditional affirmation topic choice and question” in a constructionist context of what gives “life” to a system, one heightens the positive potential in that system (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

However, holding a positive praxis is not exclusive, and most certainly does not mean that negative, critical or marginal voices are left out. Due to the nature of the constructionist philosophy and use of social interaction, the AI approach ensures that all dialogues will be welcomed and are capable of helping to create new thinking (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Grant & Humphries, 2006).

Thirdly, Cooperrider et al. (2008) state that inquiries using the AI approach should always generate viable, practical knowledge solutions that are value-adding to the organisation and individuals working in it, suggesting that AI is a useful business tool.

AI taps into the imagination of members of the organisation so that they are able to build a compelling purpose. Cooperrider et al. (2008) asserts that inquiry should lead to a future which is provocative, at least to the point that it ignites action and energy in its members to make some change.

Appreciative inquiry promises to dramatically and democratically mobilise the creation of a positive spiral of boundless imagination, possibilities and innovation and liberate the human spirit and consciously construct a better future (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.4).

Individuals in the AI process are invited to think outside of current norms and question underlying assumptions; to step outside of what they see and to ask “what would the system look like if we changed it to provide every possibility for us to reach our dreams?” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.4).

Furthermore, the created future is based on the principle of anticipatory learning, in that by finding the positive images of the future, individuals and groups will be compelled to act toward them (Davis, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

The nature of any AI process is that it is based on social construction (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). Cooperrider et al., (2008) maintain that inquiry into possibilities should be collaborative, and at the core of AI is the belief that collective strengths transform situations.

This requires the ability to competently understand and work with organisations as living, human systems, which, according to AI theory, are not entropic or declining, but rather dynamic and self-generating (Binkert et al., 2007; Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). It is important to acknowledge that human systems are capable of virtuous acts as a result of cooperating with each other, and that the type of conversation (appreciative) will set in motion the desire to pay attention to activities such as peer reflection that will have mutual benefit for all parties (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Davis, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

In summary then, Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) argue that the outcome of AI initiatives are long-term positive changes in the organisation, achieved by creating a common vision and strategy, accelerating learning and innovation, uniting stakeholders, creating partnerships, and improving communications and sustainability. Appreciative inquiry's theoretical underlying principles will now be presented.

### **3.5 APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PRINCIPLES**

The literature on AI has revealed that it is based on a number of principles, namely the constructionist principle, the principle of simultaneity, the poetic principle, the anticipatory principle, the narrative principle and the positive principle, which can be applied to coaching from an AI perspective.

#### **3.5.1 The constructionist principle**

The first principle of AI is the constructionist principle, which refers to using co-creative social constructionism (Sloan, 2007). In practical terms, the authors are talking about conversations in groups as the core of any AI design and application (Binkert et al., 2007).

A model of co-construction suggests the use of dialogue, narrative and groups (Morgan, 2000), and storytelling and collaboration (Bushe & Coetzer, 1995), which are used to create meaning, to define perceptions of the reality and also to create futures and possibilities (Sloan, 2007) and which are strongly aligned to postmodernism.

The underlying core assumption of this principle is that the individual is part of a system and integrated through community to the greater whole. Sloan and Canine (2007) argue that the thoughtful engagement of others in the process holds the possibility for strong and sustainable support for transformation.

Constructionism “replaces the individual with the *relationship* as the locus of knowledge”, (Cooperrider et al., 2008), and it is built upon the narrative praxis, which relates to the power of language and discourse used on a communal basis to create our reality. The aim of the inquiry is for the generation of possibilities, rather than descriptions or explanations of the past (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This could be described as a mental dislocation, which may be daunting for some, but exciting for the adventurous.

The concept of social constructionism, which is used in narrative coaching, advocates that knowledge is actively constructed in, and relies on the internal human perception of

reality, appreciating it 'as it is' and as experienced through social interactions (Morgan, 2000; van der Haar & Hosking, 2004).

The change in social arrangements from hierarchical to co-operative cultures and the increasing diversity of individuals in the workplace challenges leadership coaching to move away from a single methodology perspective: "one grand narrative for all individuals" to appreciate and represent more localised and multiple realities in coaching practice (Savickas, 2007).

There has been some focus on the impact of cultural elements in coaching (Hamrick, 2008), and there is a need to expand the repertoire of the coach working across cultures.

In the coaching context, the partnership between coach, client and the client's social system draws from the use of narrative and biographic stories to create transformation and new worlds (Gordon, 2008a).

The role of the postmodern coach, using AI principles in this context is to "establish an appreciative tone and orchestrate generative conversations that enable the coaching client to realise his fullest potential within his social context" (Sloan & Canine, 2007, p.9).

This requires that the coaching is positioned with the client from the beginning as a developmental activity to help them to fulfil their greatest potential and to encourage the engagement of others through the various phases of the coaching process (Sloan & Canine, 2007).

### **3.5.2 The principle of simultaneity**

The second principle is the principle of simultaneity, and this refers to the parallel and simultaneous processes of inquiry and transformation. The assertion is that change occurs "in the moment" (Napolitano, 2007, p25).

Inquiry is that which sets the change process in motion, but it is not seen as occurring at a different or separate time from transformation, rather occurring simultaneously (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008). Contrary to the more traditional view of

problem solving, we do not first analyse and then change. The AI view is that the moment we begin to inquire, we begin changing and reflecting new thoughts and ideas.

“The questions we ask set the stage for what we ‘find’, and what we ‘discover’ (the data) becomes the linguistic material, the stories, out of which the future is conceived, conversed about, and constructed” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.10).

Assuming that patterns of behaviour are dynamic in relation to relationships, then changing our language and our discourses, and asking the right question, has the power to profoundly affect and alter the reality. The appreciative coach will be concerned with mostly the quality of his/her questions to determine whether they are being helpful in generating positive conversations that strengthen bonds and connections (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Practically, the postmodern coach will use this principle to ask questions about the participants’ best times as well as their unconstrained future dreams, being very purposeful of the quality and nature of each question or statement as it is made in the moment (Sloan & Canine, 2007).

### **3.5.3 The poetic principle**

The third principle of AI theory is the poetic principle or endless reflection, which creates sustainable change and growth (Binkert et al., 2007; Gordon, 2008a).

An outcome of postmodern coaching, using AI principles, would therefore be the ability to unlock a self-reflective competence in the individual to allow for sustainable and life-long self- and co-authoring and to use the reflections of past, present and future as constant and infinite sources of change and transformation, even in the nature of our topics and questions being asked.

Using the metaphor of the human system as an open book, this would be precisely like, for example, the endless interpretive possibilities in a good piece of poetry or a biblical text (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Canine (2007) argues that the poetic and artistic element is lost in the reality of daily living, with a focus on the bottom line. Instead of linear lists and bullet points, the postmodern coach would ask for stories. Just as poems have multiple interpretations, so the reality as expressed in stories and narratives can be interpreted in postmodern coaching by many others and given new meaning (Sloan, 2007).

#### **3.5.4 The anticipatory principle**

The anticipatory principle draws on the collective genius of shared thoughts, images, metaphors and visions of the future which inspire action (Gordon, 2008a). Cooperrider et al. (2008) refer to this as an infinite resource available to human systems, and it is these shared images which guide current behaviour, much like projected expectations on a time horizon that bring the future in an impactful way into the present – through talking in the passages and tea room, and discourses in meetings and in the marketplace, employees and individuals are mobilised towards bringing a created future in to the present (Albertyn, 2010).

A presupposition of the anticipatory principle is that our positive image of the future leads to positive actions, and this provides a form of energy and drive within the human system. This is referred to as the “first class reality/dream” (Sloan & Canine, 2007, p.3).

#### **3.5.5 The narrative principle**

The narrative principle is based on the underlying assumption that in using the narrative approach, and stories in particular, transformation is set in motion (Binkert et al., 2007; Gordon, 2008a). This principle was originally outlined and used in postmodernism and specifically in narrative therapy, and when applied to coaching it results in the roles of the coach and leader being significantly restructured (Allan et al., 2002; Maree, 2007; Morgan, 2000). Postmodern coaching taps into a new set of tools and techniques, such as the narrative biographic approach. The narrative approach, especially the use of autobiographical work, is grounded in both social constructionism and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000; Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 2008a).



Transformative learning is “a critical and emancipatory model of lifelong learning and an epistemological model based on the co-construction of knowledge from the analysis of personal and social experience” (Monteagudo, 2011).

Narrative therapy has been reframed in numerous organisational settings through techniques such as the management development narrative facilitation process (Schmidt, 2002); high performance team coaching (Kets de Vries, 2005) and executive coaching (Chapman & Cilliers, 2008), and is relevant for use at the individual, group and organisational levels.

Narrative coaching refers to “the practice of learning and coaching through the use of stories; active listening; re-authoring of stories in collaboration with participants in a group context of witnessing and remembering” (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007b). It provides a richer, more personalised coaching experience (Palmer and Whybrow, 2007a) and it is through sharing autobiographical stories that transformative development occurs, due to the power of the shared emotional experience of telling life stories, and receiving feedback, support and hope shared with other group members (Kets de Vries, 2005). It is very act of listening to another’s story that creates a learning experience, and this helps to build leadership skills such as empathic listening, with the proviso that trust must be evident and implicit in the interaction (Kets de Vries, 2005).

New genres of narrative coaching have also emerged, such as the integration of media and art into coaching practice (Paulus, 2006). The creation and interpretation of drawings, art and photographs has been used to make, tell and listen to stories, as well as to create and have dialogue around metaphors, images, self-narratives, scenarios, and artefacts, and it is argued that that by combining art and the narrative, the coach is able to promote synthesis between thinking and feeling (Paulus, 2006). Through the narration of the life story, personal reality and created future of the leader, coupled with active, authentic and informed listening and interaction, the leader learns how to ‘hold their own story’, contain their anxieties, create new meanings and quell the uncertainties associated with life and work (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

### **3.5.6 The positive principle**

The positive principle is based on the assumption that building strengths is better than weaknesses (Gordon, 2008b), and that in order to sustain the momentum for transformation, the human system requires large amounts of positive emotion and social connection, which in turn create states of hope, joy, sense of urgency and excitement. Furthermore, it is argued that the more positively the initial question is framed, the more lasting and successful the change effort (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This requires a steadfast dogmatism to ensure that the inquiry is not taken from the standpoint of the world as a problem to be solved. Albert Einstein's words (as cited in Cooperrider et al., 2008, p10), clearly compel us to the positive principle: "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle".

Taking the positive emotional standpoint, it is argued by Canine (2007) that positive emotions are antidotes to negativity during the postmodern coaching process. Furthermore, even if faced with situations where problems emerge during coaching, the postmodern coach would use the positive principle to work through the problem through questions that call up previous similar situations where strengths were used to overcome the challenge (Sloan & Canine, 2007).

The abovementioned AI principles, namely the constructionist principle, the principle of simultaneity, the poetic principle, the anticipatory principle, the narrative principle and the positive principle, are fundamental elements that could be incorporated into the postmodern approach to coaching.

## **3.6 APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY MODELS**

Having outlined the AI aims and principles, an overview of AI models will now be given. This is to provide context for the use of AI principles in postmodern leadership coaching. Firstly, the Cooperrider 4-D AI model (Cooperrider et al., 2008) is outlined, followed by the Whitney Model of Appreciative Leadership (D. Whitney, 2010), (Newell, 2007) and the Five Principles Coaching Syntax (Tschannen-Moran, 2007). This is followed by a

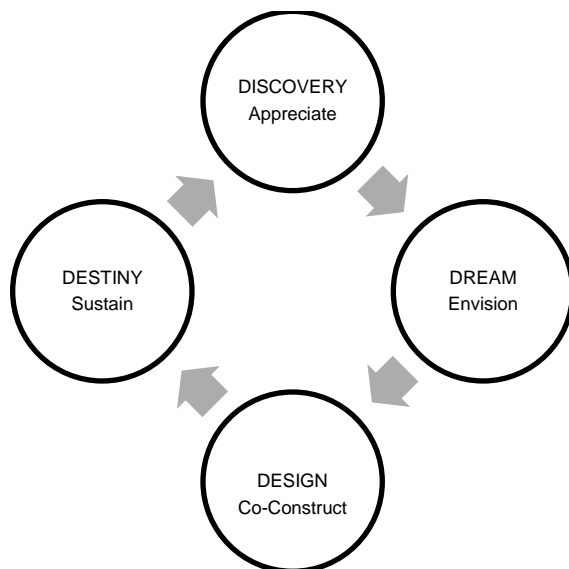
presentation and discussion of three models which have direct relevance to AI coaching: – the Newell Model of Renewal (Newell, 2007); the Bioss Model of Appreciative Conversations (Bioss, 2010) and the Binkert, Orem and Clancy tools and model for postmodern coaching (Binkert et al. 2007; Orem et al. (2011)).

### 3.6.1 The Cooperrider 4-D appreciative inquiry model

The practical methodology for achievement of AI aims and principles is achieved through the application of the AI 4-D model, which will be explained in the following section.

The dynamic and interactive 4-D cycle of AI is made up of four stages: Discovery (Appreciate); Dream (Envision); Design (Co-construct) and Destiny (Sustain). It may be engaged during a coaching process to allow the client and coach to move more rapidly into a relationship of mutual trust and transformation (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Davis, 2005).

This is also sometimes referred to as the 5-D cycle, with an additional stage, Define, before the other four stages (Tschannen-Moran, 2007) depicted in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1 The appreciative inquiry cycle (adapted from Cooperrider et al., 2008)**

Choosing the right question or topic to begin with is critical for the success of the AI model. Cooperrider et al. (2008) refers to it as the Affirmative Topic Choice, because the roots of the transformation are set in place by the initial starting point – “in fact, knowledge and organisational destiny are as intricately interwoven as we think, then isn’t it possible that the seeds of change are implicit in the very first questions we ask?” (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The Discovery stage refers to mobilizing a whole human system through inquiry into the positive core, referred to as the “other side” (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This is not dissimilar to the concept of the unleashing the atom’s power.

In the Discovery stage, the “best of what is” in a system is identified as the positive core and connected through a process of appreciation through memory of the human system’s past, present and future capacity. This stage draws us toward life, stirs our emotions, sets in motion our curiosity, and provides inspiration to the envisioning stage.

Orem et al (2011, p. 107) ask the following questions to elicit a positive directional response in the Discovery phase of coaching:

- What gives life to you now?
- Describe a high point or peak experience in your life or work up to now
- What do you most value about yourself, your relationships, and the nature of your work?
- What one or two things do you want more of?

To begin with, appreciation, in direct contrast to a problem solving model, is a critical principle enunciated by (Cooperrider et al., 2008), meaning that AI should look at the best of the system under examination. Instead of focusing on issues and problems requiring solutions, AI starts by focusing on examples of the system at its best: its highest values and aspirations (Bushe & Coetzer, 1995).

The data emerging from the Discovery phase is often collated into some form of publication or thematic analysis, keeping in mind the importance for documenting rich stories rather than thin narratives and one-line quotes.

In summary, with respect to the Discovery stage, Cooperrider et al., (2008, p 14) state: “[a]s people throughout a system connect in serious study into qualities, examples, and analysis of the positive core –each appreciating and everyone being appreciated – hope grows and community expands”.

The Dream phase refers to a process which opens up the possibilities for “what might be” and which creates a clear results-oriented vision in relation to discovered potential and to questions of higher purpose, i.e., “What is the world calling us to become?” The dream phase usually results in three outcomes – a vision of a better world, a powerful purpose, and a compelling statement of strategic intent (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

During this phase, through social interaction and listening, participants learn to use a visioning process and soon a convergence zone is created as the future begins to emerge, somewhere in the interpretative and analytical modes. The future starts with patterns of innovation, which become highlighted and reinforced through interaction until the participants start to have clarity about the future dream. The attention now turns to the creation of an ideal design. “When inspired by a great dream we have yet to find an organisation that did not feel compelled to design something very new and very necessary” (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The Design stage refers to creating provocative propositions for the ideal system, and agreeing on a design which people feel is capable of expanding and leveraging the positive core and realising the articulated dream (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). This stage builds upon the positive core and the created future (envisioned results) of the first two stages, and provides space for co-construction of an ideal design based on how things could be. Cooperrider et al. (2008) have found that it is important to sequence the steps correctly, allowing for back and forth movement and iterations if required.

By spending time in reaching a powerful dream, the process of design is smoother. For example, in Zimbabwe while working with a partner organisation of Save the Children, Cooperrider et al. (2008) found that, once the powerful vision was clearly articulated, “[e]very person in Zimbabwe shall have access to clean water within five years” – the

design shift to a new partnership rather than bureaucratic organisational design was facilitated with ease.

The Destiny phase strengthens the affirmative capability and sustainability of the whole system, enabling it to build hope and momentum around a deep purpose, and creating processes for learning, adjustment, and improvisation (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This stage initially referred to planning for continuous improvement and execution, consisting of action plans, implementation strategies and dealing with obstacles. Over time, it has evolved to be less interventionist around planning, and instead allowing for the creativity and energy within the human system to be the driving force for on-going execution.

Destiny is never linear, and expects the unexpected. However, it does include planning for the point at which the power of the nonlinear interaction of collective breakthroughs creates a new and unexpected leap forward, and the complete re-patterning of the system which comes as a result of the empowerment of people within the human system (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

The Destiny phase is powerful when it has network-like support structures available after the AI 'event', and where there is a convergence zone for people to come together for connection, cooperation and more co-creation, such as. a community of practice (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The 4D model is the most well used and cited AI model, and it will now be followed with a number of models in which AI principles and processes are applied to various situations, including leadership development, coaching and conversations. They all bring a flavour of the original AI principles of Cooperrider et al. (2008) to their design.

The following model by Whitney (2010) explains how AI principles may be applied to leadership.

### **3.6.2 The Whitney model of appreciative leadership**

Whitney offers a model consisting of five elements of appreciative leadership as guidelines for “enhancing the positive capacity of human organisations and communities” (Whitney, 2010, p.1).

These five elements, which may be applied in the coaching context with leaders, are Inclusion, Inquiry, Illumination, Inspiration and Integrity (Whitney, 2010).

Inclusion requires finding as many diverse methods to include the whole community of people who have a stake in creating the future, so that there is buy-in by everyone who may be impacted on by the conversation. Whitney recommends a multi-modal approach using conversational circles, dialogue and even social technology to engage a diverse group of people in the discussion, enabling what Whitney refers to as “collective wisdom” (Whitney, 2010, p.2).

Inquiry is based on an intense interest and curiosity in the world of the leader. It moves the conversation to one of value-added questioning techniques, different to the traditional statement-driven approach (Whitney, 2010). So for example, using the Question to Design approach, the coach would ask: ‘How can we build capability as a competitive advantage?’ versus the traditional Design to Purpose statement, which is: ‘The purpose of this meeting is to develop a capability strategy’.

The effective leader is able to harness the strengths of all people, both individually and as a team, through identification of talents and creating an environment, structures and processes where these strengths can be leveraged to the greater good of the individuals, the team and the organisation (Whitney, 2010). It is believed that by aligning the strengths of one with the strengths of another that we significantly increase the “capacity for performance” and create a collective “intelligence” (Whitney, 2010, p.2).

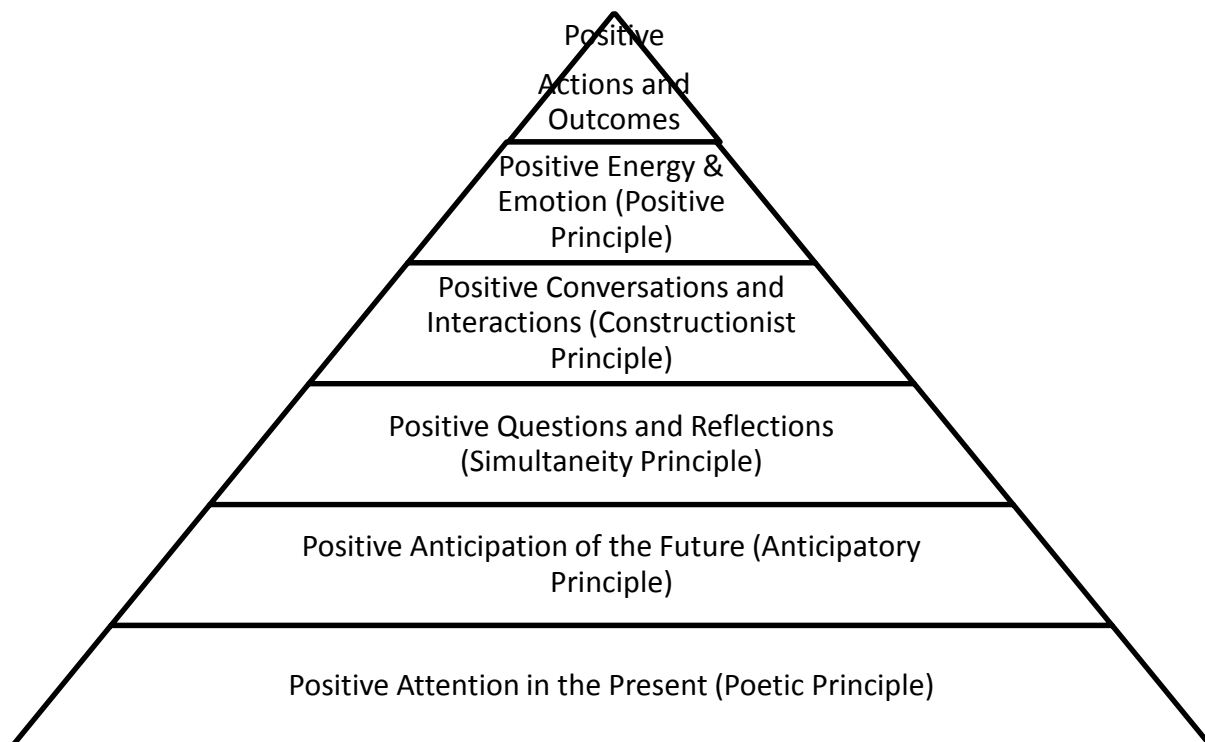
The ability to harness the collective wisdom of the whole inspires others with hope for the future, and it is argued by (Whitney, 2010) that the element of Inspiration creates vitality and collaboration as success breeds success.

Finally, the effective leader is characterised by relational Integrity and the ability to connect different individuals, whilst respecting their needs, differences and dreams. Integrity “crafts conditions, opportunities and dialogue which results in win-win situations” to “create a world that works for all” (Whitney, 2010, p.3).

It is believed that these five elements of leadership, which draw on the theoretical assumptions of AI, will drive employees to act collaboratively and with innovation (Whitney, 2010).

### 3.6.3 Five-principle syntax model

The five-principle syntax model depicted in Figure 3.2 (Tschannen-Moran, 2007) provides an additional tool for the coach to explain how the AI principles may be applied in practice. Without detracting from the pragmatic value of the 4-D model of (Cooperrider et al., 2008), Tschannen-Moran (2007) has gone on to further outline the meaning of the five principles of AI in the coaching context, as a transformational model for postmodern coaches. This is presented in Figure 3.2.



**Figure 3.2 Five-principle coaching syntax (adapted from Tschannen-Moran p. 22)**

The five-principle syntax (5PC) is used as a tool to represent how the principles work and relate to one another to improve the coaching process and to “exploit the connections and developmental applications of the five principles of AI” (Tschannen-Moran, 2007, p.23).



Firstly, the positive principle is based on the premises inherent in the Newton's first law of motion, in that objects at rest tend to stay at rest, whereas objects in motion tend to stay in motion (Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Instead of conducting a root-cause analysis, which will create a downward spiral of negative energy, the postmodern coach will use the positive principle to begin the process with positive energy and emotion, thus "disrupting the downward spirals into powerful possibilities and building the inherent aspirations of people into a dynamic force for transformational change" (Tschannen-Moran, 2007, p.20).

The constructionist principle is based on the premise that energy is constructed through "positive conversations and interactions with other people", and is different to self-help. Thus, postmodern coaching will use the holistic social context of the client in relation to others and story making through dialogue with others to create new worlds and generate positive energy and emotions (Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

Working in the here and now, the simultaneity principle asserts that the moment that the postmodern coach poses a positive question, the transformation occurs, and this is why Tschannen-Moran (2007) argues that the unconditional positive question is a hallmark of the postmodern coaching toolkit, when incorporating AI principles.

Furthermore, Tschannen-Moran (2007) states that the positive outlook and expectation of the postmodern coach embedded in the anticipatory principle will tilt the tone and direction of the conversation to look in the future and to ground the positive image with confidence that it is possible for all.

The poetic principle inspires because the mindset and outlook of the coaching conversation is seen as a miracle in the moment. It is characterised by emotions and attitudes of "hope, mindfulness, intention and attention" (Tschannen-Moran, 2007, p.21).

It is a way of seeing life as poetry; as beautiful and magical, that the focus shifts away from problems and to imagination, freedom and an unconstrained future.

Based on the syntax of the AI principles outlined in the five-principle model, Tschannen-Moran (2007) also makes recommendations for using the model in a practical way to generate positive outcomes and actions.

For example, if the client arrives in a negative frame of mind with little energy, the 5PC model will know how to generate possibilities, how to change direction to and “build self-efficacy and courage” (Tschannen-Moran, 2007, p.22).

With certainty about a positive outcome in the future, the coach is able to be able to work with empathy to deal with the uncertainty that is linked to change, and if necessary, to change the conversation to help clients see the world differently (Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

In conclusion, the simplicity and essence of the AI approach is emphasised by Tschannen-Moran (2007, p.23): “Such is the poetic power of positive attention in the present moment”.

The preceding section has outlined AI principles as it applies to coaching and as it pertains to a professional coaching relationship. It is noteworthy to then also outline models which have a direct relevance to postmodern coaching, using AI principles. For instance, the appreciative coaching conversation model presented by Bioss International (Brunel Institute of Organisational Social Studies) for the purpose of training line managers as coaches (Bioss, 2010). It is important to acknowledge how the concept of appreciation is being commercialised and used in the organisation development context, and how it may prove to be extremely transformational if applied to manager-employee relationships.

### **3.7 MODELS OF APPRECIATIVE COACHING**

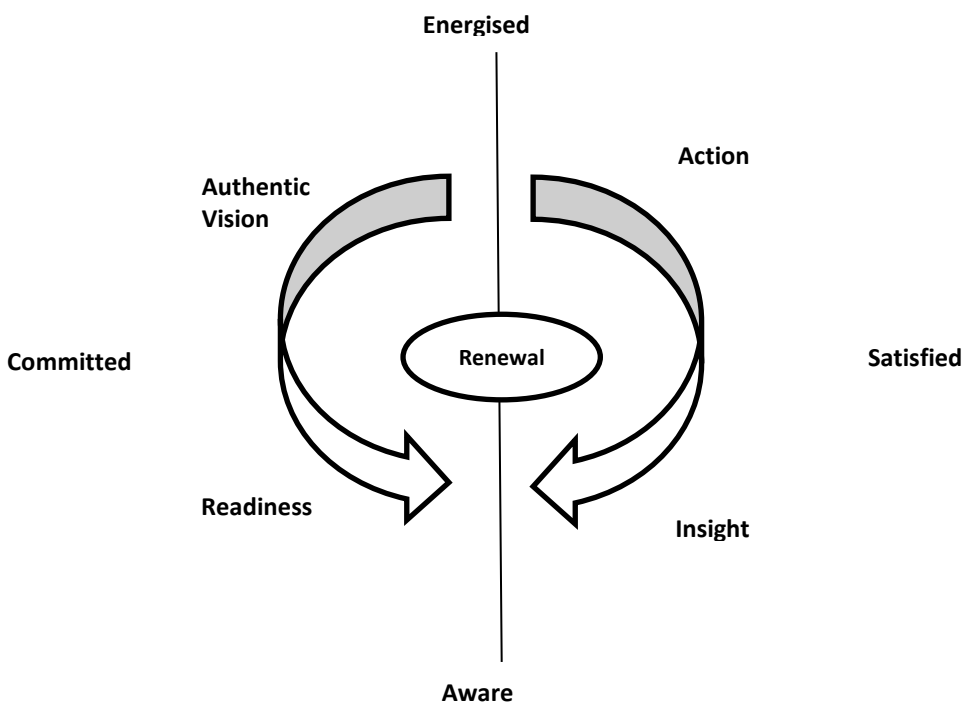
The overview of AI models is now followed by the presentation of three models which have direct relevance to postmodern coaching: the Newell model of renewal (Newell, 2007), the Bioss model of appreciative conversations (Bioss, 2010) and the Binkert, Orem and Clancy tools for postmodern coaching (Binkert et al., 2007).

### 3.7.1. Newell model of renewal

The challenges of the postmodern world call for an approach to organising work and organisations that is based on renewal, especially with regard to the role of the leader, when dealing with the ambiguities of multiple stakeholders and multiple complexities (Newell, 2007). In order to be successful, leader development needs to continually review leaders' authenticity – how they 'are', rather than only work on developing their competencies (Newell, 2007). Furthermore, the reality is that individuals do become 'stuck' in their development, and this prevents them from reaching their full potential.

Based on experience in practice, postmodern appreciative coaching is therefore proposed as form of leader development that is able to cultivate renewal in leaders (Newell, 2007).

The model in Figure 3.3 illustrates the Newell model of renewal, which in its essence is less linear and more perpetual, as well as more multi-faceted than the diagram suggests:



### **Figure 3.3 Newell Model of Renewal (adapted from Newell (2007))**

The process begins with Insight, which is initiated by the appreciative coach with a choice of inquiry that is positive and that generates renewal. The inquiry needs to either tap into an existing change that is being experienced, even if only occasionally, or into a change which the client is motivated to achieve (Newell, 2007). A typical question could be: 'When are you being the best you can be?' Further inquiry then works with intense memory work with the client's thoughts and emotions as they recall these experiences (Newell, 2007). The outcomes of Insight are clarity of the world and a sense of motivation, energy and commitment to change and transformation. This insight and awareness is not enough for transformation, and the next critical process in the renewal model is Readiness, which is defined by (Newell, 2007, p.29) as "an ability to identify and free ourselves from the limiting assumptions, habits of mind or practice which hold us in our old patterns of being".

In order to obtain a state of readiness, the client is required to work with and identify the limitations that may block the client's ability to sustain transformation. Newell (2007) recognises that it may be uncomfortable for the purist appreciative coach to work with negative questioning, e.g. 'What prevents you from .....?' and it is suggested that the coach examines examples of when the client was able to break free from a certain blockage by shifting the question e.g. 'What made it possible.....?' and 'How could you be like that in the future.....?'.

Readiness opens up real commitment to change and allows the transition of the client to be able to dream the future and create their own authentic vision. Questions such as: 'What would it be like if.....?' will help to elicit these images for the client.

The vision of the future creates its own powerful force for sustainable change due to the self-generated vision, which is of value to the client – this is what makes it authentic (Newell, 2007), as "compelling visions of the future create action" (Cooperrider in

Newell, 2007, p.31). The energy and direction required to give birth to the vision is what gives the motivation to take action. Vision requires execution, and the appreciative coach is required to assist the client to identify those actions that are effective and fully appreciate the satisfaction that comes from even the smallest achievement. It is important for the client to learn how to reflect and to continuously practice the process of renewal (Newell, 2007). The Newell model of renewal provides a practical process-driven approach upon which to base the postmodern appreciative coaching process.

### **3.7.2. Bioss model of appreciative conversations**

The term “appreciation” was articulated by Gillian Stamp (Stamp, 2001) in her work with Elliot Jacques (Jacques, 1976) at Bioss in stratified systems theory and practice, and specifically in the design of the Career Path Appreciation (CPA) assessment tool (Bioss, 2010). Subsequently, Bioss have expanded the tool to work in groups using appreciation, through appreciative conversations. Appreciative conversations are “open, two way dialogue between two or more people” (Bioss, 2010), and they provide a way of dealing with people, enabling all to maintain effective and open conversation held with each other and not to each other, which leads to greater engagement and better results.

Appreciation goes beyond the economic meaning to a human meaning, which is to operate with a positive intention to learn, grow and realise potential through being open with each other (Bioss, 2010). The pre-conditions for an appreciative conversation climate include respect, trust, authenticity, directedness and empathy. Respect refers to a conversation that will display a tone of neutrality and warmth and genuine interest in the other person; unconditional acceptance and interpersonal sensitivity. Trust means that both parties accept one another and that there is a platform of confidentiality that gives congruence and authenticity to both words and actions for the parties involved. The ability to be direct and leave nothing unsaid requires an ability to express thoughts with clarity, openness and honesty, and acknowledge, affirm, and give accurate reflections of feeling and support in order to sustain empathy during the conversation (Bioss, 2010).

Resilience, a POB construct, is a core personality trait required by individuals participating in an appreciative conversation: “resilience means having the ability to bounce back and deal positively with new challenges or tough situations” (Bioss, 2010). Furthermore, an appreciative conversation is normally conducted under conditions of conflict or pressure, and so it requires the ability to remain calm and engaged, being able to problem solve, self-awareness and the ability to modify behaviour and emotional sensitivity, emotional control, leadership skills and an over-riding sense of purpose, meaning and exuberance for life (Bioss, 2010).

The process for an appreciative conversation (Bioss, 2010) flows through five stages, shown in Figure 3.4 – The appreciative conversation cycle:



**Figure 3.4 The appreciative conversation cycle (adapted from Bioss, 2010)**

The first stage is the Prepare stage, in which the person conducting the conversation will think about the current situation to assist in being able to identify the most important aspects to discuss.

The second stage is the Appreciate phase, and the aim of this is to gain an understanding of the participant's context and reality – 'warts and all'. It involves creating a safe and positive climate for the conversation, clarity in describing the purpose of the conversation, and creating genuine space for listening and acknowledging the perceptions and values of the others in the conversation.

The energy now shifts from gathering data, reflecting and agreeing on what is going on to exploring possibilities in the Co-create phase, where parties jointly explore a goal or a solution and set goals based on what they want to achieve and why. It is this stage that most closely resembles the Dream phase in AI, namely in imagining possibilities, considering new alternatives and developing options. The premise is that positive clarity on the vision will open up invention and positive action.

The Design phase planning stage is extremely important, and the conversation shifts from building options to making choices and agreeing on a documented action plan. This is followed by the Achieve phase, consisting of follow-up and review, and most importantly in the business context, execution in the workplace.

In summary, the appreciative conversation cycle (Bioss, 2010) provides a useful and practical tool for dealing with difficult conversations in a different way – working with a positive, postmodern and appreciative frame.

### **3.7.3. Binkert, Orem and Clancy's model and tools for appreciative coaching**

Appreciative inquiry principles are applied to postmodern coaching into Appreciative Coaching (Binkert et al., 2007; Orem et al. 2011).

The Orem et al. (2011, p. 84) model of Appreciative Coaching consists of the following paraphrased statements:

- In every society, organization, group, or individual something works.
- What people focus on becomes their reality.
- Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.

- The act of asking questions of an organization, group or individual influences the group or individual in some way.
- People are more confident and comfortable in their journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
- If people carry parts of the past forward, those parts should be what is best about the past.
- It is important to value differences
- The language people use creates their reality.

The practice of Appreciative Coaching is applied by Orem et al. (2011) according to the following premises:

- Inquiry starts with appreciation
- Inquiry into possibilities must lead to action
- Knowledge shared about the current reality can provoke a call to action by members
- Inquiry is a collaborative process

Key tools in the coaching process include using artful positive questions, for example: 'When have I been successful in the past?' 'What are my strengths and abilities?' 'What is my real desire or dream outcome for this situation?' and 'What actions can I begin experimenting with?' (Binkert et al., 2007). This list is outlined by Oren et al. (2011, p.2) as follows:

- Describe your three greatest accomplishments to date.
- What made these accomplishments stand out for you?
- What have you incorporated into your current actions from your past accomplishments?
- How could you use what you've learned from these accomplishments to assist you in making future changes?
- Who are, or have been, your major role models?
- What attributes of these role models do you admire and most appreciate?



- What are the five most positive things in your life?
- Who are the key supportive people in your life, and what do they provide for you?
- List five adjectives that describe you at your best?
- What energizes you?
- What would you like to contribute to the world?
- What are you wanting to achieve in the next three years?

Canine conducted interviews with 35 coaching practitioners who used AI within their coaching work (Canine, 2007). The insights showed that postmodern coaches will use and value the creation of the positive core, the power of generative questions and language, and the transformational potential of positive imagery as tools to create possibilities for the unique needs of their clients (Canine, 2007).

The positive core is discovered through sharing peak personal experiences, which is then used to identify core strength qualities and capabilities. Provoking questions and language that will create positive energy and movement are often used: e.g. 'What would it look like we had nailed that?' The use of positive imagery was also reported as an important part of the AI phases of Discovery and Dreaming, yet Canine found that only two of the 35 coaching practitioners interviewed actually made use of graphic illustrations in their coaching. This was highlighted as an opportunity to enhance coaching work (Canine, 2007). Canine's interviews also highlighted the value of AI to help clients to create hopes and futures beyond their current realities, largely due to the fact that clients rarely stop long enough to dream or really think about their futures. Finally, Canine found that the use of metaphors was a popular choice of tool used amongst these coaching practitioners (Canine, 2007).

Binkert et al. (2007) identified and described specific tools for postmodern appreciative coaching. These are: the pathways of constructive futures, four core questions, the coaching sequence, the miracle question, the generative metaphor, the appreciative pathway, themes, mindfulness, cultivators, being-with, practice, perseverance and celebration, and these will be systematically described in the following paragraphs.

The pathways of constructive futures (Binkert et al., 2007; Walter & Peller, 1992) is a methodology for creating three positive frames for the coaching interaction. These frames assist the coach in moving the coaching dialogue from wishes/complaints into goals/problems, and these are based on the assumption that “focusing on the positive and solutions and on the future facilitates change in the right direction” (Walter & Peller, 1992).

The first frame is the goal or coaching frame, and this refers to choosing the appropriate positive topic for the coaching conversation by asking a goal-directed question, for example ‘What is your goal in coming here?’.

The second frame, the exceptions or inclusions frame (Binkert et al., 2007; Walter & Peller, 1992) assists the coaching process through searching for the ‘positive core’ by asking for examples from past and present that echo some of the desired future state. It could be framed in questions such as: ‘describe a time when you might have experienced elements of this topic in a different context, but in a positive way’; ‘When is the goal happening somewhat already?’; ‘When doesn’t the problem happen?’ (Binkert et al., 2007; Walter & Peller, 1992). The actions that the coach can explore in this frame are how to do it here and/or to do it again now (Binkert et al., 2007).

Finally, the hypothetical solution frame facilitates the creation of a positive future state through imaging and visualising (Walter & Peller, 1992). Questions to ask in this frame include ‘If the problem were solved what would you be doing differently?’ (Walter & Peller, 1992) and ‘If the future could be any way you wanted it to be, how would you state this topic in the positive?’ (Binkert et al., 2007). The action for the coach and client from this frame might be to try out and execute a small piece of the future as soon as possible.

Another tool in AI coaching is the use of the four core questions: ‘What gives life to you now?’; ‘Describe a high point or peak experience in your life or work up to now’; ‘What do you most value about yourself, your relationships, and the nature of your work?’; and ‘What one or two things do you want more of?’ (Binkert et al., 2007). AI makes use of affirmative questioning to unfold the strengths within the individual and system, in order

to unfold new possibilities (Napolitano, 2007). These questions serve to provide an opportunity for both connecting with the client's 'positive core' as well as to translate this into a future imagined vision that is articulated.

The AI coaching sequence is useful for the coach in process (Binkert et al., 2007). The first step is to ask the client to describe a positive experience; then to ask the client to reflect on the positive aspects of the experience; then for both client and coach to identify similarities across several positive experiences, and finally to allow the client to apply the learning to the topic of coaching.

Appreciative inquiry coaches and practitioners find the miracle question extremely helpful and most appropriate as a tool in the Dream stage of AI (Binkert et al., 2007). The question could for example be framed as, "Suppose that one night, while you were asleep, there is a miracle and the concern that you have is gone. However, because you are asleep, you don't know that the miracle has happened. When you wake up in the morning, what will be different that will tell you that the miracle has taken place? What else?"

The appreciative path is another tool that allows freedom for the coaching client to make choices and to be empowered to choose which path to go down as they emerge (Binkert et al., 2007). Using metaphors and drawings of a journey with multiple paths is a helpful tool to bring this to life for the coaching client (Paulus, 2006; Vansteenkiste, 2008).

The generative metaphor is a critical outcome of the AI coaching process (Lakse, 1999; Monteagudo, 2011). Tools that assist the coaching client to describe their created future include putting the client in the future where they have their heart's desire (without any limitations); using words, phrases or pictures that express this; naming created futures, visions and years with themes will reinforce the power of the generative metaphor (Binkert et al., 2007). So too will encouraging mindfulness and openness to the opportunities that emerge as the coaching client moves into the future (Binkert et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Vansteenkiste, 2008).

Coaching clients come into the coaching process with a past and certain patterns of being that may make it difficult for them to move on from 'dark moments' in their lives, and the postmodern coach using AI principles needs to be comfortable allowing the coaching client to acknowledge their internal voices and past experiences that are not positive (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gordon, 2008a; Grant & Humphries, 2006; van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). Trying to ignore or reject them only gives them greater focus and 'being with' the coaching client and being mindful of their emotions without judgement are crucial skills required by the AI coach (Binkert et al., 2007).

Finally, tools to help create an environment of encouragement and innovation for action include practice to make the new actions habitual and perseverance, especially for the postmodern coach to continue to have confidence in the coaching client. The coach should continue to remind them of their dreams and keep the faith, and use celebration, which refers to finding those moments where one can savour the successes, appreciate what has occurred and rejoice (Binkert et al., 2007).

This concludes the overview on AI models as they apply to the field of coaching.

In conclusion, by using postmodern approaches to coaching, including AI principles and being mindful of transformative learning theory and POB outcomes, the leadership coach will be able to transcend the traditional and limited approach to coaching and deploy new methodologies for increased effectiveness and transformation.

### **3.8 CRITICAL REVIEW OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY**

Critiques of AI claim to provide a balanced view to the over-optimistic approach of current AI theory with a warning to AI practitioners and researchers of the dangers of "ignoring the shadow" (Grant & Humphries, 2006, p.402). 'The shadow' refers to suppressed thought and emotions in a social system (Fitzgerald, Oliver & Hoxsey, 2010). In fact, the highly positive approach of AI has been blamed for the over-encouragement of unrealistic expectations and a discouragement of critical analysis (Golembieskwi, 2000; Grant & Humphries, 2006).

In an attempt to create clarity regarding the AI process, a number of moderators of AI transformation have been established (Bushe, 2011). The first moderator describes the differences in how AI functions in pre-identity and post-identity social systems (Bushe, 2011). The pre-identity state refers to groups where the majority of the members do not identify with their system, which could be the group they are in or an organisation within which they are working. This implies that they have low levels of group membership, with little concern for the social systems and a dispassionate lack of interest in the success of the system (Bushe, 2011). In comparison, the post-identity system is characterised by groups where the majority of members have a strong identity with the system as well as being psychologically invested in the system (Bushe, 2011). Based on a study in the navy and with an executive group, it was determined that the nature of inquiry and subsequent outcomes of the AI process should be different for the pre- and post-identity social systems. In the pre-identity group, the best inquiry is into the ideal future, whereas in the post-identity group a more helpful inquiry approach is inquiry into what is best or what ought to happen. This is because the post-identity group is already in production and is more concerned with improvements in efficiency and effectiveness (Bushe, 2011).

The second moderator of differences in AI transformation is the extent to which previous appreciative conversations or dialogues on strengths have occurred prior to the AI process. In a social system with strong negative deviance, where thoughts and feelings have been repressed, the AI transformation has a stronger effect due to the relief offered by unleashing and integrating the 'shadow' into the social system (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). The effect will be less dramatic and positive in social systems characterised by a positive deviance where appreciation is already part of the dialogue (Bushe, 2011).

The third moderator suggested by Bright and Cameron's (2009) model of normative momentum is that systems will automatically regulate their state back to the normative position or to equilibrium. This would explain why Bushe (2011) has stated that simply focusing on the positive is not adequate, and that it has been reported that the

transformative effects of AI are diminished over time, especially if used continually over a period of years in the same organisation.

The central critique of AI is that it invalidates negative organisational experiences (which are a phenomenological reality for participants) and that this represses meaningful conversation and causes frustration and confusion for participants who feel pressure to remain positive (Bushe, 2011). Moreover, Oliver (2005) hypothesises that it is not possible to conduct inquiry into images of a positive future without evoking the negative past or present. The pattern of ascribing meaning for positive and negative stories means that AI practitioners are pre-assigning meaning for others, which is counter-productive to transformation (Oliver, 2005). It is argued that an either/or approach is not conducive to change and that AI will not be effective unless it addresses the real needs of the members by embracing the negative and positive polarities and appreciating that this tension is what gives life and meaning to the inquiry (Johnson, 2011). In its defence, Cooperrider (in Bushe, 2011) states that AI was never meant to be prescriptive about a positive theory with the exclusion of the 'shadow', but that that AI is in an early stage of evolution and still holds many unknown possibilities for understanding the workings of a life-centred approach. He claims that, in order to clarify the discipline, it is not yet ready for integration with other points of view and practices.

There is a need to evaluate AI (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004), and also for studies that explore the successes and failures of AI (Head, 2005). It is also necessary to understand the drivers of these findings. For example, a failure may be due to poorly training AI practitioners (Bushe, 2011). The need for a critical analysis in the evaluation of AI creates a paradox, because AI is inherently positive, offering little self-reflection or critique for an evaluative process (Grant & Humphries, 2006). With this in mind, a combination of critical theory applied to AI evaluation in the form of a critical appreciative process (CAP) was proposed by Grant & Humphries (2006). Using the CAP method, Grant and Humphries (2006) reported that the positive outcomes promised by AI were not achieved in a case study amongst a board of directors, and in the evaluation of reasons why this occurred, the researchers hypothesised that their

encouragement to 'be positive' disqualified the local and grounded knowledge of participants (Grant & Humphries, 2006).

Bushe (2011) has also recommended comparative studies in AI which track the factors impacting on success. Furthermore, it is recommended that longitudinal studies are conducted, especially in organisations where AI is used repetitively (Bushe, 2011).

This study has specifically taken these critiques and recommendations into account. Firstly, the design of the LCP (in Chapter 4.7) embraces both positive and negative experiences in the articulation and interpretation of personal stories in Stage 2 of the LCP. It is by encouraging stories, whether positive or negative, and appreciating these unconditionally, that the discovery of unique talents and the creation of definitions of personal success are generated (Bushe, 2011). These then are used as the launch pad to the creation of positive futures (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Secondly, the study uses a longitudinal methodology, examining the transformative effects of postmodern coaching over an extended period of time. Furthermore, the study compares the findings of different groups experiencing the same postmodern coaching process, which supports the recommendation to conduct studies where AI is used repetitively rather than in once-off facilitation processes (Bushe, 2011).

### **3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provides an overview of a detailed discussion of the principles and tools of postmodern leadership coaching, including AI theory, principles and coaching models. This included a detailed discussion of the principles and tools of AI theory and coaching was presented. This was followed by models of AI, as well as models and tools for postmodern coaching. Finally, a critical review of AI is presented with recommendations for further research as it applies to postmodern coaching. A chapter summary highlighting major discussion and elaboration points is also provided.

The following chapter will provide a detailed overview of the design and operationalisation of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme, the LCP.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE LEADERSHIP COACHING PROGRAMME**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will outline and document the components and design principles of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme using AI principles. The components and design of the programme are described in detail in the following sections: the development of the LCP, the objectives of the LCP, the design and rationale of the LCP, AI principles as applied to the LCP, and finally, the programme structure and components, and administration requirements.

#### **4.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALCP**

The ALCP was developed out of the business need for a differentiated leadership coaching programme that would respond to the requirements for accelerated leadership coaching for high-potential managers in a global organisation.

The researcher psychologist conducting this study works as internal consultant and manager responsible for talent and learning and development in an international organisation with a large footprint across Africa and Asia. The business needs of the specific organisation for leadership coaching presented a unique opportunity to respond to the postmodern challenges described in Chapter 1 through the operationalisation and study of the LCP. By linking AI principles to postmodern leadership coaching, and by coupling this with a group-based approach, the LCP was able to offer a highly interactive, high-impact coaching experience to the target group, and so respond to the business need.

Secondly, a research need was identified for the further examination of transformational outcomes as a result of the AI process, and specifically postmodern coaching. The postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme (LCP) was proposed as a process that could also facilitate the achievement of the research objectives for this study. The final aim of this programme was to investigate postmodern leadership coaching with a group-based approach, and by using AI principles, the achievement of



the objectives of empowerment and transformation for leaders' personal and professional perspectives could be enabled.

The LCP captures the essence of the postmodern approach in its philosophy, aims and methods, using an integrated approach along with group-based coaching as a predominant methodology. Firstly, the underlying philosophy of the LCP is one of empowerment through sustainable personal and professional perspective transformation according to the description provided by (Laske, 1999).

Secondly, the aims of the LCP are for the fulfilment of purpose and for creating a leader who will, in the future, remain self-reflective and emotionally open to change. This is in line with the outcomes suggested for postmodern coaching by Kilburg (2007); Newell (2007) and Stelter (2009).

Thirdly, the methodology employed in the LCP is biographic in nature, grounded in social construction as outlined in postmodernism and AI principles (Cooperrider et al. 2008), making full use of peer reflection by using the coaching group as part of the coaching system through the use of narrative techniques (Fetherson & Kelly, 2007).

Finally, the design of the LCP is aimed at being relevant to and impactful on both the organisation and the leaders working in it. This is a requirement for all postmodern AI processes (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

### **4.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE LCP**

The LCP is a personal and professional leadership development coaching programme, aimed at transforming the personal and professional agenda of delegates by increasing self-awareness and self-directed, reflective competencies required to navigate their leadership journey throughout their career.

The core aim of the LCP is to empower individuals in terms of establishing optimal and sustainable leadership of and independence in both their career and personal lives (Vansteenkiste, 2011). Individuals participating in the LCP are not seen through the lens of the economic model – as resources, a number or even capital, as in the terms 'human resources' and 'human capital', but rather as unique individuals with rich and

diverse emotional lives, histories and identities who are privileged to enjoy a brief moment to find their 'positive core' and then move forward, taking up their respective roles on a personal and professional level (Vansteenkiste, 2009).

Designed according to a postmodern approach and also using certain AI principles (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), the ACLP also uses a group-based coaching process in the form of a peer reflection team, and is a cornerstone and crucial component of a structured one-year management development curriculum offered to high-potential talent in a global, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) organisation.

The specific objectives of the LCP are to increase leadership effectiveness through a journey of appreciation of the self and strengths, to orientate the participants to their current challenges and to create a meaningful future as leader (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

The LCP aims include completion of an inward process of self-discovery, understanding and articulating one's own story and life themes, and then becoming more future-focused as a leader, with outcomes related to the creation and clarification of life and work purpose/vision and the translation of this into a plan of action (Vansteenkiste, 2008) with the intention of "liberating the human spirit and consciously constructing a better future" (Cooperrider et al., 2008p. 3).

#### **4.4 DESIGN AND RATIONALE OF THE LCP**

It is argued that the LCP, being grounded in a postmodern approach, using AI principles, is at its foundation focused on the best of the individuals' personal and professional life (Cooperrider et al., 2008), and it initiates and provides rich research data for the individual through narrative, biographical and memory work, group and peer reflection and the construction of a personal plan and vision.

Described by Vansteenkiste (2011) as a "biographical stock taking" or a personal research process, it is through the narration of the life story, personal reality and created future of the leader, coupled with active and informed listening and interaction, that the leader learns how to 'hold their story', contain their anxieties, create new meanings and

quell the uncertainties associated with life and work, and empower themselves to 'take up their leadership' (Kilburg, 2007).

This particular method of leadership coaching was developed by Vansteenkiste (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2009; Vansteenkiste, 2011) in her corporate consulting work in Belgium during the 1980's, grounded in her scientific background and humanistic principles of empowerment and choice (Vansteenkiste, 1993). Her practice and work then moved to South Africa, where, since the 1990s, her focus shifted to working with empowerment, especially that of professional women, and for the most part on an individual coach-client basis through biographical and motivational coaching (Vansteenkiste, 2011). The use of the large-group coaching methodology was developed as a bespoke programme for the purpose of leadership coaching in the organisation, and was previously only applied in smaller groups and in academic settings.

The qualitative researcher is never removed from the research, and the author personally experienced Dr Vansteenkiste's coaching as part of a small-group setting late in the 1990s, with continued coaching and reflection over a decade. This deepened the interest and curiosity as to the profound and sustainable transformative effects and empowerment potential that this process had for participants. More recently, since 2006, Dr Vansteenkiste was approached to work together with the researcher to introduce this coaching methodology into the organisation. The breakthrough was in taking the risk in working in larger groups with emerging leaders on international leadership programmes (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

Based on anecdotal evidence, the individual coaching work of Dr Vansteenkiste held great value for participants and had the potential to add value to the emerging coaching profession. It became worthwhile to explore this process in a corporate setting, using a group-based coaching approach, as well as to document and formalise the programme through a scientific study that would provide a theoretical framework for the programme, as well as evidence of how and why transformation takes place during this programme.

The predominant philosophical and methodological basis for the design and rationale of the LCP is postmodern using social construction (group work) and AI, and this will be made evident in the description of the underlying philosophies of the programme and content design (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2011).

The LCP makes use of social construction in coaching “through the use of stories; active listening; re-authoring of stories in collaboration with participants in a group context of witnessing and remembering” (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007b), and it leverages the potential of collective strengths, based on social construction (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004), to transform the leaders’ perspectives.

By deploying the narrative principle (Binkert et al., 2007; Gordon, 2008a) through the use of stories, biographic work and peer reflection, transformation is set in motion from the first stage in the LCP by providing a richer, more personalised coaching experience through the method of social construction (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007a). According to Kets de Vries (2005), it is through sharing autobiographical stories that transformative development occurs, due to the power of the shared emotional experience of telling life stories, receiving feedback, and the support and hope shared with other group members. It is the very act of listening to another’s story that creates a learning experience and helps to build leadership skills such as empathic listening, with the proviso that trust must be evident and implicit in the interaction (Kets de Vries, 2005).

The narrative approach is deployed by using participating managers on the programme as active agents in the construction of knowledge and in making sense of the reality or encounter (Mouton, 1990) by using them as peer reflectors, co-creators and co-researchers in the coaching process. By providing an opportunity for each person to share their story and discuss themes with peers, the individual is engaged in learning about themselves on a deeper level, while the others in the group are able to learn vicariously from the experience and model their own leadership coaching skills (Kets de Vries, 2005). Through the process of vicarious experiencing, the group becomes caught up in the journey and action plan of the individual, making commitment to transformation and behaviour change more likely and sustainable (Kilburg, 2007).

In the LCP, while coaches are available throughout the process to hold a safe space for the narration of stories, they do 'hold the process lightly', using a less directive approach and rather using peer reflectors as a core resource in the feedback process. However, the overall group dynamic is coached intensely, and the role of the facilitator is to observe, channel and shape the group's interactions and energies throughout the process and vary the facilitator response based on what emerges from the group (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

#### **4.5 APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PRINCIPLES AS APPLIED TO LCP**

This discussion will focus on the LCP and the extent to which it includes AI principles in its design and methodology. The coding rules for the presence of AI principles were established by Bushe and Kassam (2005), and this coding process was followed to determine to what extent the design of the LCP included and was based on AI principles.

##### **4.5.1. Coding process to determine adherence to appreciative inquiry principles applied to LCP**

Coding was also conducted by the researcher according to whether the LCP adhered to the six AI principles (the constructionist, simultaneity, poetic, anticipatory, narrative and positive principles) according to the following decision rules, presented in a decision rules matrix. The decision rules for coding were based upon a coding structure set up by Bushe and Kassam (2005). They are now outlined in more detail.

##### **The constructionist principle**

Coding as constructionist occurs if the inquiry was used co-creative collaboration and social interaction (yes/no). The coaching needs to demonstrate a partnership between coach, client and the client's social system, and use narrative and stories to create transformation and new worlds.

**The principle of simultaneity**

Coding as using the principles of simultaneity occurs if there is evidence of parallel and simultaneous processes of inquiry and transformation (yes/no). The process may start with inquiry, but if the change process is seen as a separate moment then the coding is 'no'.

**The poetic principle**

Coding as using the poetic principle occurs if the process creates endless reflection, which in turn creates sustainable change and growth (Gordon 2008a) (yes/no). If the individuals demonstrated that they had a new self-reflective competence to allow for sustainable and life-long self- and co-authoring and the use of the reflections of past, present and future as constant and infinite sources of change and transformation and possibility, then the coding is 'yes'. The data for this coding is to be taken from individual case studies.

**The anticipatory principle**

Coding for using the anticipatory principles occurs if the AI process draws on the collective genius of shared thoughts, images, metaphors and visions of the future which inspire action (Binkert, et al. 2007; Gordon, 2008a). If positive images of the future are created then this is evidence for a 'yes' coding.

**The narrative principle**

Coding for evidence of the narrative principle occurs if the narrative approach is used – active listening, stories, autobiographies, a group context of witnessing and story re-authoring (yes/no).

**The positive principle**

Coding as using the positive principles occurs if the AI process is based on the assumption that building strengths is better than weaknesses. (Gordon, 2008a) (yes/no).

It is critical that the inquiry is not taken from the standpoint of the world as a problem to be solved. If so, then the coding is 'no'.

These decision rules are used to set the foundation for the detailed discussion, which is enriched with a discussion of the LCP against the criteria set by the four requirements for life story narration (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

A coding matrix (Table 4.1) graphically displays the coding findings according to whether the LCP adhered to the six AI principles: constructionist, simultaneity, poetic, anticipatory, narrative and positive.

**Table 4.1 AI matrix**

<b>Case</b>	<b>Constructionist Principle</b>	<b>Simultaneity</b>	<b>Poetic Principle</b>	<b>Anticipatory Principle</b>	<b>Narrative Principle</b>	<b>Positive Principle</b>	<b>Connectedness</b>	<b>Reflection</b>	<b>Meaning-making</b>	<b>Learning through others</b>
Appreciative coaching programme	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Whilst the LCP does not follow the specific methods of AI as outlined in the literature (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010; Watkins, Mohe & Kelly (2011) ), the programme does meet some of the criteria for all of the principles with the exception of the poetic principle, where the coaching programme most definitely creates space for self-reflection, but with room for improvement in transferring this into the daily lives of most of the group after the programme.

#### **4.5.1.1 Constructionist principle**

The first principle displayed in the LCP is the constructionist principle, shown through the use of co-creative dialogue, narrative and collaborative group work through discourse used collectively to create transformation and new metaphors for the leader participants (Gordon, 2008a).

The LCP meets the requirements for the constructionist principle, in that the programme uses co-creative collaboration and social interaction. Grounded in an appreciative approach, the LCP is at its foundation focused on the “best of” the individuals personal and professional life and it initiates and provides rich research data for the individual through narrative, biographical and memory work; group and peer reflection and the construction of a personal plan and vision.

The use of life stories, biographic work and the concept of peer reflection creates a collaborative space in which the coaching process can be guided, and in which the individuals are able to construct their personal plans.

The use of a collaborative process involving social interaction highlights the importance of the preparation and partnership of the facilitators, as well as the skill-building required for the peer reflectors.

A key component of the postmodern coaching programme is that the peer group is used as part of the reflective team, through the use of dyads and triads, small groups and plenary groups, and that training in listening and feedback skills is provided to prepare the participants for their reflective role – a skill which they require in their leadership roles, both in their personal and work roles. In addition, the peer groups are used to construct collective themes, provide feedback and take responsibility for the process, with little facilitation required.

The skill-building session on communication and listening skills is designed and deployed so that the quality of listening and reflection within the peer groups is meaningful. Many of the leader participants note in their reflective essays how important the skill of listening had become to them as a leadership tool. This is summed up in the following simple statement by one participant: “Group work taught me to listen”.



The facilitators meet regularly before, during and after the programme to align, prepare and then review and re-calibrate the process as it evolved.

The following note from Dr Vansteenkiste to the author (2012) also provides insight into the nature of facilitating a group in the context of social collaboration as opposed to individual coaching, as well as the open relationship and dialogue between the facilitators.

*“The above ‘less directive’ holds true for the smaller group facilitators, but it does not represent ... coaching the overall group dynamic. Actually the group is coached, and this is the quality guarantee for the integrity of the work. As a matter of fact, the channel and shape of the group’s interaction and energies is observed all the time. Also the coach input varies according to the response which emerges from the participants.*

*Though this too may appear ‘non directive’, this is where the overall process and the group energy is “coached” all along ‘from welcome to goodbye’, to help it evolve along a constructive path. You’d be amazed how much direction is put into that!*

*This supervision of the group dynamic is central to creating the ‘safe space’ for individuals to take active part.*

*What may appear to be ‘going lightly’ but is like ‘holding the reins on the horse’: an intensive tuning in, being alert to the tones and under-tones in participants’ communication, their behaviour and interaction and the chemistry of the group dynamic and of intervening when necessary.”*

#### **4.5.1.2 The principle of simultaneity**

The following principle, the principle of simultaneity, is evident in the LCP in that there are parallel and simultaneous processes of inquiry and transformation taking place for the group, as well as the leader participants, as a continuous process.

The process of simultaneous inquiry and then transformation is continuous. The flow and dynamic of the process includes multiple periods of sequential self-reflection, peer reflection and then a plenary group session. Through social interaction and learning the

skill of visioning, a convergence zone is created as the future begins to emerge, somewhere in the midst of both interpretative and analytical modes. The future vision begins with patterns of innovation and inquiry and it is reinforced through interaction.

The point of transformation cannot be identified at a particular point in the process because the 'aha moments' are unique for each individual participant, and It is important that the change process is integrated throughout the coaching process and not seen as a separate moment. One of the leader participants wrote: "The coaching process was unconscious and felt natural and not forced".

The following note from Dr Vansteenkiste (2012) to the author adds to the importance of working dynamically within the group coaching context.

*"Referring to what you describe as setting up the group as collective transformation agent – this working with the group is not just in the beginning, setting it up – it goes on until the closing 'mega' round of presentations (you would see the difference if the coach lets attention slip or waver...)"*

#### **4.5.1.3 The poetic principle**

The design of the LCP also reinforces the poetic principle to further enhance and hone the self-reflective competence of leader participants. Firstly, plenary teaching sessions on various key areas such as empowerment of personal and professional life, emotions as signposts for change and planning are presented as short controversial modules designed to debunk myths and help the leader participants to think more critically (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

Furthermore, the longitudinal design of the programme, with the break in between sessions and homework assignments to be completed during this time, establish and further reinforce the capability of the leader participants to hold sustainable and life-long self- and co-authoring habits (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

In reviewing criteria for the poetic principle, many of the leader participants are grateful for the opportunity to have time to spend on themselves and to hone their self-reflective

competence through the use of reflection on past, present and futures, and this was central to the design and transformative process of the programme.

However, the author is of the opinion that, while the evidence for creating endless reflection (which in turn creates growth and change) was clear during the execution of the LCP, it could be made more sustainable by creating opportunities for self-reflection on an on-going basis, until it becomes a life skill and habit.

The use of the poetic principle is further enhanced in the LCP through the use of rich multiple qualitative methods such as drawings and written exercises (Paulus, 2006), which are used as tangible artefacts that are a platform for observation by peer reflectors. This rich qualitative data also provides multiple points of reference and a richer sense of the data. It enables the process of making, telling and listening to stories; of creating and having dialogue around metaphors, images and self-narratives, enhancing the integration of cognitive, emotional and will components of the coaching process (Paulus, 2006), as well as opening up horizons beyond the rational, conscious levels of experience, into the unconscious dynamics which affect the leaders' perspectives (Kets de Vries, 2005; Peltier, 2010).

#### **4.5.1.4 The anticipatory principle**

The anticipatory principle is demonstrated in the execution of the LCP, because by using peer reflection and the mega-plenary sessions, it is able to “draw on the collective genius of shared thoughts, images, metaphors and visions of the future which inspire action” (Gordon, 2008a, p.114).

Positive images of the future are created for the leader participants, and these created futures are purposed to create and clarify life and work vision in such a powerful way that leaders felt that they “had been set free”. The use of discourse and group discussion and the sharing of personal visions provide energy within the process.

The outcome of using the anticipatory principle was that it meets the stated intention of AI: “liberating the human spirit and consciously constructing a better future” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3).

Furthermore, the anticipatory principle is deployed through the use of discourse and the generation of collective themes, as well as sharing personal visions as a form of energy within the coaching process.

A key component of the LCP is that the peer group is used as part of the reflective team through the use of dyads and triads, small groups and plenary groups, and that training in listening and feedback skills is provided to prepare the participants for their reflective role, a skill which they require in their leadership roles both in their personal and work lives.

In addition, the peer groups are used to construct collective themes, provide feedback and take responsibility for the process, with little facilitation required. For example, in one of the group feedback sessions, the larger group is split into breakaway groups for the purposes of listening, dialogue and social construction of themes. During this two-hour period, the coach is placed in the plenary room and is available to any of the groups if required. The only external involvement during this time is a light knock on the door of each room when half-time is reached. The availability of the facilitators during these breakaway sessions is sacrosanct to the process, regardless of whether or not the groups use the facilitators. Availability means being physically and emotionally present (no cell phone calls, no emails, no discussions) – just being there if required.

#### **4.5.1.5 The narrative principle**

The narrative principle refers to the inward process of discovering self; through articulating one's own story and life themes.

The LCP is described by Vansteenkiste (2011) as a “biographical stock taking” or personal research process. It is the author's view that through the narration of the life story, personal reality and created future of the leader, coupled with active and informed listening and interaction, the leader learns how to ‘hold their story’; contain their anxieties, create new meanings and quell the uncertainties associated with life and work, and empower themselves to ‘take up their leadership’.

The LCP uses the narrative principle through the use of listening, stories, autobiographies, a group context of witnessing and story re-authoring, which are the criteria necessary for the narrative principle to be in play.

The narrative approach is also evident in the use of the participating managers in the programme as active agents in the construction of knowledge and making sense of the reality or encounter (Mouton, 1990) through using them as peer reflectors, co-creators and co-researchers in the coaching process. By providing an opportunity for each person to share their story and discuss themes with peers, the individual is engaged in learning about themselves on a deeper level, while the others in the group are able to learn vicariously from the experience and model their own leadership coaching skills (Kets de Vries, 2005). Through the process of vicarious experiencing, the group becomes caught up in the journey and action plan of the individual, making commitment to transformation and behaviour change more likely and sustainable.

#### **4.5.1.6 The positive principle**

The positive principle is evident in the design and deployment of the LCP, because the central departure point of the programme is to discover the talents and strengths of each individual in the group. As stated by Vansteenkiste (2009), leader participants in the programme are not seen as a number, or even capital, as in the terms 'human resources' and 'human capital', but rather as unique individuals with rich and diverse emotional lives, histories and identities who are privileged to enjoy a brief moment to find their 'positive core' and then move forward, taking up their respective roles on a personal and professional level.

The design of the LCP is based on the assumption that the starting point is one of curiosity and inquiry, with the purpose of discovering one's talents. As stated by one of the leader participants, "My personal passions and talent are the departure point".

The positive principle is further reinforced during the LCP to generate positive images of the created future based upon the stories and 'golden moments' in the past of the participant leaders, and through building on leader strengths. The focus on drawing out

success in the past facilitates the discovery of strengths and talents and the development of unlimited dream outcomes and desires.

The positive principle in AI requires that the language of all discourses is positively framed, and this is set up in the ground rules of the LCP, which are respect for self and others, curiosity and inquiry, inclusiveness and confidentiality (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2009) and in the focus on drawing out success in the past, discovery of strengths and talents, and unlimited dream outcomes and desires. Assuming that patterns of behaviour are dynamic in relation to relationships, and then changing our language and our discourses and asking the right question, has the power to profoundly affect and alter our reality. The postmodern coach will be concerned with the quality of his/her questions in terms of whether they are being helpful in generating positive conversations that strengthen bonds and connections (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

In conclusion, it was established that the LCP specifically draws on certain AI principles in its design but not in its specific methodology, with the exception of the poetic principle, where the coaching programme most definitely creates space for self-reflection, but with room for improvement in the transferring this into the daily lives of most of the group after the programme.

#### **4.5.2 Principles of life story narration**

As additional background for measuring the postmodern approach used in the LCP, the following five principles of life story narration (McMahon & Watson, 2008) were also coded up against the LCP – connectedness (individuals with their stories, others with other's stories and connection with one another); reflection (facilitator and participants demonstrate a respectful, curious, tentative and non-expert approach); meaning-making (instead of thin narratives, the use of alternative stories, space for rich narratives); learning through others (evidence of co-construction of stories of ability, hope, strength, competence and encouragement).

#### **4.5.2.1. Connectedness**

The LCP is deemed to demonstrate connectedness between individuals with their stories, as well as connecting individuals with others with each other's stories. This is achieved through the reflective sessions where individuals write and draw their life-line and then share their autobiographical stories within the peer group. It is believed that transformative development occurs as a result of the power of the shared emotional experience of telling life stories, receiving feedback and support and hope shared with other group members.

#### **4.5.2.2. Reflection**

The second principle of life story narration is reflection, and it is argued that this is demonstrated in the execution of the LCP programme, which is conducted according to a set of ground rules and principles that demonstrated a respectful, curious, tentative and non-expert approach.

The design of the LCP session further enhances the self-reflective competence of leader participants. Plenary teaching sessions on various key areas such as empowerment of personal and professional life, emotions as signposts for change and planning are presented as short controversial modules designed to debunk myths and help the leader participants to think more critically (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2009).

Furthermore, the longitudinal design of the programme, with the break in between sessions and homework assignments to be completed during this time, establish and further reinforce the capability of the leader participants to hold sustainable and life-long self- and co-authoring habits (Vansteenkiste, 2009).

#### **4.5.2.3. Meaning-making**

The third principle of life story narration is meaning-making, and this is built into the LCP as a planned outcome by allowing for space for rich stories, time for deep reflection and

the use of multiple scenarios and stories in the visioning/dreaming phase. The use of multiple methods for creating meaning includes reflective writing and drawing, peer group reflection, plenary mega-events and discussions and homework assignments.

Another key component of the LCP is that the peer group is used as part of the reflective team through the use of dyads and triads, small groups and plenary groups, and that training in listening and feedback skills is provided to prepare the participants for their reflective role. This is a skill that they require in their leadership roles both in their personal and work lives.

In addition, the peer groups are used to construct collective themes, provide feedback and take responsibility for the process, with little facilitator involvement. It is the very act of listening to another's story with a positive inquiring attitude that creates a learning experience and helps build leadership skills such as empathic listening, with the proviso that trust must be evident and implicit in the interaction (Kets de Vries, 2005).

#### **4.5.2.4. Learning through others**

The fourth and final principle related to life story narration is the principle of learning through others. This is part of the LCP design because, through listening and reflecting on life stories, the participants are able to co-construct their stories of ability, find hope, strength, and competence and encourage one another.

By using the group as peer reflectors, co-creators and co-researchers in the coaching process, the opportunity is provided through the story-telling for individuals to engage in learning about themselves on a deeper level, while the others in the group are able to learn vicariously from the experience and model their own leadership coaching skills, as well as becoming caught up in the journey and action plan of the individual, making commitment to transformation and behaviour change more likely and sustainable (Kets de Vries, 2005).

In conclusion, postmodern principles are foundational to the design of the whole programme, but are explicit and most evident in the personal future planning component of the programme, using inquiry, appreciative conversations, a positive focus,



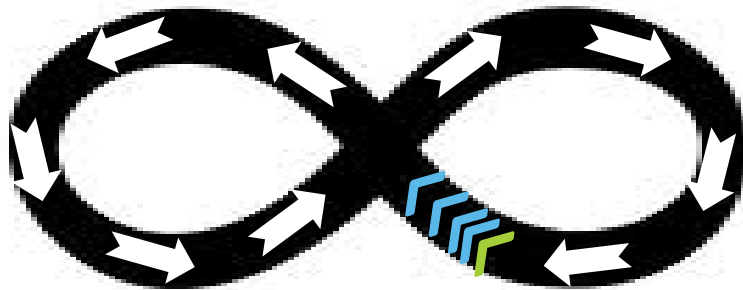
unconditional affirmation, stories, metaphors and themes, and building self-reflective competence and shared images of the future and innovation (Gordon, 2008a) to heighten the positive potential in the coaching process (Cooperrider et al., 2008) to the mutual benefit of all participant leaders (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Davis, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

#### **4.6. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND COMPONENTS**

The ideal length of the LCP (Vansteenkiste, 2008), from the first workshop until the second workshop, is roughly a four-month period, to allow for the generation of a sustainable self-reflective competence that is embedded as a habit amongst leader participants. The LCP has four face-to-face days, spaced in coaching workshops of two days each with a three to five month interval between each workshop, with individual homework, reflection and journaling being key components of the learning process in between the two face-to-face sessions.

The narrative nature of the LCP requires that an unstructured process is followed. However, the reality of working within any time frame requires that some structure is provided, and therefore, while there is a basic overall structure, the LCP is not designed according to a minute-by-minute structured (workshop) programme. It is designed as a process that holds the middle ground between allowing sufficient free space, as required by a narrative approach, and working with the reality of the time frame and inclusion of each of the multiple participants. Time margins are built into the design in order to create ample space for the unexpected to take place, for discussion and reflection. A more accurate description of the process is that it is a guided narrative technique (Vansteenkiste, 2009).

The structure of the LCP is graphically demonstrated in Figure 4.1, an adaption of the infinity symbol.



Where future is  
born

**Figure 4.1 The LCP Structure (adapted from Vansteenkiste, 2010)**

The coaching process is designed to move through three stages: firstly, the 'here-and-now' experience represented by the question mark; secondly, the 'there-and-then' experience represented by the circle and arrows on the left; and thirdly, the future scenarios and possibilities represented by the circle and arrows on the right. The journey for the leader participant always ends back in the 'here and now' in terms of bringing the dreams of the leader participant back to a practical and sustainable plan for going forward (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

The operationalisation of the LCP uses a guided facilitation approach, through a combination of consultation and peer reflection (Silverstein, 2007; Underhill et al., 2007).

The LCP uses the following three-stage structure, outlined in the ensuing sections of this chapter (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2009; Vansteenkiste, 2011). The three stages are depicted in more detail the following table (Table 4.2):

**Table 4.2 Three Stages of the LCP**

Stage 1 – Here and Now	Ground Rules
	Preparing for Peer Reflection
	Current Professional and Personal Perspectives
	Peer Reflection and Dialogue
Stage 2 – There and Then	Biographical Coaching
	Talent Research
	Peer Reflection and Dialogue
Stage 3 – Personal Created Future	Dreaming
	Destiny Planning

It is important to note that Stage 1 is primarily constructed to meet the coaching client 'where they are at', to set up a trust relationship, as well as a comprehensive context for the client using the biographic approach, before spending the majority of the programme on Stages 2 and 3, where the clients explore the positive and create their own future possibilities using AI principles as part of the postmodern approach.

#### **4.7 STAGE 1– HERE AND NOW**

The processes in Stage 1 are setting ground rules, preparing for peer reflection, developing, and then sharing, current personal and professional perspectives.

Stage 1 of the LCP sets up the group as a collective force for transformation through preparing them for the process of dialogue as professional peer reflectors, and then providing an opportunity for each individual to provide a 'here and now' description, their 'psychological present', which illustrates the forces operating in each leader participant's

life space at a point in time. This creates a stage to explore and discover the psychological past and psychological future in relation to the present.

#### **4.7.1. Ground rules**

The introduction of the programme includes sharing the aims and objectives for each leader participant and then establishing a set of ground rules for the programme. At this stage, the only tentative ground rules provided by the facilitator are respect for self and others, curiosity and being in research mode: ensuring inclusiveness and confidentiality. These ground rules are entrenched through an experiential activity, and individual introductions are conducted with the use of an artefact exercise.

#### **4.7.2 Preparing for peer reflection**

Being group-based, this coaching programme rests on the quality of peer reflection and significant attention and time is provided for 'teaching' and practising professional listening skills. Listening and reflective skills are not only important for use in the coaching programme, but in the current era, communication-with-understanding provides unprecedented opportunities for the leader, and in the professional environment it is important for the leader participant to be aware of what he/she really wants to say, and even more aware of what they are hearing (Vansteenkiste, 2009).

Trust is rare and difficult to achieve in groups operating in a competitive environment, and requires a willingness to look beyond self-interest (Kets de Vries, 2005). The group members are required to hold and display "openness, honesty, active listening, communication, consistency, competence, fairness, and mutual respect" (Kets de Vries, 2005) in order for trust to exist.

A discussion on the definition of listening is followed by input in terms of the power of listening as well as the levels of listening using the power of the ears, eyes and mind (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

Listening on three levels of communication is introduced as a framework for professional communication, and the three levels are a) the cognitive level, referring to thought, facts and word content, and the 'train of thought'; b) at the emotional level,

referring to the discernment of the verbal and non-verbal expression (intonation, expression, body language) of feelings, emotions and moods in the speaker; and c) at the will level, referring to listening for the will and intent expressed by the speaker and in trying to sense the energy and direction of the speaker, indicative of the motivation to decide or do something (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

Four experiential group-based reflection exercises are conducted in which leader participants advance through increasingly complex levels of listening skills. In the first exercise, leader participants have a number of opportunities to practice listening for each level, with a complete focus on the speaker holding back their own (pre)judgement and approach to the content and the person, so that they are able to 'forget about themselves' while listening. In the group-based plenary sessions, leader participants are able to "mirror" back what they heard at each level, whilst the speaker is given time and space to reflect. Individual differences in observation are discussed and compared (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

The second exercise, listening on split levels, provides an opportunity to practice listening to the speaker whilst also being 'separately aware' of the self and observing what reaction the speaker is having to the listener in terms of thoughts, emotions and intentions. Leader participants practice using an inquiry method that is non-judgemental in that any questions that are asked for insight are asked without any assumptions made from a position of ignorance, keeping the following key principles of curiosity, concern and unconditional positive regard at the forefront (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

In the third exercise, mirroring is used as a vehicle for transformation by exploring with the speaker how they are influenced to take action or ownership of the problem through the reflective process. This level of listening requires that the leader participant is able to link their empathic listening skills to the skills of giving good feedback, a crucial skill for professional leaders. By tuning into another person, the foundation is set for providing professional feedback, and leader participants have the opportunity to present feedback in a way that it can be understood by the speaker (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

Finally, the peer reflective group pools their collective feedback for the purpose of creative solutions.

Sufficient time of five to eight hours is provided for these four listening exercises, which reinforces the behaviour for the rest of the group-based coaching process.

Leaders observe and share their own capacity and challenges with active and observant listening through answering the following self-awareness questions: - Can you remember what the speaker said and how? Could you repeat it? What level of listening comes easiest to you? Can you forget about yourself: suspend your own thinking, feeling and intentions while listening? Do you switch off when you are listening to something you don't like what is being said? (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

The Chinese symbol for listening (see figure 4.2) is used to elucidate the importance of listening with undivided attention and using all the senses to ensure that the content as well as the underlying messages and intent of the message are heard and reflected back accurately.



**Figure 4.2 Chinese symbol for listening**

### 4.7.3 Current professional and personal perspectives

The next step in Stage 1 requires intense and focused individual work by each leader participant in order to set up the first coaching frame – the goal frame (Binkert et al., 2007). In this exercise, each leader participant develops an essay and drawing of their current perspectives of their own professional and personal life framed in an open-ended question – ‘How do you currently experience work and life right now?’ In the written exercise, leader participants are given space and time to *“write a few paragraphs or pages in response to this question in the journal provided”* and in the drawing exercise are given time and space to *“draw a picture in response to this question using the blank posters and drawing material provided”*.

The writing and drawing exercises are fairly intense, requiring high levels of personal inward reflection and concentration, and in order to create renewed external energy in the room, it is set up with work tables around the room on which blank posters and writing materials are made available. This encourages the participants to stand up, collect the material and then return to their table for their drawing exercise; in other words, to actively engage.

Dr Vansteenkiste (Vansteenkiste, 2011) describes this stage of the coaching process as “biographical stock-taking” (Figure 4.3) of the big questions of life, an activity that few of us do, but upon reflection, is always seen as critical. These big questions are: “Who am I? How do I compare to others? ; What kind of skills do I have? What are my talents? Have I got what it takes to find and hold my territory in my world at work and in life?” (Vansteenkiste, 2011).



**Figure 4.3 Biographical stock-taking (vanSteenkiste, 2011)**

#### 4.7.4 Peer reflection and dialogue

The final step in Stage 1 makes use of peer reflection and dialogue as the cornerstone for simultaneous discovery and transformation for the leader participants. Using small groups of no more than five members, each leader participant is asked:

*“How do you currently experience work and life right now? Please use your writing exercise and drawing to share with the group. You are welcome to participate actively in the group as you feel is appropriate. The group may choose to go in turns around the room, one at a time, or you may choose people to speak in a random fashion. The only request we have is that you listen when someone is speaking and you show respect to the person’s story. Please take some time to collaborate after all stories have been heard to discuss themes that were relevant to your group and be ready to present these on your return to the plenary session. You have two hours.”*

It is the author’s experience that these small group discussions are more fruitful if they are peer facilitated, but in certain situations it may be decided to provide a competent facilitator if the peer reflective competence of the groups is deemed to pose any potential limitations.

It follows that the facilitators of the small group discussions should be competent, and the criteria for this are that they should be comfortable in unstructured, ambiguous group situations with experience in facilitation, career counselling/life coaching, AI , and preferably with grounding in a social constructionist approach. They will be required to write up process notes of their impressions of the session, with particular reference to the participants, flow, limitations, major discourses and themes, major problems and challenges experienced by the group.

However, it must be stressed again that the provision of a facilitator may be counter-productive to the positive transformational dynamic of the peer reflected group, because it disempowers the group from finding their inherent collective intelligence and creativity.

Furthermore, the presentation of group themes during the plenary session serves to provide the larger group with clarity on the various differences and similarities to their



own smaller group themes, and starts to reveal personal and professional perspectives and constructions.

## **4.8 STAGE 2 – THERE AND THEN**

Stage 2 of the LCP has three main outcomes – articulation and interpretation of personal stories, the discovery of unique talents and the creation of definitions of personal success as the launch pad to the creation of positive futures (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

### **4.8.1 Biographical charting**

This stage begins with a discussion and guided facilitation to clarify a group understanding of the concept of development and success in life and work. This is followed by individual work, in which each leader participant draws their own personal and professional biographical chart using time and perception of experience as the two axes. These provide the opportunity for a visual and strategic view of the leader's own chronological development timelines, transitions, decisions and challenges. Personal reflection points are provided to assist the leader participant to reflect on their chart.

The biographical charting stage is described as taking a 'helicopter view' so that one is able to improve self-knowledge and observe life and career as a landscape – a practice that busy managers rarely make time for that often elicits surprise from leader participants as they "tap into their intuitive vision of where they want to be headed" (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

The charts are narrated during dyad group sessions with presentation and feedback by peers using their reflective skills for the purpose of collective understanding and empathy and for the clarification of life story blueprints and recurring themes.

Having a positive praxis is not exclusive, and most certainly does not mean that negative, critical or marginal voices are left out when presenting the autobiographical section. Leader participants come into the coaching process with a past and certain patterns of being that may make it difficult for them to move on from 'dark moments' in their lives, and the appreciative coach needs to be comfortable allowing the coaching

client to acknowledge their internal voices and past experiences that are not positive (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gordon, 2008a; Grant and Humphries, 2006; van der Haar and Hosking, 2004). Trying to ignore or reject them only gives them greater focus and 'being with' the coaching client and being mindful of their emotions without judgement are crucial skills required by the AI coach (Binkert et al., 2007).

#### **4.8.2 Talent research**

It is at this point that the process shifts pro-actively into the Discovery stage of AI, within the second frame, the exceptions or inclusions frame (Binkert et al., 2007; Walter & Peller, 1992), which invokes the 'positive core' by asking for examples from the past and present that echo some of the talents that point the leader participant towards a desired future state.

The second step of Stage 2 enables in-depth talent research through memory work that guides the individuals through unconscious thoughts and memories and the development of individual 'golden moments', making use of the AI tool of unconditional positive questions (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3) by asking participants to "remember and describe high points or peak experiences in your life or work up to now".

Talents relate to the natural power experienced when the leader participant feels 'in flow' and completely in their element under circumstances that allow him/her to express their power best. Being able to articulate one's own talent and to spot the talent of others is a key personal and professional life skill and outcome of the coaching programme. The most unanswered and unexplored aspect of the journey to authentic leadership and the entire identity of self are shifted at the moment when the leader participants find their power (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

Leader participants are then given the opportunity to develop a self-portrait, using a qualitative questionnaire (vanSteenkiste, 2008) as a tool to do so, in which the leader participants describe themselves in detail and in context, challenging the leader participant to be open, realistic and balanced in describing their knowledge, skills, personality, leadership skills, talents, landscape (country, political, social, and economic) and family context. The self-portrait pays attention to both sides of the self.

This moves the process out of pure appreciation to one of polarity management, of facing the paradoxes of being human and to both celebrate the great and acknowledge that which is not helpful. The questions are set out as follows:

- **My world of knowledge:** What do I know? What don't I know at all? What interests me? What does not interest me at all?
- **My world of skills:** What are my strengths? What are skills still beyond me?
- **Who am I?:** Trump cards of my personality? Shadow sides and weak points? Leadership assets? Leadership shortcomings? What is my greatest talent? My personal pitfall?
- **My landscape:** What is the place in the world where I am today? (country, city, work environment, home environment, my type of household, family or single...). What do I like about my country, my culture? What do I not like at all? Is there a tradition that I am proud of that I wish to pass onto the next generation? Is there a tradition of which I am ashamed or that I condemn and wish to protect the next generation from?
- **My life themes:** What are the life themes that prevail in my life? What are the recurrent patterns or obstacles in my life? If I were to sum up myself in an image, what would that image look like?

The final question in the self-portrait end with the generation of an image or metaphor which is shared at a later stage in an appreciative peer group session.

The data emerging from the talent research section in Stage 2 is documented in journal form by each leader participant, with guided questions to ensure that all thoughts and discoveries are documented in detail in order to track and describe the leader participant 'at their best'. Talent is viewed as potential for greater achievement in life – for development, growth, expansion, transformation through following passion and purpose and a gift to self and the world (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

A demonstration by the facilitator is used to provide an example of how to give feedback and how to look for characteristics that repeat themselves; how to stay within the

speaker's phenomenological experience, to look for clues and to highlight strong characteristics and positive 'golden moments' (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

### **4.8.3 Peer Reflection and Dialogue**

Group work is used to further illuminate and draw out these strengths through listening and feedback to each individual in small group settings. The principles of AI coaching (Binkert et al., 2007) is deployed in these group sessions, whereby the leader participants describe, reflect on and identify similarities across several positive experiences ('golden moments'). A critical premise used in this group work is the use of unconditional affirmation, which is necessary to ignite the positive potential of each individual (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

All of these exercises, the memory work, connecting with 'golden moments' and social construction of strengths in a group, serve to provide an opportunity for both connecting with the client's 'positive core' and to identify the 'best of what is' in the leader participant through a process of appreciating his/her memory of their past, present and future capacity, as well as to translate this into a future imagined vision that is articulated (Binkert et al., 2007; Vansteenkiste, 2011) and which draws the leader participant towards curiosity about a different and better created future and inspired life. The leader participants are encouraged to connect with the power expressed in their talent research to be used as positive sources of energy (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

### **4.8.4 Homework**

At this point, the first study school of the coaching workshop is brought to an end and homework journal assignments are set to enable the continued journey towards a rich understanding and appreciation of the leaders' personal and professional strengths. These assignments are spaced across the time between sessions (Vansteenkiste, 2008). The first assignment is to interpret and document notes and discoveries from the coaching workshop and to finalise the self-portrait questionnaire. The second assignment is the creation of a collage which uses images to portray and present the leader based on visual memories and images stirred up during the workshop.

The third assignment, “good day/bad day”, is a diary activity in which the leader participant researches and describes the number of good and bad days over a defined period and describes an average day for them. This is followed by an observation exercise in which the leader participant keeps a time log of all their activities, undertaken over four random days. The leader participant needs to describe and document the detailed time taken for every activity and then observe and compare differences between the four days.

The fourth assignment is the ‘energy’ exercise. Again, using a daily diary reflection, the leader participant observes and notes all activity on an energy balance sheet over a defined period.

In the fifth and final assignment, leader participants complete a weekly positive reflection (20 minutes) in which they note all the achievements for the week, as well as remember and appreciate positive things that occurred.

In summary, with respect to this stage, “as people throughout a system connect in serious study into qualities, examples, and analysis of the positive core – each appreciating and everyone being appreciated – hope grows and community expands” (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

#### **4.9 STAGE 3 – PERSONAL CREATED FUTURE**

The final stage in the LCP is aimed at enabling the creation of a compelling personal created future, with significant possibilities attached to its meaning for each leader participant. Furthermore, there are choices and consequences associated with creating a compelling vision, which is then put into action by identifying opportunities that will help to move the individual into the future. This is clarified through the development of a set of planned steps in which the individual starts the journey to transformation. Stage 3 is made up of a dreaming and a planning component.

### 4.9.1 Dreaming

The dream phase relates closely to the Dream stage in AI by providing a process that opens up the possibilities for 'what might be' and that creates a clear results-oriented vision in relation to discovered potential and to questions of higher purpose (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

This process begins with a facilitated discussion in a plenary group regarding the theory and use of feelings as signposts for managing change and enabling the participants to use their 'inner ear' to guide them in the direction and purpose that gives them more energy (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

Leader participants then have individual time to research possible scenarios for their future, which are born in Stage 2 through social interaction and listening and in the search for talents and strengths. The AI approach uses a visioning methodology, in that the images of the created future are birthed within the positive past of the human system (Cooperrider et al., 2008) and this is mirrored in the LCP methodology (Vansteenkiste, 2011). In the LCP, it is the positive stories that help us to link the reality for leader participants with their possible future in order to create a generative metaphor for circumventing common resistances to change (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Tools that assist the leader participant and the peer reflectors to describe their created future are used, and these include: putting the client in the future where they have their heart's desire (without any limitations); using words, phrases or pictures that express this; and naming created futures, visions and years with themes (Binkert et al., 2007; Vansteenkiste, 2008).

The leader participants are also encouraged to be mindful and open to the opportunities and insights that will emerge unexpectedly as they work in this phase (Binkert et al., 2007; Vansteenkiste, 2008).

Each leader participant learns how to vision by creating three future scenarios set out over a long-term view of 10 years. Participants are asked to write about the first scenario

that would reflect their professional and personal lives if they changed nothing significant but continued on the current trajectory. The second scenario would reflect their perception of their lives if they made a few small but meaningful changes in the short to medium term, and the third and final scenario reflects their lives if there were no boundaries (financial, geographical, social, political, relational etc.). This is the unconstrained ultimate dream for that individual with no limitations (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

In creating these three scenarios, the leader participants are firstly invited to think outside of current norms and question their underlying assumptions; to step outside of what they see how and to ask “what would the system look like if we changed it to provide every possibility for us to reach our dreams?” (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Secondly, the principle of anticipatory learning is leveraged as a transformational tool in this phase by using positive images of the future as compelling the leader participants toward putting them into action (Davis, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Thirdly, the hypothetical solution frame in AI theory is deployed in this phase by facilitating the creation of a positive future state through imaging and visualising (Walter & Peller, 1992) their created futures.

Leader participants then narrate these scenarios in groups, using social interaction to help make sense of them and appreciating them for their possibilities (Vansteenkiste, 2008). The social interaction facilitates a convergence zone, and as each scenario is related, the future begins to emerge and is reinforced until the participants start to have clarity about the future dream.

Quiet introspection time is provided after the group sessions, with a plenary relaxation and visioning exercise. The visioning exercise relates to the unconstrained dream and enables the leader participant to ‘go there again in their mind’ and connect with the possibilities it creates both cognitively and emotionally (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2009).

The dream phase is concluded and made tangible for the leader participants through a diary entry of “My Created Future” as well as a drawing exercise of “My Created Future” (Figure 4.4). (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2011).

This is shared within the group, and feedback is given to bring others’ views into the room and to create pathways of constructive futures (Binkert et al., 2007; Walter & Peller, 1992) that are based on positive solutions that facilitate change in the right direction. In many cases, it is before or during the group session that a generative metaphor (Lakse, 1999; Monteagudo, 2011), either a theme for the drawing or a picture, is created.



**Figure 4.4 Created future example**

#### **4.9.2 Destiny planning**

The attention now turns to the creation of an ideal design or plan as part of the Destiny phase of the AI cycle. According to Cooperrider et al., (2008), “When inspired by a great dream we have yet to find an organisation that did not feel compelled to design something very new and very necessary”. The aim of this phase is the strengthening of the affirmative capability and sustainability of the leader participant, enabling them to build hope around the deep purpose and to create processes that will allow them to reinforce this, initiate transformation and adapt and adjust as time goes by (Cooperrider et al., 2008).



This phase is aimed at answering the question of what the ideal is and how it can be constructed. The LCP begins with a plenary facilitated session on planning principles (Vansteenkiste, 2011). This is followed by an individual drawing exercise, where the leader participant draws an interconnecting drawing that creates the journey and transition between the first drawing, “My Current Reality” and the future drawing, “My Created Future”. The appreciative path is used in this phase as a tool that allows freedom for the leader participant to make choices about which path to go down as they emerge (Binkert et al., 2007).

Using metaphors and the interconnecting drawings of a journey with multiple paths is a helpful tool to bring this to life for the coaching client (Paulus, 2006; Vansteenkiste, 2008).

Taking the first step in a long journey is always the most important, and the leader participants then do individual work in setting up a plan of ‘how it can be’ for the next twelve months, which cuts across both their professional and personal goals and priorities and is made up of broad monthly goals. In thinking about plans, the leader participants create possibility propositions in order to reach their ideal future by leveraging their positive core and insights (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

The Destiny stage never assumes linear results, and whilst this stage produces action plans and implementation strategies for each leader participant, it always allows space for the unexpected and for breakthroughs which are as a result of the empowerment of the leader participants (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

This phase is most powerful when it has network-like support structures available after the LCP and where there is a convergence zone for people to come together for connection, cooperation and more co-creation, such as a community of practice (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The LCP builds this in through a plenary ‘mega’ session, in which each leader participant is given the opportunity to present their created future and plans and to be appreciated. During this session, each personal breakthrough and each vision and plan is celebrated and a public commitment is made to their future.

Sustaining the change after the inquiry and the programme is built into the fundamental design of the LCP model. The process of transformation, re-evaluation of current reality and creating futures is not static.

Leader participants are encouraged to revisit their plans daily and monthly and to revisit their current reality at least every six months in the following few years, preferably with a coaching buddy or with one of the facilitator coaches. This will help to help create an environment of habitual encouragement and innovation for action and to continue to remind them of their dreams and celebrate and savour their successes (Binkert et al., 2007). With the development of social media, this is a definite area for further investigation and leverage.

#### **4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an overview of the components and design principles of the LCP as they are grounded in a postmodern approach, and provided details on how the LCP utilises AI principles in its design. The aims of the LCP were outlined, followed by the programme phases and structure and a detailed account of the logic of each phase and stage of the journey to personal and professional transformation.

## CHAPTER 5

### EMPIRICAL STUDY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the core components and design of the empirical study, beginning with a description of the participants involved in the research project and a discussion of the measuring instruments, followed by the data collection procedures and administration of the data.

The various sources of data are identified and described, and an overview is provided of the process used to analyse the various data sets systematically and then to analyse them as one whole set. The coding analysis procedure is described in detail by giving an overview of the steps, rules and procedures used. Finally, the thematic analysis procedure is described, including the steps used to make sense of the data against the background of the research objectives.

#### 5.2 PARTICIPANTS

It is acknowledged that, due to the qualitative nature of the research design, the outcomes may be complex and ambiguous, and it is important that the various layers of information are not lost by trying to minimise or contain the qualitative process to a few variables that can be manipulated. To this end, the research findings take into account the diverse social and cultural context of the participants, which has an impact on the outcomes as well as the coaching that occurs at various levels throughout the process. These role-players will now be discussed in more detail.

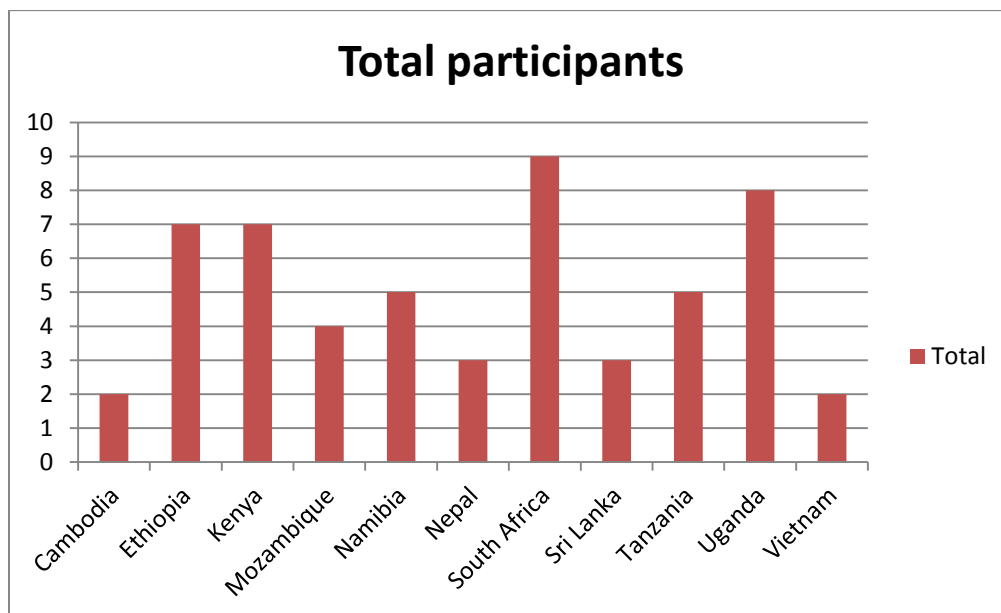
##### 5.2.1 Client organisation

This study was conducted within a large multinational organisation in the food and beverage industry, an organisation that is directed at the production, sales and distribution of beverages. This organisation works primarily in the emerging markets in Africa and Asia, across eleven countries. The context of this study therefore took place within a rich multi-cultural and global context.

### 5.2.2 Leader participants

The leader participants in the coaching programme were all chosen through the succession planning process of the organisation, in which stringent criteria and processes are deployed to nominate suitable candidates. The criteria include: having the requisite potential and performance to advance one or two hierarchical levels in the following five-year period (based on ability, aspirations and levels of engagement and commitment); having a graduate qualification and at least two years' service in the organisation; and a current role and experience at a junior manager level – candidates for whom accelerated career development is a priority.

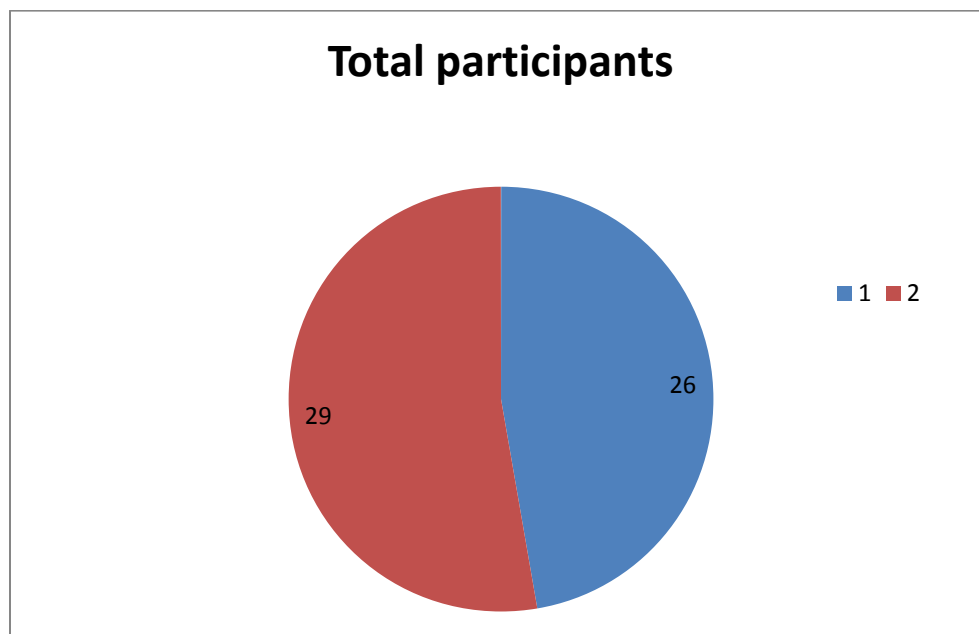
This list of employees is referred to as the Management Talent Development Programme (MTDP) delegates, and a convenience sampling technique, which means that all participants who attended the programme were used in the research (Marshall, 1999). All nominations enrolled over a two-year period into the population chosen for the study. The choice of participants for the pilot study used the same convenience sampling technique. The biographical details of the number and nationality spread of participants for both years is presented in Figure 5.1:



**Figure 5.1 Number and nationality spread of participants**

The spread of participants per country was reasonably matched, with the exception of South Africa and Uganda, who had a greater representation of participants. This is possibly a function of convenience, because the organisation headquarters are based in South Africa, as it is more cost-effective and easier to send internal candidates in larger numbers. The Ugandan participant numbers are normally larger than all other nationalities, and this is function of the strong culture of learning in that business environment.

Figure 5.2 provides an overview of the total number of participants (n =55) spread across the two years of study (this excludes the pilot group).



**Figure 5.2 Total participants across years 1 and 2 (n=55)**

The leader participants on the programme were active agents in the construction of knowledge, making sense of the reality (McMahon & Watson, 2008) as peer reflectors at various levels and layers (Schmidt, 2002; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004).

They were also co-researchers through the use of multiple qualitative methods (drawings and written exercises), which are used as concrete situations to set up an observational base and used with the reflective team during the coaching process (Schmidt, 2002). The multiple points of reference allowed the researcher to have a richer sense of the data, in contrast to a purely quantitative method.

### **5.2.3 Primary facilitators**

The primary facilitators on the programme were the lead facilitator and co-facilitator (the author). The primary researcher, who is registered as psychologist in the industrial category, is also Talent and Learning Manager for the organisation.

The role of the facilitators was to coach both the group and the individual leader participants by observing, channelling and shaping the groups' interaction and energies through the process and adapting the process where necessary, as it varies according to the responses emerging from the participants (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

Whilst this appears, on the surface to be non-directive, the coaching is intensively attuned to the group energy 'from welcome to goodbye' in order to evolve along a constructive path, and this requires an enormous amount of direction and supervision. Maintaining the group dynamic was central to creating a 'safe space' for individuals to take an active part in the coaching process (Vansteenkiste, 2009).

### **5.2.4 Co-facilitators**

The use of co-facilitators was tested in terms of relevance for the coaching process as part of the pilot study.

The participants were divided into small discussion groups of six people, clustered according to country/region of origin to allow for language barriers and easier, more open discussion. This added to the cost of the programme in that external, more experienced facilitators were contracted in to facilitate the group discussions. This seemed to be a more preferable option from an ethical point of view, allowing for cultural fluency and matching.

The co-facilitators noted some difficulties in eliciting robust conversations in their groups, and this was a puzzle for the facilitators. However, in the subsequent coaching sessions, due to a change in the demographics, heterogeneous groups (not based on national culture) were selected and no facilitators were used for these group discussions, rather making use of peer reflection. There were no observable problems in making this change, in fact, a tangible energy and dynamism was created and observation feedback from the groups was astonishment at the commonalities experienced across cultures.

### **5.2.5 Data coders**

The data coding process was conducted by the author and two independent coders who had not been involved or invested in the coaching programme in any way but who were well versed in psychological transformation and positive psychology constructs through their training as intern industrial and organisational psychologists with both having over five years assessment and organisational development experience.

### **5.3 PILOT**

A pilot study was conducted with the group from the previous year's intake. This pilot was used to marry the research process with the actual LCP process and to ensure that the research procedures of data collection would not interfere with the integrity of the coaching process, as well as to iron out any possible glitches and problems with data collection.

Furthermore, the pilot study was conducted to test the mechanics of the data collection process, both before during and after the programme. Facilitators were briefed and used to facilitate the small group discussions during the pilot. It follows that the facilitators of the small group discussions had to be competent and the criteria for this is that they had to be comfortable in unstructured, ambiguous group situations with experience in facilitation, AI, career counselling/life coaching, preferably with a grounding in a social constructionist approach. They were required to write up process notes of their impressions of the session, with particular reference to the participants,

flow, limitations, major discourses and themes, major problems and challenges experienced by the group.

The key learnings from the pilot were that the use of peer reflectors, who had been skilled up in listening, worked well as a methodology and did not impact negatively on the coaching process. Secondly, it was deemed unnecessary and disruptive to have independent facilitators for the small group peer reflector groups, and it was decided to let each group be the coach. Thirdly, the use of the small group and then plenary group sessions for feedback, sharing of stories and celebration, provided a powerful and energising force for transformation, and this was embraced as a key methodology going forward. Fourthly, it was found to be disempowering to split groups according to their geographical location, and it was decided to use a multi-culturally diverse group for small group sessions.

The time set aside at the beginning of the LCP to teach reflective listening skills was considered to be a 'game changer' for both the participants and coach, both for use during the programme but also as a life skill. This session on listening skills was retained. With regards to coaching a large group of over 25 participants, it was found that the optimal number of coaches was one coach for every 15 participants. A large component of the coaching involves not only coaching individuals, but the group as a whole, and the quality and skills of the coach require maturity, experience in group dynamics and facilitation, as well as a spirit of openness for the process to unfold.

## **5.4 MEASUREMENT**

### **5.4.1 Measuring transformative learning**

Meta-analyses of research (Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2008) indicate that the concept of transformative learning can be studied pragmatically, in a primarily qualitative manner. Studies of transformative learning are predominantly found in the field of education, and are now emerging more recently in organisational settings (Backstrom et al., 2011; Fisher-Yoshida, 2011; Johannson & Knight-McKenna, 2011; Precey, 2011). In general,



the research questions relate to asking a question such as: 'What changes did learners experience as a result of... process?' (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001).

The principles of transformative learning research, specifically studies based on the measurement of transformative effects, were taken into consideration when choosing the measuring instruments for this study. These principles and how they have been applied in this empirical study are outlined as follows:

- Studies of the measurement of transformative effects suggest the use of at least two scores – outcome and process, as well as a qualitative investigation of context (Laske, 1999). This particular research study used a qualitative design, and included both outcome and process measurements of transformation.
- Transformation can be articulated by the individual experiencing it (Lakse, 1999; Snyder, 2008). In this study, the perspectives of leader participants were used as the core data for the analysis.
- The discourse is an important enabler of the transformative process (Berger, 2004; Brown, 2005; Kitchenham, 2006; Stansberry & Kynes, 2007; Whitelaw et al., 2004). This research used peer reflection and narrative storytelling as a catalyst for transformation during the coaching process.
- Transformation is documentable in a qualitatively persuasive and deep manner through the use of field observations (Lakse, 1999; Snyder, 2008). The research methodology was conducted 'in the field' before, during and after the coaching inquiry, using coaching notes and participant essays and drawings.
- Interviewing is the most common form of data collection, followed by questionnaires, self-report data and journaling (Snyder, 2008). This study made use of self-report essays.
- The use of longitudinal design elements (longer than three to four months) or the use of some follow-up mechanism is recommended (Lakse, 1999; Snyder, 2008). This study made use of a longitudinal design, with a break of at least three months after the coaching process before requesting feedback.

- Transformative learning requires a skilled researcher to convincingly describe the participants' experience (Lakse, 1999). Participants were asked to describe their experiences, and skilled and highly qualified coders and researchers were used in this study to analyse the data.
- Improving adult learning and transformation improves communities and societies and is a worthwhile endeavour (Lakse, 1999). The aim of this study was to positively transform the professional and personal life perspectives of the coaching participants.
- Most studies use the Mezirow template to measure the presence and effectiveness of adult learning (Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 2007);
- Barriers to transformative learning include a lack of critical questioning built into the learning process and learning preferences as barriers, for example, individuals who prefer to talk and not write (Taylor, 2007);
- Measurement of process as well as end results is the recommended measure of perspective transformation (Snyder, 2008); and finally,
- Context should be orchestrated to improve the learning environment and increase the likelihood of transformative learning (Snyder, 2008)

Whitelaw et al. (2004) functionalised the outcomes of transformation by identifying evidence for each of their four levels using a pre- and post-course survey instrument and by coding the papers using the 10 phases of Mezirow (2000) as a template. Limitations in the study were the reluctance of researchers to label data as real transformation, thus leading to lower levels of reported learning amongst the learner group. It is not evident whether this reluctance was a confounding variable based on the research design or based on actual transformation scores (Whitelaw et al., 2004).

With regard to measuring transformation at more than only the process level, Snyder, (2008) argued that "it is difficult to create a context in which transformation might take place, and it is difficult to measure the level of transformation among participants when transformation is perceived as an end state."

This led to the development of an additional score on a transformation spectrum (Kitchenham, 2006): the end point or outcome score, which provides researchers with both process and outcome measures (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2008a). In addition, they argue that the context and its impact on the process should be taken into account.

An example of research applied to the professional setting, and with particular reference to coaching, is the work of Laske (Laske, 1999; Laske & Maynes, 2002), in which the transformative developmental effects on the executive's professional agenda, as applied to the coaching process, were operationalised and examined as part of a qualitative case study. A key recommendation in his doctoral dissertation was that a longitudinal study is necessary to provide sufficient evidence for any long-term transformative effects of coaching (Kampa-Kokesch, S., & Anderson, 2001; Laske, 1999). This was duly noted and included in the design of this research study.

In conclusion then, with regards to measurement of transformative learning, research suggests the use of at least two scores – outcome, process and a qualitative investigation of context, with the use of a longitudinal design highly recommended. This combination of design recommendations focused on transformative outcomes and process, using a qualitative, longitudinal design.

#### **5.4.2 Measuring transformative effects using POB constructs**

This research is concerned with investigating the transformative effects of postmodern leadership coaching, and one of the measures of transformation most relevant to the intellectual climate of this study are those based on positive psychology, specifically POB constructs, as well as those markers related to transformation within AI principles.

It was decided to focus on POB as constructs in positive organisational behaviour which could be measured rather than to consider the broader field of POS (Positive Organisational Scholarship) in order to keep the thematic analysis manageable and focused. POB constructs are focused on aspects of mental health, providing well-researched constructs which leverage the theoretical and research strength of the OB field through the identification of a few unique psychological states (Luthans, 2002).

This is in contrast to the superficial positivity found in the works of some popular authors, who create much concern for Luthans due to the lack of scientific foundation for their claims (Luthans, 2002). To this end, Luthans (2002) identified three POB measures, confidence (self-efficacy), hope and resilience, as meeting positive organisational behaviour inclusion criteria (Luthans, 2002). Later, subjective well-being was added as a fourth construct (Bartels and Boomsma, 2009; Diener et al., 1999; Huppert and Linley, 2011; Simsek, 2009), all of which have self-reporting psychometric instruments available to measure the strength of each construct under investigation. It is these four constructs that are used in this research study to measure the transformative effects of the appreciative group-based leadership coaching.

The POB constructs are largely measures using quantitative psychometric tools and scales. Confidence or self-efficacy is widely measured with the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Luszczynska, 2005; Maibach & Murphy, 2011; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1988); hope is measured through the State Hope Scale (Snyder, Cheavers, & Sympson, 1997; Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, Rapoff & Ware et al., 1997); resilience is measured using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) (Connor et al., 2003) and subjective well-being through the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 2000).

Subjective well-being is correlated to observable self-report items such as smiling frequency, smiling 'with the eyes', rating of one's happiness by friends, frequency of verbal expressions of positive emotions, sociability, sleep quality, happiness of close relatives, self-reported health, high income and income rank in a reference group, active involvement in religion, and a recent positive change in personal circumstances such as marriage or promotion (Diener, Suh, & Smith, 1997; Diener et al., 1999).

Using a self-report measure for general happiness, psychological well-being, satisfaction with life, self-efficacy, positive emotion and hope, the results for those in the experimental coaching group showed a significant effect compared to the control group, and thus, group-based life coaching can certainly be said to affect aspects of being that are known to be important contributors to intrinsic motivation, happiness and well-being (Charlotte & Boniwell, 2010).

However, no specific research was identified that used qualitative measures for any of these scales, and this posed a challenge for measurement of transformation in this study, which is qualitative in nature. Even though in most instances, the POB studies identified limitations in the scope and richness of the POB instruments and outcomes (Connor et al., 2003; Diener, 2000; Huppert & Linley, 2011; Snyder et al., 1997; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1988), no qualitative approaches to measuring transformation of POB constructs was offered up by the literature. A solution was developed through the use of simple descriptive qualitative scales for measuring the constructs are used in this study, and these will now be discussed in more detail in the coding analysis section of this chapter.

#### **5.4.3 Overview of measuring instruments**

Due to the theoretical assumption of postmodernism used in this research and the inherent qualitative nature of the research, it was decided not to make use of an “objective measuring instrument” such as a salutogenic battery of questionnaires”, but to work within a qualitative design framework. This required the capturing of rich, abstract and deeply personal insights from coachees during the measurement phase, both before, during and after the leadership coaching experience.

The use of written essays and drawings as primary sources of data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) assumes, from a methodological standpoint that the strongest evidence of transformation would be found by getting close to the relevant leader participants through their phenomenological experience. This would meet Richardson’s (2000) participatory advocacy criteria for qualitative research reflecting and expressing reality as “true”.

The data collected consisted of a three primary sources, i.e. Pre-LCP; during the LCP and Post-LCP. The Pre-LCP information consisted of journal entries (one to two pages); drawings by participants and a pre-knowledge test at the beginning of the programme, in relation to their experience of work and life. During the LCP, journal entries, drawings, a post-knowledge test and a reaction questionnaire was completed. After the LCP, a

second drawing, in relation to work and life, was collected. A written essay (five to six pages), in relation to the coaching experience and work and life perspectives was collected no sooner than 12 weeks after the programme (to allow for reflection and transfer into the daily life experience of the manager).

#### **5.4.3.1 Journal entries**

Journal entries were used as means to obtain accurate (phenomenological) descriptions of the perspectives of the leaders participating in the programme. The use of a journal entry (with the option of conducting this in the participant's own home language) provided the opportunity to describe the participant's current work and life experience at a specific point in time, so that this information could be used to understand dominant patterns and themes for each individual participant before and after the LCP (see Figures 1 – 3 and Figures 18 – 21 in Appendix A).

The participants were asked one question: *“How do you currently experience work and life right now? Write a few paragraphs or pages in response to this question”*. The question purposefully placed a double emphasis on the 'here and now' element of the experience and was kept as an open-ended question to avoid influencing the leader participants in a certain direction, rather than, for example, *“outline your current problems/issues; things with which you are extremely happy/unhappy etc.”*.

#### **5.4.3.2 Individual drawings**

The creation and interpretation of drawings has been used in coaching to create dialogue around metaphors, images, self-narratives and scenarios as a method for promoting synthesis between emotions and thoughts (Paulus, 2006). It was therefore decided to use these drawings as valuable research data and incorporate the key themes found in the drawings into the findings.

The reasons for using individual drawings (see Figures 4 – 17 in Appendix A) as a primary source of data was due to the rich level of information made available through interpretation, and through which the researcher is able to obtain a more succinct presentation of the participant experiences (Kearney & Hyle, 2004). The use of drawings

also holds benefits for mitigating researcher biases (Kearney & Hyle, 2004). Drawings also benefit the researcher by helping to create triangulation in the study data, with a caveat that researchers be provided with a framework or boundaries within which interpretations can be made (Kearney & Hyle, 2004). Furthermore, participants have dominant preferences in terms of learning and development styles, and in order to allow freer expression for participants who have a more divergent and visual style (Kolb, 2005), and in line with the qualitative nature of the coaching process, individual drawing exercises provide a means to transcend current personal and cultural barriers and provide another rich opportunity for a measure of the participant's current work and life experience (Kearney & Hyle, 2004).

In the drawing exercise, the participants were asked one question: *“How do you currently experience work and life right now? Draw a picture in response to this question.”*

Finally, at the end of the LCP, the participants were asked one question: *“What is your created future? Draw a picture in response to this question.”*

#### **5.4.3.3 Individual written essays**

Written essays were used as a primary source of data in a study of the experiences of executives during a coaching programme reported on by Cilliers (2005). The written essays provide a close phenomenological set of data from leader participants because the reality is represented exactly at that point in time for each individual, based on their peculiar and individual perspective, presented in both written and graphic form.

The use of journal entries (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) assumes, from a methodological standpoint, that the strongest evidence of transformation would be found by getting close to the relevant leader participants through their phenomenological experience. This would meet Richardson's (2000) participatory advocacy criteria for qualitative research reflecting and expressing reality as 'true'.

The participants were asked to write a journal based on the following question: *“Using your self-knowledge and scenarios, write a few paragraphs or pages in response to the*

*following question. What is your created future? Write a few paragraphs or pages in response to this question.”*

#### **5.4.3.4 Knowledge-based tests**

Knowledge-based tests were utilised as part of the organisation’s standard operating procedure for any learning and development process, based on training evaluation standards (Kirkpatrick, 1994). The knowledge-based tests assess the particular level of attainment of learning of participants. Due to the fact that this was a mandatory set of data available to the researcher, it was decided to view the findings of these knowledge tests as extra information for the researcher. The knowledge assessment was related to the content about peer-reflecting and listening skills.

#### **5.4.3.5 Focus group discussions**

Focus group discussions using peer reflection were used as a cornerstone in the multi-method approach used in this research, using an unstructured approach to allow for the construction of meanings by the peer groups (McMahon & Watson, 2008; Schmidt, 2002; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004). Focus groups have utility for the qualitative researcher due to their ability to break down barriers in communication and in gathering data, as well as adding to the triangulation of data (Morgan & Spanish, 1984).

The focus group discussion asked one question of the group: *“How do you currently experience work and life right now? Please use your writing exercise and drawing to share with the group. You are welcome to participate actively in the group as you feel is appropriate. The group may choose to go in turns around the room, one at a time, or you may choose people to speak in a random fashion. The only request we have is that you listen when someone is speaking and you show respect to the person’s story. You have two hours.”*

#### **5.4.3.6 Level 1 reactionnaire**

A ‘reactionnaire’ based on Level 1 training evaluation (Phillips, 2010) was used to elicit a response regarding the quality and overall experience of the programme. This is a



mandatory requirement by the organisation, and this information is provided as context to the findings. The questionnaire consisted of four parts, namely, quality of the facilities, quality of the facilitator, relevance of the content and the interaction level of the participant.

This brings to a conclusion the description of the measuring principles and instruments used in this empirical study.

## **5.5 DATA COLLECTION**

The data collection phase of the study required the execution of a series of steps to ensure that the data collection procedure was applied in a consistent manner across the different coaching groups.

### **5.5.1 Administration and collection**

After the pilot, data was then collected from two successive graduating groups as they attended the annual programme. This provided a significant amount of qualitative data from a total group of 55 participating leaders. The leadership coaching experience was conducted twice over a two-year period. Each group of leader participants attended the LCP over two study schools, spaced with a six-month delay between each study school. The first study school was focused entirely on the inward process of discovering self, understanding and articulating one's own story and life themes, and the second workshop was more future-focused, with outcomes related to creation and clarification of life and career purpose/vision and the translation of this into action planning (Vansteenkiste, 2008).

The steps of the data collection phase are described below:

#### **Step1 – Informed consent**

It was important to obtain permission to use materials, and an informed consent form was completed and signed by all leader participants at the beginning of the coaching programme, as well as referenced in the final instructions. At all times the author took

pains to convey the true purpose of the study without deception and to maintain the anonymity of the leader participants.

### **Step 2 – Before the LCP**

Journal entries, drawings and a knowledge-based test were collected at the beginning of the LCP. The writing and drawing exercises were intense, and in order to create renewed external energy, the room was set up with work tables around the room on which blank posters, writing/drawing materials were made available. This forced the participants to stand up, collect the material and then return to their table for their drawing exercise. Participants were able to make use of breakaway rooms to complete their drawings in privacy and with sufficient space. Participants were asked to choose from a variety of styled journal notebooks in which to write their notes, and to use this book as a journal throughout the LCP, creating a more individualistic and less 'corporate' feel to the exercise.

A limited time was given for this exercise, although it was not rushed, in order to capture dominant 'first-to-mind' themes. No participants chose to write their story in their home language, even though this option was provided. At a later stage, after the group discussion, these drawings and journals were collected and with permission, the pages scanned for recording purposes and returned to the participants after lunch. This data was archived for later analysis. Figures 1 – 3 in Appendix A provide examples of parts of the written essays.

The data from the knowledge-based test was collected and captured into a spread sheet for analysis and comparison to post-knowledge assessments.

### **Step 3 – During the LCP**

During the LCP, the following data was collected: primary data, through individual essays and drawings, and secondary data, using focus group discussions, reaction questionnaires and post-knowledge tests.

The size of each coaching group was roughly thirty, and therefore it was decided to break up the focus groups into five smaller groups of six participants each to ensure

time and space for each participant to contribute during the focus group discussion. There were distinct different cultural and communication styles between the national cultures of leader participants, yet, because the LCP was aimed at transcending these differences, dyads, triads and small groups were therefore chosen randomly. The diversity in communication styles was always a challenge during the coaching programme. For example, those with more controlled, ambiguous communication style such as the Vietnamese, and to a lesser extent, the Cambodian delegates, it is important that the process contains their possible anxiety, while showing respect for the participant's well-being. In order to mitigate the risk of participants feeling overwhelmed by the multi-cultural nature of the process, and especially taking into account that participants have diverse communication styles and may still have felt uncomfortable sharing fairly personal information without some structure, a session on professional communication skills was facilitated prior to these group reflective sessions.

Focus group discussion reflections were collected and recorded, and examples of the outcome of a focus group discussion is provided in Table 1 in Appendix A. The facilitators also made process notes, and an example of a process note taken during a group discussion is provided in Table 2 in Appendix A.

At the end of the session, the participants are given their first drawing and journal entries to spend some time in reflection on the two different drawings and what changes have been reflected in these. These drawings were then presented in a plenary session and photographed and captured for later reference. Figures 11 – 17 in Appendix A represent a sample of these drawings. Through peer reflection, these dominant themes, meanings and discourses could be compared and discussed, and inferences made.

A post-programme knowledge test with the same content as the pre-programme knowledge test was conducted to determine the level of knowledge growth for each leader participant. This data was collected and captured into a spread sheet for analysis and comparison.

The Level 1 reactionnaire asked the participants to rate the facilitators on twelve areas: explanation of outcomes; mastery of content; ability to meet the participant at their level

of knowledge; effectiveness in giving instructions; effective use of time; stimulation of discussion; motivation of participants; use of vocal variety; use of gestures, body movement and eye contact; training aids; dealing with all outstanding issues; and finally, an overall rating.

#### **Step 4 – After the LCP**

12 weeks after the end of the coaching programme, all delegates were sent an email request asking them to complete an open-ended questionnaire detailing their experience of life and work as a result of the coaching programme within the following structure and according to the instructions in Table 3 in Appendix A.

#### **Step 5 – Administration**

The size and nature of the data required disciplined collection, collation and electronic copying of all personal writing exercises and drawings and coding and numbering leader participant exercises into electronic folders. The data was collected over a period of two and a half years as the various LCP sessions took place. As each data set was collected, it was categorised according to an individual folder, then categorised according the specific data set and type. The data was then prepared for the coding analysis by printing out a file of all data and presenting it to the coders in individual alphabetical order. An electronic copy of all data was kept in folders with a backup file. All original documents were archived in lock-up storage.

#### **5.5.2 Description of data sets**

The multiple sources of qualitative data, including drawings, essays and additional sources of data such as the use of group narratives, participant evaluations and a word frequency count can create a rather complex and obscure view of the sources of data for the reader. For purposes of clarity, this section describes the various data sets and explains how they were analysed systematically and then as a whole, in order to conduct the coding and thematic analysis meaningfully.

The research provided five distinct sets of data: a) narratives and drawings, b) coder interpretative notes, c) group discussion themes, d) participant reactions and new

knowledge gained, and e) consolidation of data and word frequency count. These are described in Table 5.4.

**TABLE 5.4 DESCRIPTIONS OF DATA SETS**

<b>Set 1</b>	<b>Narratives and drawings</b>	The primary data used was the original raw data (set 1) presented as drawings; narratives and essays by the leader participants.
<b>Set 2</b>	<b>Coder interpretative notes</b>	The coders' interpretative notes and comments written for each individual case, referred to as (set 2).
<b>Set 3</b>	<b>Group discussion themes</b>	<p>The third source of data was collected from the themes that were identified during the peer group sessions during the LCP. <u>This was additional data which added to the richness of the primary data sources of narratives and drawings.</u></p> <p>Each group was asked to highlight key themes that had emerged during their discourses, and this set (set 3) was used as an additional source of information. The group themes were generated during group discussion, and they elicited a number of key themes and commonalities, which are detailed in Table 1 in Appendix B. Data set 3 was used as additional data to provide multiple perspectives regarding the leader participants' experience of work and life at the beginning of the programme.</p>
<b>Set 4</b>	<b>Participant reactions and</b>	Data set 4 was collected as part of the

	<b>new knowledge gained</b>	organisation's training policy and procedure protocol. <u>They are documented as an additional source of interesting data to make up the whole.</u> The findings have also been presented to indicate the level of rigour deployed at all stages in the research process, as well as to highlight how the delivery of the coaching programme was received by participants.
<b>Set 5</b>	<b>Consolidation of data and word frequency count</b>	The coders' interpretative notes and comments (set 2), including the authors' thematic analysis of set 1 and set 3 were merged into one data set, and this provided a significant amount of data in itself, consisting of 19,728 words (set 5).

## 5.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis phases began with general observations of the data set, followed by specific observations and analysis per individual data set, using a coding rules analysis and then building towards general patterns through a thematic analysis (Lincoln, 1995).

The data analysis phase consisted of a coding analysis, followed by a thematic analysis of the data. The coding analysis methodology, using coding rules and multiple coders, was based upon a meta-analysis of AI principles conducted by Bushe and Kassam (2005).

The thematic analysis process requires the identification of a limited number of themes that accurately reflect the data. The thematic analysis methodology and process steps used were based upon the description of thematic analysis by Howitt and Cramer (2007), as well as the pragmatic view formulated by Aronson (1994).

The coding analysis and steps are outlined and explained below:

### 5.6.1 Coding Analysis

The data analysis methodology is based upon a meta-analysis study of AI principles conducted by Bushe and Kassam (2005), in which 20 cases of the use of AI were examined to identify transformational change, as well as to classify each case according to how well it aligned to the seven principles of AI. These cases were all related to large scale facilitation used for changing social systems, as opposed to the group and individual inquiry process used in this research project. However, the coding rules were considered robust enough to use for individual data, and the procedure for determining outcomes according to the rules, as well as the agreement rate between coders, was replicated easily in this study.

Bushe and Kassam's (2005) identified two key findings. The first was that AI is differentiated from other established OD facilitation by changing how people think, rather than how they do things. The currency in AI is in idea creation and transformational change. Bushe and Kassam (2005) also found that that a spontaneous, unprepared approach to change strengthened the transformation change outcome of an inquiry, compared to the traditional OD approach of planned change.

There were a number of limitations identified in the Bushe and Kassam study (2005). The first was with respect to the nature, length and complexity of the published cases that they analysed as part of the meta-analysis. Obviously, this was due to the fact that the cases were not written up specifically for the meta-analysis, and certain foregone conclusions and shortcomings were identified as a result of the inconsistencies. In this particular research study, each set of data was collected in the same way, using the same set of questions and structure, and this created consistency for the coders when conducting the analysis. This therefore mitigated a possible limitation with coding.

Bushe and Kassam (2005) identified the need for more empirical assessments of AI practice as an important consideration for OD scholars, and this particular study provides a further exploration of the contribution of AI principles for transformational change.

Following the procedure used by Bushe and Kassam (2005), a coding rules structure was also developed for the measurement of POB constructs, using a qualitative approach.

The first step was to conduct the coding analysis of set 1. By using a coding structure, a comparison of differences and similarities were revealed and personal and professional constructions within the data were identified. Of importance to the coders was identifying whether certain dominant discourses underlie the discussions and life experience of the participants and whether this changed over time.

After collating all participant data into electronic and manual copies, the biographical details of participants and the confirmation of each piece of data received was recorded onto an Excel spread sheet.

Next, the independent coders were identified and approached in order to determine if they would be prepared to spend time coding and analysing the data. Once they had agreed, a two-hour briefing session was held, in which the researcher gave an overview of the spread sheet and data and gave instructions according to the coding rules.

The three coders (two independent and the author) separately and independently coded the data and recorded this information in a spread sheet consisting of a number of coding rules. In setting up the coding rules structure, it was decided to use the individual as the level of analysis, and to then draw conclusions and premises based upon the general trends and common themes if they emerged.

Three transformative concepts were chosen for coding, and coding was based upon the existence of a concept rather than its frequency. The rules guiding the coding criteria are described in detail in 5.5.1.1. and 5.5.1.3.

Four POB constructs were also chosen for coding, and coding was based on the existence of a concept rather than its frequency. The rules guiding the coding criteria are described in detail in 5.5.1.4.



Each coder took a copy of the full data set, including all essays and drawings, and then conducted an independent rating and thematic analysis. The process that the coders followed was first to read through and view all the data to get a general sense of the material. Then, starting with one individual's data, they identified text and drawing segments that would relate to that individual's perspectives of professional and personal life. These text segments were bracketed and a code word assigned to them according to the coding structure as outlined in detail in the following section of this chapter. This was repeated for all the individual data sets.

They then coded the data by locating text and drawing segments and assigning a code to them. This information was documented in a matrix that was used to organise the material and individual records using an Excel spread sheet.

Each coder was given three months in which to complete the coding and return it.

During this time, the researcher also conducted a coding and analysis of the data. The process involved scrutinising, reading and observing each set of data (essays, pictures and narratives) from every participant and then using the coding rules matrix to determine if the data met the coding rule. Finally, comments were made for every coding rule to record the observations of the coders and illuminate any emerging interpretations.

When all three coding sheets with comments had been returned, the information was merged into a single spread sheet using each coding rule as a point of reference. The information was separated into two pieces of information: a) the responses to the coding rules, and b) the qualitative comments of the three coders. The responses to the coding rules were analysed to determine the agreement rate before analysis to ensure that there were not major inconsistencies or areas in which interpretation would be less than robust. In addition, this was used to determine and use the agreement rates as a robustness test and extrapolate insights from this, as well as to highlight any interesting or unique differences and similarities. This information was used to develop a coding rules matrix with the yes/no comments of the coders for each coding rule.

Secondly, the qualitative comments of the coders were merged into one data set. This was used as the base document for the thematic analysis, in which the key themes were identified and then fleshed out using the verbatim comments of participants, physical drawings and examples, and the coder comments. This is the data set titled “coder interpretative notes” (set 2).

The following rules were developed for the coding of both texts and drawings, and each of the data sets was examined according to the following transformative criteria as replicated from a meta-analysis study of AI processes conducted by Bushe and Kassam (2005).

#### **5.6.1.1 Transformational change**

##### **Transformational change (yes/no)**

Data will be coded as transformational when evidence is given of a qualitative shift in the state of being or identity of the system, usually reflected in patterns or organisation emerging after the ACLP that are clearly different from previous patterns (Bushe and Kassam, 2005, p.8-9).

Data will not be coded as transformational if the changes described new processes, procedures, plans or methods that are applied without changing the basic nature of the system.

#### **5.6.1.2 New knowledge or new processes**

##### **New knowledge or new processes (yes/no)**

Data will be coded ‘yes’ if the outcome was that new knowledge was created versus simply new processes. So, did the LCP lead to the collective creation of new knowledge that served as a new reference point or foundation, or was the inquiry simply used as a means to gather consensus for a specific end? If the inquiry was focused on getting buy-in, with all the ideas focused on reaching a certain end point, then this will be coded as creating new processes. This means that the individuals would still have the same realm of possibilities for their system, constrained by the same set of beliefs. In contrast,

if a new way of looking at the world was evident, and included some form of realisation that something that was previously not considered important was now important, then this will be coded as new knowledge. A shift to a new lens needs to be apparent in the number of possibilities that open up for consideration, the new ideas put out and new channels for action that were not considered.

### 5.6.1.3 Generative metaphor

#### Generative metaphor vs. no generative metaphor

This coding was done according to whether the LCP created a generative metaphor (yes or no). Cases that describe an artefact or common reference point that guides the participant, or served as a key memory of a key event, are to be coded as generative metaphors. The symbol can be material, linguistic or 'other'. It needs to be persistent, and one that evokes a unique shared meaning by the system members who consider it to represent a new lens/or new possibilities.

### 5.6.1.4 Positive organisational behaviour constructs

Three positive organisational behaviour constructs were also used to elicit additional rich themes related to possible psychological transformation and to provide clues for premise generation regarding the characteristics of the psychological states of the individual data sets. A yes/no code was used to determine if the piece of data showed evidence of any of the four traits, and if so, comments as to the nature of these observations was documented by the coders. The following definitions were used for coding purposes:

- a) **Confidence** – evidence of the individual's conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to successfully execute the plan within their context (yes/no) (Maibach & Murphy, 2011).
- b) **Hope** – evidence of both goal-directed determination and pathways (plans) to meet goals (yes/no) (Snyder & Lopez, 2010).

- c) **Subjective well-being** – evidence that the total sum of the cognitive and emotional reactions that the individual experiences when they compare what they have and do in life with their aspirations, needs, and other expectations is positive (yes/no) (Diener, 2000).
- d) **Resilience** – evidence of a psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility (yes/no) (Connor et al., 2003).

This brings the description of the coding analysis phase to an end.

### 5.6.2 Thematic Analysis

A critical first step in the thematic analysis is that of data familiarisation, which requires that the researcher become intimate with the data in order to advantage the researcher and set up a firm foundation for a robust analysis (Howitt & Kramer, 2007). In this particular study, both sets one and two were used as data to in order to identify themes. A systematic process was followed to ensure that the author was familiar with the data. Firstly, the author collected and catalogued all the data personally. This included recording photographic versions of the drawings and filing the essays. Then, the author read through the leader participant data (set 1) four times, firstly when collecting and collating the data into individual files, then once the data had been printed out by reviewing the full set of data a second time, thirdly, when conducting the coding and analysis, and finally, after reviewing the interpretative notes of the other two coders. This gave the researcher an intimate knowledge of the material and an opportunity to be fully immersed in the data, as well as conduct a thorough thematic analysis of the information.

The next step in the thematic analysis phase is for the research to identify a number of themes which reflect the data which are identified. These make it possible to collect a big-picture view of the data and to identify if a certain trend or pattern is emerging (Howitt & Kramer, 2007).

Themes are defined as “units derived from patterns and recurring meanings” (Aronson, 1994, p.1). The patterns can be listed and will come from direct quotes and paraphrasing common ideas (Hewitt & Kramer, 2007). Themes are identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (Leininger, 1985, p. 60).

In this study, the author read through set 2 (coder interpretative notes) as well as the consolidated document (set 5) in detail a number of times.

This, along with the original data from the leader participants (set 1), was used to identify patterns of meaning and to generate a number of themes, which were used in the empirical report. From the detailed individual data, common and unexpected themes were developed for the group as a whole, taking into account contextual issues such as cultural differences. Common themes were identified across the whole set of data by firstly identifying key words, phrases and insights from the thematic data. The next step in the thematic analysis is to link all the data to its corresponding pattern or theme. This provides data from which the themes can be expanded and further explained (Howitt & Kramer, 2007). The data was coded according to the identified themes, and this was done for both sets 1 and 2. This provided valuable examples and information that could be noted, captured and then reported on.

The next step of the thematic analysis includes revision and adjustments to the analysis based upon the review of the data, especially when viewed as a whole, and in striving for themes and coding of themes that is appropriate and makes sense (Howitt & Kramer, 2007). The piecing together of the themes is what creates a complete portrayal of the collective experience (Aronson, 1994). This step was conducted by the author, who then identified further insights per theme and captured these in keywords and key phrases and concepts, making adaptations to the original themes identified. This step was conducted with rigour to ensure that the analysis provides a meaningful representation of the various ideas and components, which is important for coherence in the research (Leininger, 1985).

A word frequency count of the top twenty words emerging from the document was then conducted to overlay with the themes identified to again ensure that no key ideas, concepts or themes were missed in the analysis phase. Thus, the frequency count was used for analysis purposes, but also as one of the checks and balances within the process. By transposing the top 20 keywords in the data set into and over the data, it was determined that the themes were balanced and that no themes were missed or overlooked, underplayed or over-emphasised.

The key words were clustered into themes, and as these were interrogated, an integrated visual model of the themes/insights became apparent. This model emerged along a set of headings including: coding rules, higher-order outcomes (of the programme), central processes (of the programme), coding rules, transformative themes, generative metaphors, prevailing outcomes, personal insights, enabling tools and psychological impact. This integrated model is presented in Chapter 6.

The findings were then interpreted and validated for accuracy and credibility against existing literature and previous arguments. By referring back to the literature, it was possible to make interpretations from the data and to add credibility to the findings.

The objective was to present a developed story of how appreciative group-based leadership coaching is able to transform leaders' professional and personal perspectives in a manner that helps the reader to process, understand and read the report with merit.

Finally, the researcher then identified contradictions, paradoxes and interesting insights, and summarised the themes in relation to the coaching process and possible premises.

## **5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the core components and design of this piece of research, beginning with a description of the role-players involved in the research project, and continuing with a description and clarification of the data sets used for the analysis; a detailed process outline of the data collection methods and

procedures and administration of the data; an overview of the coding analysis steps, including the coding steps, rules and procedures for analysing the data; and an overview of the process followed in conducting the thematic analysis and for making sense of the data against the background of the research objectives.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a comprehensive report and discussion of the findings of the study, based on a coding analysis and thematic analysis of the data. Firstly, the findings from the participant's reactions to the inquiry are presented, followed by the coding analysis for transformation using AI and POB constructs, in which the transformative effects and psychological impact of the LCP are investigated and discussed. This is followed by a full thematic analysis of the various data sets. These findings include transformative themes, generative metaphors, personal insights and prevailing outcomes related to the transformative effects of the LCP.

A set of themes is presented as an outcome of the thematic analysis. The discussion and findings are then integrated with a model of the transformative effects of appreciative group-based coaching. This model provides a descriptive and pictorial crux for the research findings. These findings conclude with a set of premises, based upon the aims of the study.

#### **6.2 PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS**

The Level 1 reactionnaire evaluation used a long-form evaluation tool based on the ROI (return on investment) methodology (Phillips and Phillips, 2010) that is standardised for the organisation and which was used to provide general information related to the participant's perception of the coaching programme. This was completed at the conclusion of the programme and the information was captured and reported on.

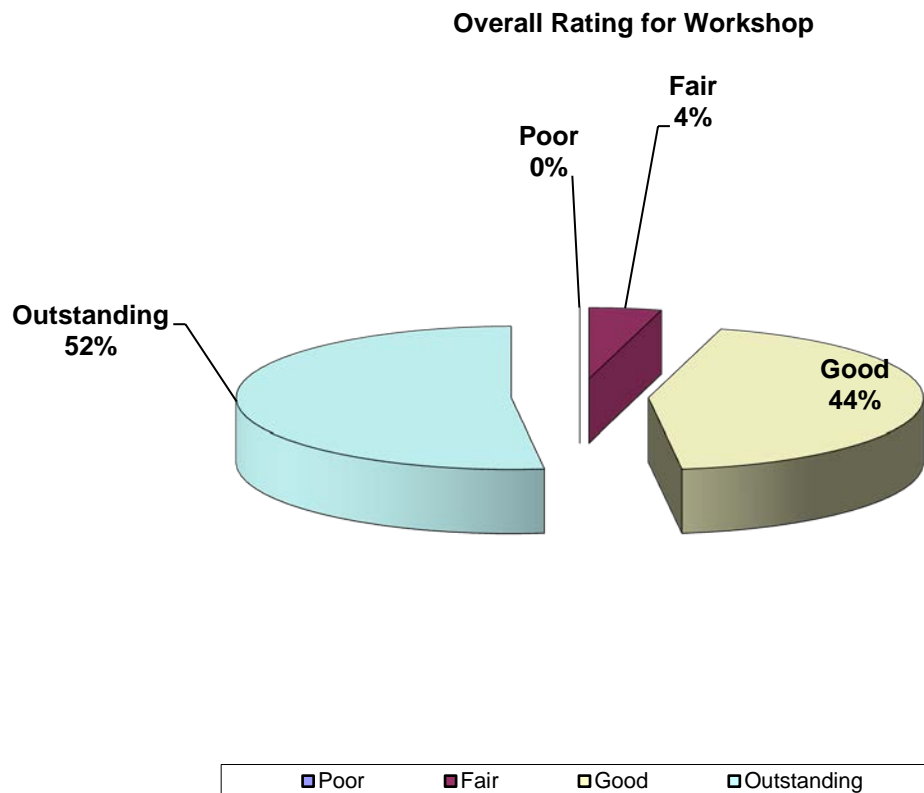
The detailed findings (set4) include aspects such as the quality and content of the programme, its relevance to the leader participant, the quality of the facilitators and quality of venue.



Due to the qualitative nature of this study, verbatim comments have also been noted, as written on the forms, and these relate to the statements previously presented regarding discovery of the self and leader purpose:

- “Gained more confidence, also will apply the same techniques to build my team”.
- “Very Good”.
- “...did an excellent job, allowed us opportunities to re-discover ourselves in determining the links between our Dream Career and Current Career”.

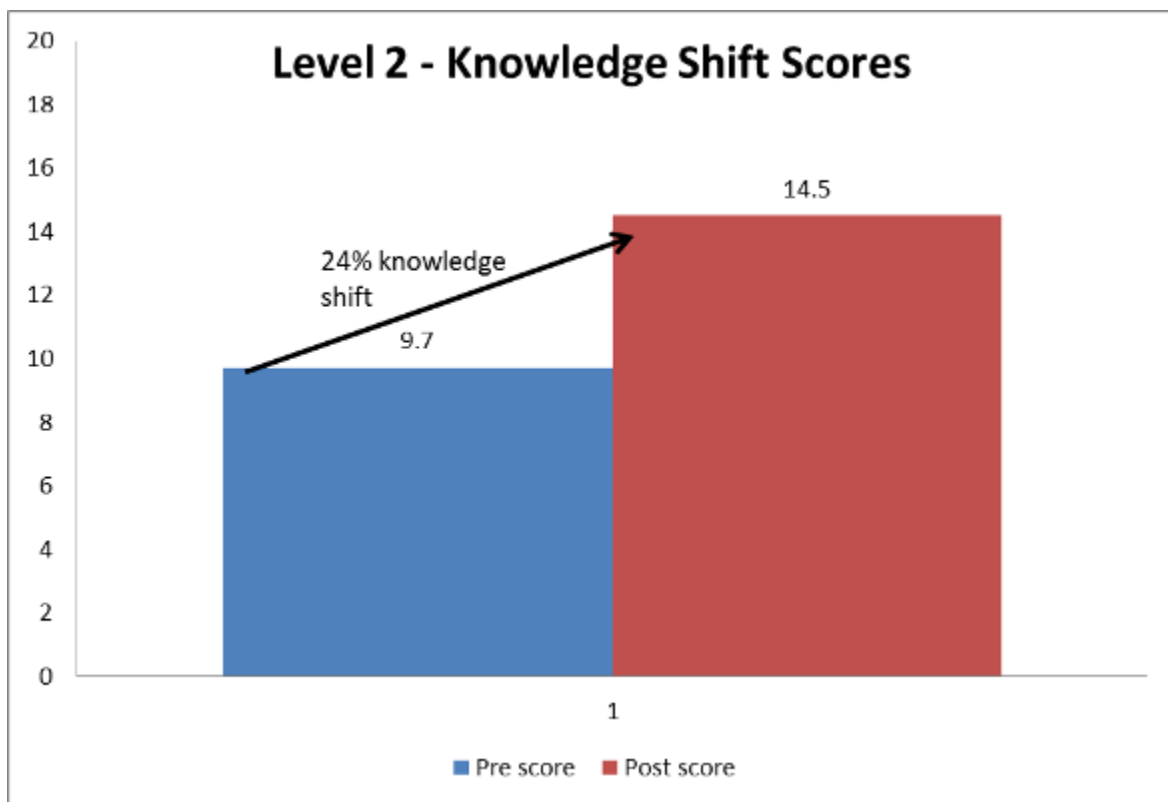
Furthermore, the Level 1 findings (Figure 6.1) provide a general overview of the reaction of participants to the coaching programme. The majority of leader participants found the programme and all its elements either good or outstanding, indicating that the programme was favourably perceived by participants.



**Figure 6.1 Participants' reaction to the coaching programme**

The knowledge-based test used a standard pre- and post-programme knowledge short questionnaire that relates to the knowledge outcomes of the programme, with twenty simple multiple-choice and short questions.

As participants learn new skills and enhance knowledge, and as they explore their role in the programme, the evaluation was used to measure the skill or knowledge acquired through the coaching programme. The findings are presented in Figure 6.2, and they indicate a strong increase in knowledge regarding leadership coaching from starting the programme to ending it.



**Figure 6.2 Level 2 knowledge shift in coaching programme**

### 6.3 WORD FREQUENCY COUNT

A word frequency count was conducted using a programme, WinRAR, which was used to identify the most frequently used words and phrases (Brysbaert, New & Keuleers, 2012) in order to overlay these over the themes as an additional measure to ensure that no important themes had been missed in the analysis.

The word frequency count rendered the following top twenty keywords:

- Future
- Achieve
- Specific/clear
- Goals
- Thinking
- Created
- Positive
- Wants
- Plan
- Family
- Confidence
- Determination
- Development
- Plans
- Personal
- Able/Competence
- Knowing
- Outlook – broad new world
- Focus
- Picture

These key words were noted and then set to one side, used towards the end of the thematic analysis and used for crystallisation purposes. The use of both triangulation in data collection as well as crystallisation in data analysis will increase the confidence a researcher may have in his/her findings (Denzin, 1998; Silva & Fraga, 2013). This would ensure that no specific themes or key findings were omitted in the findings and that not only narrative data is used but also allowing space for a concurrent data analysis and data collection process (Silva & Fraga, 2013).

## **6.4 CODING ANALYSIS**

The coding analysis which applied the AI coding rules and POB coding rules to data set 1 will now be presented and discussed.

All three coders used the coding rules, and an agreement rate analysis was conducted to determine the strength of the conclusions, as mirrored in the study by Bushe and Kassam (1995), who conducted a similar agreement analysis. Despite being difficult to achieve, a rule of thumb for agreement rates is 80% (Bayer & Paul, 2011), providing a high degree of certainty and trustworthiness. A high agreement rate between all three independent raters should add credibility to the presentation of the findings and add robustness to the conclusions, as well as mitigate the inherent risk of bias in interpretation when conducting a qualitative analysis.

The findings of the coding rules analysis will now be presented in a matrix/table in the following sequence. Firstly, the findings for the analysis of the transformative outcomes of AI, which includes three elements, transformation, new knowledge and generative metaphors, will be presented and discussed. This will be followed by a presentation of the coding matrix for the impact of the coaching on the following POB constructs: confidence, hope, subjective well-being and resilience.

### **6.4.1 AI coding matrix as applied to individual data sets**

The summary table below (Table 6.1) indicates the findings per individual case, summated across all three coders. Each individual participant is represented as a case number; their country of origin is included and the findings according to the coding rules, as rated by all three raters, is presented as either a 'yes', 'no' or '?' Where there was not full agreement between raters, these have been highlighted in yellow. Blanks represent no data for the individual, either because they resigned before the programme was completed or because they did not complete the programme for personal reasons.

**Table 6.1 AI Coding Matrix based on individual data sets**

<b>Case #</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Transformational change</b>	<b>New Knowledge</b>	<b>Generative Metaphor</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	Tanzania	Yes	Yes	Yes	
2	Namibia	?	Blank	Blank	Resigned
3	Sri Lanka	Yes	Yes	Yes	
4	South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes	
5	South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes	
6	Mozambique	Yes	No	Yes	
7	South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes	
8	Namibia	Yes	?	Yes	
9	Namibia	Yes	Yes	Yes	
10	Ethiopia	Yes	Yes	Yes	
11	Ethiopia	?	No	No	
12	Vietnam	Yes	Yes	Yes	
13	Tanzania	Yes	Yes	Yes	
14	Tanzania	Yes	Yes	Yes	
15	Tanzania	Yes	Yes	Yes	
16	Namibia	?	Blank	Yes	
17	Kenya	Yes	Yes	Yes	
18	Kenya	Yes	Yes	Yes	
19	Nepal	Yes	No	Yes	
20	Cambodia	Yes	?	Yes	
21	Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	
22	Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	
23	South Africa	Yes	?	Yes	
24	Mozambique	Yes	?	Yes	
25	South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes	

26	Ethiopia	Blank	Blank	Blank	Resigned
27	Mozambique	Yes	Yes	Yes	
28	Kenya	Yes	Yes	Yes	
29	South Africa	Yes	?	Yes	
30	Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	
31	Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	
32	Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	
33	Ethiopia	Yes	?	Yes	
34	Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	
35	Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	
36	Kenya	Yes	Yes	Yes	
37	Uganda	Yes	Yes	?	
38	South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes	
39	Mozambique	Yes	Yes	Yes	
40	Kenya	Yes	Yes	Yes	
41	Tanzania	Yes	Yes	?	
42	Kenya	Yes	?	Yes	
43	Sri Lanka	Yes	Yes	Yes	
44	Kenya	Blank	Blank	Blank	
45	Namibia	Yes	Yes	?	
46	Cambodia	Yes	No	Yes	
47	Nepal	?	?	No	Resigned
48	Ethiopia	Yes	?	Yes	
49	Ethiopia	Yes	?	Yes	
50	Ethiopia	Yes	Yes	Yes	
51	Vietnam	Yes	Yes	Yes	
52	Nepal	Yes	Yes	Yes	
53	South Africa	Yes	?	Yes	
54	Sri Lanka	Yes	Yes	Yes	
55	South Africa	Yes	?	Yes	

These findings, based on 55 individual data sets, indicate that 89.9% of all data sets (including those who did not complete the programme due to resignations) had a positive transformative learning. 85.45% of the leader participants showed evidence of the creation of a generative metaphor as a result of the coaching. This adds weight to the importance of conducting a full illumination and interpretation the transformative themes, generative metaphors and personal insights of the leader participants.

For the appreciative outcome of new knowledge, 63.63% of leader participants showed evidence that new knowledge was gained, and therefore the interpretation for new knowledge will be less intensive than that of the other two AI outcomes.

The following table (Table 6.2) indicates the agreement rating summary between raters for the AI coding analysis:

**Table 6.2 Agreement rating summary AI transformative themes**

<b>AI Variable</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>% Yes</b>	<b>% Agreement Between Raters</b>
<b>Transformative Learning</b>	55	(n=49) 89.09%	(n=49) 89.09%
<b>New Knowledge</b>	55	(n=35) 63.63%	(n=39) 70.9%
<b>Generative metaphor</b>	55	(n=47) 86.45%	(n=49) 89.09%

Further analysis of the coding rater agreements showed very strong agreement ratings for transformative learning (89,09%) and the generative metaphor (89,09%), with a strong, but not quite as intense, agreement rate of 70.9% for new knowledge. This

indicates that the thematic analysis, which is based on the coders' coding and interpretation, was consistent and robust.

Based on an evaluation of the data, it may be concluded that the AI matrix was helpful as a starting point for the coding analysis of data and as a point of reference firmly rooted in AI theory and research. The coding rules were sufficiently detailed, yet not too prescriptive to allow for easy interpretation of each individual case.

The matrix indicates that there was strong evidence for a transformative effect (based on AI principles) – indicated by a qualitative shift in the state of being or identity of the individuals participating in the programme. This was reflected in different patterns emerging in the text and drawings, and refers to a change in the basic nature of the individual as person and leader.

Furthermore, it is evident that the coders used the drawings predominantly to draw a conclusion regarding transformation and then used the text to verify this. Examples of this process using the coder's comments are presented as evidence in the following data sets:

- a) "Transformation was unblocked dramatically through father's death. This provided the breakthrough. Difference between earlier statements as a stressed mom and career women changed to a powerful visual statement. This individual had an extremely strong outcome post the coaching programme because she was able to immediately apply her leadership in a national project"
- b) "Big visual transformation - knowing what he wants out of life, knowing where he wants to be and the plan to achieve it"
- c) "Definite transformation visually and in writing about the future and bigger picture – 'whilst battling with work taking all time from real passions; unable to integrate my work with the rest of my life'. In the final scenario the breakthrough is in the sheer number of possibilities for the future, and the change from just trying to get through what you can day to day to very specific goals that have a broad range including youth development, profitable farming and retirement from corporate



life, leaving a legacy as a leader all whilst keeping position as man of God who will not compromise his faith nor family for the world”

- d) “Transformation evident in the change from a person who works six days a week and is available all day on his phone with any spare time given to his family and no time for himself. The breakthrough was his decision to become an intellectual man and start studying at the age of 36. What is remarkable is that this person started his work as a security guard and was now on an international management development programme. His honest integrity and commitment to work had got him noticed and unlocked his leadership potential. Big Picture thinking, broader focus and specific between work, seeing the world and family or personal life. From day to day to long term structured plan. More Global perspective than before. Sole focus used to be work – now focusing on studying further, making time for the family and him. Transformation came in a very clearly articulated identity as a businessman and observer of others someone with good insight into others. Has been asked by others to join their businesses but he rather wants to pick up business acumen skills and capital before embarking on this”
- e) “...has an interesting journey as refugee, trainee priest and now a sales manager. Transformation evident in the introduction of a very philosophical approach to leadership. Earlier picture uni-dimensional depicting only work with his team who all look unhappy and a truck leaving the factory. Bridge picture is systems oriented with inputs and outputs and more connected and global in nature”
- f) “Gave me the ability to see my life reflected in comparison to others bigger picture thinking - personal, family, and work and the impact I can have on them”
- g) “Although the person was already functioning at a high level of self-determination the one transformation that I saw as a result of this programme was the ability to learn how to reflect and be more self-aware. He moved from blurry optimism to very specific goal directed objectives”

For those leader participants where the transformation was not clearly evident, there might have been a new process, plan or method introduced. However, this was applied without changing the fundamental nature of the human system, and these data sets were coded as “no”. Some examples based on the coder comments are as follows:

- a) “The transformation was not one that was breakthrough in nature. The elements of the drawing were basically the same work; family, friends and self and the same for the drawings. The only big breakthrough was the introduction of own business, a hotel”.
- b) “My overall view is that the transformation and overall picture is a bit ambiguous?”
- c) “The created future seemed to have a weak affect and vision and consisted more of questions than any specific answers. However, the coaching process seemed to have unlocked existential questions that had previously had not been explored”.
- d) “There was no major difference in the nature of the pre and post drawings and the created future seemed sketchy. Drawing did however indicate work life balance and happiness, self-development”.

The AI matrix indicated evidence of the creation of new knowledge as a result of the coaching programme, according to the coding rules. However, the evidence was sparser for this transformative theme, and in general the outcomes were more specific to each individual, rather than representing a total collective transformation of knowledge as a group.

In coding the data for new knowledge, the data needed to show that the LCP led to the creation of new knowledge that served as a new reference point or foundation. The presence of new knowledge assumes new possibilities for the individual and a new way of looking at the world. These are reflected in the following quotes obtained from the text:

- a) “I do have enough time to do everything I want to without being rushed”
- b) “I have learnt how to manage my energy effectively”

- c) "I have learned about other people"
- d) "This has opened my mind"
- e) "The planning skills was new for me"
- f) "My mind-set and feelings are more visual now"
- g) "My overall approach to leadership and life has changed"
- h) "The biggest learning was setting my career objectives"
- i) "Secondly, thinking deeply through my life set me free"
- j) "Better understanding of coaching and the value it can add to leading and managing others".
- k) "Think carefully about the future if you do not create it properly it can ruin you it must be in sync with your identity and that of your community"
- l) "Personal and professional lives are always intertwined and the balance between these is important"
- m) "Understanding of coaching and mentoring, leading and communicating for the first time I looked at myself in detail"
- n) "All professional interactions are an opportunity to grow"
- o) "I feel like I am more focused in my work life and have a sense of purpose"
- p) "Because I understand myself more I am more tolerable"
- q) "Being in the group gave me a different perspective. We can achieve anything no matter what and the taste of sweet victory reflection unlocks the prison of our mind".
- r) "Everything is possible once the determination is in place"

Comments from the coders included the following statements in relation to new knowledge:

- a) "He was focussed on acquiring skills to add more value on the business and develop further".
- b) "Related to further education - to study and grow as an individual. She also came to realise that she should fulfil being a motivator in whatever position she fulfils – studies will unlock my potential".
- c) "The prospects of even becoming a top Country Businessman or Political Activist are suddenly possibilities for him".
- d) "Evidence of a change in thinking of future and career development through further development and studying. Focus on more on life-work balance than work-life balance and on achievement with ethical behaviour."

In summary, with respect to new knowledge, this seemed to be quite varied and individualised, rather than having one or two collective group themes emerging. It is postulated that this might be as a result of the multicultural diversity within the group and the differences in national culture and background, specifically with respect to collaboration not being part of the cultures of some members (Finegold, Holland & Linghan, 2002). Although participants drew strength from knowing that they had a lot in common with other group members, this did not necessarily translate into an overriding transformation in how they saw the world as a group.

However the new knowledge and opening up of possibilities was seen to be profound enough to indicate that transformation had occurred. Major themes related to learning about the self, learning new skills, the value of education and the opening up of enormous possibilities for the individuals was noted.

Where data sets were not coded as new knowledge, this means that individuals would still have the same possibilities in their narrative and drawings, still constrained by the same set of beliefs. These are indicated with the following coder examples:

- a) "No specific evidence of new knowledge gained"
- b) "Limited in terms of being able to identify if new knowledge has been acquired."
- c) "Purely based on evidence I have selected no"
- d) "Limited with regards to new information or something new that was never considered before"
- e) "No clear evidence of actual acquisition of new insights or knowledge"
- f) "More a reshuffling of current processes"
- g) "More questions than answers"
- h) "Search for meaning Yes, some evidence - but made nothing of it"

The AI coding matrix showed a strong case for the creation of numerous collective generative metaphors or data sets that were able to describe or produce a common reference point/symbol that would guide the participants to see the world through a new lens or through new possibilities. The metaphor created needs to be persistent across the case and one that evokes a shared meaning between individuals.

A number of generative metaphors were developed from the raw data, and the integration of a set of core generative metaphors common to the group is outlined later in the chapter. The following is a sampling of the source statements relating to generative metaphors:

- a) "I work to live, not live to work. I love my work, but I want to love my life. I am in the driver's seat"
- b) "Moving forward and reaching new heights goals are powerful mountain"
- c) "The future is in my hands. I am sharpening my life skills as well as business understanding skills while still pursuing my personal life's goals"
- d) "*Wat ek is, is net genade. Wat ek het is net geleen.* Impact other people's lives for the positive. Career development is a tree which needs nurturing"

- e) "At a cross roads - similar to the others in the group"
- f) "Career development is a long term journey"
- g) "Manage my life better, oil, polish and pump myself up!!"
- h) "Entrepreneur" "Start my dream - brick by brick"
- i) "I am the Captain of my own ship because I want to overcome the storm and not drown"

These generative metaphors were repeated across various individuals and represented both in the text and the drawings. Having a strong picture of performance and a strong metaphor as represented in the final drawing seems to provide a useful tool for understanding and making sense of identity, as well as helping the individuals think in the longer term and in more ambiguous terms. The majority of metaphors seemed to relate to objects in nature, such as mountains and trees, or man-made objects, such as roads, cars and ships. A more detailed description and discussion of these generative metaphors will be provided in the thematic analysis section of this chapter.

#### **6.4.2. Psychological impact coding matrix as applied to individual data sets**

The POB matrix presented as Table 6.3 indicated that there is transformation and shift across all the POB constructs under exploration. The highest shift was in the construct of hope, and in descending order, resilience, confidence and subjective-wellbeing.

This indicates that it is worthwhile to explore these constructs as part of the thematic analysis and use the findings to confirm that there is a robust agreement between coders and within the findings, adding to the credibility of the findings. The findings should be seen in this context and not as an attempt to prove reliability or power in terms of traditional quantitative research methods.

Table 6.3 Findings of coaching data sets using Positive Organisational constructs

Case #	Country	Confidence Pre	Confidence Post	Hope Pre	Hope Post	Subjective well-being Pre	Subjective Well-being Pre2	Resilience Pre	Resilience Pre2
1	Tanzania	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2	Namibia	Blank	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
3	Sri Lanka	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
4	South Africa	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes
5	South Africa	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
6	Mozambique	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	South Africa	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
8	Namibia	Yes	Yes	No	?	No	Yes	?	Yes
9	Namibia	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
10	Ethiopia	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
11	Ethiopia	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
12	Vietnam	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
13	Tanzania	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
14	Tanzania	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
15	Tanzania	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
16	Namibia	Blank	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
17	Kenya	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
18	Kenya	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
19	Nepal	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
20	Cambodia	Blank	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
21	Uganda	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes
22	Uganda	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
23	South Africa	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes

24	Mozambique	No	Yes	No	?	?	Yes	No	?
25	South Africa	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	Yes
26	Ethiopia	Blank	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
27	Mozambique	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
28	Kenya	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
29	South Africa	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
30	Uganda	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
31	Uganda	?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes
32	Uganda	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
33	Ethiopia	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
34	Uganda	?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes
35	Uganda	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
36	Kenya	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes
37	Uganda	?	Yes	No	?	No	Yes	?	Yes
38	South Africa	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
39	Mozambique	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
40	Kenya	No	Yes	No	?	No	Yes	?	Yes
41	Tanzania	?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes
42	Kenya	?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes
43	Sri Lanka	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
44	Kenya	?	Blank	Blank	Blank	?	Yes	?	Blank
45	Namibia	No	Yes	No	?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
46	Cambodia	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	?	?	Yes
47	Nepal	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
48	Ethiopia	No	Yes	No	?	?	Yes	?	Yes
49	Ethiopia	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes
50	Ethiopia	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	No	Yes
51	Vietnam	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
52	Nepal	?	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes
53	South Africa	Yes	Yes	No	?	No	Yes	?	Yes



54	Sri Lanka	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
55	South Africa	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	Yes	?	Yes

The POB agreement rates are presented in Table 6.4. There is a strong agreement rate between coders on both the pre- and post-programme coding of the POB constructs, which should give the reader confidence in the assumptions and premises that flow out of the thematic analysis. The risk of confirmation bias has been strongly mitigated by using multiple coders and using this measure of agreement across all three raters.

However, in the case of the constructs of confidence and resilience, as measured in the pre-coding phase, there was not a strong agreement rate between coders, as marked in yellow. This will be explored in the thematic analysis.

**Table 6.4 POB agreement rates**

<b>AI Variable</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>% Yes</b>	<b>Agreement Rate %</b>	<b>Shift pre to post score %</b>
<b>Confidence Pre</b>	55	(n=16) 29.09%	41.82	
<b>Confidence Post</b>	55	(n=52) 94.54%	94.55	<b>66.45+</b>
<b>Hope Pre</b>	55	None (No=94.55%)	94.55	
<b>Hope Post</b>	55	(n=41) 74.54%	74.55	<b>74.55+</b>
<b>Subjective Well Being Pre</b>	55	(n=18) 32.72%	60.00	
<b>Subjective Well Being Post</b>	55	(n=52) 94.54%	94.55	<b>61.82+</b>

<b>Resilience Pre</b>	55	(n=4) 7.27%	20.00	
<b>Resilience Post</b>	55	(n=51) 92.97%	92.73	<b>72.73+</b>

The first construct in the POB matrix relates to confidence. This was coded in the pre- and post-programme narratives and drawings. In general, there were three key observations in this set of data.

Firstly, it was evident that many of the individuals expressed low levels of confidence at the start of the programme. In order to be selected for this programme, participants would have already showed potential as a leader within the organisation based on their performance, abilities, aspirations and level of engagement. This would suggest that the individuals would have had to demonstrate and hold a positive and confident attitude, and this was not always evident in the narratives.

The following statements taken from leader participants' narratives and coder comments at the beginning of the programme provide examples of lower levels of confidence, which, as stated, is surprising in a group of high-potential candidate leaders.

- a) "Getting caught up in work pressures and having to work over time to ensure she met her deadlines"
- b) "Not much information to go on to indicate confidence"
- c) "Life challenging – able to cope with only work challenges not both work and family, friends"
- d) "Limited evidence of confidence and uncertain"
- e) "Definitely worried more than focused on positive"
- f) "Quite focused on his weaknesses being too sensitive not a good communicator"

- g) "Before the programme there was a level of uncertainty that existed based on his drawings and written work with many obstacles and barriers. He wrote: I need to be stronger than I was in my childhood"
- h) "Worry and diffused anxiety regarding the outcomes and anxiety about if he was for some reason unable to work e.g. sickness"
- i) "Visual evidence (drawings) indicated uncertainty of what to do and how to do it"
- j) "Drawings indicated uncertainty and sadness – focusing on the mountain in front of her"
- k) "Confused about how on earth I am going to cope with all the tasks and demands facing me"
- l) "Battling with balance - she focused more on the personal challenges and the impact they had on her life and focused more on the negatives than the positives and possibilities"
- m) "No clear evidence of confidence in her ability to handle things in her life"

Secondly, where the individuals started on the programme with a good or strong level of confidence, their confidence seemed to be reinforced as a result of the programme. A case in point was an individual leader participant who had high levels of confidence coming into the programme. This individual has made significant life choices which led them to leave their home country and move to a developing country as a mission worker, and through their role had witnessed and been part of rebuilding the country's psyche and culture after a war to make something beautiful. In this case, at the end of the programme, the level of confidence for this individual was reinforced, with no major changes evident, but still remaining highly positive. There were other data sets in which confidence was clearly expressed at the start of the programme, and the coders' comments include the following statements:

- a) "Clearly confident in his ability to be successful in life - work, family, personal"
- b) "Confidence rooted in God even though bad things happen God will help him"

- c) “Clearly confident in his ability to be successful in life – work, family, personal unsure but aware she is on the brink of change”
- d) “Clear passion and confidence in her ability – feels she is better than where she is currently I need to be analytical and work long hours to deal with future”

Thirdly, where individuals had started with less confidence at the beginning of the programme, the predominant and recurring theme was that there was an improvement in confidence in the narratives and text. These are illuminated in the following statements taken from the narratives and coders comments:

- a) “Less confident when he started than he is after the programme”
- b) “Improvement in both his work and life –‘I am the driver’. The goals he has set himself he believes he will achieve – this exhibits confidence in his ability”
- c) “Confidence expressed through specific challenging goals 10 years into future”
- d) “Life will provide not only luck but opportunities more positive thinking and belief in himself”
- e) “Dreams and visions for the future – this could also be considered as hope more than confidence”
- f) “A strongly articulated view of his own philosophy of life and leadership with a clear vision as well as development area which he will need to address”
- g) “Significant improvement in his level of confidence in his ability absolutely through finding purpose and aligning god given talents to a created future”
- h) “More relaxed away from work, allowed her the opportunity to reflect and refocus on the future coaching process. This strengthened confidence through positive feedback from others about strengths as well as role models within the group and facilitators”
- i) “Stronger and more overt confidence evident in the post notes directly as a result of sense of control on self-efficacy over own future”

- j) “Significant improvement in his level of confidence - ‘the first study school gave me a spark’. The goals he has set himself he believes he will achieve – this exhibits confidence in his ability more pronounced confidence about being a manager and having financial freedom”
- k) “More self-belief and knows what she wants to achieve strength achievement mastery maturity reaching prowess academically, professionally and politically”
- l) “The goals he has set himself he believes he will achieve – this exhibits confidence in his ability to work towards specific professional study and career goals, create a great team and family and create an alternative source of income through farming”
- m) “Clear Visual picture of where he sees himself in 2019. He also indicated that there are short-long term goals and being encouraged to pursue and achieve them. Absolute clarity that achievement of life vision will be achieved”
- n) “More self-belief and knows what she wants to achieve almost manically confident in ability to achieve so many goals realistic?”
- o) “Definite positive outlook on life and on achieving her objectives. Clearly motivated and excited about what the future holds”.
- p) “Significant improvement in his confidence and changes in positive thinking and what he wants and will achieve through prayer hard word and managing politics ‘see myself flying higher””
- q) “Definite improvement in her confidence and changes in positive thinking and what she wants and will achieve ‘not only do I have a dream but I have a plan for my future””

The narratives and themes related to hope are intriguing and complex, because they are so startling in direction. Beginning with feelings of despair to those of enthusiasm and evidence, and both goal-directed determination and pathways (plans) to meet goals.

Because hope is a fleeting emotion (Snyder & Lopez, 2010) it may be difficult to articulate through the media of drawing and writing, and perhaps it is easier to elicit through an interview. Perhaps this is why the coders found it relatively difficult to find evidence of hope in the drawings and text.

A smorgasbord of comments and statements related to hope follow:

- a) “Regardless of culture we have similar backgrounds hopes and dreams planning and prioritizing one's work tasks and life better in order to meet deadlines and achieve goals without putting strain on oneself and family”
- b) “...in a diverse team highlights our commonalities, hopes and fears”
- c) “Dreams and visions for the future – this could also be considered as hope more than confidence – a strongly articulated view of his own philosophy of life and leadership with a clear vision as well as development area which he will need to address”
- d) “Hope was evident but related to the activities of the week and the ability to manage daily interactions such as going for a daily walk and calling home once a day. This was in contrast to the original essay in which the normal day to day activities at home which make it difficult to cope with long hours lack of exercise and sleep”
- e) “No real discussion of hope. There is evidence of determination and passion in pre work but no real indication of plans – this is more relevant in post work just keep your head down to cope”
- f) “Hope – evident with a definite plan for the future 10-15 years from career and personal development, for the farm and for her children”
- g) “Hope for own future as one of significance in own life, nuclear family, career as well as in the community”
- h) “Specific mention of what he wants to achieve and plans to achieve - on how to make it happen with a clear indication of hope to achieve them”

- i) "Hope through self-determination and disciplined execution of a plan. Confident in ability to achieve this"
- j) "A new chapter begins with a clearer determination and specific goals"
- k) "More room for improvement in crystallisation of determination and goals the next 10 years are full of hope and this includes the theme of weaving my real passion for art with professional goals"
- l) "Definite 10 year plan and contingency plans and determination to take it upon himself to meet his plan/goals"
- m) "Indications of being unhappy in current situation and unsure of how to achieve her goals or dreams prior to the programme not coping"
- n) "Indications of not being where she wanted to be, not having achieved her dreams and journey of ups and downs, which I believe could have impacted her confidence and hope"

There was a remarkable shift in the narrative at the end of the coaching programme. At the start of the LCP there was little indication of hope in the pre-programme work (writing or drawings), and in some instances an explicit statement of despair, particularly related to being unable to manage the day-to-day challenges of work and life. For the first time, explicit statements of hope were evident. The coding for hope requires that positive anticipation of the future is coupled with a plan and goal-directed behaviour, and this provided a strong case for the transformative effect of the coaching programme on this critical psychological construct.

The bold and clear nature of the statements in the essays was particularly exciting to uncover and read as it provided such a startling change from the narratives at the beginning of the programme. Could it be that the mere act of making a plan and taking the first step is so empowering as to impact a fairly robust psychological construct? If so, this provides a strong case for the education of robust planning skills for leaders in transition.

The construct of subjective well-being requires that the total sum of the cognitive and emotional reactions that the individual experiences when they compare what they have and do in life with their aspirations, needs, and other expectations be positive. This means that the individual considers what they have and do at the 'head, heart and hands' level as generally positive compared to what their expectations and aspirations are. The inclusion of the cognitive component should have made it easier to identify common themes and patterns in the narratives, but in many data sets, unless explicitly positive or negative, the evidence was sparse or lacking. Examples of positive states of subjective well-being include the following excerpts from the narrative and coder comments:

- a) "Positive outlook and knows what he wants to achieve - smiling"
- b) "Blessed with a wonderful wife and child receive unconditional love"
- c) "Knows what he wants to achieve - get away from the rat race"
- d) "Happy that my bosses had recognised me"
- e) "I am a happy man - fulfilled and privileged"
- f) "Very appreciative and very happy"
- g) "Realised she needs to be the captain of her own ship and take control prior to the programme"
- h) "Previously had an external locus of control but had come to the realisation that you could take own future into your own hands so he went to college worked hard and received a promotion"
- i) "Good relationship with my boss and family – good start to the year, opened small business, joined gym, attending church, keeping time aggressively"

Those individuals who were more negative in their subjective well-being state at the start of the programme were fairly outspoken in their first essays and drawings about



how unhappy they were very early on in the programme, indicating just how strong their thoughts and feelings in this regard were. Examples and excerpts follow:

- a) "Worried quite a bit according to written essay. Too sensitive and emotional"
- b) "Quite nervous about the programme"
- c) "Focused on the negative impact of work on his social life"
- d) "Work stress – indications of work getting her depressed at times due to pressure and work load demands"
- e) "Work is taking an enormous amount of time both during and after work. 'Life is made up only of work drudgery and no choice but to continue on the treadmill'"
- f) "Seemed disassociated from work and using intellectualisation"
- g) "Visual indication of sadness, tired, burnt out and not sustainable to balance all demands. The death of her father impacted on her well-being as she blocked out pain, emotional gaps and issues/concerns the death had on her life"
- h) "Time – it does not belong to me. I am not in control"
- i) "Frustration and difficulty dealing with some people and the way some people approach work. Frustrated and conflict with others but happy with marriage"
- j) "The way some people approach work creates conflict for me"
- k) "Exhausted – struggles with stress and demands in the workplace and also finds life a little bit boring at present. Very emotional and getting angry"
- l) "Passion and believes she has the ability, but there is a sense of she should be better off than what she is now because work consumes me"
- m) "Was highly critical of himself and thought he was a failure work consuming too much of my time poor work life balance"

- n) "Self-doubt, low self-esteem prior to the programme overwrought with mounds of obstacles – He has a vision but sees obstacles all around him"
- o) "Experienced some low points in life and his development which impacted his outlook negatively. Based on visual drawing there was extreme amount of uncertainty in every aspect of his life"
- p) "Significant improvement in developing oneself to be a better leader, manager and coach. Indications of contributing to the nation of Ethiopia, specifically in education in control of both future as well as current work life integration"
- q) "A lot more relaxed and at ease because the other areas of my life are "

The dominant subjective well-being state, as articulated at the end of the programme through writing and drawing and in the essays, was positive in nature for most leader participants. Thoughts and feelings of self-belief were strengthened and the success of simple behavioural changes after the programme had further led to a sense of positivity about life in the 'here and now' and their ability as individuals to actually achieve their dreams. These simple acts included more work-life balance, exercise, time management, planning skills and connecting more with others, all which provide data points for the individuals from which to move forward. Examples of statements from the data include the following:

- a) "Greater focus on work-life balance – spending more time relaxing and enjoying life and on things that make him happy"
- b) "Infused with energy to achieve a number of goals. Very specific three year plan regarding studies to qualify professionally and to make it happen"
- c) "Seems to be hopeful in the extreme – unrealistic?"
- d) "More self-belief and focused more on the positive implicitly implied through love and close relationships and ability to provide for family and parents"
- e) "Positive outlook and knows what she wants to achieve By identifying and helping her deal with her father's death, she changed her way of thinking and is

focusing on growing as a person and impacting other people's lives positively.  
Excitement about my future”

- f) “More self-belief and focused more on the positive in control excited driven and energised”
- g) “Calm and purposeful”
- h) “Very productive changes in behaviour such as reading and listening actively”
- i) “Image of a beautiful successful and fulfilled woman”
- j) “Very positive – published article about his experiences in company magazine”
- k) “Appreciates what he has achieved positive outlook and knows what he wants to achieve and people around him have noticed the changes”
- l) “Being first in office saves me traffic jam time and makes me more efficient”
- m) “I wake up every day happy with joy a life of celebration”

Resilience requires that there is evidence of a psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility (Connor, Davidson, & Davidson, 2003) The data set at the start of the programme lacked evidence of resilience in any form and the coders struggled to find clear evidence of resilience as a construct in the pre-work data.

However, there was a strong sense of resilience in the data set at the end of the programme and in the essays of leader participants.

The fact that participants had a long-term, well-articulated vision for the future, as represented by their ‘created future’, came through as the catalyst for building a strong sense of resilience amongst the individuals and group as a whole. It is as if having control of the future builds the psychological capacity to deal with ambiguity, change, and even failure, and come back from these challenges even stronger and more empowered.

The personal 'created future' is a unique element in this coaching programme, in which the leader participants set a vision 10 years in the future 'in technicolour' through drawing and then writing it out. The essays received from the leader participants certainly support the fact that the act of doing this holds power for the individual's overall psychological strength (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The art of visioning a future is a learned and new skill in most data sets, and it is useful in itself.

The act of presenting this vision in a public forum in the plenary group session and receiving strong reinforcement and celebration of the created future would also add an adrenaline-induced emotional surge or experience for the individual, thus providing a platform for a highly charged state that could induce real change in the resilience state of the individual over time. Examples of resilience articulated in the data are presented in the following excerpts:

- a) "Evidence of looking to be more involved and impacting others and being a better leader"
- b) "Indications that he has experienced some tough situation and he still looks to develop himself"
- c) "Definitely maintained and strengthened resilience through longer term view maintained his thinking"
- d) "Created Future is clear and specific of where he sees himself and how he will go about achieving it to continue to reach my future. Will require hard work and discipline and a purposeful choice"
- e) "Clear evidence due to the fact that he has contingency plans and provided options for where he sees himself in 10 years and that his future lies in his hands increased energy and sustainability to achieve future goals"
- f) "Plans for future and what she wants and how she plans on achieving this. Clear discussions and support with her family too. Subject had found her inner strength and identity as leader this was immutable and now unshakeable"

- g) "... resilience to tackle new challenges such as MBA"
- h) "Focusing more on positives and enjoying life"
- i) "Hero leader in for the long haul"
- j) "Specific in terms of what to focus on, what he wants out of life and to do things that make him happy and develop further. Self-efficacy; self-determination and high levels of focussed energy"
- k) "Reliance on his faith and knows he will be successful definite long term energy and determination to succeed"
- l) " Essay infused with strength and leadership metaphors"
- m) "Her Created Future has clear and specific goals which she will achieve and through her life experiences she will be able to deal with anything";
- n) "Strength of character"
- o) "I will not accept external locus of control as a given, my dream and my plans transcend any situation"
- p) "Although her essay seemed a bit scattered, her Created Future has clear and specific goals which she will achieve and through her life experiences she will be able to deal with anything"

This brings the coding analysis discussion to an end.

#### **6.4.3 Focus group discussion themes**

The focus group discussions generated a number of themes (set 3), which were identified by the groups. These related to work-life balance, politics in the workplace, career development, personal development, leading teams, uncertainty and capability challenges. In general, the discourses indicate a mounting pressure to perform and achieve and ever-diminishing resources to manage the competing demands of work and life. This, coupled with the pressures of managing a team, lack of capability and

resources and creeping politics in the workplace created a picture of a tough environment with little internal controls and coping resources to deal with the demands. This can be explained by the fact that this was a group of mid-level managers who were in their first middle management role, traditionally a high-pressure role with many new competing demands. This information is used as context for the thematic analysis.

## **6.5 THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

The thematic analysis process generated a set of key findings, which are presented in sequence as the categories of information and themes emerged during the thematic analysis. In conducting the thematic analysis, key words and phrases were identified and documented from data sets 1 to 5. These were then clustered according to emerging themes which were reviewed and then adjusted. It was at this point that the structure for the Integrated Model of the Transformative Effects of Postmodern Group-based Leadership Coaching emerged (Figure 6.50), with a comprehensive graphical overview of the transformative themes, higher order outcomes, central processes, generative metaphors, prevailing outcomes for leader participants, personal insights, enabling tools, premises and integrated themes. The integrated model was used to organise the findings from the thematic analysis according to clusters and categories of findings.

The emergence of the integrated model was a natural process arising from the coding and thematic analysis. It was, however, an unexpected consequence of the process, because the initial expectation was only to identify a set of transformative themes and a few tentative premises. The discovery of the depth of insights, processes, outcomes, themes and premises was in part due to the rich data set that was available from both the individual leader's drawings, essays and narratives, as well as the interpretative data provided by the coders. This integrated model provided clarity and resonance to the findings, providing a framework for the reader to follow the discovery process of the analysis through to its final conclusions.

The various elements of the thematic analysis will now be presented and discussed.

### **6.5.1 Higher order outcome of the LCP**

The first key observation in the data was the emergence of a clear higher order outcome or purpose for the LCP. The stated core aim of the LCP was to empower individuals in terms of establishing optimal and sustainable leadership of and independence in both their career and personal lives (Vansteenkiste, 2011). What emerged from the data was an explicit and clear message by participants that the coaching programme provided a means to liberate personal leadership identity and personal purposes through postmodern coaching.

This matched to the stated outcome of postmodern coaching with the aim of “facilitation of the coaching dialogue with the objectives (1) of strengthening a sense of coherence in the coachee’s self -identity, and (2) of coupling various events and integrating past, present and future into a whole” (Stelter, 2009 p. 9-10).

The objective of the LCP also mirrors the intention of AI, which is to search for the best in people and the world (Cooperrider et al., 2008), and supports the outcome of leadership coaching for clarity of vision and purpose (Ting, 2006).

Furthermore, it is argued that the higher order outcome of personal liberation and purpose achieved during the LCP can be explained through the four levels of learning as described by Whitelaw et al. (2004). The phases of learning do not necessarily move smoothly, but are characterised by “fits and starts, failures and regressions” (Snyder, 2008). The first level, elaborating existing frames of reference, refers to the ability to “differentiate and elaborate the previously acquired meaning schemas that we take for granted, or learning within the structure of our acquired frames of reference” (Mezirow, 2000).

The second level, learning new frames of reference, refers to the creation of “new meanings that are sufficiently consistent and compatible with existing meaning perspectives to complement rather than by extending their scope” (Mezirow, 2000).

The third level of learning, transforming points of view, proposes a state of learning in which it is acknowledged that beliefs have become dysfunctional, causing us to

experience “a growing sense of the inadequacy of our old ways of seeing and understanding meaning” (Mezirow, 2000).

The fourth level, transforming habits of mind, is characterised by awareness, “through reflection and critique, of specific presuppositions upon which distorted or incomplete meaning perspective is based and then transforming that perspective through a reorganisation of meaning” (Mezirow, 2000).

Once they had completed the coaching process, comments from leader participants related to the power of self-insight as a transformative tool. Some examples include the following statements as written by leader participants:

- a) “This was the first time I sat back and did research on myself and my purpose in life”
- b) “Consciousness moves our life to be more successful, purposeful and delightful”
- c) “Self-awareness is critical to being a leader”

The liberation of personal and leadership purpose was identified as a common narrative, and this became evident in statements related to freedom and choice:

- a) “Secondly, thinking deeply through my life set me free”
- b) “Being set free by reflecting deeply about my past present and future”
- c) “To take control and break free”
- d) “Nothing is impossible to the willing heart”
- e) “I feel like I am more focused in my work life and have a sense of purpose”
- f) “To be the best I can be! Be purposeful and planned about the future”
- g) “I feel fully realised as if I was born for this new position with conscious move our life will be more successful, purposeful and delightful”



- h) "Through finding purpose and aligning my God given talents to a created future"
- i) "I am empowered and more purposeful"
- j) "Feel calm and purposeful"
- k) "To continue to reach my future will require hard work and discipline and a purposeful choice"

The development of a clear leadership identity was the second key component of the higher order outcome experienced by the leader participants. The text was infused with many leadership strength metaphors. A major theme that emerged across the data set was the discovery of the participants' leadership identity and leadership potential as a tangible, immutable and unshakeable truth. This resulted in the participants' discovery of a deeper inner strength.

In addition, the transition of their leadership identity from an individual focus to a broader leadership definition extended and crystallised to one that included leadership of their family, team and community. The initial zealous focus on work as an all-consuming passion was transformed into a vision that included professional achievement as well as time, space and energy to give leadership to the broader community and church. The following statements provide examples of written statements made by leader participants to this end:

- a) "My overall approach to leadership and life has changed"
- b) "I have leadership potential"
- c) "I had a complete transformation as a leader. Before I made all the decisions and all meetings were a waste of time as I did not appreciate the shop floor workers. I was pleasantly surprised that if you involve them and treat them as part of the team they take ownership"
- d) "I have become a confident leader of my life and people around me"
- e) "My identity as a professional leader, mother and wife with a good balance"

- f) "With extra capacity and capability to empower other leaders and my community"
- g) "Significant improvement in developing myself to be a better leader, manager and coach"
- h) "Winning spirit and me as leader walking the talk"
- i) "I am a better leader"
- j) "Taken up my leadership and have also enrolled for my MBA"
- k) "From a boring life to being a leader and adding value to my community"
- l) "My leadership role at work and wife and mother"
- m) "Leadership is not a learned model. It is about deciding to be a leader and influence others it is your responsibility as a leader to behave and act as a leader"
- n) "Anyone can be a leader regardless of what your job title. Just doing something as a piece of excellence will inspire others"

Some leader participants were also able to broaden their sights on achieving a key leadership position or supporting the nation, and the theme of leaving a legacy as a leader was an important outcome of the text and drawings. Statements taken from the text of leader participants to support this statement include the following:

- a) "This lead to me developing a philosophy of leadership and life";
- b) "Leaving a legacy as a leader all whilst keeping position as man of God"
- c) "After if I take up my leadership I can achieve sweet victory not only for myself but my country"
- d) "...my leadership legacy (after)...."
- e) "Leadership is a journey of maturity"

- f) “Leadership legacy – believe in yourself and you will achieve great things. Leadership is a journey of maturity”

Leader participants identified the need to lead through others and having the right skills to do this with credibility as a critical insight on leadership. The following statements illuminate this theme:

- a) “Being a good communicator is critical to leadership success”
- b) “Appreciation for others is the key to leadership and success”
- c) “Leadership is more than management”
- d) “Leadership creates bonds as strong as a family”
- e) “Lead by example and then you will be a leader. Be punctual and a role model”
- f) “Leadership is not only about self it is about the people around you”
- g) “Leadership is about bringing out the individual talents and strengths of team members”
- h) “Leadership is powerful; listening provides relational connections and success”

In summary then, the higher order outcome of the LCP was perceived by participants to be a positive experience, providing a rare opportunity to gain self-insight, and in so doing to redefine or clarify one’s personal purpose and leadership identity. The leadership identity is obtained through a broader perspective of what leadership stands for, and requires going beyond self to include others at the family, team and community level, in order to achieve success.

### **6.5.2 Central processes**

The process and underlying methodology of the LCP was discussed in Chapter 4. However, two central processes related to methodology were identified during the thematic analysis, and these are presented because they seemed to be most valuable

to the participants. These core processes are, firstly, the act of conscious mindfulness, and secondly, self-reflection.

#### **6.5.2.1 Act of conscious mindfulness**

Firstly, in terms of conscious mindfulness, the participants seemed pleasantly surprised to be provided the space, time and skills to think and to use this to appreciate their strengths, talents and potential. Sample statements from their written text include the following:

- a) "Conscious mindfulness leads to success"
- b) "By thinking carefully about my future and being mindful of it was important"
- c) "It helps me identify my strengths and weaknesses"
- d) "By being conscious of myself I am able to unlock my future"
- e) "By analysing my life I am now able to appreciate it"
- f) "Reflection unlocks the prison of our mind"
- g) "The inward reflection aroused intense emotions"
- h) "Being conscious about me and life and work leads to preferred future"

These indicated that the process of a structured metacognitive process and conscious thinking about their self, their career and themselves as leaders provided a valuable and useful mechanism for unlocking their knowledge of self. Even more so, it opened up 'mind maps' and visions for their future career, life and being as leaders.

According to Taylor (2008a), critical reflection of assumption (CRA) refers to "the conscious and explicit reassessment of the consequence and origin of our meaning structures", using techniques such as journaling, reflective dialogue and critical questioning to develop these skills (Taylor, 2008a, p.5).

The findings relate to the transformative learning process described by Fetherson and Kelly (2007) as self-reflection and the critical reflection of assumptions (CRA). By being

critical of our personal perceptions (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004) we are able to re-evaluate our thinking and create new meaning.

### **6.5.2.2 Self-reflection**

The second central process that dominated the text was the process of self-discovery or the act of self-reflection. For many participants this was initially viewed with scepticism but later awe and appreciation for how powerful this simple process is.

Sample comments from participants include:

- a) "Revelation of the value of self-reflection as a catalyst for finding myself"
- b) "...discovery of my hidden talents..."
- c) "It takes work to unwrap your potential"
- d) "...self-knowledge is the key to success..."
- e) "A journey of discovery self-knowledge"
- f) "...knowing myself..."
- g) "... on self-awareness helped me find my self-identity..."
- h) "I understand myself more"
- i) "This was the first time I spent with myself"
- j) "For the first time I spend time with myself and reflect inwardly and spend time on my future. Nothing is impossible to the willing heart. Career success is birthed in self-discovery"
- k) "...knowing myself more I can achieve anything..."
- l) "I know myself better"
- m) "Self-awareness is critical to being a leader";

- n) “Self-awareness creates a confident air and this enables the right atmosphere for the team”;
- o) “Making time for the family and my self-awareness and deep knowledge of talent has empowered me to take up accountability for life and work”
- p) “It gave me an appreciation of myself and loving myself for who I am”
- q) “Examining myself for the first time”
- r) “Self-awareness helps the discovery process”

What was intriguing and interesting was that the lack of time, opportunity and skills to self-reflect was predominant in this group of high achievers, a poor reflection on the educational, tertiary and leadership development resources provided to young leaders. The opportunity and 'gift' to spend time on oneself at a critical transition time as leaders was highly valued and appreciated. Furthermore, this process of self-discovery was simultaneously achieved through the process of learning through others.

As one leader participant stated:

“Through fellowship among the group candidates I identified my hidden talents ... I feel supported to change my life and identify my hidden talents more self-belief and focused more on the positive grateful and thankful even eight months later”.

### **6.5.3 Transformative themes**

A group of dominant transformative themes emerged during the thematic analysis, and it is interesting to note that they emerged as polarities – “from/to” statements, indicating movement between two different states along a continuum. The following themes were identified through the process of layering and connecting ideas and themes, and they will now be discussed in more detail:

- From lack of self-awareness to 'knowing'
- From external challenges and demands that are uncontrollable to control of life (empowered)

- From reactive to proactive
- From immediate to long term
- From scattered/random to planned and directed/directional
- From a small worldview to broader big-picture thinking
- From individual contributor to leader
- From arrogance to appreciation
- From 'comfortable' to achievement oriented/having driving force

It was evident that these were achieved through the two central processes described by the participants as conscious mindfulness and personal reflection.

There was the opportunity to further cluster these themes, and these integrated themes/outcomes are discussed in 6.6. However, it is felt that this would detract from the richness and detail of the themes as they stand, and that the integration of these themes would emerge with more meaning after the discussion on emerging premises. The illumination of each identified theme follows with excerpts and examples from the data sets.

#### **6.5.3.1 From lack of self-awareness to 'knowing'**

The first emerging theme is the process of self-awareness that is an inherent component of the programme. By deploying the narrative principle (Binkert et al., 2007; Gordon, 2008a) through the use of stories, biographic work and peer reflection, transformation is set in motion from the first stage in the LCP by providing a richer, more personalised coaching experience through the use of social construction (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007).

According to Kets de Vries (2005), it is through sharing autobiographical stories that transformative development occurs, due to the power of the shared emotional experience of telling life stories, receiving feedback and support, and hope shared with other group members. It is very act of listening to another's story that creates a learning

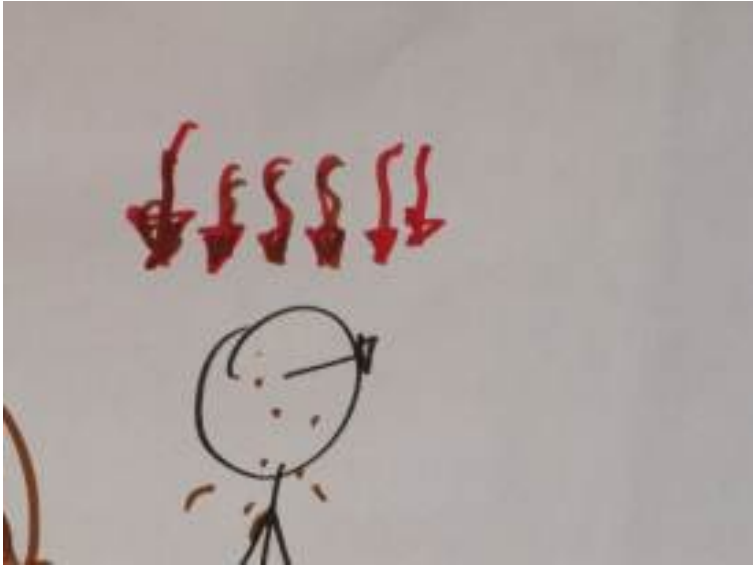
experience and helps build leadership skills such as empathic listening, with the proviso that trust must be evident and implicit in the interaction (Kets de Vries, 2005).

The coders found evidence of major shifts in self-awareness in the data collected before and after the coaching programme in the text:

- a) “Self-awareness and deep knowledge of talent has empowered him to take up accountability for life and work”
- b) “Knowing what he wants out of life, knowing where he wants to be and the plan to achieve it”
- c) “Has a set plan for the future to work towards”
- d) “Consciousness moves our life to be more successful, purposeful and delightful living – it provides insight in obtaining new self-knowledge to achieve my goals”
- e) “Self-determination and specific planning empower me”;
- f) “I have a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses”
- g) “It was a journey of discovery self-knowledge”
- h) “New insights have enabled me to look at life differently”
- i) “Every day is a journey for me. I know what I want - but I want it now I rediscovered who I am”
- j) “Self-awareness is critical to being a leader; creates a confident air and this enables the right atmosphere for the team”
- k) “Knowing myself more I can achieve anything”

The journey from confusion and lack of self-awareness to confident “knowing” of self is well depicted in Figure 6.3 – 6.7:





**Figure 6.3 Self-awareness (from) a**



**Figure 6.4 Self-awareness (to) a**

Figure 6.3 and Figure 6.4 are drawn by the same individual. In the Figure 6.3 there is a sense of worry and anxiety about what the situation and way forward is (sweat drops) falling off his face which is blank. In Figure 6.4 the individual is displaying emotion and is mindfully now considering a future – there are still questions but a lot of possibilities. The pictures have moved from a downward spiral to a list of possibilities.



**Figure 6.5 Self-Awareness (from) b**



**Figure 6.6 Self-awareness (to) b**

Figure 6.5 and Figure 6.6 drawn by the same individual and the first picture depicts pressures of work and life all drawing towards the individual with less distinct images. In the second picture there is more detail, more colour and a definite identity as a person with a specific and prominent place in the work and life space.



**Figure 6.7 Self-Awareness (from) c**

Figure 6.7 is a “before” picture and clearly shows uncertainty and a lack of identity of self or of the journey going forward.

### **6.5.3.2 From external challenges and demands that are uncontrollable to control of life (empowerment)**

AI claims to dramatically mobilise a new set of possibilities and choices that is so compelling that it would lead the individual towards complete transformation (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This was evident in the second transformative theme, which related to self-empowerment.

There was a marked difference in the findings and comments of leader participants between the start of the LCP (blaming others, team members, bosses, the organisation, lack of time) and comments after the LCP, in which the participants showed a strong internal locus of control and empowerment for their lives and destiny. This was strengthened by the creation of a strong 10-year vision, as well as a shorter term one-year plan, which were two specific outcomes of the programme.

The following statements begin with the comments made by participants at the beginning of the programme, and then move onto comments made at a later stage in

the programme. These comments expand the theme of self-awareness and its role in more detail:

Before:

- a) "Work holds me back from fulfilling my dreams and purpose"
- b) "Work dominating all my time – not sustainable “;
- c) "Work stress – Indications of work getting her depressed at times due to pressure and work load; work is taking an enormous amount of time both during and after work"
- d) "Struggles with stress and demands in the workplace and also finds life a little bit boring at present"
- e) "Work consumes me"
- f) "Difficulty in meeting deadlines in normal hours"
- g) "Tired from long lack of sleep"
- h) "Faced with uncertainty or adversity of work pressures"
- i) "Did make mention of a feeling of being trapped at work"
- j) "Work consuming too much of my time – poor work life balance"
- k) "Visual indication of sadness tired burning out not sustainable to balance all demands"
- l) "Life is made up only of work drudgery and no choice but to continue on the treadmill"
- m) "Disassociated from work through intellectualisation"

After:

- n) "Taking control in a structured planned process"

- o) “Knows that he must plan and how to plan”
- p) “Much stronger energy directed through specific goals, empowered and more purposeful”
- q) “Definite ten year plan and contingency plans and determination to take it upon herself to meet her plan/goals success as a professional and business women, whilst balancing work and life”
- r) “Had come to the realisation that you could take own future into your own hands so he went to college worked hard and received a promotion”
- s) “Work can and should be a delight“
- t) “Focus on work-life balance”
- u) “More positive outlook and feeling of a more balanced work/life”
- v) “Positive outlook and knows what she wants to achieve very productive changes in behaviour such as reading and listening actively”

The following three drawings (pre- and post-programme) depicted in Figures 6.8 – 6.10 reflect the transformation from a fragmentation between work and family life and the move to a more integrated, controlled story.



**Figure 6.8 Work-life fragmentation**

Figure 6.8 articulates a split between work life (unhappy faces rain fall) and home life which is intact and shows strong a sunny place with a firm relationship.



**Figure 6.9 Work-life integration a**

Figure 6.9 articulates a full and clear integrated picture of the various work, academic and home life aspects of their picture, It is coherent – clear without splitting and fragmentation.



**Figure 6.10 Work-life integration b**

Figure 6.10 depicts a sunny picture with clear integration between work and life elements – e.g. working from him; family; a playground.

### 6.5.3.3 From reactive to proactive

AI provides a paradigm that is a purposeful and conscious act of design (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The act of planning in the long and medium term during the LCP provided an opportunity for leader participants to experience a more proactive approach to dealing with life and work, and the following stories provide evidence for this theme:

- a) “Whilst his overall before picture was positive and upbeat it was reactive because he had relocated a few times because work required this. It was not part of his life plan and had been an inconvenience and disruption”

- b) “She became much clearer in terms of steps that she had laid out in a journey which included being flexible during change and being successful in her deployment of work duties and maintaining relationships. Her first step is a management role and finally leaving a leadership legacy”
- c) “He is stimulated by work challenges however, of a more reactive nature based in daily work challenges and problem solving. There were changes in his way of thinking from when he first started to work - He then realised that he needs to take control of his own destination and focused on what he wanted to achieve and take on more responsibility”.
- d) “Work for bosses and that’s it. Then changed to self-determination and he went to college and got promoted”.

The ability to take pre-emptive action and to take the initiative in life was seen as a key learning in the coaching programme.

#### **6.5.3.4 From immediate to long term**

AI purports to dramatically mobilise and free individuals to create a better future (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Along with a more proactive approach to life and work, the leader participants were explicit in their appreciation for the opportunity to spend time in the future in envisioning a plan for their lives. This was then brought back into the current reality through a pragmatic planning tool for the following twelve months. This had an impact on the total experience of participants and changed the narrative from that of an immediate focus to that of a longer term focus, including ideals, dreams and lofty goals. Examples from the text and drawings are used to further illuminate this theme:

- a) “Plans moved from short to long term thinking, from an inward focus to broader possibilities outside of current scenario”
- b) “Moved from day to day to long term structured plan”

- c) “Big Picture thinking, broader focus and specific goals spread between work, seeing the world and family or personal life”
- d) “More Global perspective than before”
- e) “Before I coped by focusing on daily tasks rather than long term thinking”
- f) “Career development is a long term journey”
- g) “Clear Visual picture of where he sees himself in 2019. He also indicated that there are short-long term goals and being encouraged to pursue and achieve them. Absolute clarity that achievement of life vision will be achieved”
- h) “Definite long term plan and determination to take it upon herself to meet her plan/goals. Idealistic view of the future with a much stronger spiritual orientation and power derived from this and expressed through family”
- i) “Definite plan in place, knows what he needs to do it, clear indication of desire to do it and a will to do it no matter what. Reliance on his faith and knows he will be successful definite long term energy and determination to succeed”

Figures 6.11 – 6.13 depict the transformation from immediate to long term.



**Figure 6.11 Immediate here-and-now orientation**





**Figure 6.12 The Bridge to the Future – medium term**



**Figure 6.13 Long-term plan**

Figure 6.11 – Figure 6.13 were drawn by the same individual and tell a story of who the individual was able to move from an orientation in the present (work and life today) to one in which there were long terms plans for marriage, travel, career and family plans. Figure 6.12 depicts the journey/bridge of plans that will be actioned to reach the created future.

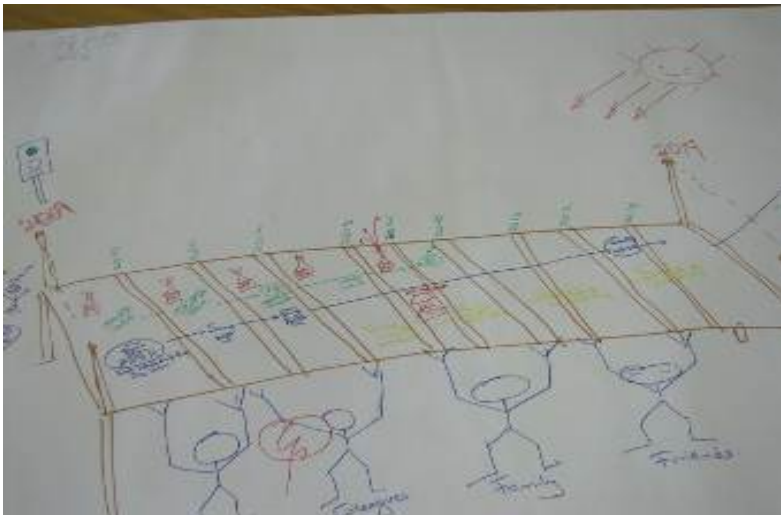
#### **6.5.3.5 From scattered/random to planned and directed/directional**

It is important to note that at the beginning of the programme, many individuals spontaneously indicated confusion about which direction to follow and also some

uncertainty in making critical decisions. This was evident in many of the first drawings, and the following two examples (Figure 6.14 – 6.15) depict this well:



**Figure 6.14 Confusion a**



**Figure 6.15 Confusion as to direction a**

Figure 6.14 depicts an individual standing at a cross roads with a question mark – not sure which way to go. Figure 6.15 depicts an individual trying to hold up numerous priorities on a table but having to fragment himself into parts to play all his roles.



**Figure 6.16 Confusion b**



**Figure 6.17 Confusion as to direction b**

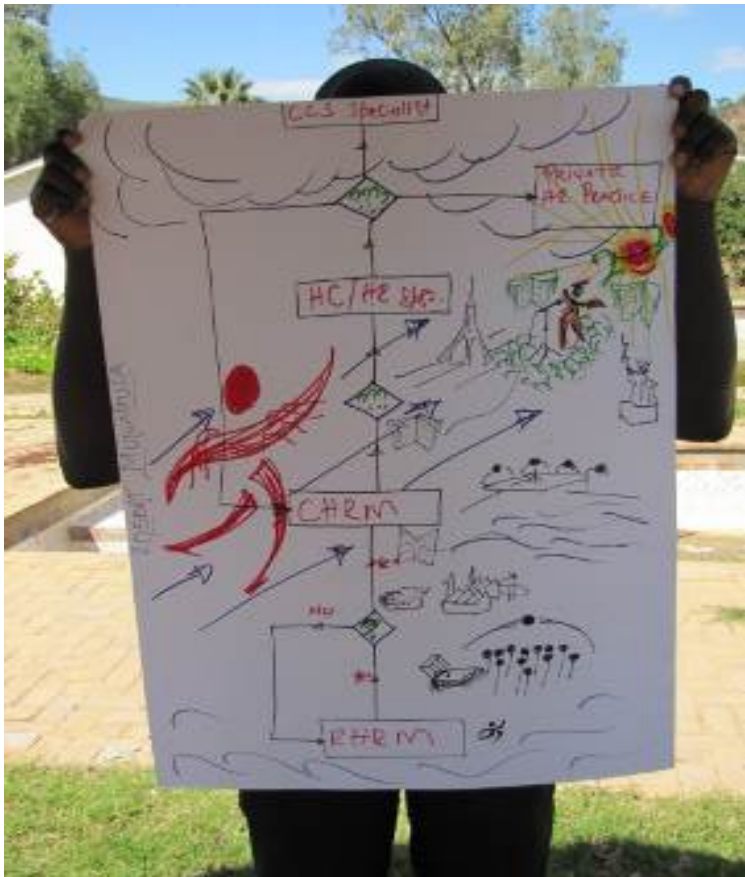
Figure 6.16 and Figure 6.17 were drawn by the same individual, clearly showing a shift from confusion and uncertainty to a strong stance clearly knowing her place in the world.

It was therefore interesting to follow this trend and to note that none of the drawings or essays after the LCP indicated confusion or uncertainty about key decisions. This indicates that leader participants were able to build their capability to lead themselves with direction and were no longer confused about which direction to follow. The working

towards their created futures was the catalyst for providing a long-term plan and direction and pathway in which to achieve their dreams and goals.

The Design phase of the 4-D model refers to the planned intentionality by sequencing the steps for enabling realisation of the created future (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The following drawing (Figure 6.18) shows the directional quality of the dreams of leader participants:



**Figure 6.18 Direction**

Figure 6.18 shows a positive forward and upward direction (vertically in the career plan) and then across the whole picture as a strong and empowered individual (the red figure).

### 6.5.3.6 From small worldview to broader-picture thinking

The leader participants on the programme showed a strong shift from thinking in a limited and self-constrained manner to big-picture thinking, and they seemed to be bolder in terms of the scope and shape of their boundaries. This could be as a result of being given the opportunity to vision freely without constraint, and this effect would have been further strengthened by the fact that the group were on an international programme, along with a very diverse and multicultural group. Examples of this transformation from a narrow to a broader worldview are provided in the following texts and drawings (Figure 6.19 – 6.20) to expand this theme:

- a) “Big Picture thinking – wanting to have more time to spend with family and friends and on his personal dreams of being a CEO or owning his own consultancy firm”
- b) “Plans in short to long term thinking. – from inward focus to broader possibilities outside of current scenario”
- c) “Big goals regarding his goals to be involved in the politics of his country and also what he wants to achieve in the workplace, whilst wanting to have more time to spend with family and friends”
- d) “Difference between the first and last drawings was not in substance – it remained a still a road but rather in the nature of the pictures. The second picture was one of absolute abundance”
- e) “Focus on what he wants to achieve personally and career wise from daily pressures as a sales rep to a medium term view”
- f) “Only focus used to be work - now focusing on studying further, making time for the family and him self-awareness and deep knowledge of talent has empowered him to take up accountability for life and work”
- g) “Previously work was seen as chores and a duty and stress related to the possibility of not being physically able to work. Created future was clear and

realistic. To be Finance director of local company and balanced between good happy family and open home for friends. Self-aware that he missing financial qualifications required to reach dream and has specific plans in place to complete big visual transformation - knowing what he wants out of life, knowing where he wants to be and the plan to achieve it”

- h) “Future oriented thinking and bigger picture thinking – not only on work and family pictures snakes and ladders, race track and then a solid roadway”



**Figure 6.19 In the cockpit**

Figure 6.19 is the post drawing of a delegate who started with a small picture of his current life and work. In Figure 6.19 this has changed to include lofty academic, entrepreneurial and family goals.





## 6.20 Broader thinking

Figure 6.20 depicts the broader world view of an individual from a country which could be highly restrictive, especially for professional women in leadership. In this drawing she predicts her listing on the New York stock exchange.

### 6.5.3.7 From individual contributor to leader

A dominant theme especially evident in the personal essays of leader participants was the transformation from being an individual contributor to that of leader. Leadership was spoken about in the first person and the collective identity of the group was one of leadership.

Some individuals were articulate about how inspired they had become to create and clarify their leadership philosophy and identity, while others immediately 'took up' their leadership in a more pragmatic fashion back at work in the team context, as well as in the family situation.

It is intriguing to explore the reasons for this transformation. Was it an outcome of a specific process during the coaching programme or an outcome of the integrated whole? Does the process of self-reflection, followed by discovery and dreaming unlock leadership potential to such an extent that a construct that was not specifically called out in the programme became strong theme of personal transformation?

The following statements provide a story of clarification of a leadership philosophy for the leader participants, as well as examples of how they had executed this in their daily lives:

- a) "This lead to me developing a philosophy of leadership and life"
- b) "Leadership is a journey of maturity – it is a choice; a journey"
- c) "Leadership creates bonds as strong as a family"
- d) "Leadership legacy – believe in yourself and you will achieve great things – leadership is a journey of maturity"
- e) "Leadership is not a learned model it is about deciding to be a leader and influence others it is your responsibility as a leader to behave and act as a leader"
- f) "Anyone can be a leader regardless of what your job title. Just doing something as a piece of excellence will inspire others"
- g) "Leadership is powerful; listening provides relational connections and success"
- h) "The coaching programme led to another breakthrough. It is not all about me but about relationships, role model and communication the transformation was from an individual focus to broader leadership beyond only self to family team and community"
- i) "Leaving a legacy as a leader all whilst keeping position as man of God who will not compromise his faith nor family for the world"
- j) "Zealous focus on work as all-consuming transformed into a vision that included professional achievement and time space and energy to give leadership to the broader community and church transformation from self to others"
- k) "After if I take up my leadership I can achieve sweet victory not only for myself but my country"



- l) "My overall approach to leadership and life has changed"
- m) "Leadership is not a learned model it is about deciding to be a leader and influence others it is your responsibility as a leader to behave and act as a leader"
- n) "Anyone can be a leader regardless of what your job title. Just doing something as a piece of excellence will inspire others"
- o) "I am focused more on the positive leadership and work can and should be a delight"
- p) "Complete transformation as a leader before I made all the decisions and all meetings were a waste of time as I did not appreciate the shop floor workers. I was pleasantly surprised that if you involve them and treat them as part of the team they take ownership"
- q) "Change from conservative approach to being more of an extrovert in order to work well with the team"
- r) "Taken up my leadership and have also enrolled for my MBA"
- s) "Being in a leadership role at work and as wife and mother"
- t) "His honest integrity and commitment to work had got him noticed and unlocked his leadership potential"
- u) "Leadership is more effective when systematic -understand and motivated be fair being a coach"
- v) "Confident leader of my life and people around me"
- w) "Subject was able to immediately apply her leadership in a national project"

#### **6.5.3.8 From arrogance to appreciation**

A key change in the attitude and thinking of the leader participants was the move away from a self-centred approach to one in which others were appreciated and in which the skill of listening was seen as a valuable tool to enable this appreciation. Appreciation of

others and listening skills are highlighted as an important outcome of group-based leadership coaching (Kets de Vries, 2005). It is believed that the skill-building session on active listening and communication was a catalyst for this transformation.

Because the coaches were comfortable that the participants had learnt the foundation skill of listening on three levels, they were encouraged to use this skill in all group sessions. The text suggests that this programme provided leader participants with insight into how important real appreciation for others is, and practice using a basic leadership skill.

The following statements extrapolate this finding:

- a) "Appreciation for others is the key to leadership and success"
- b) "Leadership is not only about self it is about the people around you"
- c) "Leadership is about bringing out the individual talents and strengths of team members"
- d) "Allowing my extra capacity and capability to empower other leaders and my community"
- e) "Developing oneself to be a better leader, manager and coach"
- f) "Evidence of looking to be more involved and impacting others and being a better leader"
- g) "Subject had found her inner strength and identity as leader this was immutable and now unshakeable"
- h) "Making me a good listener and by appreciating others"
- i) "Sole focus used to be work - now focusing on studying further, making time for the family and himself"
- j) "I have energy to give leadership to the broader community and church"

- k) “My identity as a businessman and observer of others someone with good insight into others”
- l) “Better understanding of coaching and the value it can add to leading and managing others”
- m) “Understand my colleagues better and work with their strengths appreciation of others”
- n) “Appreciation for others is the key to leadership and success”
- o) “Evidence of looking to be more involved and impacting others and being a better leader”
- p) “Appreciation of myself and loving myself for whom I am”

#### **6.5.3.9 From comfortable to achievement orientation/driving force**

A common theme in the essays and drawings of the leader participants was the shift to wanting to stretch themselves more than they were at the moment, and they seemed to have set challenging, but realistic, goals related to their professional and personal lives. This is well-aligned to the proposition of AI for creating new energy and to set in place new opportunities and goals for the future (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

It is interesting to see how important it was to give back to the community and how predominant community service was as a theme in their narratives and drawings, which relates to the assumption of AI that individuals are inherently capable of virtuous acts for the collective good of the whole (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The following statements out of the data set expand upon this transformative theme:

- a) “Work towards my created future – indicating long-term plan and direction he wants to follow to achieve his dreams and goals”
- b) “With the right attitude you can reach new heights and it is clear that she has clear plan and goals and determination to achieve these”

- c) "Believe in yourself and you will achieve great things; leadership is a journey of maturity"
- d) "I cannot achieve work goals alone they need to be integrated with personal goals in order to be effective. Do not identify one – Ensure Family gets better out of life than what I experienced. This has been a journey of discovery and self-knowledge"
- e) "Continue dreaming and achieve my dreams that are set myself – no matter what obstacles (snakes) are put in my path"
- f) "Start a soup kitchen"
- g) "Broader focus on the future and where she sees her family and what she wants to achieve with her work and family"
- h) "Clear shift and focusing on what she needs to do to achieve her dreams and goals"
- i) "Uncertain before the programme – now I have already achieved a lot and I am in a great place"
- j) "Clearly confident in his ability to be successful in life – work, family, personal rat race of work means not everything can be done so all I can reasonably achieve is possible";
- k) "More self-belief and knows what she wants to achieve – strength, achievement, mastery, maturity, reaching prowess - academically, professionally and politically"
- l) "Absolute clarity that achievement of life vision will be achieved"
- m) "I can achieve all I dreamed of"
- n) "Very confident in the achievement of critical goals"

#### **6.5.4 Generative metaphors**

The creation of generative metaphors that serve as a key memory or event are a natural outcome of any transformation process (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) and open up more possibilities and opportunities for the individuals and group. The generative metaphors that emerged in the drawings and essays of leader participants were documented, and a list of common and recurring metaphors will be outlined.

It is important to note that the generative metaphor should evoke a unique shared meaning amongst the members of the group, and this was achieved when each leader participant shared their created future in the plenary session. Common metaphors and themes became evident, and there was a strong sense of shared meaning when referring to these metaphors.

The first metaphor was the 'career as a journey'. Careers and life were spoken of often as a journey – not an end state, but a longer-term passage or trip. Individuals used their Created Future drawings as the roadmap for their crossing from the current 'here and now' to the future, and the 'bridge' drawings were used symbolically to link the first and last drawings in a systematic and continuous manner, as depicted in Figures 6.21 – 6.27.

The leader participants also used sub-metaphors related to the voyage of their professional and personal lives. The idea of a cross-roads or fork in the road was symbolic for a point of decision making – of having reached a junction point at which the individual would need to separate from the current path and take a new one.



**Figure 6.21 The journey a**

The use of locomotive machines was used frequently as in Figure 6.22, and this included reference to racing cars, aeroplanes, ships and motorbikes. All of these signify power, modern technology and movement, and are symbolic of being in control and moving forward.

Finally, the sub-metaphor of being the "captain of my ship" (Figures 6.23 – 6.24) further supports the metaphor of a journey but this with specific reference to being in control and empowered to direct the journey.



**Figure 6.22 The journey b**



Figure 6.23 Captain of my own ship



Figure 6.24 Pilot, captain and driver



Figure 6.25 The career as journey



Figure 6.26 Fork in the road





**Figure 6.27 The journey**

The second metaphor relates to the 'Ladder to Success' as presented in Figure 6.28. A ladder represents moving vertically and symbolises success. It signifies a ranking of sorts – perhaps indicating that the leader participants saw themselves as somehow special or privileged in the pecking order and standings in the organisation. This is understandable, given that there is a 1: 500 ratio between those chosen to attend this specific programme and other employees.



**Figure 6.28 Ladder of success**

Climbing the ladder of success relates to the upward mobility found in careers in the organisation and hints to the future potential of the leaders as well as their strong career aspirations and expectations for career progress.

Whilst this metaphor was used in a positive context, it was interesting to note that one participant used “snakes and ladders” as a metaphor to describe her experience of the challenge and opportunities in her life and work (Figure 6.29 – 6.30).



**Figure 6.29 Snakes and Ladders**



**Figure 6.30 Snakes now under my control**

The third metaphor that was used was the Tree of Life. It related to growth and development, nurturing and related again to the concept of ranking and climbing the hierarchy. The following picture (Figure 6.31) depicts this graphically.



**Figure 6.31 Tree of life**

Interestingly, one leader participant brought a metaphor that also represented growth and building a career and life, using the metaphor of a pyramid (Figure 6.32), which is similar in shape to and has the same vertical direction as a tree. This was a powerful metaphor, but it has not been specifically called out in the coding structure because it was not a collective metaphor and only used by one of the leader participants.



**Figure 6.32 Spectacular pyramid**

A fourth generative metaphor was that of the ‘career as mountain (Figures 6.33 – 6.34). The mountain represents some sort of peak, as well as incorporating a tough journey and climb to reach this peak. The mountain again represents elevation and ranking in the system and organisation, and it has aspirational tones. The predominant action words associated with a mountain are climbing, ascending and soaring to new heights.



**Figure 6.33 Mountain a**



**Figure 6.34 Mountain b**

The fifth generative metaphor relates to the ‘dream as a house’ (Figures 6.35 – 6.39). This was a strong and recurring theme amongst the leader participants, who wrote about “building their dreams brick by brick”. It suggests a systematic and planned approach to dealing with life and work, and a house also signifies security, home, family and personal validity. It is important to note that due to the nature of the cultures and countries from which the leader participants came, in most data sets owning or building one’s own house is seen as a lifetime achievement, and so using this metaphor was significant.





Figure 6.35 Houses and building



Figure 6.36 House a



Figure 6.37 House b



Figure 6.38 House c



**Figure 6.39 House, work and church**

The sixth generative metaphor was 'the future in my hands'. This signifies a strong longer-term orientation with resonance to themes of hope and self-directedness. This was further expounded upon in the metaphorical images by speaking of the self as a 'man or woman of my dreams'.

The use of hands symbolises care, as well as control and influence over one's own destiny. Hands can also symbolise achievement and execution or 'getting things done'. They are used in celebration of success and achievement through a handclap and burst of applause, and so it is a strong metaphor for success.

Having the 'future in my hands' also signifies control over the future and destiny, and a strong internal locus of control. As the individual scripts out their life (by writing or drawing with their hands) so they go forth and execute it by doing and applying the plans they have set up.

The final generative metaphor relates to 'sweet victory', a metaphor that symbolises a win or triumph over hardship and the masses or the system. It has a militaristic overtone, which suggests conquest conducted in an orderly fashion and the support of the establishment with a legion of resources and forces to support the victory. This is a powerful metaphor of success and power.



This explanation of the generative metaphors will now be followed by the development of a core set of prevailing outcomes for the coaching programme, as reported by leader participants and coders. These will be outlined and discussed in the following section.

### **6.5.5 Prevailing outcomes**

A principal outcome of the coaching programme was that of breakthrough and revelation for the leader participants. The process of 'unblocking' at a cognitive, emotional and will level was seen as the channel for their personal breakthrough as leader. The process of coaching led to cognitive restructuring of their current situation in the context of the future, and most certainly leads to discontent with the status quo. The skills to unblock thinking, both for themselves as well as their teams, is important for their development as an effective leader and the ability to inspire others with hope for the future is considered to be a vital component of successful leadership (Whitney, 2010).

Through deep reflection, the leader participants were able to open the discovery process and determine aspects of their self that were previously not detected. The process of careful listening and appreciative feedback in the group situation supported the process of reflection.

The participants were able to get in touch with their deepest feelings, and so unlock personal meaning for them. They described this as "being set free through reflection".

On the cognitive level, being able to have the bigger picture in mind was transformational for the self, and led to confidence in the ability to change. This provided some significant changes in the predominant worldview of participants.

The programme, in focusing so strongly on reflective skills, was creating opportunities for meta-cognition at the individual level and in the group context, and this in turn opened up new ways of thinking. Some participants wrote about finally appreciating themselves after receiving feedback from peers in the group sessions.

The second critical outcome of the coaching programme was the 'clarity of vision' developed by participants. The creation of a personal vision as expressed in the created

future or brilliant future provided clarity and focus to what could have been an ambiguous dream.

Rather than ambiguity, the vision was able to provide a dream that was inspiring enough to motivate the participant to action (Cooperrider et al. 2008). Even so, it is believed that the inclusion of a medium-term (one-year) planning tool is the reagent that is necessary to be introduced into the chemistry of the programme so that the participants are able to experience immediate and quick successes, and in time build a habit of being that is directed towards the long-term dream. The following pictures (Figures 6.40 – 6.41) demonstrate the transformation from a vague and ambiguous situation to one that has clarity and structure.



**Figure 6.40 Vague and ambiguous**



**Figure 6.41 Vagueness to clarity**

A third outcome was that of more ‘abundant’ thinking. The leader participants’ narratives and drawings were infused with richer and more abundant possibilities than before the programme. They had a broader view of the world and the lack of limits and boundaries in setting up objectives.

This is likely due to two main processes in the programme. Firstly, the leader participants were given the opportunity to explore their passion and talents, and in many data sets these were identified by other members in the peer group through active listening’. Secondly, in the visioning session, participants were encouraged to think without constraint, to dream with limitless possibilities and no geographical or financial boundaries.

Both of these prompts would have created an environment in the coaching process for the development of rich and expansive thinking. This expanded thinking also created a more global mindset and broader vision. Statements and drawings (Figures 6.42 – 6.44) by the participants include the following:

- “Life is now beautiful”
- “The sky is the limit”

- “I can see the picture of my future”



**Figure 6.42 Abundant thinking a**



**Figure 6.43 Abundant thinking b**



**Figure 6.44 Abundant thinking c**

The identification of a clear ‘personal leadership brand’ was another central outcome of the coaching programme. Leader participants were explicit in the articulation of a) their identity as a leader and b) in their unique and personal leadership brand.

The ability to identify and understand personal strengths is the foundation of the leaders’ ability to thrive with resilience in personal, professional and community-based situations (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Firstly, leaders were seen to accept their authority and accountability as leaders of their teams and clearly express their role as coach. They were also able to express their identity as a leader within their family and community situations.

Secondly, leader participants were clear in how they would like to express their leadership, for example: as a fair and ethical leader. They were able to write about their leadership in a philosophical sense of leaving a legacy and of being author of their leadership.

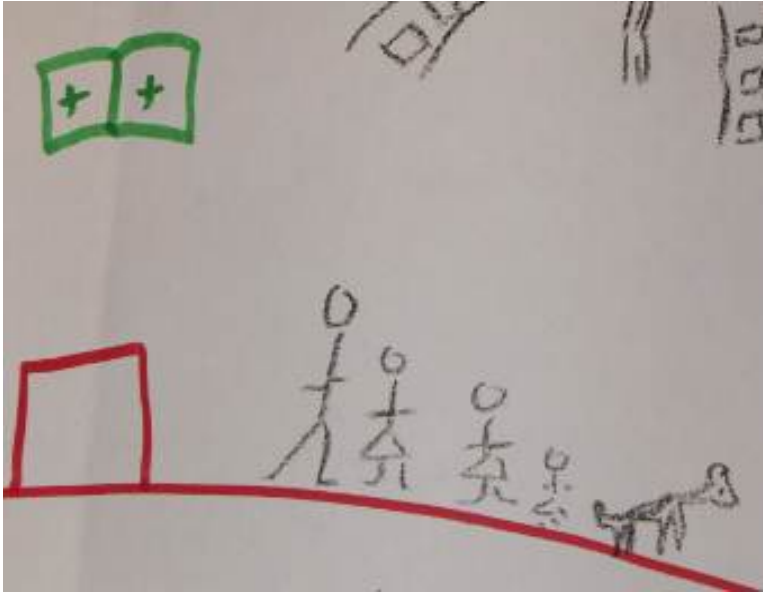
Finally, leadership was seen in a serious light by the participants. They understood the power invested in leadership and were willing to take up the role by taking accountability for their influence and responsibility for decisions.

Another leading outcome of the programme was the expression of more appreciation for the humanity of others, which indicates that the participants realised that people are valuable and worthy of their focus and time. This is best reflected in the following statements and drawings (Figure 6.45 – 6.47) taken from the data collected from participants:

- “Leadership is not about self but others”
- “Learned to appreciate others”
- “I have become less arrogant and more tolerant”
- “Relationships and connections are important”
- I can impact on others in a positive way”
- “When I am financially free I want to give back to my community”



**Figure 6.45 Connectedness**



**Figure 6.46 Relatedness to others**



**Figure 6.47 Achievements and connectedness**

'Empowerment of self' was a central outcome of the coaching programme, as depicted in Figure 6.47. Leader participants felt empowered as a result of having gone through the process. This was achieved through perceiving their worlds as more controllable.



By taking control they had moved from being stressed to powerful, which was felt within. This was expressed by one participant as: "I am in the driver's seat" (Figure 6.48).



**Figure 6.48 In the driver's seat**

Finally, the coaching process led to a re-ignited achievement orientation amongst the leader participants. Obviously, they were already on a positive career trajectory, as identified during the succession planning process, and the heightened cognitive and emotional experience seemed to create movement forward and towards the future.

This directionality was taken as a driving force for change, and the narrative and drawings were characterised by achievement and thoughts of excellence, coupled with determination to reach the goals set out before them. Examples of statements made by the participants include:

- "To be the best me"
- "I am fully realised"
- "Everything is possible with determination"
- "Nothing is impossible if the heart is willing"



- “Achievement must happen with ethical behaviour”

### **6.5.6 Personal Insights**

The leader participants were encouraged in the essay to reflect and use meta-cognition to think about the coaching process and what insights it held for them.

The following personal insights were identified as the most critical. They include a) consciousness as an enabler of success; b) education as a liberation tool; c) seeing career development as a journey and not a race; d) the fact that dreams transcend culture; e) the realisation that personal passions and talent are the departure point for achievement ; f) the importance of work-life calibration; g) the realisation that leadership is powerful, a philosophy, a life choice and a lifestyle, and does not require a job title; and h) the importance of appreciation of the humanity of others to personhood.

The premise that self-reflection and mindfulness about self will lead to success and delight is a powerful insight made by the leader participants. Finding purpose is a central aim and requirement for authentic leadership and for this reason it is crucial that this opportunity be afforded to all leaders at various juncture points in their careers.

Secondly, even though this group were highly qualified – all having successfully completed at least an undergraduate degree, they as a group had identified education as a liberation tool, that studying and developing themselves was important and that even reading more would help to give them more knowledge and power. Some leader participants had identified the need to learn more about the general business processes and/or to improve their qualifications and further their education at the MBA level as critical to their success.

A third key insight was that career development is a journey, not a race. The career was seen in a new light as a longer term track, and it was seen that that it is sometimes important to delay the need for instant gratification in the form of promotion for a longer-term goal and that it is important to be patient and accept that careers take time to mature. This was an interesting and unexpected outcome of the programme. Perhaps by comparing their own career trajectory with peers they were able to calibrate their

progress more realistically. Or perhaps, the immediate career seen within the longer term 10-year lens took on a different meaning. This is unclear, but interesting and worthy of further exploration.

The fourth insight was that much of who and what we are is culture-free – that dreams transcend culture. The leader participants noted that coaching in diverse groups was able to highlight their commonalities and fears, and that they had a lot in common despite having different nationalities. One leader participant noted that the “international connections energised me”.

The fifth central insight was the realisation that personal passions and talent are the departure point for development. Leader participants came to a new realisation of their talents and passions that was previously unspoken or not identified, and in addition to this, they had highlighted the need to integrate personal talent and passion with their chosen profession.

The ability to achieve work-life calibration was a pivotal insight of the programme. Leader participants noted that their personal and professional lives are intertwined, and that it is important to set up boundaries so that you do not lose yourself.

Many came to the conclusion that family and personal life is important, whilst work may be a means to an end. Notwithstanding the central role of work, it was important for participants to learn to manage competing agendas. As one participant stated: “I love work but I want to love life as well”.

The need for balance and integration was an important life skill in order to achieve this calibration. Participants were aware of the need to manage their energy effectively. This was well summed up by one leader participant in the following statement: “My picture of success is defined by achievement (material things) as well as BALANCE”.

The penultimate personal insight relates to leadership and this was well articulated by a participant in the following statement: “Leadership is powerful, a philosophy, a life choice, a lifestyle and does not require a job title”. Leadership and self-identification as a leader was a predominant theme in the essays and drawings of participants. In

addition, the expansion of the leader role beyond the role at work to include roles as wife, husband, mother, father and community leader was a central insight.

Finally, the appreciation of the humanity of others as important to one's personhood was a prevailing insight amongst leader participants. This suggests that the way that the coaching programme was facilitated using AI principles provided an experience that profoundly impacted on the orientation of the leader participants to other people in general.

### **6.5.7 Enabling Tools**

Three enabling tools were identified as critical to the success of the coaching process.

The creation of a compelling personal created future held great meaning for each leader participant. The tool used was the created future, in which the leader participant described their created future using words, phrases or pictures that express this, and naming created futures; visions and years. Learning how to envision the future using scenario planning provided the leader participants with the opportunity to explore and develop constrained as well as unconstrained dreams. It is believed that there are a number of reasons why this tool was seen to hold such significance for the leader participants.

Firstly, the leader participants were encouraged to think outside of current norms and question their underlying assumptions; they are able to step outside of what they see now and ask 'what would the system look like if we changed it to provide every possibility for us to reach our dreams?' (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Secondly, the principle of anticipatory learning is leveraged as a transformational tool in this phase by using positive images of the future to compel the leader participants to put them into action (Davis, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Finally, narrating these scenarios in groups uses social interaction to help make sense of them and appreciate these for their possibilities (Vansteenkiste, 2008). The social interaction facilitates a convergence zone, and as each scenario is related, the future

begins to emerge and is reinforced until the participants start to have clarity about the future dream.

The second enabling tool described by participants as significantly helpful in their development was that of 'listening on three levels'. Listening on three levels of communication was introduced as a framework for professional communication during the coaching programme, and the three levels are a) the cognitive level, referring to thought, facts and word content, and the 'train of thought'; b) the emotional level, referring to the discernment of verbal and non-verbal expression (intonation, expression, body language) of feelings, emotions and moods in the speaker; and c) at the will level, referring to listening for the will and intent expressed by the speaker and in trying to sense the energy and direction of the speaker, indicative of the motivation to decide or do something (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

The leader participants acknowledged the importance of listening and reflective skills in the current era of communication as a tool that provides unprecedented opportunities for the leader. As stated by Vansteenkiste (2009), in the professional environment it is important for the leader to be aware of what he/she really wants to say and even more so of what they are hearing.

The last, but equally important, enabling tool was the annual planning tool provided to the leader participants during the programme. Taking the first step in a long journey is always the most important, and the leader participants then do individual work in setting up a plan as to 'how it can be' for the next 12 months, which cuts across both their professional and personal goals and priorities, and is made up of broad monthly goals. In thinking about plans, the leader participants create possibility propositions in order to reach their ideal future by leveraging their positive core and insights (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Statements made by the participants in their essays included:

- "This got me into the habit of planning"
- "Sharpened my planning skills"

- “Time management is a tool”
- “The annual planner tool helped me”
- “The planning was important to help me achieve my goals”

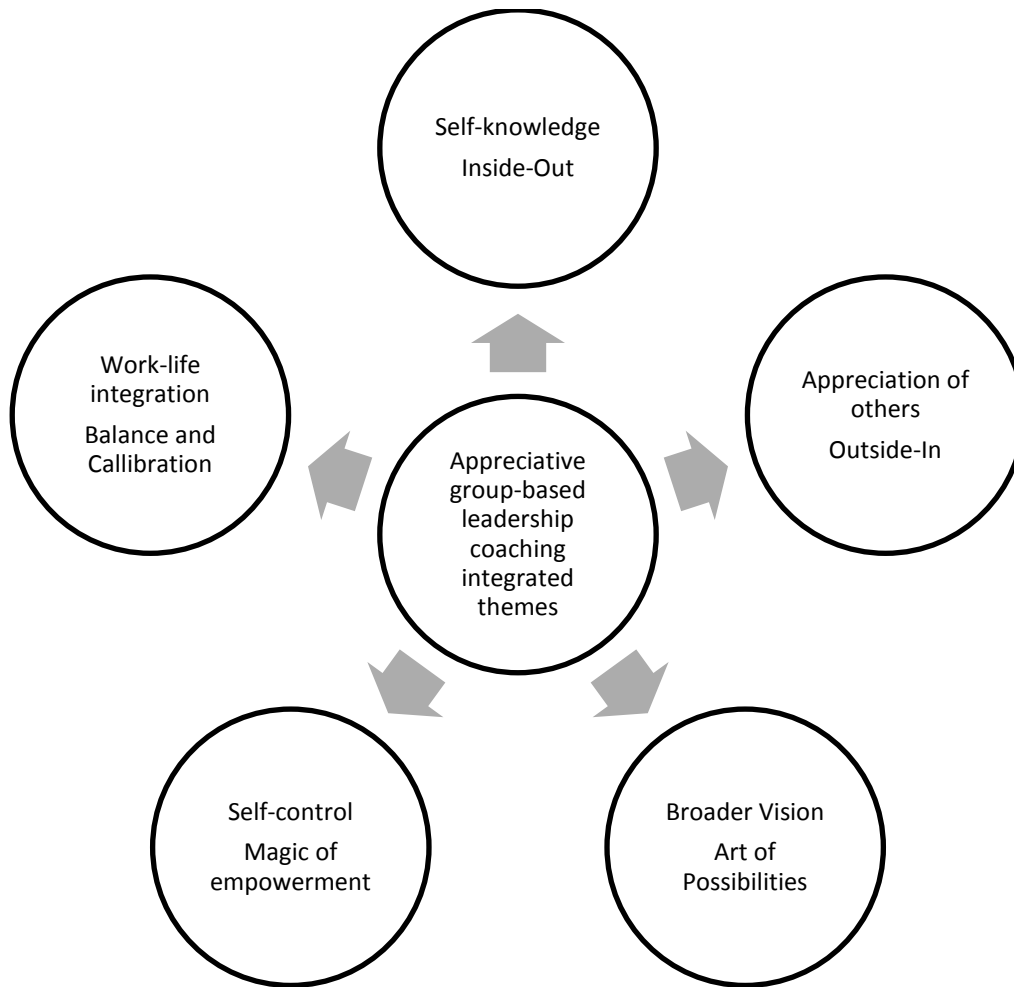
This tool provided a connection to the created future that is birthed in the process, and it provides a link between the current reality and the future by clarifying a set of planned steps, which are created along with choices and consequences to start the journey to transformation.

## **6.6 INTEGRATIVE THEMES**

The coding analysis, which was based on transformative learning theory (Snyder, 2008) and POB constructs, along with the thematic analysis, provided the author with emerging integrative themes which could describe and explain the findings.

With the phases of transformation as a backdrop (Snyder, 2008), the details of the findings, and specifically transformative themes and personal insights, were re-evaluated and clustered into a set of integrated themes which will now be discussed.

There are five themes (see Figure 6.49), which were developed as the integration of outcomes and the impact of the LCP for appreciative group-based leadership coaching in general. They are self-knowledge (secret of inside-out); appreciation of others (secret of outside-in), broader vision (art of possibility), self-control (magic of empowerment), and work-life integration (balancing and calibration).



**Figure 6.49 Integrative themes for postmodern group-based leadership coaching**

### **6.6.1 Inside-out**

Firstly, as expressed by the leader participants, possibly one of the most empowering moments for them on the coaching programme was the opportunity to spend time being curious about self, to inquire, test, and be consciously mindful of their strengths, talents and their stories.

This discovery of self, proved to be the catalyst for transformation and the journey into leadership. This is the starting point, and the ability to be introspective and become completely comfortable with whom one is as a person and leader is the point at which authenticity is established.

According to the Kegan (2009) model of transformative learning, the capacity for transformation begins as the learner moves to higher levels of consciousness. It starts at stage 3 – abstractions, the outcome being theoretical balance, where the learner is able to work with abstract concepts and hypotheses, values and ideals. This stage is characterised by “the ability to evaluate and critically reflect on one’s own perceptions” (Kegan, 2009; Snyder, 2008).

This was clearly achieved during the LCP, both in the ability to reflect critically on one’s own life story, but also through peer reflection and the ability to listen and reflect constructively on others’ stories.

Self-knowledge is also about being able to articulate who and what one stands for as a leader, from the inside out, as well as to be able to tell one’s story firmly and positively so that others are able to understand the individual as a leader and in their unique personhood.

This relates to stage 4 of the transformative learning model (Kegan, 2002), which is integration. In this stage, integration, the outcome, is self-authoring, with the learner able to “integrate reflections into inferences” and with the ability to define and be comfortable with the self (Kegan, 2009; Snyder, 2008).

### **6.6.2 Outside-in**

The second theme moves from an internal perspective to a focus on others, from the outside in. By first building the ability of leader participants to listen appreciatively on three levels, they were in a place of openness to really listen to the stories and perspectives of others in the peer group, and this had the outcome of a deeper appreciation for the humanity of others. This had a transformative impact on their perspective as a leader and the need to behave differently as a leader in order to respect others and to really understand them well. It is believed that the listening and communication skills training provided to the leader participants provided them with a strong skills foundation for people management and leadership.

This relates to stage 5 of the transformative learning model (Kegan, 2002) where the individual is able to be openly mindful to others, pay attention in the present and have a non-judgmental attitude towards others.

### **6.6.3 The art of possibilities**

The third over-riding theme relates to the creation of a broader vision (the art of possibilities).

The participants experienced a cognitive breakthrough in their ability to create a powerful and long-term, 10-year vision. This compelling future contained a vision of a better world for the individual, a powerful personal purpose and a compelling metaphor of intent. As stated by Cooperrider et al. (2008, p.5) “When inspired by a great dream we have yet to find an organisation that did not feel compelled to design something very new and very necessary”.

It is believed that the exercise of creating three different scenarios, and moving from a constrained future to one without any constraints, generated liberation for the leader participants to think beyond their current reality and dream in an unlimited fashion.

By spending time in reaching this powerful dream and then testing it out through social interaction, participants were able to expand their boundaries and leverage their newly discovered positive core (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This testing of possibilities in social interaction is a process of co-construction, and it allowed for iterations, reality testing and then the final design of the created future, followed by a planning phase.

This mirrors stage 5 of the transformative learning model (Kegan, 2009), the postmodern stage. The outcome of this stage is polarity management and mindfulness, which is the “awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). For example, in a longstanding conflict with someone else, the individual would be able to use the conflict to see their own incompleteness and use this to transform and integrate both views to form a higher level of consciousness (Snyder, 2008).



Obviously, this level of mindfulness is rare and unique only to a few individuals (Snyders and Lopez, 2009). Any AI process has as its core the aim of opening up possibilities of what might be, and the creation of a clear results-oriented vision rooted in talents, strengths and potential and purpose for the individual. The LCP coaching programme is no exception.

#### **6.6.4 The magic of empowerment**

The fourth integrative theme relates to self-control (the magic of empowerment). The ability to translate dreams into action and reality is what makes the difference between dreaming and achieving dreams or reaching one's destiny. This phase strengthens the courage and sustainability of the individual, and allows then the opportunity to create a strong process that will reinforce the plan whilst adapting it over time (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This relates to stage 6 of the transformative learning model (Kegan 2002) which is about planning a course of action.

The LCP has a specific process in which leader participants are called to create an annual plan to re-pattern their work and life systems and processes and create sustainable change. Taking the first step in a journey is important, and the 12-month plan covers both professional and personal goals, as well as prioritising these according to their alignment to their vision.

#### **6.6.5 Balance and calibration**

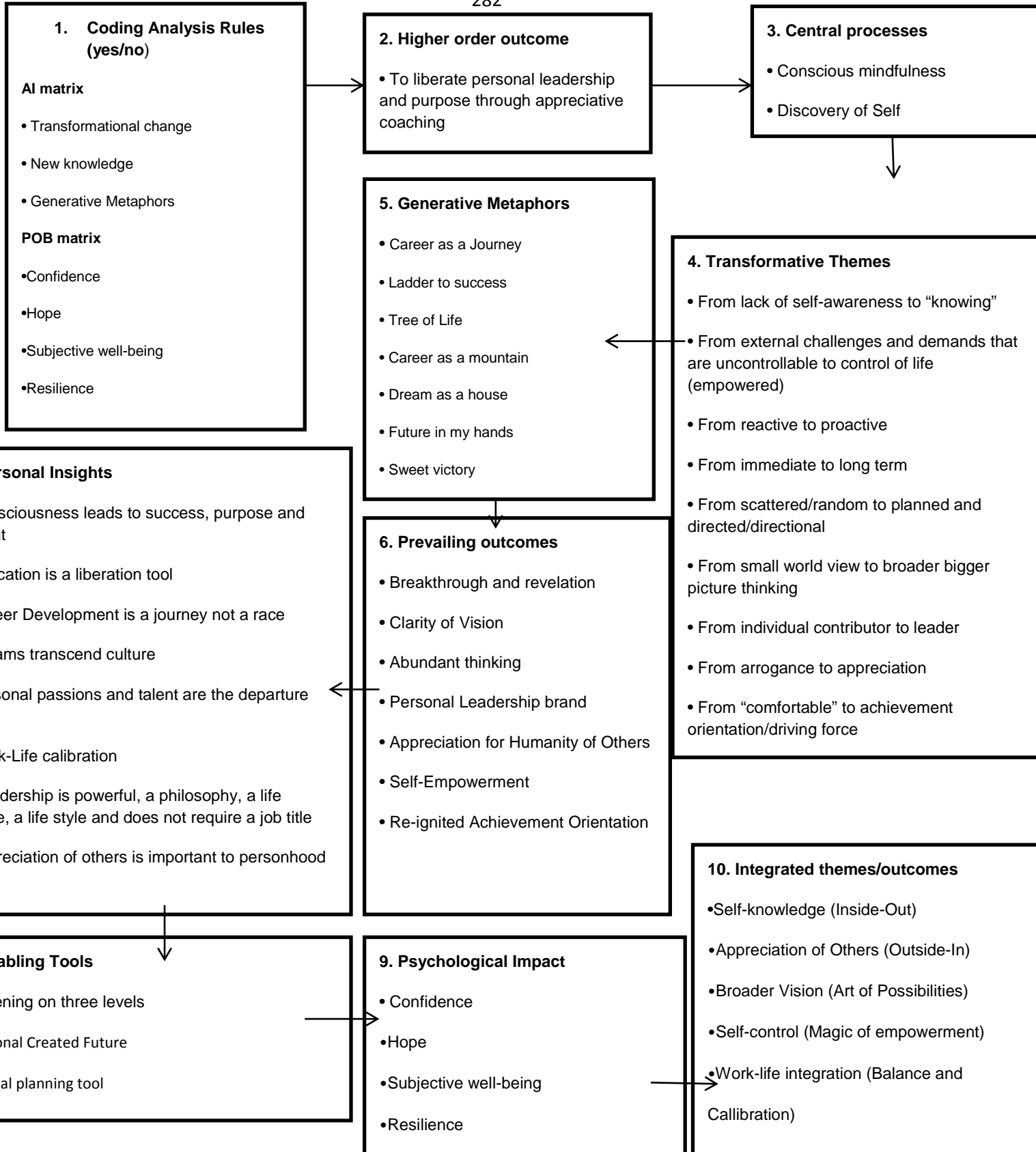
The fifth and final integrative theme was that of work-life integration (balancing and calibration). The consuming nature of work and the negative impact that it was having on the perspectives of the leader participants was highlighted as a common theme at the beginning of the programme. The will to change the status quo and find techniques to balance and calibrate work, family and community was one of the central transformative themes that emerged during the thematic analysis. The realisation that personal and professional lives are integrated and managed through boundary management was evident, and many leader participants wanted to enjoy the best of both aspects of their lives. The picture of success and vision was characterised with picture of achievement interwoven with personal goals and happiness in a balanced

fashion. This relates to stage 4 of the transformative learning model (Kegan, 2002) which is the integration of the learning into one's life.

This ends the presentation and discussion of the integrated themes based on the findings. The Integrated model of transformative effects of postmodern group-based leadership coaching will be presented as the conclusion of the findings.

## **6.7 INTEGRATED MODEL OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS OF POSTMODERN GROUP-BASED LEADERSHIP COACHING**

The coding and thematic analyses were used to construct an integrated model of the transformative effects of postmodern group-based leadership coaching (Figure 6.50). The model provides a visual representation of the way in which meaning emerged from the data, and the model embodies the full scope and range of outcomes related to the findings. The integrated model of the transformative effects of appreciative group-based leadership coaching is represented in the Figure 6.50:



**Figure 6.50 Integrated Model of the Transformative Effects of Postmodern Group-based leadership coaching**

A comprehensive description of the model and its elements is now provided.

Firstly, the analytical process began with a coding analysis based on criteria set for both transformative effects and psychological impact, based on POB constructs. These findings indicated that there was strong evidence for a transformative effect (using AI principles as criteria) – indicated by a qualitative shift in the state of being or identity of the individuals participating in the programme. The AI coding analysis also indicated evidence of the creation of new knowledge created as a result of the coaching programme, although this finding was specific to each individual, rather than representing a total collective transformation of knowledge as a group. The AI coding analysis also showed a strong case for the creation of numerous collective generative metaphors or data sets that were able to describe or produce a common reference point/symbol that would guide the participants to see the world through a new lens or through new possibilities.

The POB coding analysis indicated that there is transformation and shift across all the POB constructs under exploration. The highest shift was in the construct of hope, and in descending order, resilience, confidence and subjective well-being.

The second element of the integrated model refers to the higher-order outcomes evident in the findings. The dominant narrative higher-order outcome regarding the LCP was that the process was perceived to be a positive experience by participants. The LCP was seen to provide a rare opportunity to gain self-insight, and in so doing to redefine or clarify one's personal purpose and leadership identity. The leadership identity was obtained through a broader perspective of what leadership stands for, and requires going beyond the self to include others at the family, team and community level in order to achieve success.

The third component of the integrated model highlights the two central processes in the LCP that seemed to be most valuable to the participants. These were a) the act of conscious mindfulness and b) self-reflection. These indicated that a structured meta-cognitive process and conscious thinking about their self, their career and themselves as leaders provided a valuable and useful mechanism for unlocking the participants'

knowledge of self, but even more so, to open up mind maps and visions for their future career, life and being as leaders.

A number of detailed transformative themes that were common across the individual data sets were identified through the process of layering and connecting ideas and themes, and these are outlined in the fourth part of the integrated model. These themes are represented as polarities, suggesting that participants shifted along the continuum depending on the strength of the data and findings for each individual data set.

The first emerging theme was from a lack of self-awareness to knowing, believed to be triggered through sharing autobiographical stories and the shared emotional experience of telling life stories, receiving feedback and support, and hope shared with other group members.

Secondly, there was transformation from a focus on external challenges and demands that are uncontrollable to control of life (empowerment), in which there was a marked difference in the comments of leader participants from blaming others (team members, bosses, the organisation, lack of time) for the challenges of life to comments in which the participants showed a strong internal locus of control and empowerment for their lives and destinies. This was strengthened by the creation of a strong 10-year vision, as well as a shorter term one year plan, which were two specific outcomes of the programme.

The third transformative theme was from reactive to proactive, in which leader participants demonstrated a more proactive approach to dealing with life and work. The ability to take pre-emptive action and to take the initiative in life was seen as a key learning in the coaching programme.

Fourthly, there was a shift from the immediate to long term, in which, along with a more proactive approach to life and work, the leader participants were explicit in their appreciation for the opportunity to spend time in the future envisioning a plan for their lives.

The fifth transformative theme was from a scattered/random view to one that is planned and directed/directional. It is important to note that at the beginning of the programme, many individuals spontaneously indicated confusion about which direction to take, and also some uncertainty in making critical decisions. By the end of the coaching process, the action of working towards their created futures was the catalyst for providing a long-term plan and direction and pathway through which to achieve their dreams and goals.

The sixth transformative theme was from a small worldview to broader-picture thinking, in which the leader participants in the programme showed a strong shift from thinking in a limited and self-constrained manner to big-picture thinking, and they seemed to be bolder in terms of the scope and shape of their boundaries.

The seventh transformative theme was the movement from individual contributor to leader. Leadership was spoken about in the first person, and the collective identity of the group was one of leadership. In addition, a personal leadership philosophy and identity was clarified. Finally, the coaching programme led to another breakthrough in thinking about the importance of relationships in leadership, moving from an individual focus to broader leadership beyond only the self to family team and community.

The penultimate theme was a shift from arrogance to appreciation, in which a key change in the attitude and thinking of the leader participants was the move away from a self-centred approach to one in which others were appreciated, and in which the skill of listening was seen as a valuable tool to enable this appreciation. It is believed that the skill-building session on active listening and communication was a catalyst for this transformation.

The final transformative theme was a move from comfort to achievement orientation/driving force. The leader participants demonstrated a shift towards wanting to stretch themselves more than they were at the moment, and they seemed to have set challenging but realistic goals related to their professional and personal lives and community involvement.

The fifth component of the integrated model refers to the specific common generative metaphors that emerged in the data and findings. These were identified both in the AI

coding analysis and thematic analysis stages. The AI coding analysis showed a strong case for the creation of numerous collective generative metaphors, and it was found that having a strong picture of performance and a strong metaphor as represented in the final drawing seems to provide a useful tool for understanding and making sense of identity, as well as helping the individuals think in the longer-term and in more ambiguous terms. The first metaphor was the 'career as a journey', in which the career and life was spoken of as a journey or a voyage, with critical incidents and decisions symbolised through cross-roads and junction points, symbolic of being in control and moving forward.

The second metaphor related to the 'Ladder to Success', which represented moving vertically, and symbolises success and upward mobility found in careers in the organisation, and hints to the future potential of the leaders as well as their strong career aspirations and expectations for career progress.

The third metaphor that was created related to growth, development, and nurturing, and was again linked to the concept of ranks and climbing the hierarchy.

A fourth generative metaphor was that of the 'career as mountain'. The mountain represents some sort of peak, as well as incorporating a tough journey and climb to reach this peak.

The fifth generative metaphor relates to the 'dream as a house', with owning a home having strong cultural relevance for the specific participants on the programme. This metaphor suggested a systematic and planned approach to dealing with life and work, and a house also signifies security, home, family and personal validity.

The sixth generative metaphor was 'the future in my hands', which signified a strong longer term orientation, with resonance with themes of hope and self-directedness.

The final generative metaphor relates to 'sweet victory', a metaphor that symbolises a win or triumph over hardship and the masses or the system.

A number of key prevailing outcomes were also identified as part six of the integrated model. The first was that of 'breakthrough and revelation" for the leader participants. The process of 'unblocking' at a cognitive, emotional and will level was seen as the

channel for their personal breakthrough as a leader. The programme, in focusing so strongly on reflective skills, created opportunities for meta-cognition at the individual level and in the group context, and this in turn opened up new ways of thinking. Some participants wrote about finally appreciating themselves after receiving feedback from peers in the group sessions.

The second critical outcome of the coaching programme was the 'clarity of vision' developed by participants. The creation of a personal vision as expressed in the created future or brilliant future provided clarity and focus to what could have been an ambiguous dream.

A third outcome was that of more 'abundant' thinking. The leader participants' narratives and drawings were infused with richer and more abundant possibilities than before the programme. They had a broader view of the world, and there was a lack of limits and boundaries in setting up objectives.

The identification of a 'personal leadership brand' was another central outcome of the coaching programme. Leader participants were explicit in the articulation of a) their identity as a leader, and b) in their unique and personal leadership brand.

Another leading outcome of the programme was the expression of more appreciation for the 'humanity' of others, which indicates that the participants realised that people are valuable and worthy of their focus and time.

Self-empowerment of was also a central outcome of the coaching programme. Leader participants felt empowered as a result of having gone through the process. This was achieved through perceiving their worlds as more controllable.

Finally, the coaching process led to a 're-ignited achievement orientation' amongst the leader participants. Obviously, they were already on a positive career trajectory, as identified during the succession planning process, and the heightened cognitive and emotional experience seemed to create movement forward and towards the future. This directionality was taken as a driving force for change and the narrative and drawings



were characterised by achievement and thoughts of excellence, coupled with determination to reach the goals set out before participants.

Part seven of the integrated model outlines the personal insights of leader participants on the LCP that were identified during the thematic analysis phase. They include a) consciousness as an enabler of success; b) education as a liberation tool; c) seeing career development as a journey and not a race; d) the fact that dreams transcend culture; e) the realisation that personal passions and talent are the departure point for achievement; f) the importance of work-life calibration; g) the idea that leadership is powerful, a philosophy, a life choice and a lifestyle, and does not require a job title; and h) appreciation of the humanity of others as important to personhood.

Firstly, seeing consciousness as an enabler of success is a powerful insight made by leader participants. Finding purpose is a central aim and requirement for authentic leadership, and for this reason it is crucial that this opportunity be afforded to all leaders at various juncture points in their careers.

Secondly, even though this group were highly qualified, all having successfully completed at least an undergraduate degree, they as a group had identified education as a liberation tool, and recognised that studying and developing themselves was important, and that even reading more would help give them more knowledge and power.

A third key insight was that career development is a journey, not a race. The career was seen in a new light as a longer-term track, and that it is sometime important to delay the need for instant gratification in the form of promotion for a longer-term goal, and that it is important to be patient and accept that careers take time to mature.

The fourth insight was that much of who and what we are is culture-free – that “dreams transcend culture”. The leader participants noted that coaching in diverse groups was able to highlight their commonalities and fears, and that they had a lot in common despite having different nationalities.

The fifth central insight was the realisation that personal passions and talent are the departure point for development, and that this is the central supposition for finding success and fulfilment of purpose.

The ability to achieve 'work-life calibration' was another pivotal insight of the programme. Leader participants noted that their personal and professional lives are intertwined, and that it is important to set up boundaries so not to lose yourself. The need for balance and integration was an important life skill to achieve this calibration. Participants were aware of the need to manage their energy effectively. This was well summed up by one leader participant in the following statement: "My picture of success is defined by achievement (material things) as well as BALANCE".

The penultimate personal insight relates to leadership and this was well articulated by a participant in the following statement: "Leadership is powerful, a philosophy, a life choice, a life style and does not require a job title".

Finally, the appreciation of the humanity of others as important to one's personhood was a prevailing insight amongst leader participants. This suggests that the way that the coaching programme was facilitated using AI principles provided an experience that profoundly impacted on the orientation of the leader participants to other people in general.

Three enabling tools were identified as critical to the success of the coaching process, and these are described and discussed in part eight of the integrated model. Firstly, the creation of a compelling personal created future held great meaning for each leader participant, by encouraging them to think outside of current norms and question their underlying assumptions, to leverage an anticipatory learning as a transformational tool, and finally, by using social interaction to help make sense of these tools and appreciate them for their possibilities and to create a convergence zone. As each scenario is related, the future begins to emerge and is reinforced until the participants start to have clarity about the future dream.

The second enabling tool which was described by participants as significantly helpful in their development was that of 'listening on three levels'. Listening on three levels of

communication was introduced as a framework for professional communication during the coaching programme, and the three levels are a) the cognitive level, referring to thought, facts and word content, and the 'train of thought'; b) the emotional level, referring to the discernment of verbal and non-verbal expression (intonation, expression, body language) of feelings, emotions and moods in the speaker; and c) at the will level, referring to listening for the will and intent expressed by the speaker and in trying to sense the energy and direction of the speaker, indicative of the motivation to decide or do something (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

The last, but equally important enabling tool was the annual planning tool provided to the leader participants during the programme. In thinking about plans, the leader participants create possibility propositions in order to reach their ideal future by leveraging their positive core and insights (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

With regard to the psychological impact of the LCP (refer to part nine of the integrated model), the overall assertion from the findings is that the LCP had a positive impact on POB constructs of hope, confidence, resilience and subjective well-being. Confidence and hope levels as expressed in the text and drawings was markedly improved, the transformation in positive expressions of hope was startling, and many data sets started with expressed feelings of despair and moved to enthusiasm and evidence of both goal-directed determination and pathways (plans) to meet goals. Furthermore, the LCP was seen to impact positively on the subjective well-being of leader participants. Thoughts, acts and feelings of self-belief were strengthened, and the success of simple behavioural changes (for example, work-life balance; time management and exercise) after the programme had further led to a sense of positivity about life in the here and now and the participants' ability as individuals to actually achieve their dreams.

Finally, the POB construct, resilience, was found to show strong evidence for resilience across the group by the end of the programme. There was evidence for the capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility.

Part 10 of the integrated model describes the five themes/outcomes which were developed as the crux of both the design and outcomes of the LCP, and for leadership coaching in general. They are self-knowledge (secret of inside-out); appreciation of others (secret of outside-in), broader vision (art of possibility), self-control (magic of empowerment), and work-life integration (balancing and calibration).

Firstly, as expressed by the leader participants, possibly one of the most empowering moments for them on the coaching programme was the opportunity to spend time being curious about themselves, to inquire, test, and be consciously mindful of their strengths, talents and their stories. This discovery of self, proved to be the catalyst for transformation and the journey into leadership. This is the starting point, and the ability to be introspective and self-reflect (Stelter, 2009) to become completely comfortable with who one is as a person and leader is the point at which authenticity is established.

This relates to stage 3 and 4 of Kegan's (2009) transformative learning model, in which the learner moves to higher levels of consciousness, starting with the ability to work with abstraction, then to integrate, and finally, to self-author.

Self-knowledge is also about being able to articulate who and what one stands for as a leader from the inside-out, as well as be able to tell one's story firmly and positively so that others are able to understand the individual as leader and in their unique personhood.

The second theme moves from an internal perspective to a focus on others, looking from the outside in. By first building the ability of leader participants to listen appreciatively on three levels, they were in a place of openness to really listen to the stories and perspectives of others in the peer group, and this had the outcome of a deeper appreciation for the humanity of others. This had a transformative impact on their perspectives as leaders and how they need to behave differently as leaders in order to respect others and to really understand them well. It is believed that the listening and communication skills training provided to the leader participants provided them with a strong skills foundation for people management and leadership.

This is mirrored in stage 5 of Kegan's (2009) transformative learning model, which relates to mindfulness. This is a postmodern concept, which is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Any postmodern process, especially one using AI principles has as its core the aim of opening up possibilities for what might be, and the creation of a clear results-oriented vision rooted in talents, strengths, potential and purpose for the individual. The LCP coaching programme is no exception.

The third over-riding theme relates to the creation of a broader vision (the art of possibility).

The participants experienced a cognitive breakthrough in their ability to create a powerful and long-term, 10-year vision. This compelling future contained a vision of a better world for the individual, a powerful personal purpose and a compelling metaphor of intent. As stated by Cooperrider et al. (2008, p.5) "When inspired by a great dream we have yet to find an organisation that did not feel compelled to design something very new and very necessary".

It is believed that the exercise of creating three different scenarios, and by moving from a constrained future to one without any constraints, that this liberated the leader participants to think beyond their current reality and dream in an unlimited fashion.

By spending time in reaching this powerful dream and then testing it out through social interaction, participants were able to expand their boundaries and leverage their newly discovered positive core (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This testing of possibilities in social interaction is a process of co-construction, and it allowed for iterations, reality testing and then final design of the created future, followed by a planning phase.

The fourth integrative theme relates to self-control (the magic of empowerment). The ability to translate dreams into action and reality is what makes the difference between dreaming and achieving dreams, or reaching one's destiny. This phase strengthens the courage and sustainability of the individual and allows then the opportunity to create a

strong process that will reinforce the plan, whilst adapting over time (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The LCP has a specific process in which leader participants are called to create an annual plan in order to re-pattern their work and life systems and processes and create sustainable change. Taking the first step in a journey is important, and the 12-month plan covers both professional and personal goals, as well as prioritising these according to their alignment to their vision.

The fifth and final integrative theme was that of work-life integration (balancing and calibration). The consuming nature of work and the negative impact that it was having on the perspectives of the leader participants was highlighted as a common theme at the beginning of the programme. The will to change the status quo and find techniques to balance and calibrate work, family and community was one of the central transformative themes which emerged during the thematic analysis. The realisation that personal and professional lives are integrated and managed through boundary management was evident, and many leader participants wanted to enjoy the best of both aspects of their lives. The picture of success and vision was characterised with picture of achievement interwoven with personal goals and happiness in a balanced fashion.

## **6.8 PREMISES OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the thematic analysis are now discussed against the original research question set for the research project, i.e. to explore the transformative effects of postmodern group-based leadership coaching, in an organisational context. Based on this research question, an overall premise was developed, covering the transformative effective of a postmodern leadership coaching programme. In summary, the prospect of using and examining the transformative effects of a postmodern approach to group-based leadership coaching therefore provided an problem statement and a unique possibility for this research project, which would build and expand upon the body of knowledge by combining postmodern coaching, AI and positive psychology principles and a group-based methodology (Bushe, 2011).

Sub-premises were also developed, providing more detailed postulations regarding the detailed research questions and objectives as outlined in sections 1.3 – 1.4. These relate to the applicability of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme to a global multi-cultural organisational setting, as well as propositions regarding the impact of postmodern group-based leadership coaching on positive individual organisational constructs (POB). The sub-premises are identified and discussed in the following section, concluding with the overall premise for this study.

### **6.8.1 Sub-premise one – Group-based coaching is applicable for leadership coaching**

The first sub-premise states that group-based coaching is applicable for leadership coaching. Group-based leadership coaching provides a strong proposition for organisations wanting to accelerate leadership development through coaching. From the organisational perspective, this exploration demonstrated that it was possible to apply AI principles to a leadership coaching programme successfully and to replicate it a number of times. More importantly, this was conducted in a group setting, making it a more effective methodology for leadership transformation in the organisational setting.

A key component of the LCP is that the peer group is used as part of the reflective team through the use of dyads and triads, small groups and plenary groups, and that training in listening and feedback skills is provided to prepare the participants for their reflective role. This is a skill that they require in their leadership roles both in their personal and work lives. The LCP also makes use of narrative coaching “through the use of stories; active listening; re-authoring of stories in collaboration with participants in a group context of witnessing and remembering” (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007) and leverages the potential of collective strengths, based on social construction (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004), to transform the leaders’ perspectives. The facilitators were successfully able to apply the methodology that would normally be deployed in a smaller group or individual coaching setting to a larger group setting, consisting of more than 20 delegates per session, in a reasonably short space of time.

Direct coaching time amounted to a total of 5 days or 40 hours. Individual coaching using the biographical appreciative approach would take on average 16 hours, made up of four four-hour sessions. For a group of 25 delegates, this would require 400 hours of individual coaching time. The ratio of 1:10 (group-based coaching hours to individual coaching hours) represents improved efficiencies in terms of less time and expense related to professional coaches. This saving was achieved without compromising a strong perceived return on investment in terms of transformation and positive psychological impact by the leader participants. Furthermore, the positive experience of coaching in groups makes this an attractive and energising coaching programme for the coaching practitioner.

Working within the international and multicultural setting, and with such diversity, was successful, and it was extremely satisfying to the coach involved in the programme. With many respected universities offering coaching and launching coach training programmes, Kim (2011) recommended follow-up studies to examine the use of multiple disciplines in coaching in business schools. Furthermore, this was conducted with a multi-cultural and international group of participants, providing confirmation that this is a coaching methodology that may be applicable in other international coaching situations, for example, in a business school setting.

This premise asserts that the LCP is relevant and applicable for use as a group-based leadership coaching programme. High levels of time efficiency are possible by using group-based coaching versus individual coaching, on average a 1:10 ratio between group-based and individual coaching time. This is achieved without compromising the perceived effectiveness and impact of coaching the group. In fact, the group-based setting was found to leverage robust levels of transformation and positive psychological impact, due to the nature of appreciation and the use of peer coaching. Furthermore, the LCP provides an attractive and energising coaching programme for the coaching practitioner and leader participants. From the organisational perspective, this exploration also demonstrated that it was possible to apply AI principles to a leadership coaching programme successfully, and to replicate it a number of times. The LCP was



conducted with a multi-cultural and international group of participants, providing confirmation that this is a coaching methodology that may be applicable in other international coaching situations, for example, in a business school setting.

### **6.8.2 Sub-premise two - AI principles can be successfully linked to postmodern leadership coaching.**

The second premise is that certain AI principles can be successfully linked to leadership coaching. Whilst the programme does not mirror the AI methodology (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2020), certain elements of the programme demonstrated and utilised the principles of AI.

The entire LCP was reviewed in terms of its design, but even more so in terms of how it was examined in the context of this research programme to determine whether it adhered to the six AI principles (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). The programme was found to meet the criteria for all of the principles with the exception of the poetic principle, where the coaching programme most definitely created space for self-reflection, but the findings were not convincing for the transfer of this skill over into the daily lives of most of the group after the programme.

The first principle displayed in the LCP was the constructionist principle, through the use of co-creative dialogue, narrative and collaborative group work through discourse. This was used in a collective way to create transformation and new metaphors for the leader participants (Gordon, 2008a). Furthermore, the positive principle is used during the LCP to generate positive images of the created future based upon the positive stories and moments in the past of the participant leaders, and through building on leader strengths through the ground rules of the LCP, which are respect for self and others, curiosity and inquiry, inclusiveness and confidentiality (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2009). It is also used in the focus on drawing out successes in the past, discovery of strengths and talents, and unlimited dream outcomes and desires. In addition, the anticipatory principle is deployed through the use of discourse and the generation of collective themes and sharing of personal visions as a form of energy within the coaching process.

The LCP was also shown to capture the essence of the AI principles using an integrated approach, along with group-based coaching. Firstly, the underlying philosophy of the LCP is one of empowerment through sustainable personal and professional perspective transformation according to the description provided by (Laske, 1999). Secondly, the aims of the LCP are for the fulfilment of purpose and for creating a leader who will in the future remain self-reflective and emotionally open to change. This is in line with the outcomes suggested for postmodern coaching by Kilburg (2007) and Newell (2007). Thirdly, the methodology employed in the LCP is biographic in nature, grounded in social construction as outlined in AI theory by Cooperrider et al. (2008), making full use of peer reflection and geared to critical reflection as described by Fetherson and Kelly (2007). Finally, the design of the LCP is aimed at being relevant and impactful in both the organisation and the leaders working in it. This is a requirement for all AI processes (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Appreciative inquiry principles are used in elements of the design of the LCP, but are explicit and most evident in the personal future planning component of the programme, which uses inquiry, appreciative conversations, a positive focus, unconditional affirmation, stories, metaphors and themes to build self-reflective competence and shared images of the future and innovation (Gordon, 2008a) to heighten the positive potential in the coaching process (Cooperrider et al., 2008) to the mutual benefit of all participant leaders (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Davis, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

The creation of generative metaphors that serve as a key memory or event are a natural outcome of any AI process (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) and open up more possibilities and opportunities for the individuals and group. A number of generative metaphors that emerged in the thematic analysis were documented.

Any AI process has as its core the aim of opening up possibilities of 'what might be', and the creation of a clear results-oriented vision rooted in talents, strengths and potential and purpose for the individual. The LCP coaching programme is no exception.

In summary, the findings demonstrated that it was possible to apply AI principles to a postmodern leadership coaching programme successfully and to replicate this a number of times.

### **6.8.3 Sub-premise three – Postmodern group-based leadership coaching has a positive impact on the psychological POB constructs of confidence, hope, subjective well-being and resilience**

The third of the sub-premises is that the LCP had a positive impact on the psychological POB constructs of confidence, hope, subjective well-being and resilience amongst the leader participants.

Confidence levels as expressed in the text and drawings was markedly improved where the individual had previously expressed low levels of confidence, or strengthened where confidence levels were already evident. The transformation in positive expressions of hope was startling, and many data sets started with expressed feelings of despair and moved to enthusiasm and evidence of both goal-directed determination and pathways (plans) to meet goals. Hope is a complex psychological construct, and it is believed that it may have been easier to identify signs of hope through an individual interview. Hope is a fleeting emotion that requires a high sense of anticipation about the future, coupled with actual plans to reach the future. Nevertheless, the bold and clear nature of the hope statements in the essays was particularly exciting to uncover and read, as this provided such a startling change from the narratives at the beginning of the programme.

The LCP was seen to impact positively on the subjective well-being of leader participants. When the individual compares what they actually have and do with their aspirations, the gap or disconnect between these two areas would determine the cognitive and emotional state of the individual. The analysis determined that those individuals who were more negative in their subjective well-being state at the start of the programme were fairly outspoken in their first essays and drawings about how unhappy they were very early on in the programme. Thoughts, acts and feelings of self-belief were strengthened and the success of simple behavioural changes (for example, work-

life balance, time management and exercise) after the programme had further led to a sense of positivity about life in the here and now and their ability as individuals to actually achieve their dreams.

Finally, strong evidence for the POB construct of resilience was found across the group by the end of the programme. There was evidence for the capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility. It is postulated that one of the major reasons for this is that participants had a long-term, well-articulated vision for the future as represented by their 'created future' and that this was the catalyst for building a strong sense of resilience amongst the individuals and group as a whole. It is as if having control of the future builds the psychological capacity to deal with ambiguity, change and even failure, and come back from these challenges even stronger and more empowered.

#### **6.8.4 Overall premise – Postmodern group-based leadership coaching offers transformative effects for professional and personal perspectives**

This premise asserts that appreciative group-based leadership coaching offers transformative effects for the professional and personal perspectives of leader participants. This assumes that participation in the LCP transforms the leader's future plans and orientation, and it also asserts that the LCP was able to meet the original intention, which was to transform and liberate the personal and professional perspectives of leaders through postmodern coaching, in terms of establishing optimal and sustainable leadership and independence in both their career and personal lives. The research clearly indicated that the LCP was a catalyst in transforming the leader participant's future plans and orientation, but that there was room to improve the sustainability of change through reinforcing processes and follow-up.

The LCP was found to generate a number of positive transformative effects on the leaders' professional and personal perspectives. What emerged from the data as an explicit and clear core higher order outcome was that the coaching programme was designed in such a way as to liberate personal leadership and purpose through

postmodern coaching (Vansteenkiste, 2011). This relates to the stated outcome of AI, to search for the best in people and the world, according to Cooperrider et al. (2008). It also supports the outcome of leadership coaching for clarity of vision and purpose, as stated by Ting (2006).

The data analysis identified two central processes that seemed to be most valuable to the participants, a) the act of conscious mindfulness, and b) self-reflection.

The following transformative themes were identified through the process of layering and connecting ideas and themes:

- From lack of self-awareness to 'knowing'
- From external challenges and demands that are uncontrollable to control of life (empowerment);
- From reactive to proactive;
- From immediate to long-term;
- From scattered/random to planned and directed/directional;
- From a small worldview to broader big-picture thinking;
- From individual contributor to leader;
- From arrogance to appreciation;
- From being 'comfortable' to achievement orientation/driving force;

The theory of transformative learning is based upon a number of key assumptions that were utilised fully with the purpose of leader transformation. The assumptions that were deployed successfully towards this goal in the LCP include: dealing with the whole person (emotional, intuitive, thinking, physical and spiritual); centrality of experience; irreversible paradigm shifts; self-reflection; critical reflection of assumptions (CRA); use of journaling and reflective dialogue; disruptive experiences; rational discourse; critical

engagement and dialogue with peers; and non-evaluative feedback (Fetherson & Kelly, 2007; Mezirow, 2000; Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 2008).

From the perspective of the leader participants, the aims of the LCP were achieved, which were personal empowerment of the individuals in terms of establishing optimal and sustainable leadership and independence in both their career and personal lives. Through a personal and public journey, and through the conscious processes of mindfulness and self-reflection, the leader participants were able to discover their strengths, understand and articulate their own story and life themes, and then become more future-focused as leaders, with clear a clear vision for life and work, and an action plan to execute this effectively.

Kegan's model of developmental consciousness provides clarity, especially for the transformative learning process, as it is placed within the broader field of adult learning theory (Kegan, 2009), and especially as it is applied during the LCP.

Furthermore, it is believed that the LCP provided a richer, more personalised coaching experience through the use of social construction and the peer reflection method. The research clearly indicated that the LCP was a catalyst in transforming the leader participant's future plans and orientation. The transformative themes were peppered with positive transformation at the self-awareness level, for empowerment levels and control over life.

Transformation was also identified during the analysis in that leader participants had a more proactive approach as a result of the coaching programme. In addition, their personal and professional perspectives were more directed, goal-directed, planned, longer-term in time horizon and characterised by a broader perspective on life – 'big-picture thinking'.

The transformation was also evident in the identity of the participants as leaders both at work and in their personal lives. This was enhanced by a deeper appreciation for the value of consciousness, for education as a liberation tool, for patience in career development, for the humanity of others and for the importance of integrating one's personal passions into a personal and leadership brand and vision.

The act of self-reflection was powerful as a change agent for the transformation identified, and many leader participants were grateful for the opportunity to have time to spend on themselves and to self-reflect. However, there was no overt evidence that this was a skill that they could use themselves to create change and growth on a sustainable basis.

According to Kets de Vries (2005) it is through sharing autobiographical stories that transformative development occurs, due to the power of the shared emotional experience of telling life stories, receiving feedback and support, and hope shared with other group members. Conducting this follow-up in a supportive peer group setting would be ideal, and this would build the sense of community and collaboration with participants on a strong base of 'knowing' as a group, having previously shared their created futures and plans and finding commonality in their shared experiences and journey. This could prove to be a truly powerful coaching community of collaboration.

A principal outcome of the coaching programme was that of breakthrough and revelation for the leader participants. The process of 'unblocking' at a cognitive, emotional and will level was seen as the channel for their personal breakthrough as a leader. The process of coaching led to cognitive restructuring of their current situation in the context of the future, and most certainly leads to discontent with the status quo. The skills to unblock thinking, both for themselves as well as their teams, is important for their development as an effective leader and the ability to inspire others with hope for the future is considered to be a vital component of successful leadership (Whitney, 2010).

Through deep reflection, the leader participants were able to open the discovery process and determine aspects of themselves that were previously not detected. The process of careful listening and appreciative feedback in the group situation supported the process of reflection. The participants were able to get in touch with their deepest feelings, and so unlock personal meaning. They described this as "being set free through reflection".

On the cognitive level, being able to have the bigger picture in mind was transformational for self, leading to confidence in the ability to change, and this provided some significant changes in the predominant worldview of participants. The programme, in focusing so strongly on reflective skills, was created opportunities for meta-cognition at the individual level and in the group context, and this in turn opened up new ways of thinking. Some participants wrote about finally appreciating themselves after receiving feedback from peers in the group sessions.

The second critical outcome of the coaching programme was the 'clarity of vision' developed by participants. The creation of a personal vision as expressed in the created future or brilliant future provided clarity and focus to what could have been an ambiguous dream.

Rather than ambiguity, the vision was able to provide a dream that was inspiring enough to motivate the participant to action. Even so, it is believed that the inclusion of a medium-term (one-year) planning tool is the reagent that is necessary to introduce into the chemistry of the programme so that the participants is able to experience immediate and quick successes, and in time build a habit of being that is directed towards the long-term dream.

A third outcome was that of more 'abundant' thinking. The leader participants' narratives and drawings were infused with richer and more abundant possibilities than before the programme. They had a broader view of the world and a lack of limits and boundaries in setting up objectives. This is likely due to two main processes in the programme. Firstly, the leader participants were given the opportunity to explore their passion and talents, and in many data sets these were identified by other members in the peer group through active listening 'under the surface'. Secondly, in the visioning session, participants were encouraged to think without constraint, to dream with limitless possibilities and without geographical or financial boundaries.

The identification of a clear 'personal leadership brand' was another central outcome of the coaching programme. Leader participants were explicit in the articulation of a) their identity as a leader, and b) in their unique and personal leadership brand. The ability to



identify and understand personal strengths is the foundation of the leaders' ability to thrive with resilience in personal, professional and community-based situations (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Self-empowerment was a central outcome of the coaching programme. Leader participants felt empowered as a result of having gone through the process. This was achieved through perceiving their worlds as more controllable.

Finally, the coaching process led to a 're-ignited achievement orientation' amongst the leader participants. Obviously, they were already on a positive career trajectory, as identified during the succession planning process, and the heightened cognitive and emotional experience seemed to create movement forward and towards the future.

This directionality was taken as a driving force for change and the narrative and drawings were characterised by achievement and thoughts of excellence, coupled with determination to reach the goals set out before them.

The following personal insights were identified as the most critical. They include a) consciousness as an enabler of success; b) education as a liberation tool; c) seeing career development as a journey and not a race; d) the fact that dreams transcend culture; e) the realisation that personal passions and talent are the departure point for achievement; f) the importance of work-life calibration; g) the idea that leadership is powerful, a philosophy, a life choice and a lifestyle, and does not require a job title; and h) appreciation of the humanity of others as important to personhood.

Three enabling tools were identified as critical to the success of the coaching process.

Firstly, the creation of a compelling personal created future held great meaning for each leader participant. The tool used was the created future, in which the leader participant described their created future using words, phrases or pictures that express this, and naming created futures; visions and years. Learning how to vision using scenario planning provided the leader participants with the opportunity to explore and develop constrained as well as unconstrained dreams. This is achieved through asking 'what would the system look like if we changed it to provide every possibility for us to reach

our dreams? (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The principle of anticipatory learning was leveraged as a transformational tool in this phase by using positive images of the future as compelling the leader participants toward putting them into action (Davis, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Finally, by narrating these scenarios in groups, using social interaction to help make sense of them and appreciating them for their possibilities (Vansteenkiste, 2008), the social interaction facilitates a convergence zone, and as each scenario is related the future begins to emerge and is reinforced until the participants start to have clarity about the future dream.

The second enabling tool which was described by participants as significantly helpful in their development was that of listening on three levels. The three levels are a) the cognitive level, referring to thought, facts and word content, and the 'train of thought'; b) the emotional level, referring to the discernment of verbal and non-verbal expression (intonation, expression, body language) of feelings, emotions and moods in the speaker; and c) at the will level, referring to listening for the will and intent expressed by the speaker and in trying to sense the energy and direction of the speaker, indicative of the motivation to decide or do something (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

The last, but equally important enabling tool was the annual planning tool provided to the leader participants during the programme. Taking the first step in a long journey is always the most important, and the leader participants then do individual work in setting up a plan of 'how it can be' for the next 12 months, which cuts across both their professional and personal goals and priorities, and is made up of broad monthly goals. In thinking about plans, the leader participants create possibility propositions in order to reach their ideal future by leveraging their positive core and insights (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Five themes were developed as the crux of both the design and outcomes of the LCP and for leadership coaching in general. They are self-knowledge (secret of inside-out), appreciation of others (secret of outside-in), broader vision (art of possibility), self-control (magic of empowerment), work-life integration (balancing and calibration).

Firstly, as expressed by the leader participants, possibly one of the most empowering moments for those on the coaching programme was the opportunity to spend time being curious about themselves, to inquire, test, and be consciously mindful of their strengths, talents and their stories. This self-discovery proved to be the catalyst for transformation and the journey into leadership. This is the starting point, and the ability to be introspective and become completely comfortable with who one is as a person and leader is the point at which authenticity is established.

This relates to stage 3 and 4 of Kegan's (2009) transformative learning model, where the learner moves to higher levels of consciousness, starting with the ability to work with abstraction, then to integrate, and finally, to self-author.

Self-knowledge is also about being able to articulate who and what one stands for as a leader, from the inside out, as well as to be able to tell one's story firmly and positively so that others are able to understand the individual as leader and in their unique personhood.

The second theme moves from an internal perspective to a focus on others, namely from the outside in. By first building the ability of leader participants to listen appreciatively on three levels, they were in a place of openness to really listen to the stories and perspectives of others in the peer group, and this had the outcome of a deeper appreciation for the humanity of others. This had a transformative impact on their perspective as leaders and how they need to behave differently as leaders in order to respect others and to really understand them well. It is believed that the listening and communication skills training provided to the leader participants provided them with a strong skills foundation for people management and leadership.

This is mirrored stage 5 of Kegan's transformative learning model, which relates to mindfulness. This is a postmodern concept which is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

The third over-riding theme relates to the creation of a broader vision (the art of possibility).

The participants experienced a cognitive breakthrough in their ability to create a powerful and long-term 10-year vision. This compelling future contained a vision of a better world for the individual, a powerful personal purpose and a compelling metaphor of intent. As stated by Cooperrider et al. (2008, p.5) "When inspired by a great dream we have yet to find an organisation that did not feel compelled to design something very new and very necessary".

It is believed that the exercise of creating three different scenarios, and by moving from a constrained future to one without any constraints, that this liberated the leader participants to think beyond their current reality and dream in an unlimited fashion.

By spending time in reaching this powerful dream and then testing it out through social interaction, participants were able to expand their boundaries and leverage their newly discovered positive core (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This testing of possibilities in social interaction is a process of co-construction, and it allowed for iterations, reality testing and then final design of the created future followed by a planning phase.

The fourth integrative theme relates to self-control (the magic of empowerment). The ability to translate dreams into action and reality is what makes the difference between dreaming and achieving dreams or reaching one's destiny. This phase strengthens the courage and sustainability of the individual and allows them the opportunity to create a strong process that will reinforce the plan, whilst adapting over time (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

The LCP has a specific process in which leader participants are called to create an annual plan in order to re-pattern their work and life systems and processes and create sustainable change. Taking the first step in a journey is important and the 12-month plan covers both professional and personal goals, as well as prioritising these according to alignment to their vision.

The fifth and final integrative theme was that of work-life integration (balancing and calibration). The consuming nature of work and the negative impact that it was having on the perspectives of the leader participants was highlighted as a common theme at the beginning of the programme. The will to change the status quo and find techniques

to balance and calibrate work, family and community was one of the central transformative themes that emerged during the thematic analysis. The realisation that personal and professional lives are integrated and managed through boundary management was evident, and many leader participants wanted to enjoy the best of both aspects of their lives. The picture of success and vision was characterised by a picture of achievement interwoven with personal goals and happiness in a balanced fashion.

Finally, the LCP was conducted in a group setting, making it a more effective methodology for leadership transformation in the organisational setting. Furthermore, this was conducted with a multi-cultural and international group of participants, providing confirmation that this is a coaching methodology that may be applicable in other international coaching situations, for example, in a business school setting, with associated cost-effectiveness benefits.

The findings also concluded that the study met the original intention, which was to transform and liberate the personal and professional perspectives of leaders through postmodern leadership group-based coaching. The research question was answered in the positive, by also postulating that AI and POB principles can be successfully applied to group-based leadership coaching. This concludes the presentation of findings.

## **6.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided a presentation, discussion and integration of the research findings. An investigation of the transformative effects and psychological impact of the LCP, using a coding analysis, was presented. This was followed by the thematic analysis, which generated a number of themes, generative metaphors and personal insights. This culminates in an integration of all themes into major and supporting themes, followed by the presentation of an integrated model of the transformative effects of a group-based leadership coaching programme. Finally, the findings are concluded with a discussion of premises that relate to the research questions and that explain the transformative effects of the leadership coaching programme, provide a

critical evaluation of the applicability of appreciative leadership coaching in a global organisational setting and also of the impact of postmodern coaching on positive individual organisational constructs. The overall premise asserts that AI principles can be successfully applied to group-based leadership coaching.

The next chapter presents the final conclusions, recommendations, shortcomings and integration of the entire study.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS, SHORTCOMINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND INTEGRATION

This chapter presents the formulated conclusions which are addressed with reference to the research aim as well as the general and specific research objectives and emerging themes. Recommendations are formulated and presented with regard to appreciative leadership coaching, aimed at transforming the personal and professional perspectives of leaders and of optimising their functioning, in the context of psychology at work. Finally, the shortcomings and limitations of the study will be presented.

#### 7.1 CONCLUSIONS

This study presented the findings of a qualitative examination of the transformative effects of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme (LCP) for leaders' personal and professional perspectives in an organisational setting. The research is grounded in the challenges associated with leadership in the postmodern world and provides a response to these challenges and business needs, for both coach and psychologist.

With this end in mind, a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme, the Leadership Coaching Programme (LCP), was presented. The LCP is rooted and designed within the positive psychology paradigm, specifically using AI principles, both of which have been chosen as the appropriate empirical lens to determine the transformative effects of the LCP on leaders' personal and professional perspectives.

The recommendations of a meta-analysis of AI transformation (Laske, 1999) indicated that there was a lack of research into AI coaching processes that provided a practical and research-based response to coaching challenges in the postmodern coaching industry. Specific opportunities for further research in the field of leadership coaching were identified, and these were translated in the overall aim, which was to investigate the transformative effects of a postmodern leadership coaching experience, using AI principles, using a group-based approach and also responding to the recommendation

to use a longitudinal empirical design for further research on the transformative effects of leadership coaching. The problem statement indicated that there is a requirement for further exploration of postmodern group-based leadership coaching.

The unique contribution of this research was the use of and examination of AI principles in coaching, therefore providing a unique possibility for this research to build and expand upon the body of knowledge by combining postmodern principles, including AI and coaching (Bushe, 2011), primarily acting upon the question of whether postmodern principles can be successfully linked to leadership coaching. Furthermore, this was applied in a group-based setting, providing benefits of scale which are deemed to be of value as this coaching setting was the organisational context.

In formulating the research objectives, the problem statements and research questions were synthesised into the an overall research aim, which was to qualitatively examine the transformative effect of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme on leaders' personal and professional perspectives, and so add to the current body of knowledge in the field of coaching psychology. A set of broad research objectives (stated in section 1.4), each of which was supported and underlined by a few specific research objectives (stated in sections 1.4.1 and 1.4.2). The extent to which the objectives of both the literature and qualitative study were achieved will be discussed in the following sections.

### **7.1.1 Objectives: Literature Study**

The objectives of the literature study will now be summarised.

#### **7.1.1.1 To conceptualise group-based leadership coaching**

A literature overview of group-based leadership coaching as a field of coaching psychology was developed and presented in Chapter 2, and the sub-objective was deemed to have been achieved.

Leadership coaching is a facilitated process of empowerment of leaders through either an individual or group-based process, in which the perspective of leaders' personal and professional lives is transformed through an appreciation for the leader's experiences



and talents, the creation of a broader purpose and meaning for the leader and the definition and clarification of aspirational and achievable short-, medium- and long-term goals.

Group-based leadership coaching is a form of coaching facilitated by a leader coach that utilises the group processes of social construction and learning, narrative work and peer reflection with the aim of high engagement and feedback for the transformation of leader participants' perspectives.

The main outcomes of this literature study outlined the responsibilities of leaders in displaying competence in technical skills, as well as holding a personal leadership brand, especially in times of increasing ambiguity (Savickas, 2007). Leadership coaching in groups and the use of peer coaching and dialogue as a tool in transformative learning (Schapiro et al., 2011) and in leveraging the power of the therapeutic relationship between coach, client and group members is growing rapidly in popularity, particularly within the business community, and is strongly advocated in recent studies (Green et al., 2006; Joseph et al., 2001; Kets de Vries, 2005; Kets de Vries et al., 2007; Oades, Crowe, & Nguyen, 2009). Leadership coaching was defined as a process which is used "to help leaders understand themselves more fully, drawing on strengths, use themselves more effectively and intentionally and identify development needs and develop untested potential" (Ting & Scisco, 2006, p.2).

Leadership coaching was also described as a tool for personal and professional development that empowers leaders to construct their own reality and create their own sense of meaning and purpose, in order to remain psychologically healthy and rely more on themselves and their ability to take up their own personal authority (Crocket, 2007; Henwood 2007; Hirschhorn, 1997; Martin, 2001, McCluskey, 2008; McIntosh, 2003).

Coaching principles, adapted from the CCL coaching model, were used to describe the traditional approach to coaching. These principles are used to create a challenging, collaborative environment in which self-awareness is advocated to promote self-awareness and sustainable learning from experience through reflection, awareness and action (Ting, 2006). Only dealing with change at the cognitive level is insufficient, and

the coach is also required to have an impact on both the cognitive and emotional levels (Kets de Vries, 2005). It is argued that this is so important that all aspiring leadership coaches should undergo clinical psychological training to prepare them to work through the psychological processes that could derail the leadership coaching session (Kets de Vries, 2005).

By using postmodern approaches such as AI and being mindful of transformative learning theory and positive organisational behaviour outcomes, the group-based leadership coach is able to transcend the traditional and limited approach to coaching, offering an alternative approach.

The use of groups in leadership coaching was also described as a powerful process for leaders in the postmodern context to connect with their own personal and professional agenda, and in so doing 'take up their leadership' more effectively and efficiently. The aims of group-based postmodern coaching are for the fulfilment of purpose and for creating a leader who will in the future remain self-reflective and emotionally open to change. Furthermore, group-based leadership coaching was proposed as a viable, low-cost process (Oades, Crowe, & Nguyen, 2009) to support sustainable change, conflict resolution, commitment, accountability and business results (Joseph et al., 2001; Kets de Vries, 2005), and to strengthen perceptions of well-being and hope (Green et al., 2006). Leadership coaching in groups requires skill and mastery in order to deal effectively with the complex underlying dynamics involved when working in groups (Lawrence, 1966). In staying aware of the group dynamics, the group-based leadership coach will also need to take on a different style and process when compared with individual coaching techniques.

#### **7.1.1.2 To conceptualise postmodern coaching**

The second research objective related to conceptualising postmodern coaching, including the use of AI principles. Postmodern coaching is defined for the purposes of this study as a reflective dialogue which opens spaces for the unfolding of narratives that strengthen the agility of leader's to make meaning of social, personal and professional life experiences, so that the leader is able to unlock an authentic value based self-

identity and from this create breakthrough opportunities for growth within conditions of ever-increasing complexity.

Furthermore, the LCP used element of AI principles in its design. AI is a revolutionary theory, in which a pragmatic inquiry process based upon an appreciation for and a focus on the positive core and strengths of a human system is proposed as a solution in which entirely new meanings and shared images are collectively generated, providing previously untapped sources of strength and solutions with a powerful call to action.

For the purposes of this research, appreciative AI coaching are used interchangeably. AI coaching is:

AI coaching is the linking of the AI principles to coaching, characterised by a conscious positive stance and appreciation throughout the coaching process, with the aim of co-constructing new worlds and meanings for the client previously not available to them in service of mobilising a dramatic transformation in the possibilities, purpose and resolve of the client.

An overview of the theory and praxis of the AI approach to coaching, using seminal (Cooperrider et al. 2008) and more recent publications (Orem et al. (2011); Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2010) were used to provide content to the field of AI. The influence of positive psychology paradigm was also taken into account.

Positive psychology was cited as the “backbone of strengths-based coaching”, and an emerging stream in the coaching profession (Lueneburger, 2009). Strengths-based development involves the identification of talents and integration into self-awareness, resulting in a change in behaviour (Hodges & Clifton, 2004), and the trend to work with strengths, rather than weaknesses also holds true for the coaching profession (Linley & Haring, 2009).

The focus of the strengths-based psychologist, coach and researcher is a) to understand why some people thrive and live a life 'beyond good enough', despite life's challenges, and b) to learn from their resilience/strengths to build thriving individuals,

families and communities (Knott, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman et al., 2005).

Positive Organisational Behaviour (POB), was chosen as the focus area, delimiting it within the broader POS domain, and it was defined as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s workplace” (Luthans, 2002, p. 695).

Positive organisational behaviour constructs that were examined were: confidence (self-efficacy), hope, resilience (Luthans, 2002) and subjective well-being (Bartels & Boomsma, 2009; Diener et al., 1999; Simsek, 2009).

No specific research was identified that used qualitative measures for any of these scales, even though in most instances the authors identified limitations in the scope and richness of the instruments and outcomes (Connor et al., 2003; Diener, 2000; Snyder et al., 1997; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1988). This study therefore proposed a qualitative methodology, using coding rules for the measurement of these constructs.

Appreciative inquiry proposes that the positive core of people and organisations is an untapped source of strength in the postmodern world, and that the problem-solving inquiry model seems to have limitations if we wish to mobilise sustainable solutions and create energy through organisational development facilitation (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). Appreciation goes beyond the economic meaning to a human meaning, which is to operate with a positive intention to learn, grow and realise potential through being open with each other (Bioss, 2010).

Appreciative inquiry is distinctively different from other visioning methodologies in that the images of the created future are birthed within the positive past of the human system (Cooperrider et al., 2008). It is the positive stories that help us to link the reality with the possible future, and it may be that other best practice examples from other systems are brought into the exploration in order to create a generative metaphor for circumventing common resistances to change (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Appreciative conversations are “open, two way dialogue between two or more people” (Bioss, 2010) and they provide a way of dealing with people, enabling all to maintain effective and open conversations held with each other and not to each other, which leads to greater engagement and better results.

Finally, AI is distinctive in its claims because it avoids creating plans and processes for implementing agreed-upon changes, and rather creates plans and processes that will encourage and nurture improvised action by system members (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008). By creating space and freedom for building plans from the bottom up without having to service the hierarchy, AI theorists argue that much more sustainable transformation is created (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Whilst AI becomes progressively more popular as an organisational transformation method, there has been a dearth of published research examining it as a method (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). Stavros and Torres (2005) applied AI to the enhancement of daily living, and Gordon (2008b) applied AI to the enhancement of teamwork in the Sri Lankan cricket team. It was recommended that those people in charge of coaching and leadership development programmes should continue this trend in the workplace setting (Gordon, 2008b).

The principles of AI were described as they apply to the field of coaching, namely the constructionist principle, the principle of simultaneity, the poetic principle, the anticipatory principle, the narrative principle and the positive principle. A number of AI models were outlined, namely the Cooperrider 4-D AI model (Cooperrider et al., 2008), the Whitney model of appreciative leadership (Whitney, 2010), and the five-principle syntax model of AI (Tschannen-Moran, 2007). This was followed by the presentation of three models which have direct relevance to AI coaching: the Newell model of renewal (Newell, 2007), the Bioss model of appreciative conversations (Bioss, 2010) and the Binkert, Orem and Clancy tools for postmodern coaching (Binkert et al., 2007).

Critiques of AI have blamed the over-encouragement of unrealistic expectations and a discouragement of critical analysis (Golembieskwi, 2000; Grant & Humphries, 2006).

Finally, the need to evaluate AI is important (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004), as well as for studies that explore the successes and failures of AI (Head, 2005), and there is a need to understand the drivers of these findings. Bushe (2011) has also recommended comparative studies in AI which track the factors impacting on success. Furthermore, it is recommended that longitudinal studies are conducted, especially in organisations where AI is used repetitively (Bushe, 2011).

This study has specifically taken these critiques and recommendations into account, using elements of AI principles in the design of the postmodern LCP. Firstly, the design of the LCP (in Chapter 4.7) embraces both positive and negative experiences in the articulation and interpretation of personal stories in Stage 2 of the LCP. It is by encouraging stories, whether positive or negative, and appreciating these unconditionally, that the discovery of unique talents and the creation of definitions of personal success are generated (Bushe, 2011). These then are used as the launch pad for the creation of positive futures (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Secondly, the study uses a longitudinal methodology, examining the transformative effects of AI over an extended period of time. Furthermore, the study compares the findings of different groups experiencing the same postmodern coaching programme, which supports the recommendation to conduct studies where postmodern coaching is used repetitively rather than in once-off processes (Bushe, 2011).

Using the above-mentioned conclusions, it can be stated that the sub-objective to conceptualise postmodern coaching, using AI principles was achieved.

#### **7.1.1.3 To present a postmodern group-based leadership coaching model that uses AI principles.**

The third sub-objective was to propose a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme rooted in a positive psychology and AI approach, and this was achieved in Chapter 4.

The research question required a design that would reflect a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme, that used AI principles. A postmodern group-based appreciative leadership coaching programme, the LCP, was proposed as the process of

choice for this study. The core aim of the LCP is to empower individuals in terms of establishing optimal and sustainable leadership of and independence in both their career and personal lives (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

Individuals participating on the LCP are not seen through the lens of the economic model – as resources, a number or even capital as in the terms ‘human resources’ and ‘human capital’, but rather as unique individuals with rich and diverse emotional lives, histories and identities who are privileged to enjoy a brief moment to find their ‘positive core’ and then move forward, taking up their respective roles on a personal and professional level (Vansteenkiste, 2009).

The LCP was shown to capture the essence of the postmodern approach in philosophy, aims and methods, using an integrated approach, along with group-based coaching as a predominant methodology.

Firstly, the underlying philosophy of the LCP is one of empowerment through sustainable personal and professional perspective transformation. Secondly, the LCP aims include the completion of an inward process of discovering self; understanding and articulating one’s own story and life themes, and then becoming more future-focused as a leader, with outcomes related to creation and clarification of life and work purpose/vision and the translation of this into action planning (Vansteenkiste, 2008) with the intention of “liberating the human spirit and consciously constructing a better future” (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3).

Secondly, the use AI principles in the design are most evident in the personal future planning component of the programme, by using inquiry; appreciative conversations, a positive focus, unconditional affirmation, stories, metaphors and themes, building self-reflective competence and shared images of the future and innovation (Gordon, 2008a) to heighten the positive potential in the coaching process (Cooperrider et al., 2008) to the mutual benefit of all participant leaders (Binkert et al., 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Davis, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Thirdly, the methodology employed in the LCP is biographic in nature, grounded in social interaction, making full use of peer reflection and geared to critical reflection.

Furthermore, another key component of the LCP is that the peer group is used as part of the reflective team through the use of dyads and triads, small groups and plenary groups, and that training in listening and feedback skills is provided to prepare the participants for their reflective role, a skill which they require in their leadership roles both in their personal and work lives. The LCP also makes use of narrative coaching “through the use of stories; active listening; re-authoring of stories in collaboration with participants in a group context of witnessing and remembering” (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007) and leverages the potential of collective strengths, based on social construction (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004) to transform the leaders’ perspectives.

The postmodern use of the narrative and appreciative approach was further enhanced through the use of rich multiple qualitative methods such as drawings and written exercises (Paulus, 2006), which are used as tangible artefacts that are a platform for observation by peer reflectors, and to enhance the integration of cognitive, emotional and will components of the coaching process (Paulus, 2006) as well as opening up horizons beyond the rational, conscious levels of experience into the unconscious dynamics that affect the leaders’ perspectives (Kets de Vries, 2005; Peltier, 2010).

The entire LCP was reviewed in terms of its design, but even more so in terms of how it was executed in the context of this research programme, to determine whether it adhered to the six AI principles (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) and to the four postmodern requirements for life story narration (McMahon & Watson, 2008). The programme was found to meet the criteria for all of the principles, with the exception of the poetic principle, where the coaching programme most definitely created space for self-reflection, but the findings for the transfer of this skill over into the daily lives of most of the group after the programme were not convincing.

The first principle displayed in the LCP was the constructionist principle, through the use of co-creative dialogue, narrative and collaborative group work and through discourse used in a collective way to create transformation and new metaphors for the leader participants (Gordon, 2008a).



The positive principle is used during the LCP to generate positive images of the created future based upon the positive stories and moments in the past of the participant leaders, and through building on leader strengths through the ground rules of the LCP, which are respect for self and others, curiosity and inquiry, inclusiveness and confidentiality (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2009) and in the focus on drawing out success in the past, discovery of strengths and talents and unlimited dream outcomes and desires.

Furthermore, the anticipatory principle is deployed through the use of discourse and the generation of collective themes, as well as the sharing of personal visions as a form of energy within the coaching process.

The design of the LCP also reinforces the poetic principle to further enhance and hone the self-reflective competence of leader participants through the use of plenary self-awareness teaching sessions designed to debunk myths and help the leader participants to think more critically (Vansteenkiste, 2008; Vansteenkiste, 2009). Furthermore, the longitudinal design of the programme, with the break in between sessions and homework assignments to be completed during this time, establish and further reinforce the capability of the leader participants to hold sustainable and life-long self- and co-authoring habits (Vansteenkiste, 2009)

The third sub-objective, which was to propose a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme, using AI principles is deemed to have been achieved.

### **7.1.2 Objectives: Empirical Study**

The objectives of the empirical study will now be summarised.

#### **7.1.2.1 To implement a postmodern group-based leadership programme in an international organisational setting.**

The fourth sub-objective was to implement a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme in an international organisational setting, and this was described and achieved in Chapter 5.

The LCP was conducted within a large multinational organisation in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, working primarily in the emerging markets in Africa and Asia across eleven countries, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Vietnam and Cambodia. The context of this study therefore took place within a rich multi-cultural and global context.

The leader participants in the coaching programme were all chosen through the succession planning process of the organisation, and a convenience sampling technique was used by enrolling all nominations over a two-year period into the population chosen for the study.

The spread of participants per country was reasonably matched, with the exception of South Africa and Uganda, which had a greater representation of participants. This is possibly a function of convenience, because the organisation headquarters are based in South Africa as it is cheaper and easier to send internal candidates in larger numbers. The Ugandan participant numbers are normally larger than all other nationalities, and this is function of the strong culture of learning in that business environment

The leader participants in the programme were active agents in the construction of knowledge and making sense of the reality or encounter as peer coaches. They were also co-researchers through the use of multiple qualitative methods (drawings and written exercises), which are used as concrete situations to set up an observational base and as peer reflectors during the coaching process. The multiple points of reference allowed the researcher to have a richer sense of the data, in contrast to a purely quantitative method.

The role of the primary facilitators was to coach both the group and the individual leader participants by observing, channelling and shaping the groups' interaction and energies through the process and adapting the process where necessary, as this varies according to the response emerging from the participants (Vansteenkiste, 2011). This can be done by through a guided facilitation approach, using a combination of consultation and peer reflection.

A pilot study was conducted in year one. The LCP was presented twice to two separate groups, the first group in year two and the second group in year three. Each group attended the first workshop, with a second workshop roughly four months after the first. This allowed for the generation of a sustainable self-reflective competence that is embedded as a habit amongst leader participants. Data was collected before, during and after the coaching programme at various stages and milestones during the coaching process.

The three stages of the LCP were applied for both groups. The first stage – ‘Here and Now’, is constructed to meet the leader participant ‘where they are at’, to set up a trust relationship, as well as a comprehensive context for the client using the biographic approach before spending the majority of the programme on stages two and three, where the clients explore the positive and create their own future possibilities using an appreciative approach. The first stage includes setting ground rules, preparation for peer reflection and communication skills training, current professional and personal perspectives and peer reflection and dialogue. Stage 1 of the LCP sets up the group as a collective force for transformation through preparing them for the process of dialogue as professional peer reflectors, and then providing an opportunity for each individual to provide a ‘here and now’ description, their ‘psychological present’, which illustrates the forces operating in each leader participant’s life space at a point in time. This creates a stage to explore and discover the psychological past and psychological future in relation to the present (de Board, 1978).

Being group-based, this coaching programme rests on the quality of peer reflection, and significant attention and time is provided for teaching and practising professional listening skills. Listening and reflective skills are not only important for the dynamics of the coaching programme, but in the current era of communication-with-understanding, it provides unprecedented opportunities for the leader. In the professional environment it is important for the leader participant to be aware of what he/she really wants to say and even more so of what they are hearing (Vansteenkiste, 2009).

Homework journal assignments are set to enable the continued journey towards a rich understanding and appreciation of the leaders’ personal and professional strengths.

Stage 2 of the LCP has three main outcomes – articulation and interpretation of personal stories, the discovery of unique talents, and the creation of definitions of personal success as the launch pad to the creation of positive futures. This stage includes the use of biographical charting, and taking a ‘helicopter view’ so that one is able to improve self-knowledge and observe life and career as a landscape, a practice that busy managers rarely make time for a process that often elicits a surprise for leader participants as they “tap into their intuitive vision of where they want to be headed” (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

It is important to note that having a positive praxis is not exclusive, and most certainly does not mean that negative, critical or marginal voices are left out when presenting the autobiographical section. Leader participants come into the coaching process with a past and certain patterns of being that may make it difficult for them to move on from ‘dark moments’ in their lives, and the appreciative coach needs to be comfortable in allowing the coaching client to acknowledge their internal voices and past experiences that are not positive (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gordon, 2008a; S. Grant & Humphries, 2006; van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). Trying to ignore or reject them only gives them greater focus, and ‘being with’ the coaching client and being mindful of their emotions without judgement are crucial skills required by the AI coach (Binkert et al., 2007).

Stage 2 pro-actively shifts into the Discovery/Appreciative stage of AI where the ‘positive core’ is invoked (Binkert et al., 2007; Walter & Peller, 1992) and enabling of in-depth talent research through memory work. The most unanswered and unexplored aspect of the journey to authentic leadership and that the entire identity of self is shifted at the moment when the leader participants find their power (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

All of these exercises, the memory work, connecting with ‘golden moments’ and social construction of strengths in a group, serve to provide an opportunity for connecting with the client’s ‘positive core’; to identify the ‘best of what is’ in the leader participant through a process of appreciating his/her memory of their past, present and future capacity, as well as to translate this into a future imagined vision that is articulated (Binkert et al., 2007; Vansteenkiste, 2011) and that draws the leader participant towards curiosity about a different and better created future and inspired life. The leader

participants are encouraged to connect with the power expressed in their talent research to be used as positive sources of energy (Vansteenkiste, 2008). With respect to this stage, “As people throughout a system connect in serious study into qualities, examples, and analysis of the positive core – each appreciating and everyone being appreciated – hope grows and community expands” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.3).

The final stage (Stage 3) in the LCP is aimed at enabling the creation of a compelling personal created future, with significant possibilities attached to its meaning for each leader participant. Stage 3 is made up of a dreaming and a planning component. Furthermore, there are choices and consequences associated with creating a compelling vision, which is then put into action by identifying opportunities that will help to move the individual into the future. This is clarified through the development of a set of planned steps in which the individual starts the journey to transformation.

In conclusion, the fourth sub-objective, implementing a postmodern group-based leadership programme in an international organisational setting, was achieved.

#### **7.1.2.2 To determine the transformative effects of the postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme on leaders’ personal and professional perspectives.**

The core aim of this study was to generate greater understanding about transformation during the postmodern group-based leadership coaching process, through a process of application and documentation of a group-based postmodern coaching process.

The LCP is grounded in the use of postmodern concepts such as social construction as a method for making sense of reality and creating meaning and truth, and so this research project drew strongly on qualitative research techniques, including open-ended text and drawing analysis, which seeks to explore the different discourses (stories/themes) at the individual and group level, which enabled them to make sense of their world at the point in time of the coaching programme. In doing so, the research process was geared towards an appreciation of the multiple data sets, including discourses, that are available and for examining how they are ‘knowledged into being’;

what purpose they serve, which are dominant and which are hidden, without any pre-set postulations or expectations.

The theory of transformative learning was used as a basis for understanding perspective transformation, and this is based upon a number of key assumptions that include: working with the whole person (emotional, intuitive, thinking, physical and spiritual), centrality of experience, irreversible paradigm shifts, self-reflection, critical reflection of assumptions (CRA), use of journaling and reflective dialogue, disruptive experiences, rational discourse, critical engagement and dialogue with peers, and non-evaluative feedback (Fetherson & Kelly, 2007; Mezirow, 2000; Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 2008)

The stated core aim of the LCP was to empower individuals in terms of establishing optimal and sustainable leadership of and independence in both their career and personal lives (Vansteenkiste, 2011). An explicit and clear core higher order outcome emerged, which was that the coaching programme was designed in such a way as to liberate personal leadership and purpose through postmodern coaching. In the pre-inquiry work there were signs of expectation and anticipation, as if the leader participants were poised to discover and formulate their purpose in life and then actually do it.

A coding structure was presented which included higher order outcomes, generative metaphors, personal insights and transformative themes. This model was used to present a systematic evaluation of the data set.

The development of the coding structure clearly indicated alignment with the second and third clusters of Mezirow's (2000) transformative model. These 10 phases may be broadly clustered into three clusters (Mezirow, 2000). Leader participants were found to demonstrate a new frame of reference (cluster 2) as well as meaning perspective transformation – "a change in one's way of knowing" (cluster 3). It can be concluded that transformative learning occurred during the LCP.

The higher order outcome of the LCP was perceived by participants to be a positive experience, providing a rare opportunity to gain self-insight and in so doing to redefine or clarify one's personal purpose and leadership identity. The leadership identity was

obtained through a broader perspective of what leadership stands for and requires going beyond self to include others at the family, team and community level, in order to achieve success.

The two central processes that seemed to be most valuable to the participants were a) the act of conscious mindfulness, and b) self-reflection. These indicated that the process of a structured meta-cognitive process and conscious thinking about their self, their career and themselves as leaders provided a valuable and useful mechanism for unlocking their self-knowledge, but even more so, to open up 'mind maps' and visions for their future career, life and being as leaders.

The AI coding matrix showed a strong case for the creation of numerous collective generative metaphors, which were collectively common and repeated across various individuals and represented both in the text and the drawings.

A number of transformative themes were identified through the process of layering and connecting ideas and themes, namely: from lack of self-awareness to 'knowing'; from uncontrollable external demands to empowerment, from reactive to proactive; from immediate to long-term; from scattered to directional; from small worldview to big-picture thinking; from individual contributor to leader; from arrogance to appreciation for others; and from comfortable to achievement-oriented.

A number of key prevailing outcomes that further illuminated the transformative themes were identified as a) breakthrough and revelation, b) clarity of vision, c) abundant thinking, c) a personal leadership brand, d) appreciation for the humanity of others, e) empowerment of self, and f) re-ignited achievement orientation.

The following personal insights were identified in the critical evaluation of the LCP. They include a) consciousness as an enabler of success; b) education as a liberation tool; c) seeing career development as a journey and not a race; d) the fact that dreams transcend culture; e) the realisation that personal passions and talent are the departure point for achievement ; f) the importance of work-life calibration; g) the realisation that leadership is powerful, a philosophy, a life choice and a lifestyle, and does not require a job title; and h) the importance of appreciation of the humanity of others to personhood.

Three enabling tools were identified as critical to the success of the coaching process. Firstly, the creation of a compelling personal created future held great meaning for each leader participant by encouraging leader participants to think outside of current norms and question their underlying assumptions, to leverage anticipatory learning as a transformational tool, and finally use social interaction to help to make sense of them and appreciate them for their possibilities, as well as to create a convergence zone, where, as each scenario is related, the future begins to emerge and is reinforced until the participants start to have clarity about the future dream.

The second enabling tool which was described by participants as significantly helpful in their development was that of 'listening on three levels'. Listening on three levels of communication was introduced as a framework for professional communication during the coaching programme and the three levels are a) the cognitive level, referring to thought, facts and word content, and the 'train of thought'; b) at the emotional level, referring to the discernment of the verbal and non-verbal expression (intonation, expression, body language) of feelings, emotions and moods in the speaker; and c) at the will level, referring to listening for the will and intent expressed by the speaker and in trying to sense the energy and direction of the speaker, indicative of the motivation to decide or do something (Vansteenkiste, 2011).

The last enabling tool was the annual planning tool provided to the leader participants during the programme. In thinking about plans, the leader participants create possibility propositions in order to reach their ideal future by leveraging their positive core and insights (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins and Mohr, 2001).

The following sub-premises were then identified as part of the analysis, and these were then integrated into a main premise and are summarised briefly. The first premise asserts that group-based coaching is applicable for leadership coaching. The facilitators were successfully able to apply a group-based coaching methodology in a large group setting, with a strong return on investment for the individual participants (positive transformative effects), the coach (an energising coaching process), as well as the



organisation (cost and time effectiveness and leadership development). It was also found that group-based leadership coaching is applicable within a multi-cultural and international group of participants, providing confirmation that this is a coaching methodology that may be applicable in other international coaching situations, for example, in a business school setting.

The second sub-premise is that AI principles can be successfully linked to leadership coaching. Whilst the programme does not mirror the AI methodology (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2020), certain elements of the programme demonstrated and utilised the principles of AI. AI principles can be successfully linked to postmodern leadership coaching. The entire LCP was reviewed in terms of its design, but even more so in terms of how it was executed in the context of this research programme to determine whether it adhered to the six AI principles (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). The programme was found to meet the criteria for all of the principles, with the exception of the poetic principle, where the coaching programme most definitely created space for self-reflection, but the findings were not convincing for the transfer of this skill over into the daily lives of most of the group after the programme. The findings demonstrated that it was possible to apply AI principles to a leadership coaching programme successfully and to replicate this number of times.

The third sub-premise asserts that appreciative group-based leadership coaching has a positive impact on the psychological POB constructs of confidence, hope, subjective well-being and resilience.

The overall premise asserts that postmodern group-based leadership coaching offers transformative effects for the professional and personal perspectives of leader participants consisting of five core transformative themes: a) self-knowledge/inside-out; b) appreciation of others/outside-in; c) broader vision/art of possibilities; d) self-control/magic of empowerment and e) work-life integration/balance and calibration. The findings indicated that the LCP was a catalyst in transforming the leader participant's future plans and orientation but that there was room to improve the sustainability of change through reinforcing processes and follow up.

The findings also concluded that the study met the original intention, which was to transform and liberate the personal and professional perspectives of leaders through postmodern group-based coaching. This section has provided an overview of the findings of the transformative effects of the LCP on leaders' personal and professional perspectives as presented in Chapter 6. The fifth sub-objective has therefore been achieved.

This concludes the presentation of findings.

## **7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The final main research objective was to make recommendations for further applications and research for postmodern group-based leadership coaching, aimed at transforming personal and professional life experience and optimising functioning in the context of psychology at work, and this is presented in the following section. The recommendations need to illuminate which lessons could be learned from this research and describe how the resulting recommendations could benefit industrial psychology and coaching practice in the organisational setting.

Recommendations are now presented for the following areas: a) with regard to future group-based postmodern coaching, b) recommendations for future research and practice, c) recommendations in terms of improving the LCP methodology, and d) training of LCP practitioners.

### **7.2.1 Recommendations for future postmodern group-based leadership coaching**

The findings of the critical evaluation of the LCP indicate that the general trend in the data was for a positive shift in the personal and professional perspectives of leader participants. Furthermore, a number of positive transformative themes were identified at the cognitive, emotional and will levels, presupposing the power of group-based postmodern coaching for transformation.

It is important to note that this research provides evidence for the continued use of group-based postmodern coaching outside of the personal or team based context, as it is applied successfully, with research evidence, in the organisational setting.

It would be interesting to apply this methodology in another industry or group setting, possibly in a tertiary leadership development programme, to determine whether the transformative impact would be as pronounced in a different industry or organisational culture.

It is suggested that this methodology is deployed using different coaches who have been trained in the LCP approach, and to evaluate whether this methodology is transferable as a coaching technique that can be used across the coaching industry. This would indicate and demonstrate the applicability and broader generalisability of the LCP as a personal leadership coaching tool.

Therefore, it is recommended that this approach be used within the coaching context where group-based leadership coaching would be called for.

### **7.2.2 Recommendations for future research and practice**

It is recommended that postmodern group-based coaching research and practice be expanded using leader participants from different organisations, industries, cultures and nations, perhaps in a business school setting as part of a transition leadership programme, where the leader must transition from managing as a team leader to managing other managers, where authentic leadership becomes even more critical. Doing this would provide even more robust evidence for the generalisability and transferability of the programme across various settings and in a multi-cultural context.

The LCP was developed for acceleration of mid-level managers in the organisation and it is recommended that further research be conducted at other levels in the organisation, including the first-line management and senior management levels to investigate the relevance and appropriateness of the postmodern group-based approach across the leadership pipeline.

The use of narrative individual interviews, conducted amongst leader participants, and a narrative analysis of these findings would further strengthen any future research and add to the richness of the qualitative data and findings in the postmodern coaching space.

Finally, the information in the literature review on postmodern group-based coaching, using AI principles was limited, and it is recommended that this work, along with that of other researchers and coaches in this specific form of coaching, be collected and edited into a collection of works or chapters called “Perspectives on Postmodern Coaching” in a publication such as the *AI Practitioner and Coaching: an International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*.

### **7.2.3 Recommendations for the LCP methodology**

It is suggested that the transformation would be more viable in the longer term if an opportunity was created for follow-up coaching, preferably in the same peer group setting, but if this is not possible, in a virtual setting or with an individual coach. It is believed that the act of practicing the skills of reflection within the dynamics of the changing conditions of the specific circumstances of the leader participant over time would help to embed the ability to be flexible to adapt both the created future and goals as change occurs.

In addition, it would be useful to conduct an evaluation/check-in with participants and a coach at least one year after the programme. This gives a reasonable amount of time for specific goals to be achieved and for participants to see significant progress and identify themes of resistance.

It is recommended that the use of reinforcing coaching sessions (either individually or in a plenary group session) be applied and tested out in future research and practice. This would provide an opportunity for cementing the behaviour change for leader participants and give them an opportunity to re-calibrate plans within the shifting context of their environments.

There is a need to mitigate the risk of an extreme reversion to the previous perspectives on the part of leader participants on the LCP.

The ability to maintain the transformation and ensure a sustainable shift is critical to the credibility of the process and to the ultimate success of the coaching process. Whilst this programme is by no means a once-off process, it does take place over a specific time period (six to nine months), after which the leader participants are left to continue 'alone' and without the support of the peer group or coaches, unless specifically requested.

It is believed that responsible coaching practice would then provide additional support until such a time as the transformation had been crystallised and set in place. It is believed that the opportunity for a follow-up session after six months, as well as training in polarity management would provide the needed support to entrench this transformation.

Leader participants should be encouraged to revisit their plans daily and monthly, and to revisit their current reality at least every six months in the following few years, preferably with a coaching buddy or with one of the facilitator coaches. This will help to create an environment of habitual encouragement and innovation for action, and continue to remind them of their dreams and celebrate and savour their successes (Binkert et al., 2007). With the development of social media, this is a definite area for further investigation and leverage.

The act of self-reflection was powerful as a change agent for personal transformation. While many leader participants were grateful for the opportunity to have time to spend on themselves and to self-reflect, there was no overt evidence that this was a skill that they could use themselves to create change and growth on a sustainable basis.

According to Kets de Vries (2005), it is through sharing autobiographical stories that transformative development occurs, due to the power of the shared emotional experience of telling life stories, receiving feedback and support, and hope shared with other group members. Conducting this follow-up in a supportive peer group setting would be ideal, and this would build the sense of community and collaboration, with

participants working off a strong base of 'knowing' as a group, having previously shared their created futures and plans and finding commonality in their shared experiences and journey. This could prove to be a truly powerful coaching community of collaboration.

#### **7.2.4 Training LCP practitioners**

Now that the findings have established that the LCP has a positive transformational effect on leaders' personal and professional perspectives, it is recommended that a core group of coaching practitioners is trained to use the methodology, so that empowerment of leaders can be further accelerated and developed.

It is suggested that this occurs in the organisation in which the original research took place, and extended within the global reach of that organisation to other global hubs across Europe, USA, Africa and Asia. This would provide valuable research material for the sustainability of the programme, as well as for its impact on leadership development.

Finally, it is suggested that a training workshop and accreditation be provided to interested coaching practitioners in the LCP methodology to enable the practice of postmodern coaching to be further extended within the coaching profession.

All six sub-objectives for this research are deemed to have been achieved, and the conclusions and recommendations of this research have been outlined.

### **7.3 SHORTCOMINGS**

The following section will present a discussion of the shortcomings of this study and will be followed by the chapter summary.

#### **7.3.1 Polarities and paradoxes in findings**

The following section will highlight polarities, contradictions and paradoxes that emerged in the findings, before presenting the general trend in the data, which was for a positive shift in the personal and professional perspectives of leader participants. At this point it is important to critically evaluate this highly positive pattern and ask whether

there are any underlying assumptions, gaps in conclusions or possible problems within the themes and premises that should be discussed (Bushe, 2011; Grant & Humphries, 2006).

With a data set that is so inspiring and encouraging, there is always the risk that the researcher lacks the insight to understand possible limitations and problems which may be lying under the surface. It is important not to take the data only at face value in a naïve manner, but to be circumspect and ensure that all eventualities are accounted for. When the shifts in perspective have been as extreme, as in these findings, there is a need to mitigate the risk of an extreme swing back to the previous state. The ability to maintain the transformation and ensure a sustainable shift is critical to the credibility of the process and to the ultimate success of the coaching process. Whilst this programme is by no means a once-off process, it does take place over a specific time period (six to nine months), after which the leader participants are left to continue 'alone' and without the support of the peer group or coaches, unless specifically requested.

There is a concern that the transformation that is generated as a result of the LCP, as described by the transformative themes, actually represents a polarity between one state or perspective and another, for example, from random to directed. This suggests then that the leader participants had moved from one state to another, and that this is a set point, and that the individual will not return to the previous state. The homeostatic effect would suggest otherwise, and we would be naïve to assume that all leader participants would remain in the highly charged positive state without reinforcement and support.

It also assumes that the leader participant will know how to manage this shift effectively and find the perfect balance on the polarity continuum, without becoming too extreme in their shift and without coaching support to manage the consequences of these shifts.

It is believed that responsible coaching practice would then provide additional support until such a time as the transformation has been crystallised and set in place. It is believed that the opportunity for a follow-up session after six months, as well as training

in polarity management would provide the needed support to entrench this transformation.

### **7.3.2 Challenges associated with a single paradigm**

As a researcher, the need to stay focused within one approach in order to design and execute the research according to one particular paradigm was challenging at times. Being able to do so is important in terms of maintaining integrity and focus within the study. However, it can limit the ability of the researcher to draw from a richer and more eclectic set of theories and models, using a situational approach (Grant & Humphries, 2006).

There is a controversial emerging view in the literature regarding scientists taking up a more integrative approach that acknowledges complexity and even chaos as a reality (Veldsman, 2009; Watson & Kuit, 2007), and this suggests that the psychologist/researcher will no longer be 'strait-jacketed' into one school of thought.

Whilst the psychologist/researcher will remain centred in a specific foundation of practice, he/she will draw thoughtfully from other theories and practices to strengthen research and practice, and it is suggested that this may be possible in future research, especially in the concluding chapters (Watson & Kuit, 2007).

Watson (2007), a proponent of the postmodern approach, warns against missionary zeal either for or against the modern and postmodern approaches, because this has polarised psychology and research into either a subjective or objective approach. By being forced into choosing an epistemology, the researcher and psychologist is able to construct a clear identity and boundaries, but may be limited by a narrower worldview.

There is a growing argument for a more flexible 'both/and' approach, a new philosophical perspective based on complexity, which may represent an eclectic merger between the two modalities in the future (Allen et al., 2011; Johnson, 2005).

This research was conducted within tight theoretical and methodological assumptions based on postmodernism and it is suggested that while these boundaries are powerful, that it is also limiting to the coach to work within only one school of thought and practice.



### **7.3.3 Data collection limited to text and drawings**

Due to the dispersed geographic location and nature of the jobs of leader participants who are 'out in the market' or in the factory, the opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews before or after the programme was not available to the researcher. This meant that the data set was limited to observations and text in the form of essays and drawings. Whilst the data was rich and used multiple methods, it is believed that the collection of verbal narrative interview notes, which could be transcribed and used in the thematic analysis, would have improved the richness of the findings.

Furthermore, recordings of the narratives during the coaching programme could have provided additional useful data in terms of the research question. However, this was attempted in the pilot coaching session by taping all the group conversations, and the technology required to tape multiple groups in breakaway sessions proved to be impractical and expensive. The lack of this discourse had the potential to negatively impact on the findings. However, it was found the richness of the drawings and personal essays provided sufficient data for the analysis, and this risk was mitigated.

### **7.3.4 Positive findings**

The overall findings of the thematic analysis indicated a profoundly positive perspective transformation during the LCP. Although the risk of biased interpretation was mitigated through the use of objective coders, at this point it is important to scrutinise this highly positive pattern in the findings and ask whether there are any underlying assumptions, gaps in conclusions or possible problems within the themes and premises that should be discussed.

The researcher needs to maintain a critical stance, and with a data set that is so inspiring and encouraging, there is always the risk that the researcher/coders lacked the insight to understand the possible limitations and problems which may be lying under the surface. The fact that the design of the coding rules were set in the AI and positive psychology paradigms also may have lead the coders to only look for positive transformation.

This is where the use of an objective coder, well trained in a different paradigm (perhaps from the systems psychodynamic approach or a coach with clinical experience), who could look at the data with a fresh set of eyes, and with even more circumspection, would add value to the conclusions and interpretation of the findings.

Therefore, it is important not to take the data at face value, but to be circumspect and ensure that all eventualities are accounted for and that the spirit of appreciation be acknowledged when reading the findings.

### **7.3.5 Design of LCP follow-up process**

The design of the LCP was limited by the amount of time available for this programme, and this was determined by the daily training cost associated with an international programme, using hotels, flights and other costs in the calculation.

There could be some concern that the themes of transformation that were generated as a result of the LCP actually represents a polarity between one state or perspective and another, for example, from random to directed. This suggests then that the leader participants had moved from one state to another, and that the new state is a set point, and that the individual will not return to the previous state.

The homeostatic effect would suggest otherwise, and we would be naïve to assume that all leader participants would remain in the highly charged positive state without reinforcement and support.

It also assumes that the leader participant will know how to manage this shift effectively and find the perfect balance on the polarity continuum, without becoming too extreme in their shift and without coaching support to manage the consequences of these shifts.

In reflective essays of leader participants, there is no direct reference to the use of self-reflection outside of the coaching process as a skill that could continue to be used to create change and growth. It was as if the LCP programme is used as a space for self-reflection, but not necessarily participants' daily lives.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the mere fact that participants took time to write a self-reflective essay is evidence enough that they had developed a sustainable self-reflective ability. This is an area for further probing and is a concern, as this area could be strengthened if there was the opportunity for a third, shorter coaching session with the emphasis on sustainable growth and reflection.

Ideally, the design of the LCP should include a six-month follow up session, and the formation of support structures available after the AI 'event' and where there is a convergence zone for people to come together for connection, cooperation and more co-creation – a community of practice (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Whilst some sustainability is built into the process after the programme, the process of transformation, re-evaluation of current reality and creating futures is not static, and the LCP process would be reinforced through the provision of a coach for a period of time or a series of coaching sessions after the programme, which would help to account for this dynamism.

#### **7.4 FINAL INTEGRATION**

The postmodern organisation and its leaders are faced with relentless turbulence and change (Allen et al., 2011; Kirkbride et al., 1994; Peus, 2011). Organisations have a compelling economic drive for success, and to enable this they need to have leadership bench-strength – a critical mass of self-directed; mature leaders who will lead effectively in chaotic times, as well as accelerate the development of a sustainable supply of talent of talent through the organisation's leadership pipeline (Charan et al., 2001; Conger & Fishel, 2007).

The recent exponential rise in popularity and use of coaching can be ascribed to the increased business need for leadership development (Kets de Vries, 2005; Kilburg, 2004a). However, the growth of coaching as a profession (in practice) has not necessarily been followed in terms of research output, and there is a need to grow the current body of knowledge in coaching psychology, stepping out of the traditional positivistic models into alternative approaches (Schmidt, 2002).

Appreciative inquiry claims to be a source of untapped strength in the postmodern world, and a source of sustainable solutions and genesis for energy within the organisational context (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). There is a requirement to specifically cater to the needs of the postmodern leader, using postmodern coaching and drawing from the principles of positive psychology and AI approaches to coaching (Gordon, 2008a). The lack of research in the area of postmodern leadership coaching, using AI principles, using innovative methods such as group-based coaching, provided an opportunity for this study to contribute to the theory and practice of leadership coaching in an organisational setting.

With this end in mind, a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme, the Leadership Coaching Programme (LCP), was proposed as a response to the need to provide a scientifically robust, postmodern, alternative coaching programme, relevant to the professional coaching setting. The LCP is rooted and designed within the postmodern domain and the positive psychology paradigm, specifically using AI principles, which have therefore been chosen as the appropriate empirical lens to determine the transformative effects of the LCP on leaders' personal and professional perspectives.

This study presented a qualitative examination of the transformative effects of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme (LCP) on leaders' personal and professional perspectives in an organisational setting. It is grounded in the challenges associated with leadership in the postmodern world, and provides a response to these challenges as both coach and psychologist.

The research was successfully able to integrate postmodern leadership coaching, group-based coaching methods and the use of AI principles into the design of a coaching methodology that is relevant, practical and cost-effective for use in the leadership coaching space in multi-cultural international organisations. By applying the AI principles to leadership coaching, this study was able to determine that postmodern coaching was able to transform and liberate the personal and professional future perspectives of leaders. This was achieved through a journey of personal empowerment using the conscious processes of mindfulness and self- and peer- reflection, which

revealed the leader participants' strengths. This was used to understand and articulate their own story and life themes, and then become more future-focused as leaders, with a clear vision for life and work and an action plan to execute this effectively.

From the organisational perspective, this exploration demonstrated that it was possible to apply postmodern principles to a leadership coaching programme successfully and to replicate this a number of times. Furthermore, the research successfully used a group-based coaching methodology that could be deployed in an individual coaching setting with a large group of leaders in a short space of time. For practical and cost reasons, this is a more effective methodology for leadership transformation in the organisational setting, made possible through the use of group-based coaching methods (peer group reflection and appreciation).

This study succeeded in generating knowledge and opportunities for expanding the use of postmodern, AI and group-based leadership coaching. In addition, the programme delivery was amongst international groups of leaders, and this added to the relevance and implications of the study for coaching practice in conditions of high diversity and in multicultural settings. This provided confirmation that the methodology outlined is robust and has potential for application in other international coaching situations, for example, in a business school setting.

The transformative effects of this process on leader participants was examined through qualitative research methods, and the reported findings clearly indicated that the LCP was a positive catalyst in transforming the leader participant's future plans and orientation. Furthermore, transformation was identified in that leader participants had a more proactive and empowered approach to their lives as a result of the coaching programme. In addition, their personal and professional perspectives were more goal-directed, and characterised by a broader perspective on life – 'big-picture thinking'. According to Kets de Vries (2005), it is through sharing autobiographical stories that transformative development occurs, due to the power of the shared emotional experience of telling life stories, receiving feedback and support and hope shared with other group members. This transformation was also evident in the altered identity of the participants as leaders both at work and in their personal lives. This was enhanced by a

deeper appreciation for the value of consciousness, for education as a liberation tool, for patience in career development, for the humanity of others and for the importance of integrating one's personal passions into a personal and leadership brand and vision.

Key transformative themes were identified as self-knowledge, appreciation of others, broader vision, self-control and work-life integration. The LCP was found to be a positive catalyst in transforming the leader participant's future plans, goal-directedness, confidence, resilience, hope and subjective well-being. It was also found to positively empower leaders and broaden their life perspective. There are five themes which were identified as the crux of the design and outcomes of the LCP, and for leadership coaching in general. They are self-knowledge (secret of inside-out); appreciation of others (secret of outside-in); broader vision (art of possibility); self-control (magic of empowerment); work-life integration (balancing and calibration).

The LCP was also found to have a positive impact on the psychological POB constructs of confidence, hope, subjective well-being and resilience amongst the leader participants. Confidence levels as expressed in the text and drawings were markedly improved where the individual had previously expressed low levels of confidence, or strengthened where confidence levels were already evident. The transformation in positive expressions of hope was startling, with many data sets starting with expressed feelings of despair, and moving to enthusiasm and evidence of both goal-directed determination and pathways (plans) to meet goals. Furthermore, the LCP was seen to impact positively on the subjective well-being of leader participants where thoughts, acts and feelings of self-belief were strengthened and the success of simple behavioural changes (for example, work-life balance; time management and exercise) after the programme had further led to a sense of positivity about life. Finally, strong evidence for improved resilience was determined in the evidence of the capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict and even failure. It is postulated that one of the major reasons for this is that participants had a long-term, well-articulated vision for the future as represented by their created future, and that this was the catalyst for building a strong sense of resilience amongst the individuals and group as a whole. By having control of the future, the psychological capacity to deal with ambiguity,

change and even failure and to come back from these challenges even more empowered is strengthened.

Replication in other industries, training of postmodern coaches and robust follow-up coaching were identified as opportunities for further exploration. The recommendations are for application in another industry or group setting, possibly in a tertiary leadership development programme, to determine whether the transformative impact would be evident across different settings and different levels of leadership. Furthermore, it is suggested that this methodology is deployed using different coaches who have been trained in the LCP approach to evaluate whether this methodology is replicable across the coaching practice industry. This would indicate and demonstrate the applicability and broader generalisability of the LCP as a personal leadership coaching tool. The recommendations for further research in AI and for postmodern coaching provided an opportunity for this study to contribute to the theory and practice of AI and leadership coaching in an organisational setting, and to make a useful contribution to the coaching psychology field of study. Furthermore, the need was identified to expand the use of a group-based coaching methodology which could be examined using a longitudinal design (Laske, 1999; Bushe, 2011).

These findings enabled the final conclusion that this postmodern group-based method of coaching is able to transform the personal and professional perspectives of leaders, and in doing so, this has made a valuable contribution as an applied study to the body of research in the area of postmodern coaching.

## **7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study, which are addressed with reference to the research aim, which is to present the findings of a qualitative examination of the transformative effects of a postmodern group-based leadership coaching programme (LCP) for leaders' personal and professional perspectives in an organisational setting. In addition, the general and specific research objectives were discussed. Recommendations are formulated and presented with regard to the theory and praxis of postmodern leadership coaching, aimed at transforming the personal and professional

perspectives of leaders and of optimising their functioning, in the context of psychology at work. Finally, the shortcomings and limitations of the study are presented and discussed.

The conclusions, shortcomings of the study, as well as recommendations were presented in this chapter; it was concluded by an integration of the overall research project. With this, Step 10 of the qualitative research, namely the integration of the research as well as the total research project, is completed.



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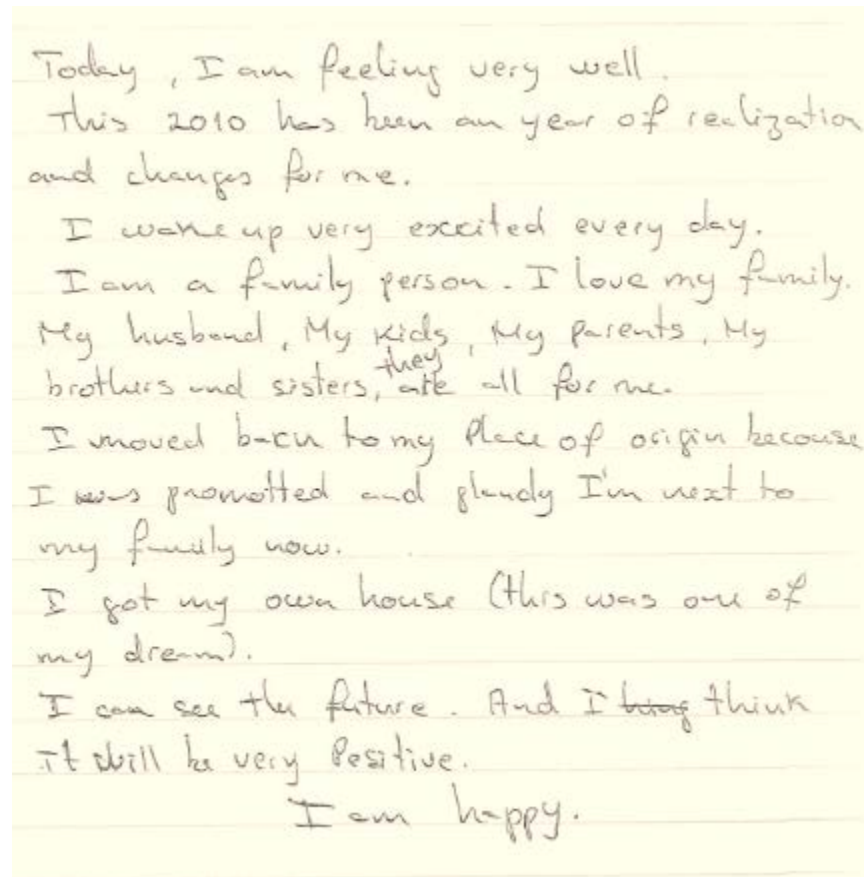
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**Appendix A****MEASURING INSTRUMENTS**A photograph of a handwritten journal entry on yellowed, lined paper. The text is written in cursive and describes a positive year of realization and family-oriented changes. The entry includes several paragraphs detailing the author's feelings, family love, and personal achievements like moving back to their place of origin and getting a house.

Today, I am feeling very well.  
This 2010 has been an year of realization  
and changes for me.  
I wake up very excited every day.  
I am a family person. I love my family.  
My husband, My kids, My parents, My  
brothers and sisters, <sup>they</sup> all for me.  
I moved back to my place of origin because  
I was promoted and gladly I'm next to  
my family now.  
I got my own house (this was one of  
my dream).  
I can see the future. And I ~~think~~ think  
it will be very positive.  
I am happy.

**Figure 1 – Excerpt from individual journal entry pre-LCP**

I feel that I am at a crossroads, not sure whether to go straight or turn left or turn right. I thought I had life all figured out: - 2yrs 35 Capability manager at work, wife & mother, minister worker at church.

Today: Current scenario at work

→ New guy coming in to take over Key Accounts. It says the system does not believe that I have the capability to run this function, regardless of the fact that I have been in it for 4 years, both IC & FC roles & my record should speak for itself. For that nod of no-confidence, not even bothering to interview me for the role, is it a signal that what I do is worthless & does not count for anything? Is it time for me to leave & find another job selling my wares or slave power? Or should I lie in wait, patiently, doing what I am supposed to do diligently using my skills, learnings & mind to finally get that promotion?

Figure 2 – Excerpt from individual journal entry pre-LCP

- I FEEL THAT THE COMPANY SEND ME ON THE  
RIGHT COURSE, COZ R, <sup>FACT</sup> ~~WAS~~, VERY DEMORALISED  
I NEVER HAD TIME TO FIND MYSELF AND DO A RESEARCH  
ON ME SINCE, I WAS VERY STRESSED, COZ WE DON'T GET  
TIME OFF FOR YOURSELF.

BUT NOW THAT R WAS GIVEN THE GUIDE ON HOW  
TO FIND ~~MYSELF~~ AND ENCOURAGE MYSELF I FEEL  
MUCH MORE BETTER, I REALISE COURSES LIKE THIS  
ONE ARE VERY IMPORTANT

Figure 3 – Excerpt from individual journal entry pre-LCP

Being on the MIBP Program/school has been truly great. It has accelerated my growth and helped me understand who I am and what I would like to be.

Bringing my dreams closer to me and turning them into realities.

I had a vision of myself in a suit (shirt, shirt & jacket) with briefcase (laptop) in my hand and jetting around the country and around the world. I wondered what that meant to be.

I began to think about my future and what I would like to become.

Figure 4 - Excerpt from journal entry post-LCP

I would like to be remembered for as somebody who made a difference in peoples lives. Who got them to believe in themselves & also their abilities. Who told them to take responsibility & do their best. Who motivated them to rise above their circumstances and to not let where they are and the past of the country and the availability of money chain them down to just being "average". "Average is just not good enough". I expect 100% of your potential - ability - and if that is an IQ of 102, I shall work with that & respect you for doing your best. It is important for me that people are proud (not arrogant) of who they are, the work/<sup>performance</sup> they give and the life they live — even if it means you live in a mud hut — it

Figure 5 - Excerpt journal entry post-LCP



WHAT'S MY CREATED FUTURE ?

My Created Future in next 10 years :

- To be HR Manager in a big Multinational Company.
- To improve my thinking level as the comprehensive and strategic one
- To build my own family
- To get the MBA Degree.
- To have my own nice house and car
- To have a balance in work & life.

This Created Future just happens only if :

- I try to equip more knowledge & experience in work, exposure in HR functions
- I get many good things from books or internet
- I spend time for relationships

Figure 6 - Excerpt journal entry post-LCP



I am this person who want to be a successful career and business woman.  
 I want to have a managerial position with a luxury car and a beach house in Cape-town where my kids can live and go to school.  
 Apart from being a mother and partner I will also grow my business from planning events to include catering and hire a manager because I will be busy!  
 During all this time I will keep my hobby of dancing and do it professional part-time.  
 With some spare time I will want to start a social enterprise to help and motivate rape victims.  
 To achieve all this I need to study further and enrich myself I want to enroll for MBA in 2011 and complete it before I reach 30 years. I also promise

**Figure 7 - Excerpt journal entry post-LCP**



**Figure 8 - Individual drawing pre-LCP**



Figure 9 - Individual drawing pre-LCP



Figure 10 - Individual drawing pre-LCP



**Figure 11- Individual drawing pre-LCP**



**Figure 12 - Individual drawing pre-LCP**





Figure 13 - Individual drawing pre-LCP

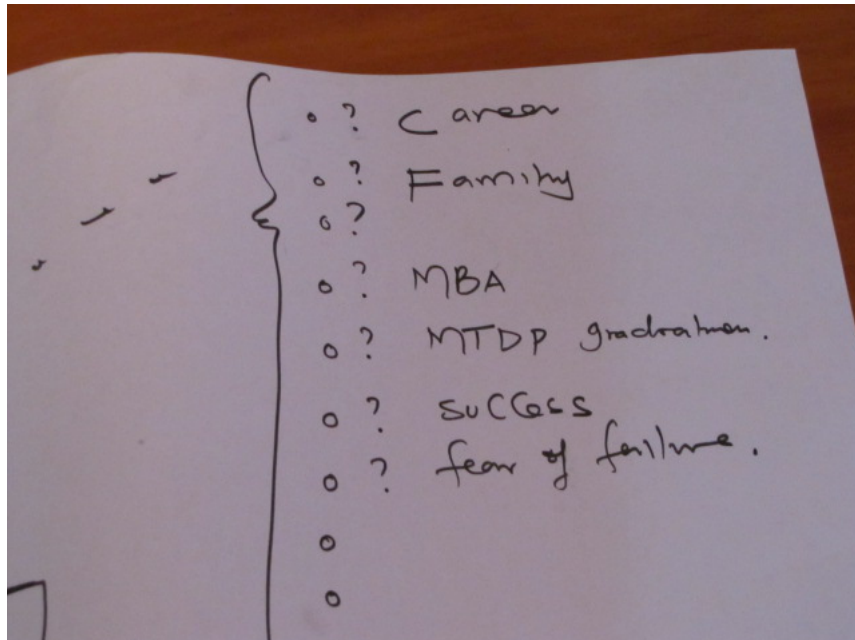


Figure 14 - Detail on individual drawing pre-LCP



Figure 15 - Individual drawing post-LCP



Figure 16 - Individual drawing post-LCP

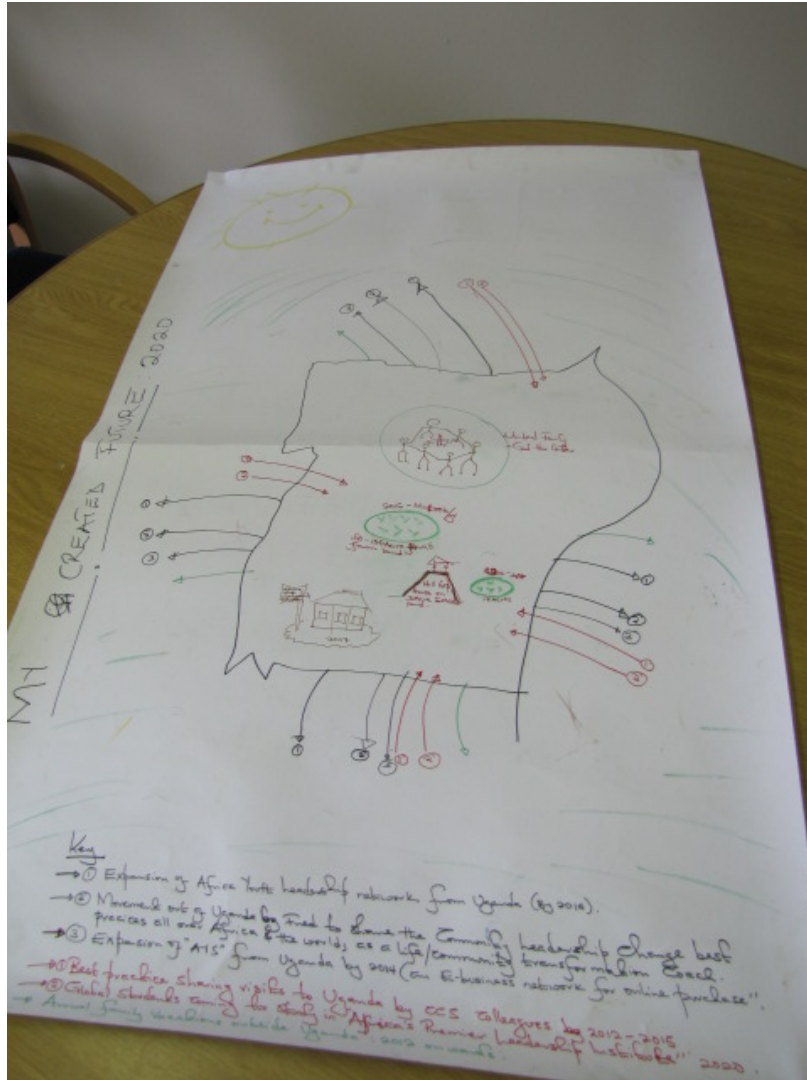


Figure 17 - Example Individual drawing post-LCP





Figure - 18 Individual drawing post-LCP

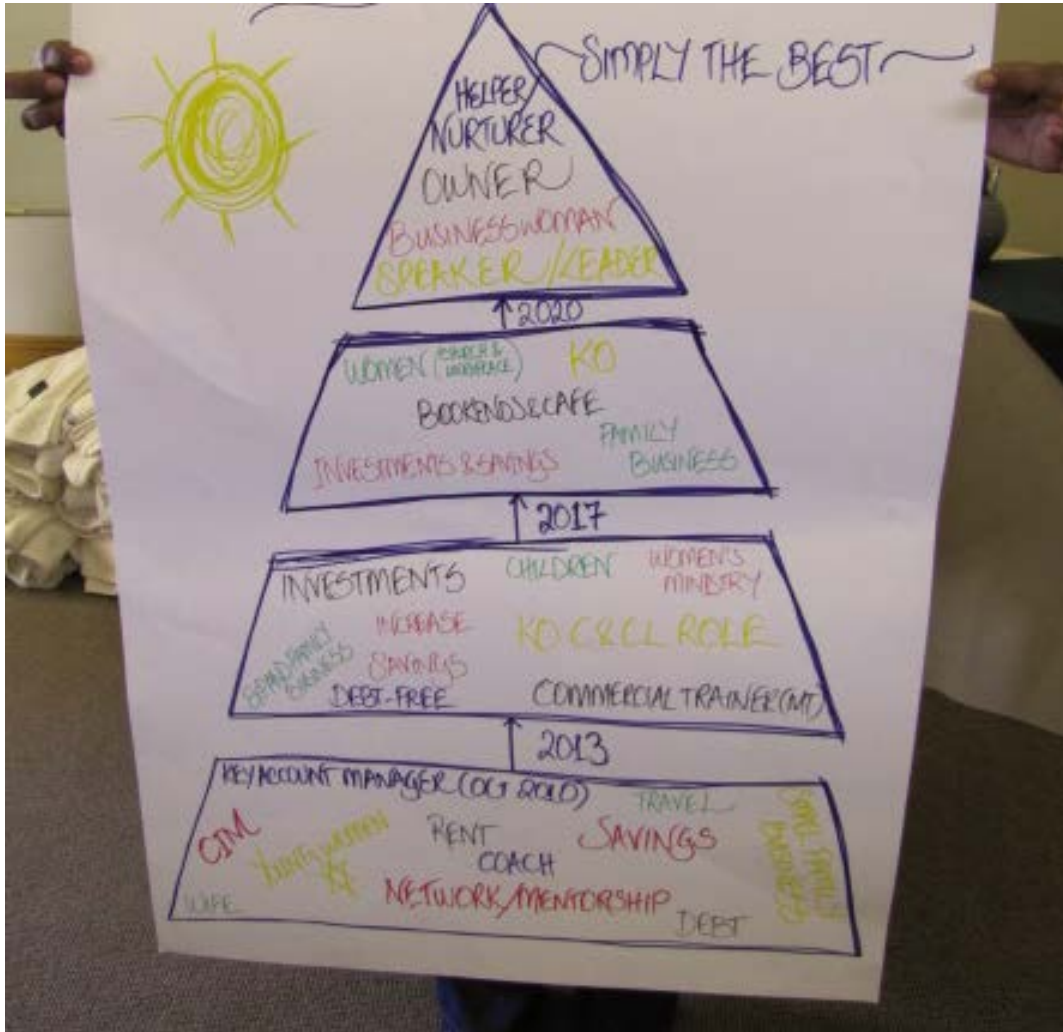


Figure - 19 Individual drawing post-LCP





Figure 20 - Individual drawing post-LCP



Figure 21 - Individual drawing post-LCP

TABLE 1 - TEAM CONCERNS

#### TEAM 1 CONCERNS

- Politics at the workplace
- Challenges at work—inefficiency, new people on the job
- Work / Life Balance—spending time with family, hobbies (10 hours work, 3 hours sport, 1 hour family)
- Leading Teams—some motivated, some unhappy (long working hours, fatigue) affects productivity and customer service
- MDWT challenges
- Capability—coaching daily, level of qualifications
- Personal Development—School (MBA) building house, future plans
- Career development—Promotions, People Plan

**TABLE 2 - EXAMPLE OF FACILITATOR PROCESS NOTES**

Group composition is quite diverse in terms of age, experience and background within the SA context.

Overall theme of discussion: Achieving financial security

Flow of discussion:

The overall discussion adopted a pattern of presenting each person's vision with some brief discussion and then moving on to the next participant. Participants shared information freely and their appeared to be a "lighter mood" as opposed to the previous session. A general positive sense prevailed during the discussion, with participants generally appearing more focused and confident than the prior session.

Key issues raised

- A general theme related to achieving financial security emerged and took on various forms such as:
  - Providing enough for self and family to enjoy a sustainable living
  - Focus on materialism and enjoyment of life ("time for me")
  - Relating "enough money" as a possible source or prerequisite for freedom
- Participants are considering alternative possibilities to the current situation and look forward to creating their future.
- Although a strong focus on financial security was evident, this was balanced by a vision to "give back to the community"
- "Making a difference" to other supported the theme of community
- Overall the 10 year visions reflected an altruistic motive
- Other underlying themes emerging from the discussion included nurturing/ caring for family and loved ones, mentoring, having fun and spiritual growth

Longing for peace and freedom came up frequently in discussion and related to individuals being "free from daily responsibilities and recharging". This was linked directly to "when /I have enough money, then I'll be free to....."

### TABLE 3 - INSTRUCTIONS FOR ESSAY

***Congratulations on being selected for the MTDP programme. You are more than half way towards the completion of your programme and I trust that you are learning and growing on a daily basis.***

***An integral part of the programme was the Coaching and Career Development Programme facilitated with Dr Janin Vansteenkiste and Tracy Potgieter.***

***This consisted of a reflection of your current work and life experiences (drawings); a review of your time line; and the setting up of your created future (drawing). These are attached.***

***As part of Tracy's doctoral research, would you kindly, and with permission, write an essay of about 5 pages on your experiences of the coaching programme and on its impact on your life both at work (professionally as a leader) and at home (personally as a person).***

- ***Where did I start my coaching journey?***
- ***What new insights did I gain along the way? And my fellow students?***
- ***How has my overall approach to leadership, life and work changed?***
- ***What are my future development areas?***
- ***Where to from here? The road ahead.***
- ***What is your view of the impact of the multi-cultural diversity in the group? Was this helpful or a hindrance to your personal development?***

***We have attached digital copies of your original drawings as well as your journal writings as a memory jog.***

***Please return your essay to Tracy Potgieter [tpotgieter@ccsabco.co.za](mailto:tpotgieter@ccsabco.co.za) BY .***

**THANK YOU!**

**Please write or type your essay below:**

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Job at the time of completing the MTDP:</b>	
<b>Current Job:</b>	
<b>Current date:</b>	

## Appendix B

**Table 1 - Working groups themes of work and life**

Themes	Comments	Grp 1	Grp 2	Grp 3	Grp 4	Grp 5
Work / Life Balance	spending time with family, hobbies (10 hours' work, 3 hours' sport, 1 hour family) uncertainty expatriate style and consistency Passionate and Hardworking (Not easy at work) Managing Time and Prioritizing is a challenge Pressure to deliver, Expectation of results (Now, now) Today? Keep records of (achievement) and events to better manage your journey (work) Guilt System Pressure!!! Long Working Hours Pressure at work Transportation—Expensive Duplication of Reports From the Village to the City, High cost of Living Lack of Motivation Balanced life—Home, Work	x	x		x	x

	<p>Release Stress—go out with family</p> <p>Happy Family</p> <p>Proportional Life—Enjoying Work Experience</p> <p>Balanced Life—Home / Work / Self / Family</p> <p>Living in the Moment</p>					
Politics at the workplace	<p>Challenges at work—inefficiency, new people on the job</p> <p>Backstabbing (Blaming, Mistrust), Guilty until proven innocent</p> <p>Politics!</p>	x	x			x
Career development	<p>Promotions, Performance management</p> <p>We are all optimistic of the Future</p> <p>We all need time to reflect</p> <p>We all need self-control</p> <p>Career Ambitions</p> <p>Future Dreams??</p> <p>Career Opportunities</p> <p>Talent Management, Growth</p> <p>Organisation – Clear Focus and Objectives; Employer of Choice ; Modern Techniques</p> <p>World Class</p> <p>Company Investment in Training</p>	x		x	x	x
Leading Teams	<p>some motivated, some unhappy (long working hours, fatigue) affects productivity and customer service</p>	x		x		

	MDWT challenges Job Dissatisfaction—Subordinates Motivate the team by sacrificing Self-belief, Motivated, Team Work Team integration from an appreciative perspective					
Uncertainty	Retrenchment, Position, Job Security Lack of Clarity (Communication) No Top Down Alignment Undue Comparison Gender Issues We need clarity on goals Competitors		x	x	x	x
Capability	coaching daily, level of qualifications Old Plants	x				x
Personal Development	School (MBA) building house, future plans We are all on a journey, haven't reached our destination Created Future Feel Under-utilised Feel that you have Potential	x			x	x