

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH
EXECUTIVE COACHING:

The Effects on Leaders' Psychological States
and
Transformational Leadership Behaviour

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EXECUTIVE COACHING:

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Transformational Leadership Behaviour

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this, or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made.

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Date:

ABSTRACT

Executive coaching has been described as a multibillion dollar enterprise (Ennis, 2004) costing some organisations up to \$15,000 (USD) a day (Berglas, 2002). Executive coaching has also been reported as the second fastest growth industry (Wasylyshyn, 2003). Despite these astounding figures, empirical executive coaching research is still limited, thus more randomised, controlled studies are required (Grant, 2005). There is a fundamental need for high quality research to demonstrate the effects of executive coaching and provide justification for the level of commitment expended. The current research program addressed this need through three studies which together provide empirical evidence as to the psychological and behavioural effects of executive coaching.

In the first study, twenty-three leaders from a year long transformational leadership development program volunteered to participate in six sessions of executive coaching. The study examined the effects of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states, specifically, their self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. The study had an experimental design with random assignment of leaders to training and control groups which provided a rigorous basis to distinguish the effects of executive coaching from the effects of other leadership interventions in the program.

Comparison of the training group (after six executive coaching sessions) with the control group (who had not received coaching) revealed that the training group reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy, developmental support, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning compared with the control group. No significant effects were observed for positive affect. Further analysis, however, revealed that the significant differences between the training group and the control group were due to a decrease in the control group before they commenced executive coaching, rather than because the training group increased on the psychological measures after participating in executive coaching. It was proposed that this pattern of results occurred because the pre-coaching measures were obtained at the end of a two day training workshop, when the psychological measures may have already been relatively high. Thus, the effect of executive coaching was to sustain the impact of the workshop for the training group.

A longitudinal analysis was also carried out in Study One to examine whether the effects of executive coaching on the psychological variables were sustained over time. The pattern of change was examined at three time points: time one, prior to the commencement of executive coaching, time two, after the completion of six coaching sessions, and time three, six months after the completion of the six coaching sessions. This analysis was also affected by the training group's high pre-coaching measures, but when the analyses were restricted to the control group (n=6) – who by this stage had received executive coaching, significant change over time was observed on all of the study measures, which was sustained up to six months after the completion of regular coaching sessions. However, because the control group sample was small, these findings were tested again in Study Two.

The primary aim of Study Two though was to evaluate effects of executive coaching on transformational leadership behaviour, measured with self, supervisor and team member ratings. Twenty-seven leaders participated in this study. In the first instance, an experimental design was used to investigate whether leaders in the training group, who had been exposed to executive coaching, received higher ratings in transformational leadership behaviour compared with leaders in the control group. In the second instance this study examined whether there was change in transformational behaviour over time, observed in the area that was the focus of leaders' developmental efforts. Both approaches yielded similar findings in that the team member feedback identified significant improvement in leaders' transformational leadership behaviour after executive coaching. There were no significant changes in leaders' self or supervisor ratings after executive coaching.

When the psychological effects of executive coaching were re-examined in Study Two, the expected differences were observed between the training and control groups. However, once again, the data from the training group failed to show the anticipated pattern of improvement over time. This failure was attributed to the small sample size and low statistical power. Consequently, a final analysis was conducted combining the data from leaders who participated in Study One and Study Two. This analysis measured change in leaders' psychological states from pre-to post-executive coaching and confirmed that after executive coaching leaders experienced effects in the five psychological states measured. Thus, overall, the data from the two studies supported the psychological impact of executive coaching.

In Study Three a qualitative approach was employed to triangulate the quantitative results from Study One and Study Two. Eight leaders were randomly identified from the Study One and Study Two samples, and interviews were carried out with these leaders, their supervisors, two team members and their coaches (a total of 40 interviews). The interview data confirmed the effect of executive coaching on the previously investigated psychological variables and also identified coaching as providing leaders with a sense of greater control. In terms of transformational leadership behaviours, all participants in the study identified improvements in leaders' behaviour, particularly in communication, and the transformational leadership dimensions of intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration. One further aim of Study Three was to investigate the environmental conditions to determine the impact they had on the effectiveness of executive coaching. Constant change and high work load were most frequently identified as restricting participants' ability to benefit from executive coaching.

Overall, this program of research has demonstrated leadership development through executive coaching. The studies revealed that executive coaching positively enhanced the psychological states of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning. Impressively, the results also showed that executive coaching had sustained effects on some of the psychological states, and on team members' perceptions of their leader's transformational leadership behaviour. Practically, these findings justify the use of executive coaching in organisational settings. Theoretically, these outcomes augment the limited body of knowledge in this area.

KEYWORDS

Executive coaching, transformational leadership, leadership development, self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, developmental planning, communication, greater control, sustained improvement.

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CHAPTER ONE

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Executive coaching is a popular individualised approach to leadership training. It is centred on a confidential relationship between a leader and a coach which focuses on the leaders' professional development needs. To date, there is very little empirical research into this burgeoning area, although there is considerable anecdotal feedback from leaders and coaches attesting to the efficacy of executive coaching. The need for evidence-based research on this topic is considerable, given that executive coaching is so widely used in practice. The three studies undertaken in this thesis provide much needed empirical evidence, as well as theoretical and practical contributions.

It is necessary to gain an understanding of the phenomenon that is executive coaching. It has been described as a multibillion dollar enterprise (Ennis, 2004). Kodak, Chrysler, Ray White, IBM, Motorola, General Electric, Sony, Johnson and Johnson, Ernst and Young, Hewlett Packard, and Lion Nathan are a small selection of multinational organisations providing executive coaches for their employees. The

media has identified executive coaching as the second fastest growth industry with reports some organisations are spending up to \$15,000 (USD) a day on coaching programs (Berglas, 2002; Wasylyshyn, 2003). Whilst it is difficult to obtain data on the industry, the International Coach Federation estimates there are currently 50,000 part-time and full-time coaches worldwide. The coaching industry is reported to have been worth US \$1 billion in 2003, with predictions that it would more than double by the end of 2005 (Orenstein, 2006). It is not possible to acquire current figures about spending, however reports suggest that 70-88% of large companies utilise coaching, with the industry continuing to grow at a rate of approximately 20% per year (CIPD, 2005; SHRM, 2005). However, according to the Sherpa Global Coaching Survey (2007) the growth rate may be even higher; the report indicates both the number of people who used an executive coach, and those who purchased coaching services tripled from 2006 to 2007. The interest in executive coaching continues to escalate.

Despite this substantial growth, anecdotal support is the major driving force behind the popularity of executive coaching, with leaders who have experienced executive coaching, coaches who have delivered executive coaching, and human resource professionals who have initiated executive coaching, generally reporting benefits (Byrd, 2001; Dagley, 2006; Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999; Olesen, 1996; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992; Smith & Sandstrom, 1999; Thach, 2002; Withers, 2001). Overwhelmingly, executive coaching is viewed positively. This is confirmed by Garman, Whiston, and Zlatoper (2000), who after reviewing seventy-two articles on executive coaching appearing in mainstream and trade publications between 1991-1998, reported that favourable views of executive coaching greatly exceed

unfavourable views. However, there is very limited quantitative evidence to confirm the positive feedback that surrounds executive coaching (Thach, 2002). Most publications about executive coaching identify the various approaches to executive coaching or provide a discussion on coaching and its applications (e.g. Diedrich, 1996; Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kilburg, 2001; Saporito, 1996; Thach & Heinselman, 1999). These papers have been consistent in reporting that leaders appreciate the opportunity to receive assistance and feedback from an executive coach and generally report the value of executive coaching for self development. Some investigations have relied on self report data, and rather than seeking to explore the effects of executive coaching, they have focused on the perceived benefits of executive coaching, drawing on descriptions of what occurs during the coaching relationship (Judge & Cowell, 1997), or identifying the key elements in a model of coaching effectiveness (Kilburg, 2001).

Whilst there are a limited number of empirical studies on executive coaching (reviewed in Chapter 2), there is still a lack of research which provides systematic data on the effectiveness of executive coaching or differentiates the effects of executive coaching from other leadership development interventions. Grant (2003, p. 1) states that the “coaching industry has outgrown its existing theoretical and empirical research knowledge base”. His annotated bibliography examining workplace, executive and life coaching research in the behavioural science literature from 1937 to December 2005, shows empirical investigations are in the minority and many of those that do exist are uncontrolled group or case studies (Grant, 2005).

This research program aims to address these gaps. Given the large investments demanded by executive coaching, both in terms of time and money,

more rigorous investigation of the effects of this process is warranted (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003). However, undertaking this research presents difficulties. The coaching process is time intensive (typically being carried out over months) and both the coach and leader must be willing to participate in the research. Previous executive coaching research has faced barriers to obtaining large sample sizes and has been forced to work with small numbers (e.g. Conway, 1999; Jones, Rafferty, & Griffin, 2006; Kampa-Kokesch, 2001; Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997; Saling, 2005a; Wales, 2003). The current research program is also reliant upon relatively small sample sizes however this is balanced against the high quality, rich, longitudinal data collected.

To summarise, quality executive coaching research is very limited. This research program collects controlled data to provide evidence which will enable individuals and organisations to make informed decisions about implementing executive coaching programs. As has been discussed, the popularity of this alternate approach to development is on the rise, meaning there is an increasingly large amount of funding, time and resources outlaid for executive coaching. Therefore, the need for high quality research that demonstrates the effects of executive coaching and provides justification for the level of commitment displayed is vital.

Research Questions

Executive coaching can take various forms however the definition adopted for this research program describes executive coaching as a collaborative, individualised relationship that aims to bring about sustained behavioural change (Zeuss & Skiffington, 2000). It offers ongoing, continuous learning, providing

support, encouragement and feedback as new behaviours are practiced for leadership development (Tobias, 1996). This program of research aims to acquire a deeper understanding of how executive coaching supports the development of transformational leadership by answering these three questions:

- 1. Does executive coaching contribute to changes in leaders' psychological states?*
- 2. Does executive coaching improve transformational leadership behaviours?*
- 3. Are changes in leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour sustained over time?*

This research program commences by investigating the effect of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. These findings are important because these outcomes are generally agreed to be desirable and thus would begin to establish whether executive coaching has benefits for participants (Choi, Price, & Vinokur, 2003; Cote, 1999; George, 1991; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Isen, 1987; Organ, 1994; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1991; Thoresen, Kaplan, Barksy, & Warren, 2003; Williams & Shiaw, 1999). Additional data collected after regular executive coaching sessions have ended will help to determine whether the psychological effects of executive coaching are sustained over time.

Further, this research program also seeks to evaluate the effects of executive coaching on transformational leader behaviour by investigating self, supervisor and team member perceptions of change. Transformational leadership was proposed by Burns in 1978 and advanced through the work of Bass. It is an approach to leading which extends traditional transactional leader behaviour by appealing to the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978). This is achieved as leaders influence followers toward agreed upon goals through their shared sense of what is important, and in doing this, uplift the morale and motivation of their followers (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership therefore moves beyond immediate self-interests to higher level concerns for the well-being of others, the organisation and society (Burns, 1978).

Bass (1999) suggests that changes in the workforce over the last two decades have resulted in the need for leaders to become more transformational and less transactional. To achieve this outcome, leaders can be trained in transformational leadership, however Bass (1999) asserts that it is easier to reduce transactional behaviours, than to develop the willingness and ability to be transformational (Bass & Avolio, 1990b). This program of research evaluates whether executive coaching improves transformational leadership behaviours. There are similarities in the process of leadership development through executive coaching and transformational leadership. During executive coaching, leadership development is often centred on building the relationship between a leader and his or her followers. Similarly in enhancing transformational leadership, the leader develops, stimulates and inspires their team members, again fostering the relationship between leader and follower. The existing research on transformational leadership identifies improved leader

effectiveness, follower well-being, satisfaction and organisational performance as some of the many outcomes arising from the implementation of this positive form of leadership (Barling, Moutinho, & Kelloway, 1998; Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; DeGroot, Kiker, & Cross, 2000; Hater & Bass, 1988; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Howell & Frost, 1989; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Sosik, Avolio, & Surinder, 1997). The goals of executive coaching are comparable, namely to improve performance, satisfaction and organisational effectiveness. Given the similarity between the processes in executive coaching and transformational leadership, and the outcomes and goals of both, the theory of transformational leadership has guided the conceptualisation of this thesis and underlies both the content and evaluation of the executive coaching program.

This research aims to demonstrate that the effects of executive coaching are observable and play a role in helping to produce practical organisational outcomes. If executive coaching does indeed develop transformational leadership behaviour it suggests that executive coaching represents an important training and development strategy for organisations.

Methodology

Three studies constitute this research program. The studies are conducted in a large public sector organisation with approximately 1900 employees. The organisation identified a need for leadership development and implemented a one year leadership training program (rolled out over two consecutive years), aimed at

fostering transformational leadership behaviours in senior level managers. Executive coaching was offered as part of the leadership program.

Study One, conducted in the first year of the leadership program, addresses research questions one and three, namely does executive coaching contribute to change in leaders' psychological states, and is this change sustained over time. Twenty-three leaders volunteered for executive coaching during year one and provide the sample for the first study. An experimental design is used to investigate the effect of executive coaching on leaders' self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. The random assignment of leaders to an experimental group (called a training group) or control group provides a rigorous basis to distinguish the effects of executive coaching from the effects other leadership interventions in the program and establish whether executive coaching impacts on the psychological variables. To assess the extent to which the effects are sustained over time, the pattern of change is examined at three time points. Namely, time one, prior to the commencement of executive coaching, time two after the completion of six coaching sessions, and time three, a final follow-up held six months after the completion of the six coaching sessions.

In Study Two, the sample consists of twenty-seven leaders who volunteered for executive coaching in the second year of the leadership program. This study is designed to address research questions one, two and three, and extend the research by investigating whether executive coaching impacts on participants' transformational leadership behaviour, using self, supervisor and team member ratings to evaluate effects on transformational leadership behaviour. This study provides much needed non-self report data on the effects of executive coaching. This data will contribute

significantly to enhancing the existing body of literature within the executive coaching field.

The first two studies employ a quantitative methodology, whilst the third study adopts a qualitative approach. The purpose of Study Three is to provide richer data on participants' experience of executive coaching. Eight leaders are randomly identified from Study One and Study Two to participate in this study. In total, forty qualitative interviews (involving leaders, their supervisor, two team members and the leader's coach) are conducted, examining both psychological and behavioural effects of executive coaching. This study provides longer term follow-up data and explores whether improvements are sustained over time. It will also validate the psychological processes identified in Study One and provide a deeper understanding of how executive coaching works. Additionally, the qualitative data provides valuable contextual information about the organisational environment within this research program.

Together, these three studies provide an understanding of the outcomes achieved through executive coaching, and the processes through which these outcomes are achieved. This knowledge provides a basis for making more informed judgments about the benefits of executive coaching, and contributes to enhance the delivery of executive coaching in the future.

Structure of the thesis

The research program is presented as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on leadership development approaches, in particular, developmental approaches aimed at increasing transformational leader behaviour. The current research on executive coaching is presented and psychological effects of executive coaching are reviewed. Chapter 3 describes the methodology for the three studies. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the findings from Study One, Study Two and Study Three respectively. Chapter 7 draws overall implications and conclusions.

Summary

This research program aims to investigate the effects of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and their transformational leadership behaviour. Three studies are carried out to address these aims combining an experimental design, with longitudinal measures, and quantitative and qualitative methods to address gaps in the literature relating to executive coaching. These studies provide a thorough test of executive coaching and its outcomes, and contribute to developing knowledge in this emerging area. The results also assist in planning more effective executive coaching programs and provide input to organisational decision making about implementing executive coaching.

CHAPTER TWO

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Executive coaching represents a new form of leadership development which is rapidly gaining popularity in organisations. To explore executive coaching as a leadership development strategy, this chapter commences by presenting a review of leadership development research, with a particular focus on the transformational leadership model. This research adopts the transformational model of leadership because it is well researched, produces positive outcomes for organisations and their members (Barling et al., 1998; Bass & Avolio, 1994), and shares some characteristics with executive coaching (Kampa-Kokesch, 2001). This leadership model is discussed and various approaches to transformational leadership development interventions are presented with an examination of how executive coaching complements existing approaches in supporting ongoing leadership development.

The focus of the chapter then shifts to research specifically related to executive coaching. A definition of executive coaching is presented and a number of psychological processes underlying executive coaching are identified. There is

currently little empirical research on executive coaching and leadership however one empirical study by Thach (2002) has associated executive coaching with improved leadership effectiveness whilst another study by Saling (2005a) did not report any relationship between feedback, training and executive coaching on leadership behaviour change. Conway (1999) similarly did not report any significant change from feedback and executive coaching, though the qualitative interviews indicated that leaders' perceived improvement in their leadership skills. The impact of executive coaching on transformational leadership behaviour has also been examined through the research undertaken by Kampa-Kokesch (2001). These, and other studies examining executive coaching, are explored in detail in this chapter. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the theoretical framework for the research.

Leadership

The importance of leadership to organisations is undisputed. Broadly speaking, researchers define leadership as a social influence process which motivates followers to willingly do things (Anderson, 2003; Bass, 1985; Campbell, Dardis, & Campbell, 2003; Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1978; Hater et al., 1988; Hersey & Blanchard, 1993; House & Mitchell, 1974; Locke, 1991; Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1994). Some definitions of leadership also incorporate the idea that it represents interpersonal influence, over and above the influence that stems from an individual's positional power, where the outcome is oriented toward change that reflects a shared purpose (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Consistent with these viewpoints, in this research program leadership is defined as motivating people to act through non-coercive means. In other words,

leading followers by virtue of the leader's personality and behaviour, as opposed to gaining influence through formal or professional authority (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Campbell et al., 2003; Kotter, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

There are many different leadership approaches. The transformational leadership approach has been identified as one of the most valid theories of leadership behaviour (Gasper, 1992; Lowe et al., 1996) because of the many positive outcomes associated with transformational leadership behaviours (Bass, 1999; Bass et al., 1994; Den Hartog, Van Muijen, & Kloopman, 1997). It has underpinned the conceptualisation of this thesis due to the similarities between transformational leadership and the process of leadership development through executive coaching. Central to both is the development of an improved relationship between a leader and his or her followers which plays a role in contributing to the constructive outcomes realised. To further demonstrate, a review of transformational leadership is presented.

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that induces high performance and other positive organisational outcomes in team members, and in this research, is investigated as a potential outcome of executive coaching. There is much empirical data to support the relationship between the leader's use of transformational leadership behaviours and subordinate's satisfaction (Hater et al., 1988; Koh et al., 1995), commitment to the organisation (Barling et al., 1998; Barling et al., 1996; Bycio et al., 1995; Koh et al., 1995), trust in management (Barling et al., 1998) and organisational citizenship behaviours (Koh et al., 1995).

Transformational leadership is also associated with higher follower and organisational performance (Barling et al., 1998; DeGroot et al., 2000; Howell et al., 1993; Howell et al., 1989; Kirkpatrick et al., 1996; Lowe et al., 1996; Sosik et al., 1997) by creating and communicating an organisational vision, then inspiring, motivating and empowering followers to strive towards mutual goals (Bass, 2000a; Gill, Levine, & Pitt, 1998; Morden, 1997).

Transformational leadership starts with transactional leader behaviours such as clarifying task requirements, recognising and rewarding team members when they perform well, and correcting any breakdowns in performance. While transactional behaviours generally ensure adequate performance, transformational leaders go further, by developing, stimulating, and inspiring their team members (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Bass et al., 1994; Deluga, 1988; Den Hartog et al., 1997).

There has been some debate in the literature (e.g. Antonakis, 2001; Snodgrass, 2006) about the number of factors that make up transformational leadership behaviour. However, this research is centred around the four components of transformational leadership that are typically identified, namely inspirational motivation, idealised influence, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000; Bass, 1985). First, through *inspirational motivation* leaders provide followers with challenge, purpose and an understanding of mutual objectives (Bass, 1985). Leaders also motivate and inspire followers by building trust through personal commitment (Conger, 1989; Kotter, 1990). Second, transformational leaders demonstrate *idealised influence* by establishing and modelling high standards and goals that followers seek to emulate (Bass, 1985; Kouzes et al., 1995). Third, transformational leaders are *intellectually*

stimulating, creating possibilities for followers by encouraging them to question the way things are done, develop their own solutions to work issues, think for themselves and generally empowering followers to achieve the shared vision (Conger, 1989; Kent, Graber, & Johson, 1996). Finally, transformational leaders provide *individualised consideration* through individual support and attention, accepting follower's differences (Bass, 1985) and encouraging commitment in followers (Conger, 1989). These behaviours can convince and motivate followers without relying on the typical exchange relationship which characterises transactional leadership (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

It is the process through which change (transformation) is introduced to individuals and organisations, by inspiring followers to accept and accomplish difficult goals that otherwise may not have been pursued, that differentiates this approach to leadership from other models of leadership identified in the literature. The commitment developed in followers to the transformation causes leadership influence to cascade through the organisation (Bennis et al., 1985; Conger, 1989; Kent, Crotts, & Azziz, 2001; Kouzes et al., 1995; Kuhnert et al., 1987; Von Eron, 1995; Weatley, 1994).

Research studies show that leaders can be trained to demonstrate more transformational leadership behaviours, and that by doing so, improvements in follower well-being and performance are achieved (Bass, 1985, 1988; Kelloway, Barling, & Helleur, 2000c). Transformational leadership training has also been found to improve leadership effectiveness, innovation, quality improvement, commitment and organisational performance (Barling et al., 1996; Bass, 2000b; de Charon, 2003; Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999).

Thus, the transformational leadership model has already been demonstrated to be useful for training leaders and bringing about improvements both in leader behaviour and follower outcomes (Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1990a; Bycio et al., 1995; Kelloway & Barling, 2000a). As these goals are consistent with those of executive coaching, the transformational leadership framework is the model of leadership behaviour that underlies both the content and evaluation of this executive coaching research program.

Transformational leadership development

Given the range of important outcomes associated with leader behaviour, it is not surprising that researchers and practitioners seek successful leadership development interventions. This section will review a number of the existing transformational leadership development techniques and discuss how executive coaching addresses limitations of some approaches and incorporates strengths of others.

Transformational leadership development interventions

A proliferation of leadership development interventions is accessible to organisations. An analysis of a selection of commonly adopted approaches (e.g. training seminars, action learning and 360 degree feedback) for developing transformational leadership behaviours is presented. The discussion will then focus on more individualised approaches for transformational leadership development, covering mentoring, counselling and reflective self-evaluation. It will conclude with a debate around the benefits of combining techniques for transformational leadership development.

Training seminars

Training seminars are a popular leadership development approach widely used in many organisational settings. One of the main benefits of training seminars is the ability to address a wide audience in an efficient manner. However, how effectively they provide transfer of learning is questionable, as seminars tend to consist of generic information, delivered in the form of a short-term intervention, not usually tailored to individual developmental needs. Commonly, courses run over a few days, or consist of a series of hour long seminars. Often, the participants exit seminars with a moderate “buzz” from the energy and enthusiasm generated in the training, but in a short period of time, return to their familiar routine without sustained behavioural change (Dearborn, 2002).

Failure to maintain change after training seminars is a common problem. Clarke (2002) examined the factors which influenced the transfer of training on fourteen trainees within a United Kingdom social services department. His findings were that job and work environment factors impeded opportunities for trainees to reinforce the training when back in the workplace. These factors and a lack of support for implementing the training meant the training failed to result in any meaningful changes in staff work practices (Clarke, 2002). Two key aspects contributed to the failure of the training program in making a difference back in the workplace. First, the short duration of training was insufficient for trainees to master the skills taught. Second, any skill acquisition that was gained was further undermined by limited on-going practice back on the job. Clarke (2002) aligned his findings to the earlier work of Baldwin and Ford (1988) who, after reviewing the

existing transfer of training research, concluded that support and opportunity to use the training were key components for successful transfer of training.

Further research involving sixty-four participants from twelve diverse vocational educational and training sites around Australia confirmed professional development should take place over a long period of time, with ongoing contact (Falk, 2003). Falk's (2003) findings concluded that training seminars did not allow sufficient time to change leaders' attitudes and behaviour. Characteristics of short-term interventions, for example, lack of reinforcement of the training and an absence of feedback on performance, mean that training may not penetrate to use on the job (Noe & Ford, 1992). Meaningful change seldom happens with short-term interventions, whereas an ongoing process is potentially more thorough and lasting (Tobias, 1996), facilitating high transfer of training by giving trainees the opportunity to apply what they have learned to their jobs (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Lim & Johnson, 2002).

Executive coaching addresses the limitations discussed. First, because it represents an ongoing and long-term approach to development, it offers a more comprehensive and enduring alternative to behaviour change (Popper & Lipshitz, 1992). In addition, executive coaching differs from the "one size fits all" option provided by many training seminars because it addresses the leaders' identified needs by providing customised development for each leader. A further advantage of executive coaching in comparison to training seminars is that executive coaching provides an opportunity for leaders to learn from their work rather than taking them away from their work to learn (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). It is the developmental experiences that can be linked to, or embedded in a leader's ongoing

work which are likely to have the greatest ongoing impact given a typical executive's daily demands (Bernthal, Cook, & Smith, 2001). The aim of executive coaching is to interweave learning into the daily work environment, rather than adding to an individual's current work load (Conway, 1999; Niemes, 2002).

Executive coaching therefore is an effective approach to behaviour change which capitalises on the energy and enthusiasm generated through training seminars, but overcomes some of the limitations inherent in this traditional development method associated with transfer of learning to the workplace. An alternative leadership development method which shares some characteristics with executive coaching is action learning, a training approach that transfers learning to the workplace.

Action Learning

The action learning cycle was pioneered by Revans as an approach for managers to learn at work by completing real work tasks (Revans, 1998). Revans (1998) proposed that the action learning cycle commenced with inquiry, followed by reflection, trial, experimentation and evaluation. Action learning cycles are repeated until problems are resolved or new directions identified.

Action learning is used as a transformational leadership development technique that places the acquisition of leadership skills within 'real-time' organisational settings (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). It is based around the idea that people learn most effectively when working on real projects in their own work settings; challenging job assignments for example, are a potent form of

leadership development (Raelin, 1998). Linking action learning to job assignments and utilising them for developmental purposes provides benefits to the organisation in that useful projects are completed while learning occurs (Ohlott, 2004). Working in teams on specific projects under the guidance of an experienced tutor or executive is another example of action learning (Keys, 1994).

Liedtka, Weber, and Weber (1999) investigated the development and assessment of a customised executive education experience, utilising action learning, designed for 542 managers of a large financial services organisation. Data measuring participants' view of the overall effectiveness of the program, the sustainability of the effects from the program, the impact of demographic factors on those effects and the amount of sharing and support participants received on their return to work, was collected via questionnaires completed by a total of 390 of the 542 participating managers. The authors reported that the action learning in the studied development program was a useful and practical way of developing skills and knowledge among the leaders and executives (Liedtka et al., 1999). The evidence collected demonstrated substantial and sustainable effects of the program on a variety of job-related activities, including self reported increases by participants in their ability to address critical business issues, to lead, to think strategically, manage change and collaborate with colleagues. These findings greatly strengthen the return that an organisation receives on its investment in the education of its people when the program is properly designed and supported. The authors suggested one of the main benefits of action learning is that it can contribute to sustainable learning attitudes and retention of knowledge and skills (Liedtka et al., 1999). Their findings however, have some identified limitations. First, some of the outcomes

contributing to the results may relate to the specifics of the program and the assessment used. Additionally, the organisation was characterised by a unique culture which may have contributed to the increased effectiveness noted. Thus the single case study means that the results cannot be generalised to executive action learning programs in general. Further, there was no outside observer data to confirm participant perceptions of increased effectiveness actually translated into new and more effective managerial behaviours (Liedtka et al., 1999). However, as a preliminary investigation this research presents useful findings for designing powerful executive education experiences that have long-term significance for managers and their organisations (Liedtka et al., 1999).

On the other hand, leadership development from action learning has been criticised for the fact that it often represents a “one off” learning experience. Research indicates that learners require multiple or repeated exposure to truly develop skills (Conger & Toegel, 2003). Action learning has also been criticised for providing too few opportunities for reflective learning because it is heavily task focussed. According to Conger and Toegel (2003) the accomplishment of the task can potentially overwhelm the processes of learning. Depending upon how action learning is integrated into the organisation, it may be removed from the day to day demands of the participant’s general work and therefore may not provide opportunities for working with the participant’s actual work team. These factors limit the transferability of skills learnt during action learning.

Despite these potential negative aspects of action learning, evidence does indicate that it may have a positive impact on leadership development (Day, 2000; Liedtka et al., 1999; Miller, 2003; Peters & Smith, 1998; Raelin, 1998).

Furthermore, executive coaching captures many of the benefits associated with action learning, while minimising its limitations. For example, executive coaching places the learning tasks into the participant's actual work setting, providing a realistic learning situation. Similarly, like action learning, the responsibility for practical outcomes and development remains with the individual participant (Smith, 2001). Furthermore, the ongoing nature of coaching provides participants with the opportunity to practise new behaviours and skills repeatedly, whilst receiving support and feedback from their coach. Additionally, the reflective tools and conversations used in coaching also allow participants to reflect on their progress and learning. Thus, this combination of techniques used in executive coaching addresses some of the criticisms associated with action learning.

360 Degree Feedback

Another popular technique for supporting the development of transformational leadership behaviours is 360 degree feedback, a process which provides feedback to the leader from a range of sources, typically their team members, peers and supervisors (Bernthal, Cook, & Smith, 2001; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Research has confirmed that the use of 360 degree feedback is one of the best methods to promote increased self-awareness of skill strengths and deficiencies in leaders (Hagberg, 1996; Rosti & Shipper, 1998; Shipper & Dillard, 2000). The self awareness gained through 360 degree feedback provides leaders with the opportunity to see themselves as others see them and use this information to become more effective (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998).

Although 360 degree feedback has also been linked to changes in self-perception, development and performance (London & Smither, 1995) and is useful in helping leaders to understand how others view their behaviour, research has found it is not consistent in bringing about behavioural change (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Seifert, Yukl, & McDonald, 2003). A meta-analysis, mainly consisting of 131 laboratory experiments or field studies on performance feedback by Kluger and DeNisi (1996) revealed there was only a small overall improvement in performance and that performance actually declined in one third of the studies analysed. This generally occurs because leaders do not accept that the feedback from others is valid, or they fail to acknowledge usefulness of the feedback for their development (Fecteau & Fecteau, 1998). Ultimately it is the individual's receptivity to such feedback that determines whether they are willing to accept or make use of the information (Bernthal et al., 2001).

Owing to a lack of consistent conclusions about the effectiveness of 360 degree feedback for changing managerial behaviour, Seifert et al., (2003) undertook research to obtain additional evidence and to examine the impact of a skilled facilitator for enhancing the effectiveness of the feedback. Participants were fourteen middle managers from a regional savings bank in North Eastern United States. They were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Seven middle managers from another regional savings bank were used as a comparison. The authors compared a feedback workshop with both a no-feedback control group and a comparison group of managers who received a feedback report but no feedback workshop. The results provided support for the effectiveness of 360 degree feedback in increasing leaders' use of two of the eleven core tactics from the Influence

Behavior Questionnaire (Yukl & Tracey, 1992) to influence subordinates. The control group on the other hand, did not change their use of any core tactics. The results also supported the positive impact of a competent facilitator in generating more behaviour change for the managers (Seifert et al., 2003).

According to research by Cacioppe and Albrecht (2000) examining 360 degree feedback with a sample of 304 managers and over 1000 subordinates, a common difficulty with this development approach is that the feedback provides the leader with a vast amount of assessment information that may enable them to understand the starting point from which they can improve, but little challenge or support to follow through with improvement. This problem was also identified by Guthrie and Kelly-Radford (1998). Likewise, London, Smither, and Adist (1997) reported in their review paper that 360 degree feedback has limited impact when given to leaders solely for developmental purposes without the leader being held accountable for implementing the feedback. The authors evaluate the literature on accountability in performance appraisal and decision making and outline an accountability model that should be applied to raters and ratees using 360 degree feedback. It appears therefore, that it is not sufficient to provide people with feedback and expect behaviour change, leaders have to understand and commit to the development feedback before accepting it (Campbell et al., 2003). However, using a facilitated debriefing session to present the 360 degree feedback is more likely to prompt change in behaviour (Seifert et al., 2003). Ultimately, it is the goals that people set in response to the feedback, and the action they subsequently take, which results in their behavioural change (London & Smither, 1995).

The above research suggests that combining 360 feedback with executive coaching and incorporating goal setting behaviours should assist leaders to use the feedback to set performance improvement goals and monitor their progress toward those goals (Walker & Smither, 1999). Many executive coaches do indeed use some form of 360 degree feedback with their clients because executive coaching moulds neatly with the feedback to provide a fully individualised approach to development (Goldsmith, 2000; Judge et al., 1997; Waldman, Atwater, & Antonioni, 1998). Research by Luthans and Peterson (2003) investigating 360 degree feedback in a study with twenty managers and sixty-seven employees from a small manufacturing company, combined the 360 degree feedback with coaching, focusing on enhanced self-awareness and behavioural management (Luthans et al., 2003). In their research, this combination resulted in improved manager and employee satisfaction, commitment, decreased intentions to turnover, and indirect improvements in the organisation's performance after the intervention (Luthans et al., 2003). They concluded that the combination of 360 degree feedback and coaching may be a winning arrangement (Luthans et al., 2003). However, the authors did not use a control group, therefore whilst these results are encouraging, they should be interpreted with caution.

In summary, the research suggests there are benefits from combining 360 degree feedback and executive coaching (Luthans et al., 2003; Walker et al., 1999), with some studies insisting that the use of 360 degree feedback is critically important to the success of the coaching (Hunt, 2004; Hurd, 2002). By using 360 degree feedback tools in the executive coaching partnership, coaches can help leaders explore their perceptions of the feedback to make best use of it and then plan for

implementation of development tasks. Executive coaching offers the benefits of debriefing (Seifert et al., 2003) and goal setting (London & Smither, 1995), with the additional advantages of longer term support and accountability (London et al., 1997; Thach, 2002).

Mentoring

Whilst 360 degree feedback provides information from a range of sources to facilitate development, mentoring is a popular individualised approach to leadership development. It is described as a committed long-term relationship between a senior organisational member and a junior organisational member, with the senior providing professional advice, knowledge and support (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003; Hernez-Broome et al., 2004). It is often used for the augmentation of skills and competencies to enhance performance and assist in career development (Allen & Poteet, 1999; Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Scandura, Tejada, Werther, & Lankau, 1996; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991).

Empirical evidence suggests that a long-term mentoring relationship is an effective tool for leadership development (Day, 2000; Sosik & Lee, 2002; Zelinski, 2000). However, modern organisational settings can make the development of traditional long-term, ongoing mentoring relationships stressful and difficult to maintain because members have increasingly high demands made upon their time, and change and career transition is frequent (Allen et al., 1997). Often there can be a degree of organisational pressure from formal mentorships when both mentor and protégé are expected to participate in the program as a function of their positions. This pressure to take part may decrease a mentor's motivation to help the protégé

and decrease the protégé's willingness to be open to assistance from the mentor (Chao et al., 1992). Other reported problems identified by Eby and Lockwood (2005), included mentor-protégé mismatches, scheduling difficulties and geographic distance. Protégés also reported mentor neglect, unmet expectations, and structural separation from the mentor as limiting the effectiveness of the relationship, whilst mentors reported feelings of personal inadequacy (Eby et al., 2005).

Research has also identified power concerns in mentoring relationships where the relationship is composed of mentors and protégés who differ in group membership, through for example, race and gender differences (Ragins, 1995). Minorities are more likely to be in diversified relationships than majority members of organisations and there may be implications as a result of these partnerships (Thomas, 1990). These include differing outcomes from those experienced by majority members where mentoring has been related positively to organisational, career and developmental success for mentors and protégés. During these successful relationships, positive outcomes include higher income, higher career satisfaction, increased promotional opportunities, stronger positional power and access to networks (Chao et al., 1992; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Whitely et al., 1991). Minority members have different developmental and career needs, and frequently face discriminatory barriers to advancement and restricted access to mentoring relationships (Ragins, 1997).

Other concerns arising from mentoring relationships include reproduction of the status quo, which, whilst useful when times are stable, may not be what organisations need when faced with rapid change (Darwin, 2000). Additionally, hidden agendas held by the mentor may impact negatively on the relationship and

outcomes (Kram, 1985). Allen et al. (1997) identify negative outcomes of mentoring from the perspective of the mentor including, perceived favouritism to the protégé, abuse of the relationship by the protégé and feelings of failure resulting from a failed mentoring relationship, which may affect mentors personally.

Despite these negative consequences, there is research which indicates that mentoring relationships contribute positively to the protégé and the organisation (Dreher et al., 1990). This suggests that a similar type of partnership, which can overcome some of the identified problems typical in modern mentoring relationships, may be beneficial. Executive coaching offers a viable alternative. First, when the executive coach is not a member of the organisation he or she brings less of an organisational agenda to the relationship, which reduces the potential for self serving mentor and protégé agendas. Second, as executive coaching should be voluntary, pressure to participate is minimised (Hunt, 1999; Laske, 1999; Sztucinski, 2001). Third, executive coaching overcomes the problems connected with mentor time restrictions and change in mentoring relationships (Parker, 2001; Withers, 2001). Therefore, executive coaching, as an individualised approach to development should capitalise on the positive outcomes associated with mentoring whilst minimising some of the potential problems associated with this developmental approach.

Workplace Counselling

An alternate individualised approach to transformational leadership training in organisations is through an individual counselling session (Bass, 1990). Counselling, in this format generally commences with the collection of subordinate and self ratings of the leader's transformational leadership style, similar to 360

degree feedback. These ratings are presented to the leader during the individual counselling session. The focus of the counselling session is to analyse the differences between self and subordinate ratings and identify specific leader behaviours that may have contributed to the subordinate ratings. After the analysis is complete, a plan for enhancing the leader's effectiveness is discussed (Barling et al., 1996). The counselling session is frequently a one-off development initiative, with no ongoing follow-up or support.

Research by Kelloway, Barling, and Helleur (2000c), involving forty nursing supervisor departmental managers in a health care corporation in Eastern Canada was designed to assess the effects of training and counselling leaders on subordinate perceptions of transformational leadership. One hundred and eighty subordinates provided pre-and post-intervention ratings of the forty managers. The authors found significant differences in the experimental group when compared with the control group. The results, collected six months after the counselling session was held, demonstrated that a one hour counselling session reviewing the participant's leadership style (based on their team member's responses to a questionnaire) followed by individual goal setting, resulted in a significant increase in the transformational leadership behaviours observed by team members (Kelloway et al., 2000c).

A study by Barling et al. (1996) examined a series of four one hour "booster" sessions (similar to Kelloway et al.'s (2000c) counselling sessions detailed above), in conjunction with training. The twenty participants were randomly assigned to training and control groups. The results demonstrated similar significant improvements in transformational leadership for the training group, compared with

the control group, to those experienced in Kelloway et al.'s (2000c) study. The study by Barling et al. (1996) used a true experimental design to assess the causal influence of transformational leadership on subordinates perceptions, attitudes and performance. The primary limitation identified was the small sample size; nonetheless, the authors support the effectiveness of training and individual counselling sessions as a method for developing transformational leadership behaviours.

Despite these strong initial findings about the effectiveness of counselling, further investigations into the role of counselling in transformational leadership development are limited. This lack of research may reflect the fact that individual counselling sessions, as described by the above studies, are not commonly used as a leadership development tool. Counselling in organisations is more frequently offered for remedial action, for example in response to a performance evaluation, a complaint, or to present 360 degree feedback collected to demonstrate to an employee how their behaviour impacts on others (Burke, 1996; Lee & Johnston, 2001).

The existing research suggests that counselling may be beneficial in developing transformational leadership. However, there are some concerns worthy of discussion with the structure of the counselling sessions delivered in the research outlined above. First, a short session provides limited opportunity for the counsellor to develop rapport and meaningfully interact with the participant. Further, short single sessions are likely to be quite shallow and not deal with deeper issues or get into much detail. Nor are they likely to provide the opportunity for further support, accountability and focussed ongoing learning. Additionally, counselling frequently

has (often unsubstantiated) negative connotations associated with its use. This may deter organisational members from benefiting from its success as a tool for leadership development.

Executive coaching, as an alternative approach to individual counselling sessions, can overcome these shortcomings by providing accountability and personal support over a longer period of time. The development process, described by Barling et al. (1996) as counselling, has some similar characteristics to short-term executive coaching in that, a number of sessions are conducted and an action plan is created and modified as the participant progresses through it. Drawing on the results from the research by Barling et al. (1996), it seems therefore, that executive coaching based on feedback, and focussed on goal setting and accomplishments should have beneficial effects on leaders' transformational leadership behaviours. Executive coaching incorporates the most constructive aspects of counselling while avoiding the negative connotations that may lie behind the low uptake of individual counselling.

Reflective Self-evaluation

In comparison with the other techniques reviewed, reflective self-evaluation is perhaps the least utilised standalone approach for transformational leadership development. It is however, often a component of other transformational leadership development practices, such as 360 degree feedback and action learning interventions.

Reflective self-evaluation is a highly individualised method of transformational leadership development where leaders set aside time to analyse and understand their own leadership successes and development opportunities (Campbell et al., 2003; Kouzes et al., 1995; McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988). Personal analyses of leadership behaviour are then recorded in a reflective journal where leaders determine strategies to incorporate this feedback into their ongoing development (Campbell et al., 2003; Kouzes et al., 1995; McCall et al., 1988), making it a highly personalised method for professional growth. These journals provide a structured approach to help leaders reflect on the main things they have learned and translate them into actions for implementation in the work environment (Cacioppe, 1998).

This approach is thought to be effective for developing transformational leadership behaviour because reflective self-evaluation sustains personal and professional growth (Green, 2002), and provides leaders with personalised feedback that enables them to gain a genuine understanding about their behaviour and evaluate the significance of their experiences from a leadership perspective (Densten & Gray, 2001). For example, approximately 50% of the thirty-eight participants in a year long evaluation of the outcomes of leadership development undertaken by McCauley and Hughes-James (1994) reported that reflective self-evaluation through journal writing allowed them to learn from experiences, improve strategy formulation, become more organised and goal-oriented, and explore their feelings (McCauley & Hughes-James, 1994).

Reflective self-evaluation has a place in leadership development programs, however the reality of modern organisations means that dedicating time for such

activities and then undertaking action necessary for change based on feedback may become overshadowed by organisational demands if it is not supported through other means. Executive coaching utilises reflective self-evaluation (Turner, 2003) and journal keeping activities as one strategy for supporting the leader's individualised development. Executive coaching provides legitimacy for reflection and offers a safe environment for the leader to share and discuss findings from reflection activities with their coach. Together the leader and coach then plan to act on the feedback by building subsequent development steps into the leader's action plan. As part of the coaching process, the leader commits to the action plan and is held accountable for completing the actions detailed within it. This formal structure ensures that reflective self-evaluation has purpose and follow-through, and promotes the legitimacy of the method for developing leadership behaviours. It is an approach to developing transformational leadership behaviours which offers greater benefit to leaders when combined with other leadership development options.

Combined Approaches

This review has covered some of the more common approaches to developing transformational leaders. There is, however, growing recognition of the increased benefits from using a combination of developmental techniques (Hernez-Broome et al., 2004). Rather than the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to leadership development which ignores basic assumptions about human behaviour and adult learning, research is evaluating the success of some of these combined approaches to leadership development. Integrated programs can take a range of forms, for example, combined activities based on action learning partnered with 360 degree feedback and followed-up with mentoring are popular. The findings on combined

approaches to leadership development are generally positive, both in terms of attractiveness to participants and outcomes achieved (Davies, 1994; Goski, 2002). Combined approaches therefore offer variety to the trainees by incorporating the benefits of a number of different techniques.

Edmonstone and Western (2002) describe two evaluation studies they conducted on leadership programs for executive directors within the National Health Service in the United Kingdom. The aims of their studies were to present information to guide future leadership programs. Participants for the first program were approximately 200 board-level directors who attended the program in three different cohorts. The program structure consisted of development groups, personal mentoring and learning networks where action learning featured prominently. A range of evaluation approaches were used within the different cohorts including structured questionnaires, one-to-one interviews with participants and sponsors, and focus group discussions with participants and facilitators.

The second program, over a two year period, was aimed at the same target group and had approximately 100 participants per year. The design for this program consisted of a one-day launch, a development centre, a core program covering leadership and managing, optional modules to suit specific needs, action learning and a graduation day. Evaluation techniques were similar to those described above for the first program, but also included a review of participation levels. From the evaluation process, the authors identified seven areas to inform the development of programs in the future. Of particular interest was the design of the programs. The authors report that due to conceptual 'fuzziness' around the programs, the underlying conceptual framework of both programs was not always clear, with programs

attempting to combine theory and action learning when previous research suggests these are distinctly different approaches to adult learning. They suggest in the future that leadership development programs make explicit the underlying conceptual framework of leadership being adopted by the program (Edmonstone & Western, 2002). Additionally, despite the espoused aim of the program to cater for individual differences, it actually adopted a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership development. Further, in terms of evaluating the success of the combined program, the authors report that there was little attempt to ascribe organisational benefits from the program as no baseline measures were collected. However, individual benefits from the program were assessed and, most notably, participants valued the range of development opportunities presented to them by the program and the chance to reflect and plan ahead (Edmonstone & Western, 2002).

Similarly, participants rated the multidimensional development approach researched by Edelstein and Armstrong (1993) as “very valuable” and believed that they made a consistent change in their actions at work. This program incorporated one-to-one private coaching, narrative feedback, quantitative feedback from team members, goal setting, long-term action planning and peer coaching activities involving the leaders’ co-workers to sustain the changes made after the one-to-one coaching was completed. In total, fifty-six managers took part in the eighteen month program and were surveyed after the program was completed. Qualitative comments were also collected from the participants. This data indicated that the participants believed they were more cooperative and better team players with a stronger results orientation after completing the multidimensional leadership development program (Edelstein and Armstrong, 1993). However, the study did not utilise a control and

experimental group, nor did it collect non-self report data, therefore, whilst the participants provided positive reports about the effectiveness of the program, there is little evidence to demonstrate its impact within the organisation, nor any ability to identify which components of the program were effective. Additionally, without a baseline measure it is difficult to exclude the impact of time on behaviour change, in eighteen months the participants may have changed their behaviour irrespective of this program.

In a meta-analysis of managerial training techniques Burke and Day (1986) reviewed four studies of development activities combining three or more different training techniques, including lecture or group discussion, case study, business game and presentation. They found that multi-method approaches had a significant impact on subjective (self report) learning and objective performance results. The authors also noted that the multi-technique approach was more generalisable across different work settings than more specific development interventions (Burke & Day, 1986). However, the authors warn that their findings must be interpreted with caution because of the small number of studies and the variety of different training techniques included in each study, which make it difficult to draw the conclusion that all multiple methods of training are more generalisable (Burke & Day, 1986).

In summary, the main benefit of combined approaches is that they offer a range of learning experiences and development opportunities, thus addressing weaknesses associated with single approaches. Further, collective approaches offer opportunities to tailor the leadership program to the work context and the needs of the group of leaders (McCauley & Hezlett, 2001). Executive coaching, as used in the current research program and in other settings (Smither et al., 2003; Thach, 2002),

similarly incorporates the strengths from a number of synergistic techniques. It generally commences with an assessment of the leader's current performance, and is then followed by goal setting, principles of action learning and reflective self-evaluation. This offers participants the benefits of a number of different transformational leadership development methods combined with the support and accountability provided by a coach. The development is further enhanced because executive coaching provides an extremely individualised form of leadership development, with coaching targeted to achieve the individual's goals and address their specific barriers and challenges (Hall et al., 1999).

In can be seen from the evidence presented, that there are a number of strengths in alternative transformational leadership development approaches which executive coaching can capitalise on. Executive coaching aims to facilitate executive development through a practical, goal-focused form of individualised personal learning, providing focus for important development that may otherwise be left unattended (Hall et al., 1999). The potential benefits offered by this approach coupled with its wide practical application and increasing popularity in organisations give rise to the value of conducting research investigating executive coaching as a leadership development approach.

Executive Coaching

As discussed, executive coaching represents a relatively new approach to leadership development that is already widely used within organisations (Berglas, 2002; Wasylyshyn, 2003). It has been defined by Kilburg (1996, p. 142) 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.

Although executive coaching can take various forms, broadly speaking executive coaching involves a collaborative, individualised relationship that aims to bring about sustained behavioural change (Zeuss & Skiffington, 2000). One goal of executive coaching is leadership development (Kampa-Kokesch, 2001). This is achieved through professional development which focuses on building leadership skills to improve the relationship between the leader and the follower (Hall et al., 1999; Smith & Sandstrom, 1999). Executive coaching offers ongoing, continuous learning, and provides support, encouragement and feedback as new leadership behaviours are practised within the work environment (Tobias, 1996).

Executive coaching can be distinguished from other forms of coaching such as life coaching, corporate coaching and business coaching, because it is specifically concerned with leader development within an organisational setting (Zeuss & Skiffington, 2000). It generally involves a coach and a coachee (the leader), is

conducted in the work environment over multiple sessions (usually weekly or fortnightly), is action oriented and incorporates elements of goal setting, feedback and support with the focus on the individual's performance of work related behaviours (Stephenson, 2000). Executive coaching assists leadership development by maintaining a continual growth edge which helps the executive challenge and extend his or her own potential and confront resistance (Tobias, 1996). A close relationship is developed during executive coaching which potentially could lead to dependency upon the coach by the leader (Withers, 2001). To help avoid this, ownership of ideas and results remains with the leader; the coach's role is to assist the leader to identify opportunities and plan to overcome obstacles; the research identifies this as an important aspect of executive coaching (Hunt, 1999; Laske, 1999; Sztucinski, 2001).

Executive coaching has become a popular leadership development strategy (Cacioppe, 1998) with 98.5% of coaching clients surveyed by The International Coach Federation indicating that they felt their investment in a coach was well worth the money (Withers, 2001). However, anecdotal evidence is the driving force behind the popularity of executive coaching, with a collection of leaders, their team members and coaches who have delivered executive coaching, reporting the benefits (Byrd, 2001; Hall et al., 1999; Olesen, 1996; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992; Smith & Sandstrom, 1999; Thach & Heinselman, 1999; Wales, 2003; Withers, 2001). There is little empirical evidence, though, evaluating the effectiveness of executive coaching as an intervention, and equally little evidence of its anticipated outcomes (Day, 2000; Grant, 2001; Hollenbeck & McCall, 1999). Given the large investments demanded by coaching, both in terms of time and money, and its rapid increase in

popularity within organisations, more rigorous investigation of the effects of this process is warranted.

Current research

To date, there have been some self report studies (e.g. Feggetter, 2007; Hall et al., 1999; Hollenbeck & McCall, 1999) indicating anecdotally the usefulness of executive coaching. However, more detailed investigations have been conducted by Wales (2003) who explored the key benefits from executive coaching, and Olivero et al. (1997) and Thach (2002) who provided evidence that executive coaching improved productivity and leadership performance respectively. Smither et al. (2003) presented a more rigorous evaluation using a quasi-experimental design which demonstrated the impact of executive coaching on 360 degree feedback ratings over time. Conway (1999) explored 360 degree feedback, supported by coaching, for the development of leadership skills and reported mixed results. On the other hand, the research by Saling (2005a) compared the effect of feedback, training and executive coaching on leadership behaviour change, and did not provide support for the effectiveness of executive coaching. Together these investigations are an important source of information for this research program about the potential effects and processes of executive coaching and will now be reviewed.

Wales' (2003) qualitative research asked participants about the outcomes they experienced as a result of participating in executive coaching. The organisation in which this study was conducted was a major United Kingdom clearing bank which was undergoing a significant culture change. The aim of the coaching program was to provide support for the sixteen managers as the bank moved from a 'command and

control' hierarchy, to one of consultation and empowerment. Each manager received one hour's coaching every fortnight for over one year. At the conclusion of the coaching program, managers were sent a self report questionnaire to explore their different views and experiences of coaching. Wales (2003) reports the questions were based on six fundamental levels of learning and change which impact on the individual or the system (Dilts, 1996, cited in Wales, 2003). These six levels address, the environment or context within which the work takes place; the individuals' behaviours; their beliefs and values; their capabilities; their role and their vision and purpose (Wales, 2003).

Analysis of the responses to the survey resulted in the identification of three key benefits from coaching. The first outcomes from coaching were described as internal outcomes such as self awareness and confidence. The second outcomes were external outcomes. Enabled by the internal outcomes, the external outcomes were identified as being outwardly focussed and involved improved management, assertiveness, understanding difference, stress management and work/life balance. Communication skills, the third coaching outcome, were identified as mediators between internal outcomes like self confidence, and external outcomes like management and assertiveness (Wales, 2003). In addition to the outcomes reported, managers also reported improved motivation, objective setting and leadership skills, increased business performance, greater acceptance of self, and a greater ability to understand systems and analyse situations as a result of the coaching program (Wales, 2003). The study concluded that coaching substantially increased the effectiveness of the links between self-development, management development and organisational effectiveness.

Wales' (2003) study is useful in that it provides a basis for identifying potential outcomes of executive coaching for further exploration. However, the study did not use any objective measures to evaluate executive coaching. Therefore the benefits reported by participants may simply be the outcome of a placebo effect, resulting from increased attention.

Olivero et al. (1997) examined executive coaching as a transfer of training tool in a public sector health agency. The coaching included goal setting, collaborative problem solving, practice, feedback, supervisory involvement, an evaluation of end results and a public presentation. The thirty-one participants consisted of top, mid and supervisory level managers voluntarily participating in a conventional management training program to increase productivity, quality and effectiveness within the agency. Executive coaching was provided for twenty-three of the thirty-one participants and commenced after managers had participated in a training workshop, to follow-up on the workshop content. The outcome criterion was an index of productivity, identified as the percentage of timely and fully completed patient evaluation forms per manager. Results were measured by the trainees themselves analysing data on their productivity levels and reported as the percentage change in productivity, comparing change after training alone, using archival data (which increased productivity by 22.4%), and after both training and coaching. The authors found that when training was augmented by coaching, there was an average increase in productivity by 88.0%. They also collected reactions to the coaching from both the coaches and the coachees, with both groups reporting favourable reactions to the coaching process (Olivero et al., 1997). The authors

argue that their findings demonstrate the importance of developing skills rather than merely transmitting knowledge through a training workshop.

Olivero et al.'s (1997) study was the first reported attempt to examine the effects of executive coaching in a public sector organisation and provides some support for the effectiveness of executive coaching on productivity. There are some limitations however, with this study. It would seem difficult with any certainty, to separate the effects of training from executive coaching because there was no productivity data collected after the participants completed the current training program (the authors state that none of the trainees measured productivity after training alone, however, after trainees underwent executive coaching, archival data were collected and used to compute the change in productivity after training). Productivity data was collected after participants completed training and coaching. Further, participants were not randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, therefore adding to the difficulties validating the impact of coaching. It is problematical to conclusively state that executive coaching was responsible for the improvement in productivity observed in this study as it may have been a combined or delayed effect of the training.

Conway (1999) explored 360 degree feedback, supported with coaching on the leaders' current job, for the development of leadership skills. Participants were forty mid-level managers in two prison facilities in California who were randomly assigned to treatment or control groups. Leaders in round one (the treatment group) received their 360 degree feedback results, then three coaching sessions designed to identify strengths and weaknesses from the feedback and create an action plan. The process was subsequently repeated for the control group. This study did not try to

delineate the effects of executive coaching from the impact of 360 degree feedback, rather it was anticipated that the combination of feedback and coaching would improve leadership behaviours.

Data were collected from a range of sources throughout the program, these included: three commercial instruments (a 360 degree feedback tool), organisational reports, biographical data, coaching interview notes and qualitative interviews. 360 degree feedback questionnaires were completed before and after coaching by the leader, their supervisor, direct reports and peers. When measured, there were no significant differences between time one and time two (i.e. pre and post coaching) to support the intervention. The quantitative data failed to demonstrate that 360 degree feedback and coaching improved leadership behaviours. The participants however reported that feedback and coaching had positively impacted on their leadership skills. Thus, Conway (1999) concluded that although the research did not yield the expected results, the participants received significant value from coaching which substantially impacted their careers. He cited environmental conditions, in particular, the prison culture, misconceptions about promotion opportunities during the research (which de-motivated participants to develop leadership skills), limited support from top management and attrition over time (only twenty-three participants provided complete data) as possible reasons for the non significant quantitative results.

The study by Thach (2002) is one of the few to use non-self report data to evaluate the effects of executive coaching. Thach (2002) measured the impact of a six month leadership development program which collected 360 degree feedback from the leader's supervisor, peers, subordinates and leaders themselves and then

provided executive coaching. The sample consisted of 281 executives from a telecommunications organisation. There were four coaching sessions offered in the program (additional sessions could be privately organised), and on average participants completed 3.6 sessions. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research was collected by Thach (2002) to demonstrate the overall impact of executive coaching and 360 degree feedback on leadership effectiveness, coaching impact and participation rates.

Leadership effectiveness was measured with a mini 360 degree post survey assessing the leader's development area, percentage increase in leadership effectiveness and follow-up frequency. The non-self report results indicated at the end of six months of coaching an average increase in leadership effectiveness of up to 60% as judged by others. Self reported effectiveness ratings suggested improvements up to 56%. The impact of coaching was measured with a self reported (email) post survey which also included information on the number of times the leader met with their coach, self-assessed progress, and pros and cons of the coaching process. A trend emerged where leaders who met with a coach more often self reported greater improvement in leadership effectiveness than leaders who met with a coach fewer times (e.g. once or twice). This trend though is tentative as most (85%) leaders met with their coach at least four times. The qualitative data revealed that the participants found executive coaching useful for a number of reasons. The most common theme emerging from the question 'what worked well' was the "coach", identified by participants as the most positive part of the process. Other themes in response to the question 'what worked well', included receiving feedback and having the coach to "goad" you on (i.e. provide accountability) during the

developmental process. Leaders also reported the usefulness of the objective 360 degree feedback, and the ability to identify skills and gaps beneficial (Thach, 2002).

Thach (2002) concluded that her study supports the positive impact of coaching in terms of developing leaders. The combination of elements used in the study – 360 degree feedback; executive coaching; and follow-up with stakeholders – appear to represent a strong combination for developing leadership behaviours (Thach, 2002). However, one trend supporting this assumption (i.e. those leaders who met with a coach more often self reported greater improvement in leadership effectiveness than managers who met with a coach fewer times) was based on self-ratings of leadership effectiveness. Nonetheless, the study did find that others (direct reports, peers and managers) rated leaders as more effective leaders. The study is also reported to have fulfilled the organisation's goals. Unfortunately, because the design of the study did not have a control group who received 360 degree feedback alone, it was not possible to determine whether such improvement was due to 360-degree feedback only, coaching only, or the combination of the two. As executive coaching could not be clearly differentiated from the effects of the 360 degree feedback process the relative contribution of each could not be determined, thus further evidence to prove that the executive coaching is effective would be useful to build upon the contribution made by this study.

Smither et al.'s (2003) research began to address this issue with a study employing a quasi-experimental pre-post control group design involving 1361 senior managers working for a large, global corporation. Of the 1361 senior managers who received 360 degree feedback, 404 senior managers also worked with an executive coach to review their feedback and set goals. The assignment of managers to

executive coaching was not random. Some of these managers were required to work with an executive coach, others self-selected into the process, and some declined to participate in executive coaching. The senior managers who worked with an executive coach received approximately two or three in-person meetings with their executive coach.

The research focus had two primary aims. First, to determine whether the senior managers who worked with an executive coach were more likely than other managers to set specific goals and solicit ideas for improvement from their supervisors (Smither et al., 2003). Second, Smither et al. (2003) were also interested in investigating whether managers who worked with an executive coach improved more than other managers who only received 360 degree feedback, in terms of direct report and supervisor ratings on the post 360 degree feedback tool. Specific hypotheses were measured through changes in 360 degree feedback surveys from 1999 (pre-coaching) to 2000 (post-coaching) and also with an online self report coaching effectiveness survey completed by 286 of the 404 leaders participating in executive coaching.

As predicted, Smither et al. (2003) found that senior managers who worked with a coach set more specific (rather than vague) goals than senior managers who did not work with a coach, although the effect size was small ($d=.16$). Partially supporting further hypotheses, they found that senior managers who worked with a coach were more likely than other senior managers to share their feedback and solicit ideas for improvement from their supervisors ($d=.36$), though not from direct reports or peers. The relationship between executive coaching and improvement in direct report and supervisor ratings was positive, but small ($d=.17$), there was no

significant relationship with peer ratings. Those who received coaching improved more than those who did not receive coaching (although the effect was small). The coaching effectiveness survey provided an overall measure of the coach's effectiveness as perceived by the manager who received the coaching, with the results indicating that senior managers generally had favourable reactions to their executive coach and the coaching process (Smither et al., 2003).

The design of Smither et al.'s (2003) study would indicate that the greater improvement of managers who received coaching was due to coaching and not merely to 360 degree feedback. The authors state that despite the small effect sizes observed from executive coaching, for senior managers even small improvements in performance may be associated with meaningful economic benefits (Smither et al., 2003). However, they conclude that further research is necessary before judgements about the practical value of executive coaching are made (Smither et al., 2003).

Smither et al. (2003) also prescribe that the results of their study should be interpreted with caution because the 360 degree feedback reports were shared with the recipient's supervisor who could use the information to influence compensation and promotion benefits. They state that this may have increased recipients sense of accountability to respond to the feedback irrespective of the impact of executive coaching (Smither et al., 2003). Thus, this study may underestimate the impact of executive coaching. On the other hand, the fact that leaders were not randomly assigned to executive coaching means that pre-existing differences between the two groups of leaders may be responsible for some of the effects reported here.

The studies by Thach (2002) and Smither et al. (2003) are important in informing future research in this field. The study by Thach (2002) provides more objective data from which to evaluate the effects of executive coaching. However, the study did not include a control group and could not separate the effects of executive coaching from 360 degree feedback, which lessens the ability to make causal attributions about the changes that were observed. Smither et al.'s (2003) research findings were able to separate the effects of executive coaching from 360 degree feedback and do indeed suggest that executive coaching has a positive effect on behaviour and performance. However, in this study, the 360 degree feedback was used to influence compensation and promotion decisions which may have affected the outcome, equally, the non-random assignment of leaders to executive coaching may be responsible for some of the effects reported in the study.

Although executive coaching is commonly used in combination with 360 degree feedback, this represents a limitation for the research, because 360 degree feedback is known to have an impact on leadership effectiveness (Atwater, Roush, & Fischthal, 1995; Hazucha, Hezlett, & Schneider, 1993; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Smither, London, Reilly, & Millsap, 1995), the extent of which could not be determined in Thach's (2002) study. Thus, the improvements documented in these studies could be attributed to the 360 degree feedback, or the impetus to attend to the feedback, rather than the executive coaching.

Saling (2005a) compared the effect of feedback, training, and executive coaching on leadership behaviour change, and found no significant improvement in leadership behaviour after the interventions. Three groups participated in the study drawn from a convenience sample of 101 mid to senior level leaders, from medium

to large businesses. All members of the sample were coaching clients of the organisation sponsoring the research. The research examined the differences in leader behaviour change of participants in feedback only (n=71), feedback and training (n=21), and feedback, training and coaching (n=9) groups. Leaders could nominate up to fifteen superiors, subordinates and peers of their choice to provide feedback on two occasions through a 360 degree feedback questionnaire measuring task and relationship behaviours.

Saling (2005a) conducted a series of analyses, the first of which revealed there were some significant differences between the feedback only and the feedback, training and coaching group on task behaviours prior to commencing executive coaching, there were no other differences reported. The feedback, training and coaching group had a significantly higher pre-test score than the leaders in the feedback only group. This difference was attributed to the self-selection process for participants into the feedback, training and coaching group, Saling (2005a) suggested that leaders in this group may have elected to participate in the study because of more highly developed task oriented leadership behaviours. The post-test scores indicated that none of the groups (i.e. feedback only, feedback and training, or feedback, training and coaching) significantly increased over time. Unexpectedly the feedback, training and coaching group actually reported a decrease in leadership behaviour change scores on both task and relationship factors. This decrease was compared with other studies where there were similarly decreases on behaviour change after development interventions (e.g. Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). In this study Saling (2005a) anecdotally attributed the decline to a range of factors, including leader self-evaluation, reflection and self-denial resulting in rejection of the feedback

on leadership skills. She equally suggested that the decline in scores could be due to regression to the mean given the leaders in this group had higher pre-test scores than leaders in the other two comparison groups.

Saling (2005a) reports these findings need to be interpreted with caution. The most obvious limitation with this study is the sample size; there were only nine leaders who participated in the feedback, training and coaching group, and of these nine, only six leaders completed the coaching process. This limitation, combined with the convenience sampling technique where participants were clients from the sponsoring organisation, led Saling (2005a) to suggest that further research was necessary. Despite these factors, this study is worthy of note, as it calls into question the effectiveness of executive coaching for improving leadership behaviours.

The studies reported above do not provide conclusive evidence of the effects of executive coaching; additionally, the research suffers from limitations making it difficult to draw conclusions about executive coaching. Therefore more rigorous evaluation of the effects of executive coaching is required. In the current research program, the investigation will commence by acquiring a greater understanding about how executive coaching has its effects.

Executive Coaching and Psychological Processes

There is still much to be learnt about the processes underlying executive coaching and the impact of executive coaching on leader behaviour and follower reactions. Feldman and Lankau (2005) reiterate this point, stating that empirical research on executive coaching has lagged far behind its popularity. Further, they

confirm that theoretical work on the processes underlying executive coaching has been limited (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). One of the aims of this research is to explore the psychological processes and effects associated with executive coaching. Although the fundamental aim of executive coaching is to improve leadership development, it is also intended to have benefit for leaders themselves. For example, executive coaching is frequently used to attract (Maturi, 2000), retain (Parker-Wilkins, 2006) and support executives (Thach, 2002), and based on the anecdotal feedback, leaders do indeed have very positive reactions to executive coaching. Yet there is limited evidence to explain how executive coaching achieves these outcomes, signifying the need for further research (Kampa-Kokesch, 2001; Natale & Diamante, 2005).

Based on the content of executive coaching and the existing literature, five psychological variables were identified that were likely to be affected. The psychological variables, self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning, are examined in this research program, and discussed below.

Owing to the intensely individualised approach of executive coaching, executive coaching could potentially have other psychological effects that have not been examined here. This research program focuses on the above variables because they directly reflect the processes underlying executive coaching and should be experienced regardless of the specific developmental goal the leader chooses to focus on. Furthermore, all of these variables have been shown to have an impact on behaviour, and thus, may mediate the effects of coaching on leader behaviour.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is described as an individual's belief that he or she is capable of performing a task (Bandura, 1977; Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, & Coulter, 2003). It has emerged as a powerful influence on participation, behaviour and performance in developmental programs (Choi et al., 2003; Gist et al., 1992; Tannenbaum et al., 1991), and has been shown to be an important predictor of behavioural learning in training situations (Bandura, 1977; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Bandura (1977) argues that a person's self-efficacy is largely determined by previous performance in a given area (Bandura, 1977; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Outside training and development activities, self-efficacy contributes to feelings of increased confidence in oneself, and this in itself is a valuable consequence.

Popper and Lipshitz (1992) discuss coaching as a form of empowerment, where the coach strengthens the coachee's self-efficacy; they further argue that self-efficacy is the key psychological variable in coaching. Gegner (1997) also reported that the self-efficacy experienced by coaching clients is the most critical component of the coaching process.

When participating in developmental activities, self-efficacy can be maintained or enhanced by ensuring participants have the opportunity to achieve mastery. Development programs should therefore provide participants with a safe environment which allows them to practise new skills, receive feedback, and achieve success (Bernthal et al., 2001). An analysis of executive coaching reveals that it is designed to meet these conditions (Cashman, 1998; Kram, 1985).

It is difficult to develop feelings of mastery and success in participants through short-term learning experiences, which are characteristic of many training programs, lectures, seminars and workshops. Mastery and success, elements of self-efficacy can however, find expression in ongoing learning relationships developed, for example, during the coaching process. Popper and Lipshitz (1992) suggest because coaching is based on ongoing relations, it has greater potential influence on self-efficacy than other teaching relationships.

Executive coaching should also influence self-efficacy because learning is mostly done through ongoing performance. In coaching, performance goals are broken down into small achievable steps so the leader can achieve mastery and experience success. This is complemented by the coaching relationship which involves positive communication and feedback from the coach, expressing confidence in the leader's ability to succeed (Hall et al., 1999; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Coaching is therefore likely to increase leader self-efficacy beliefs through goal setting (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2006), supporting performance accomplishments and providing feedback (Popper & Lipshitz, 1992). This increase in self-efficacy is then expected to lead to further improvements in leader behaviour, as self-efficacy affects performance (Locke & Latham, 1990b) and fosters goal commitment (Evers et al., 2006; Locke & Latham, 1990b). Bush (2004) and Hall et al. (1999) confirmed executive coaching increased feelings of confidence for most leaders in their research, and in this research self-efficacy is anticipated to be an important psychological outcome associated with executive coaching.

Developmental Support

Developmental support is defined here as the leader's experience of being encouraged towards, and held accountable for, personal development. Through coaching, the leader has regular access to a coach who is attentive and committed to the leader's growth. The coach supports the leader developmentally by expressing confidence in the leader's ability to accomplish his or her goals, assisting the leader to break goals down into smaller, achievable steps, listening and reflecting on the leader's experiences, holding the leader to his or her commitments, and encouraging the leader to reach his or her developmental goals. Executive coaching also creates a sense of accountability for progress which develops through the ongoing, regular relationship established between the leader and the coach, where the coach can monitor the actions of the leader. The importance of accountability was highlighted by London et al. (1997) for ensuring people respond to their 360 degree feedback. In an executive coaching relationship, the coach holds the leader to their commitments and goals, mirroring the definition of accountability presented by Dose and Klimoski (1995) of "accepting and meeting one's...responsibilities". Thus, the perception of support in an executive coaching relationship also incorporates aspects of accountability.

The qualitative data collected in Thach's (2002) study provides backing for the proposition that executive coaching has an impact on participants' experience of developmental support. When asked, "what worked well", one leader was reported as saying, "[my] coach is knowledgeable, professional, and helpful in providing support..." and another said "It is great having a coach...giving candid feedback" (Thach, 2002, p. 210). Providing feedback has been considered the hallmark of

executive coaching in the practice literature (Waclawski & Church, 1998; Witherspoon & White, 1996). The leaders in Thach's study also reported that the sense of accountability provided by the coach was helpful in successfully implementing development plans; for example "[you are] compelled to complete as you knew your coach would be following up" and another is reported stating "having the coach to "goad" you on was helpful" (Thach, 2002, p. 211). Thach and Heinselman (1999) argue further that the support provided through executive coaching reduces executives' stress levels because they have access to an external person who they can confidentially and objectively talk to. They further suggest that as a result of this, employee satisfaction may increase as executives realise the investment their company is making in them (Thach & Heinselman, 1999). Thus, it is expected another psychological effect of executive coaching is an increased sense of developmental support.

Positive Affect

Positive affect reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, energetic and alert (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Positive affect can be distinguished as either a trait (disposition), often called positive affectivity, or a state (situation) aspect of affect (Thoresen et al., 2003). It is argued that executive coaching will have an effect on state positive affect because psychological states change in response to events and experiences (i.e. the executive coaching) (Clark & Watson, 1988). Executive coaching is not expected to have an effect on trait affect, because it is a more stable, enduring personality dimension of positively activated emotions (Thoresen et al., 2003). Thus, the discussion below relates to state positive affect unless stated otherwise.

Positive affect has been linked to a number of positive organisational outcomes, for example significantly influencing employees' intention to perform specific, desirable acts of organisational citizenship behaviour (George, 1991; Isen, 1987; Organ, 1994; Williams et al., 1999) and to increased levels of pro-social behaviour at work, including helping tendencies and altruistic behaviours (George, 1991; Isen, 1987). It is also positively correlated with personal accomplishment, effectiveness (Castro, Douglas, Hochwarter, Ferris, & Frink, 2003; Thoresen et al., 2003) and predicts job performance (Cote, 1999). Therefore, it is important to investigate whether executive coaching strengthens leaders' positive affect.

There is already anecdotal evidence (e.g. Byrd, 2001; Hall et al., 1999; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992; Smith & Sandstrom, 1999; Thach & Heinselman, 1999; Withers, 2001) that executive coaching has an impact on participants' positive affect as a result of an experience (i.e. state affect). Further, Smither et al. (2003) reported that people generally had favourable reactions to the executive coaching process. Additionally, the encouragement, constructive feedback, structure and accountability that the leader receives through coaching are likely to create feelings of enthusiasm and excitement in the leader. The coaching relationship is also characterised by performance achievements which are known to induce positive affect (Andriopoulos, 2001; Erez & Isen, 2002; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987). Performance goals are broken down into small achievable steps to enable the leader to achieve mastery and experience success, as is discussed above (*refer self-efficacy*). The success experienced by the performance achievements encourages feelings of enthusiasm and energy. As detailed previously, research demonstrates that positive affect changes in

response to events and experiences (Clark et al., 1988), thus it is predicted the experiences throughout the coaching relationship will positively influence affect.

Openness to New Behaviours

Openness to new behaviours refers to the leader's willingness to consider different approaches to managing, communicating and behaving with his or her team. Executive coaching is an action-oriented development process (Stephenson, 2000). It focuses around encouraging the leader to search for alternatives and trial new behaviours, rather than continuing to do more of what has been done in the past. The role of the coach in this process is important in providing support because being more open to doing things differently represents change, and change often creates feelings of uneasiness (Katz & Miller, 1996; Schnell, 2005; Terry & Jimmieson, 2003). During executive coaching, the coach encourages the leader to experiment with new behaviours and seek feedback on the outcomes of those new behaviours. After achieving small successes, the leader should become more open to identifying a range of new behaviour options, as he or she seeks to achieve mastery (Wakefield, 2006).

The executive coaching relationship therefore represents a partnership with the leader who, over time, becomes more willing to identify a range of new approaches to effective leadership behaviours (Kampa-Kokesch et al., 2001; Kilburg, 1996). As such, coaching has been promoted as a tool to help managers adapt to change more rapidly and effectively (Diedrich, 1996). Further supporting the link between executive coaching and leaders' openness to new behaviours, a study examining the impact of executive coaching on leaders' flexibility reported that

executive coaching positively improved leaders' levels of flexibility when compared against a control group (Jones et al., 2006). Therefore, in the executive coaching relationship it is expected that one of the ways in which executive coaching creates change in leader behaviour is by increasing the leader's openness to experiment with new behaviours and motivation to actively seek options.

Developmental Planning

Developmental planning is defined here as the leader's ability to conceptualise what it is he or she is trying to improve, and how he or she plans to achieve that improvement. Executive coaching places a high degree of emphasis on planning for the future and this includes improving leaders' current approaches to goal setting. One of the key techniques underlying executive coaching is to assist leaders in setting developmental goals that are aligned with the 'SMART' characteristics of goal setting theory (i.e. goals are formulated to be specific, measurable, agreed, challenging yet realistic and time oriented) and provide feedback (Locke & Latham, 1984).

A key component of executive coaching is the use of both goal setting and feedback, and developing effective approaches to both are crucial elements of the executive coaching process. Smither et al.'s (2003) study for example, found that leaders who worked with an executive coach had more specific goals than leaders who did not work with a coach. As a result of working with the coach to set developmental goals, identify sources of feedback in the work environment, and devise an action plan which breaks down the developmental goals into steps, it is

predicted that leaders will experience greater clarity about their developmental goals and how they plan to achieve their goals.

Executive Coaching and Transformational Leadership Behaviour

One aim of this research program is to examine the psychological impact of executive coaching. While this question is important because executive coaching is used to support leaders, organisations also invest in executive coaching to achieve increased leader effectiveness, thus, research is also need to evidence the impact of executive coaching on performance (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Therefore, apart from looking at the psychological impact of executive coaching, a second aim of this research program is to demonstrate its impact on transformational leadership behaviour as there has been little empirical research on the impact of executive coaching on leadership effectiveness (Hall et al., 1999; Kilburg, 2000; Thach, 2002).

One of the stated aims of executive coaching is to foster improved leader effectiveness (Stephenson, 2000; Zeuss & Skiffington, 2000). Though there are few empirical studies examining executive coaching and its impact on leadership behaviours, two studies which do explore this area (reviewed earlier) provide some support. The findings from Thach's (2002) research, and to a lesser extent Conway's (1999), substantiate the usefulness of executive coaching for developing leadership behaviours. Although both these studies did not specifically measure the impact of executive coaching on transformational leadership behaviours, they do suggest executive coaching improves leadership.

This research focuses specifically on the impact of executive coaching on transformational leadership because transformational leadership is known to have good organisational outcomes and is therefore, constructive leadership behaviour to foster. The effects are also examined though because executive coaching shares characteristics of the transformational leadership approach. For example, executive coaching stimulates leaders to experiment with new behaviours and motivates them to continue to pursue alternatives by conveying confidence in the leader, providing support, and establishing feedback channels. The coach also encourages the leader to question the way things are done, and challenge pre existing methods rather than continuing to do more of what has been done in the past (Kampa-Kokesch et al., 2001). In doing this, leaders often develop their own solutions. Additionally, being an individualised approach customised to the leader's specific developmental needs, executive coaching helps leaders explore innovative approaches to develop to their full potential in a safe environment (Nyman & Thach, 2002). Finally, throughout the coaching sessions, the coach demonstrates absolute acceptance of the leader without passing judgment, practices effective communication, provides feedback, and encourages excellence, acting as a role model for the leader to copy in interactions with their own team. Previous research has suggested that as a result of being coached themselves, executives more frequently adopt a coaching management style (Gegner, 1997). Thus, in this research program, it is predicted that the experience of executive coaching exposes participants to transformational leadership behaviours demonstrated by the coach, at the same time as encouraging leaders to practise these behaviours within their own teams. A similar notion was suggested by Kampa-Kokesch (2001) because of the similarities between the characteristics of both executive coaching and transformational leadership.

One hypothesis proposed in the study by Kampa-Kokesch (2001) was that executive coaching increased transformational leadership. To test this she compared coaching clients in early vs. late stages of their coaching journey. Participants were fifty coaching clients (from lower, middle, upper management and CEO or president positions) and sixty-two direct reports and peers. The design of Kampa-Kokesch's (2001) study meant that it was not possible to randomly assign participants to control or experimental groups. Thirteen coaching clients were pre/early coaching clients (these clients were in the early stages of executive coaching and had received between 0-3 months of coaching – on average participants had received 2 months coaching) and thirty-seven coaching clients were from the post/later coaching group (these clients were in the later stages of executive coaching and had received 3 months or more of coaching). Given that most participants in the early coaching group had commenced executive coaching before the study, it is impossible to separate leadership gains that may have occurred prior to measurement. Kampa-Kokesch (2001) reports that this limitation, combined with small sample size and low power, may have contributed to the non-statistically significant results when measuring the impact of executive coaching on transformational leadership as reported by direct reports and peers.

Kampa-Kokesch (2001) does report significant differences between pre/early coaching clients (48% of this group held upper management positions) and post/later coaching clients (68% of this group held upper management positions) on a measure of Idealised Influence – Attributed, which was designed to measure charismatic leadership that is attributed to the leader, or that impacts the follower in some way (Kampa-Kokesch et al., 2001). The post/later coaching clients rated themselves

higher on these measures. There were no other statistically significant measures of transformational leadership. This is reported by Kampa-Kokesch (2001) as surprising, particularly for the transformational leadership dimension, individualised consideration, which has been previously supported in the literature as being affected by executive coaching (Gegner, 1997; Kampa-Kokesch et al., 2001).

The research by Kampa-Kokesch (2001) is the first study to investigate executive coaching and transformational leadership. Despite the mostly negative findings reported, there is still some support for executive coaching impacting on transformational leadership. Kampa-Kokesch (2001) asserts that further research is imperative to determine the effects of executive coaching on transformational leadership and suggests adopting a design which tests one method of executive coaching in one organisation, comparing upper management coaching clients who are yet to commence executive coaching with similar clients who are in the later stage of the coaching process. She also recommends additional qualitative research be undertaken (Kampa-Kokesch, 2001).

This current research program adopts some of these suggestions. The research overcomes previous limitations by using a rigorous design with control and experimental groups which enable differentiation of the effects of executive coaching from other leadership development interventions. It also tests the possibility that development through executive coaching will have an impact on participants' transformational leadership behaviours and investigates the impact of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states.

Research Aim

In summary, the popularity of executive coaching and the limited empirical research currently attesting to the effects of this intervention make this an important area for future research. Comments about the effectiveness of executive coaching abound. Olesen (1996) proposes that executive coaching may be the best answer to many of the needs of today's executives, and Smith and Sandstrom (1999) suggest executive coaching is the strategic key to high levels of performance in all areas of leadership. Practitioners advocate executive coaching has an impact on leadership behaviour (Hargrove, 2000; Stephenson, 2000; Zeuss & Skiffington, 2000). However, the research to date has suffered from such problems as reliance on self report measures of change in leader behaviour, difficulty separating the effects of executive coaching with other leadership interventions, and study design issues, all of which limit the ability to draw conclusions (e.g. Smither et al., 2003; Thach, 2002; Wales, 2003).

The current research aims to address these gaps in the literature. *Figure 2.1*, on page 65, provides an overview of the research, which investigates the effects of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and their transformational leadership behaviour. Limitations of previous research will be addressed by using a range of methods, for example, an experimental design which differentiates executive coaching from other leadership development approaches, and longitudinal data to provide a rigorous test of executive coaching. Joo (2005) recommends the long-term effects of executive coaching are investigated. Additionally, this research framework also incorporates qualitative research, which provides opportunities to acquire greater depth in the psychological measures and explore the contextual issues

which may impact on the effectiveness of executive coaching. Kampa-Kokesch (2001) suggests the usefulness of qualitative research for gaining a greater understanding of the coaching process and how it contributes to change.

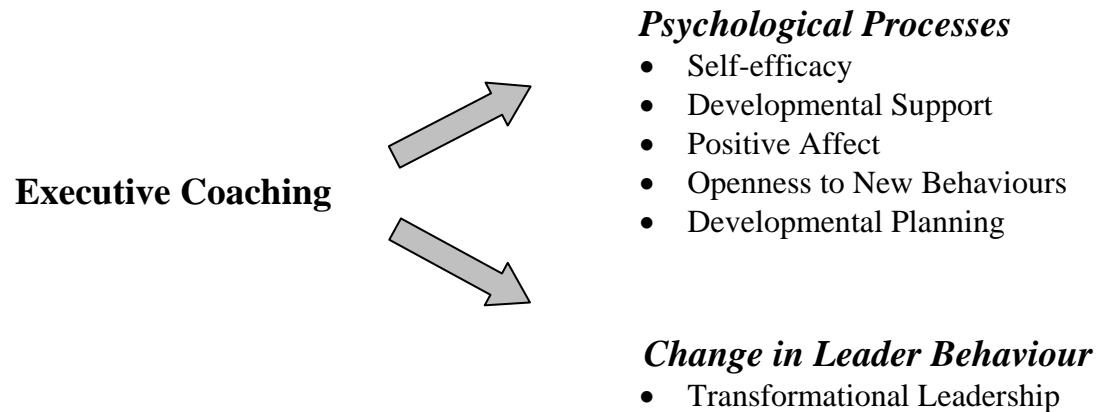


Figure 2.1. Overview of the Research.

There are three studies undertaken in this research program. Each study focuses on elements of this model, and together these studies provide an understanding of the outcomes achieved through executive coaching.

The next chapter will outline the methodology of the research program. It will describe the research design and detail the context in which the research was conducted. Information about the executive coaching program is also presented.

CHAPTER THREE

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METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the methodology is presented for this research program. This research was undertaken in a large public sector organisation where executive coaching was provided to senior managers to develop transformational leadership behaviour. Two primary aims are addressed through this research: the first, to investigate the effects of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and, the second, to examine the effects of executive coaching on transformational leadership behaviour. To meet these aims three studies were undertaken. The first self report study used an experimental design to investigate the psychological impact of executive coaching; it also examined the longitudinal impact of executive coaching on the psychological variables. The second study collected non-self report data to measure the behavioural impact of executive coaching on leaders' transformational leadership behaviours. The third study, a qualitative investigation of the psychological and behavioural impacts of executive coaching, provided rich information to enhance the quantitative data and also identified contextual material to build an understanding of how, and why, executive coaching works.

Research Approach

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

This research program captures the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection. Bouma (1996) states that it is often better to use several data-gathering techniques to answer a research question. Given that there is currently little known about executive coaching there seems merit in adopting this approach. Using a variety of techniques provides different perspectives on the situation, thereby increasing knowledge (Bouma, 1996). It also increases confidence in the results, because it does not rely on only one source of information (Wood, 1988). Yin (1994) argues that combining a smaller set of qualitative data with a larger quantitative data set allows researchers to compare patterns of findings and determine the convergence of the effects found. This triangulation of methods allows researchers to observe a given phenomenon from a number of different angles (Mason, 2002). The benefits of this combined approach are applied in this research program.

In the past, many research traditionalists in the organisational behaviour field were of the opinion that quantitative research methods were the appropriate approach to follow, and whilst this may no longer be the dominant opinion, quantitative studies still outnumber other approaches (McNabb, 2002). Questionnaires (estimated to be used in 85% or more of all quantitative research projects) are the most popular tool (McNabb, 2002; Ticehurst & Veal, 1999), perhaps because they allow researchers to examine specific relationships between variables of interest and are conducive to testing hypotheses (Neuman, 2003).

Qualitative research on the other hand, involves collecting ‘rich’ information from relatively few people (Schilling, 2006; Ticehurst et al., 1999). It seeks to uncover meanings and allows the researcher to gain understanding of research issues. Qualitative studies have been recommended for areas where there is little previous research, as is the case in this research program because they enable the researcher to explore and identify the relevant issues (Mason, 2002). Additionally, qualitative research is useful to collect information about the context of the behaviour or activity in question and thus take into consideration the natural, detailed and complex reality in which it occurs (Mason, 2002). Doing this allows researchers to capture and examine the intricacy of observed phenomenon (Mason, 2002). Hence, it is suggested to be most useful when the desired outcome is an understanding of human behaviour in its usual setting (Nardi, 2003) because it provides great depth of information. Due to these benefits, research that involves qualitative methodology can contribute a high degree of realism and applicability to the real world of work. In support of the use of qualitative methodology in this particular research program, Ticehurst and Veal (1999) conclude that people personally involved in a particular situation are best placed to analyse and describe it in their own words, which justifies the collection of data from leaders’, their team members, supervisors, and coaches in Study Three.

Therefore, in this research program the qualitative interviews enriched the questionnaire data by providing contextual information and added detail that was not able to be fully captured through the quantitative approach of Studies One and Two. The adoption of both data collection methodologies offered a well rounded approach to answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. Both methodologies

answered questions about the psychological reactions to executive coaching and the impact of executive coaching on behaviour change. The questionnaire used standardised measures of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. The interviews provided a tailored follow-up tool for collecting richer information about the psychological measures and also identifying contextual factors which may have impacted on the effects of executive coaching.

Research Context

Contextualisation, according to Rousseau and Fried (2001) is more important in contemporary organisational behaviour research than it has been in the past because of the changing nature of such research. Research is becoming more international which gives rise to great differences between countries, and even within countries, this and the rapidly diversifying nature of work, and work settings, require contextual explanation (Rousseau & Fried, 2001). Context, which has many definitions, and can include a single event or happening, has both subtle and powerful effects on research which should be presented to inform data analysis, interpretation and reportage of research results (Johns, 2006). Contextualisation allows the reader (and those researchers who would build upon a study) to understand the factors that contributed to the researcher's observations (Rousseau & Fried, 2001). It also provides authentic and authoritative information desired by managers and other consumers of research, and often helps to explain study-to-study variation in research findings (Johns, 2006). Johns (2006) concludes that the past 30 years of organisational research has improved understanding of life at work, but has been lacking in providing information about how the organisational context affects

organisational behaviour. Thus, the evidence strongly supports contextualisation. It is, therefore, necessary to take the context of this research program into account to assist in providing a more accurate interpretation of the results.

The data for the studies making up this research program were all collected from a large Australian public service organisation which provides scientific and technical services within the health sector. The State-wide organisation has approximately 1900 employees. It is acknowledged that conducting all the data collection in a single organisation does limit the generalisability of the findings, however, as the organisation represented a fairly typical environment commonly utilising executive coaching, this issue was minimised. Additionally, the data were collected from business units located throughout the State, possessing their own culture and operating fairly independently from the central organisational structure. Further, the process for delivering the executive coaching was also characteristic of many programs where it is generally used in combination with other developmental approaches. Below, a thorough description of the environment is provided to foster understanding about the context underlying the data collection for this research program (Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

At the time when the research was conducted, the organisation was experiencing increased competition from a number of private competitors and there was a growing recognition within the senior management team of the need to take proactive steps to remain competitive. A new strategic plan resulted in a renewed approach to business with an increased emphasis on providing a quality certified integrated service between the various business units. This change was reflected in

organisational structures, policies, processes, and the adoption of new technology to support the business units.

As part of the implementation of the strategic plan, the organisation identified the need for leadership development for its senior managers. A year long leadership effectiveness program, supported from the top of the organisation, was developed to address this need. These conditions are often typical of those underlying the uptake of executive coaching, but that the way in which these conditions may have influenced the findings will nevertheless be considered in the final chapter.

The Transformational Leadership Development Program

As discussed, the executive coaching program underlying this research represented one component of a year long leadership development experience aimed at fostering transformational leadership behaviours in managers. As the larger leadership program also represented part of the context for the research, it is described in some detail here. The program commenced with a 360 degree feedback process (called the “full” 360 degree feedback questionnaire) completed by the leader, the leader’s supervisor, two or more of the leader’s peers, and five or more members of the leader’s team, as recommended by Judge and Cowell (1997). This 360 degree feedback survey provided pre-intervention measures of transformational leadership behaviour. The feedback helped leaders identify behaviours that needed to be performed more frequently, less frequently, or in a different manner, and provided input to the executive coaching process. Research has confirmed that the use of 360 degree feedback is one of the best methods to promote increased self-awareness of skill strengths and areas for development (Hagberg, 1996; Rosti et al.,

1998; Shipper et al., 2000) and this was the context within which the instrument was used in the leadership program and within executive coaching, more specifically.

The 360 degree feedback questionnaire items measured dimensions of transactional leadership and the four behavioural components of transformational leadership, namely idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Bass and Avolio 1994). Leaders were encouraged to focus on improving their transformational leadership behaviours in the program (including in their executive coaching sessions).

Before commencing executive coaching, leaders participated in a two day training workshop, where they were introduced to theory on transformational leadership behaviours and guided through their 360 degree feedback data. During the first day of this workshop, leaders received their feedback report on their 360 degree feedback ratings, detailing their strengths and areas for development in the leadership dimensions. The aim of the report was to increase leader self-awareness by providing feedback from a range of sources familiar with the leaders' work (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998).

During the workshop the leaders were given background on the executive coaching process and invited to participate in coaching. They were told that the role of the coach in the executive coaching relationship was to help them interpret their 360 degree feedback report and prioritise an area for development from the transformational leadership dimensions. The coach would also help the leader to define their developmental goals and prepare an individualised action plan for their development. All up, there were six executive coaching sessions, held fortnightly

over approximately twelve weeks, for one hour per session. There was also a follow-up held six months after the leaders had completed their sixth executive coaching session.

Apart from the two day workshop and the executive coaching program, the year long program consisted of two additional one-day training workshops where leaders were supported in working through specific organisational issues they faced. The first day long workshop supported leaders in developing strategies to implement the organisations' new performance review process. The second training program centred on putting into practice the organisations' strategic plan. Leaders also had access to a training fund which allowed them to undertake external training relevant to their developmental goals. The majority of leaders participating in the program attended at least one external workshop during the year long development experience. At the completion of the program leaders received a second full 360 degree feedback report at a final one day workshop, where the development program was concluded. While this second wave of 360 degree feedback allowed leaders to examine whether they were perceived to have improved their transformational leadership behaviour, they were encouraged to also use the report to identify new areas for continued leadership development.

The Executive Coaching Program

Executive coaching has been rapidly adopted around the world. It is so well liked by most participants that it has now become an accepted development pathway in many organisations. The popularity surrounding executive coaching may be attributed to the fact that it is an intervention which can serve a variety of purposes

and achieve diverse outcomes. Executive coaching, for example, can be distinguished as developmental coaching, performance coaching, feedback coaching, targeted behavioural coaching, content coaching, group/team coaching, orientation or succession coaching, and career coaching (Ennis, 2004; Nyman et al., 2002; Stephenson, 2000). Executive coaching can also be classified by the different opportunities it offers to leaders (e.g. training managers as coaches, coaching to develop networking skills, leadership skills, work/life balance, presentation or communication skills) (Ennis, 2004; Nyman et al., 2002; Stephenson, 2000). It must be acknowledged, therefore, that there is variation in the executive coaching approach and in the structure of an executive coaching program, the number of executive coaching sessions a leader participates in and the tools used during the process.

However, the different forms of executive coaching do share certain defining characteristics. Executive coaching always involves a confidential partnership between an executive and a coach, but there is another player in the executive coaching relationship, namely, the organisation. Executive coaching is, most often, provided by the organisation and involves a clear link between the individual goals of the executive and the strategic goals of the organisation (Ennis, 2004; Stephenson, 2000; Zeuss & Skiffington, 2000). The most common forms of executive coaching are performance and/or developmental planning coaching (Hargrove, 2000). The coaching underlying the current research falls in the latter category and represents a cognitive-behavioural approach where the coach and the leader work through a process of behavioural change which commences with the identification of a developmental issue, is followed by goal setting and action planning, concluding

with an evaluation of outcomes (Grant & Cavanagh, 2002). These forms of coaching usually commence with a 360 degree assessment structured around the organisation's strategic objectives. Following the 360 degree tool, the coach works one-on-one with the leader to interpret the results, identify strengths and specific development areas and then to prepare a customised development plan for goal achievement (Ennis, 2004; Nyman et al., 2002).

The executive coaching in this research program followed this structure and is typical of the approach to coaching adopted by many organisations. Obviously, there are limitations to the generalisability of the results because this research program used one coaching approach and one set of tools. However there are also advantages to having employed a consistent approach in that the measures are standardised, the leaders and coaches are working towards common goals and there is a high degree of quality control over the delivery of the executive coaching program.

The executive coaching process commenced with the leader and coach signing a formal agreement outlining the terms of the relationship. The leaders then received a total of six one hour, one-on-one coaching sessions, over approximately twelve weeks (i.e. at fortnightly intervals), and a follow-up six months later. Previous research indicated that this timeframe was favoured by leaders, as it provided enough time for them to implement action steps toward goal achievement, without forgetting key learnings (Edelstein and Armstrong, 1993).

Leaders and coaches were instructed that the focus of the coaching program was to develop the transformational leadership behaviours measured in the 360

degree feedback reports. The first coaching session was held face-to-face, away from the leaders' organisation and involved a detailed analysis of the leader's 360 degree feedback report culminating in the identification of a development area. Removing the leader from their organisation for the first coaching session was important for establishing rapport and encouraging the leader to openly discuss professional issues relating to their leadership development. The following coaching sessions were held by telephone, which was beneficial as many of the leaders were located across the State. Subsequent sessions involved the identification and clarification of short, medium and long-term developmental goals, preparation of an action plan to guide the leader's development toward short-term goals and monitoring of progress towards goals. Additionally, the leader discussed with the coach obstacles to completing agreed action steps, feedback and outcomes. Prior to the end of the coaching program the leader and the coach worked to extend the action plan to capture mid and long range goals. A follow-up was held six months after session six and included a progress update and feedback from the leader to the coach. This session provided an opportunity for the leader to share successes with the coach and also discuss future planning activities.

The Participants

The decision by participants in the transformational leadership development program to undertake executive coaching was voluntary, and this was considered an important element of the program. Executive coaching is not a suitable development option for all leaders, because as individuals, each person brings a different learning style to the learning experience. The motivation for learning comes from the leader, not the coach, and the learning experience is directed by the leader (Lotz-Becker,

2007). Voluntary participation in executive coaching acknowledges and takes into consideration individual values and needs, and the personal, social, and meta-skills of individuals (Antonacopoulou, 1999). Had executive coaching been mandatory, there was the potential for resistance to the intervention and possible failure of the leadership program because it relies on the leader taking responsibility for individual development and demonstrating a willingness to change. Additionally because executive coaching requires a commitment of time on the leaders' behalf voluntary coaching recognises that not all leaders are in this position, mandatory coaching on the other hand, has the potential to result in a negative experience for both the coach and the leader.

Fifty senior leaders were invited by the organisation, but not required, to participate in the program. Additionally, leaders from lower levels who supervised staff and wished to take part in the program were required to submit an expression of interest; these documents were reviewed to identify an additional seventeen participants for the program. At the commencement of the program sixty-eight leaders were enrolled, however, there has been some attrition over time. Out of the sixty-eight leaders in the program, fifty leaders chose to participate in executive coaching (year 1, n=23; year 2, n=27). The majority of these leaders were male, and responsible for a team of, on average, twenty-five staff. These leaders were highly educated professionals who worked in the scientific and medical fields and had a superior level of specialist knowledge. Many leaders had progressed to the senior level positions they occupied because of their expertise. Thus, they were heading up positions with responsibility for a team of people however had received limited people management training to support them in these roles. To tailor the learning

experiences to best suit individual needs, the leaders were told they could use the executive coaching for transformational leadership development in the specific areas identified in their 360 degree feedback report.

The total number of leaders participating in this research program is not large. It is important to note that despite the widespread popularity of executive coaching, it is difficult to obtain research participants (leaders and coaches) who are agreeable to provide data for research. Furthermore, coaches do not work with a large number of leaders because executive coaching is a very time consuming and labour intensive process. It takes months for a relationship to develop between a leader and coach and requires a large time commitment both preparing for coaching sessions and debriefing after them. To conduct each hourly session, the coach will spend up to three hours preparation and follow-up work for each leader they work with. As executive coaching is an individualised process, replication of work is not possible. Previous executive coaching research has faced barriers to obtaining large sample sizes and has been forced to work with small numbers. For example, Olivero et al. (1997) worked with a sample consisting of twenty-three participants; Jones et al., (2006) with eleven leaders who completed all questionnaires; Wales' (2003) study collected data from sixteen participants and whilst Kampa-Kokesch (2001) invited 2250 coaches to participate in her study, only twenty-seven were actually involved. This demonstrates the immense challenges in acquiring participants for this type of research, but is consistent with difficulties researchers encountered when first conducting research on counselling and therapy outcomes (Kampa-Kokesch, 2001). The sample size obviously presents limitations for this research in terms of lack of power, reliability and generalisability of findings. However, this must be balanced

against the high quality, rich, longitudinal data cumulatively collected during the three studies which the current research comprises.

The Coaches

Owing to the time consuming nature of providing executive coaching, nine external executive coaches were trained to deliver coaching to the leaders participating in this research program. External coaches are not members of the organisation and are often preferred by leaders, as some topics discussed during the coaching relationship are of a sensitive nature and the leader feels more comfortable addressing these issues with someone external to the organisation (Hall et al., 1999; Stephenson, 2000). However, external coaches do not generally have intimate knowledge of the organisation and its culture (Hall et al., 1999). This lack of in-depth knowledge is not always a negative aspect of the relationship though, as it often means that prior experiences do not influence the coach's thoughts and questions. As it is useful though for the coaches to have an understanding of the organisation a briefing session was held in which senior management and the researcher provided background on the organisation and the goals of the coaching process prior to the commencement of the coaching program.

To maintain consistency and quality for the leaders in the program, all the coaches were required to have experience in human resource management, organisational behaviour, mediating and/or psychology, and a desire to be involved in the coaching program. All coaches participated in a half day training session where they were briefed on the tools and techniques to be used in the coaching program. In line with the International Coach Federation's (ICF) guidelines, the

coach training centred on the eleven coaching core competencies, which are summarised into the following four clusters: setting the foundation, co-creating the relationship, communicating effectively and facilitating learning and results (ICF, 2006). Essentially, a coach's responsibility is to attend to the leader's agenda by hearing their goals, values and beliefs and in doing so, supporting them in discovering, clarifying, and aligning their desires with positive actions to move forward. The coach should also hold the leader responsible and accountable for achieving their goals (ICF, 2006). Based on these responsibilities, the coaches formed a professional partnership with the leader where they shared a high degree of commitment to their leader's goals and felt accountable for keeping the leader on track to reach them.

After the completion of the training program, but before the coaches worked with leaders, they undertook 'round robin' coaching where one coach worked with another coach, and then that coach worked with a different coach each utilising the coaching principles they were going to use with their leaders on one another. The purpose was to enable the coaches to familiarise themselves with the executive coaching tools and gain experience in the executive coaching process. Additionally, there were ongoing training opportunities provided both before and during the executive coaching program. Initially fortnightly and then monthly, the coaches came together to discuss, without jeopardising confidentiality, their coaching experiences and share any issues that were arising. These training sessions were very popular with the coaches for professional development, but they also provided an opportunity to ensure quality control, consistency and to stay in touch with the progress of the sessions. At the completion of the first year, another half day training

session was held to debrief the outcomes of the leadership program and collect feedback from the coaches about their experience during executive coaching. This ongoing process with the coaches ensured there was coherency in the delivery of the coaching approach.

Research Design

For logistical reasons, the year long program was rolled out over two years, with the first round of leaders commencing the program in 2004, and the second round in 2005. Leaders were randomly allocated to either the 2004 round or the 2005 round. The 2004 leaders provided data for Study One (presented in Chapter 4); the 2005 leaders provided data for Study Two (refer to Chapter 5); and a subset of both 2004 and 2005 leaders participated in Study Three (refer to Chapter 6).

Study One examined the effects of executive coaching on participants' psychological states. This study was based on self report data as it was concerned with the effects of the intervention on participants' beliefs, affect, and cognition. This was the most suitable method for collecting such data, but there are some disadvantages to relying on the self report approach. Cook and Campbell (1979) have pointed out that subjects tend to report what they believe the researcher expects, or report what reflects positively on their own abilities, knowledge, beliefs, or opinions. Poor recall is another commonly cited problem with self reported data (Schacter, 1999), though this is minimised with this study as the data collection occurs at various times throughout the intervention decreasing the participants' need to remember past events. Much management research relies on self report, though the reliability of self reported data can be tenuous (Ticehurst et al., 1999).

Study Two was designed to assess behavioural outcomes by measuring whether executive coaching improved transformational leadership behaviour. Data were collected from leaders', their supervisors and team members to provide valuable non-self report information about change in leader behaviour. In particular, the leader's team members', who work closely with the leader, were expected to provide useful information about changes in leader behaviour. To provide further value, data was collected from at least five team members for each leader to increase the reliability of the responses by gaining multiple perspectives on the change in leader behaviour (Atkins & Wood, 2002b).

A classical experimental design was adopted to isolate the impact of executive coaching from other developmental interventions used during the leadership program, and hence make causal inferences (Ticehurst et al., 1999). This is a difficult design to implement in management research settings (Ticehurst et al., 1999), however, this research has been able to do so in an applied setting which represents a strength of this research program. The true experimental design was planned so there was random assignment of participants to experimental (referred to as a 'training' group within this study) and control groups, using a pre-test and a post-test (Neuman, 2003; Zikmund, 2003). With random assignment it is generally accepted that the history, maturation, testing and instrumentation effects have been controlled, because what happened to the experimental group also happened to the control group (Sekaran, 2000; Zikmund, 2003). Usually with this type of design, the only difference between the two groups is that the experimental group is exposed to the treatment, whereas the control group does not receive it (Nardi, 2003; Sekaran, 2000). However, as this research was conducted in an applied setting, the executive

coaching was delivered to both the training (i.e. the experimental) and control groups (at different times) because it was inappropriate given the leadership development setting, to exclude the control group from the executive coaching. This did not impact on the integrity of the design though, because the intervention for the control group did not occur until after the training group had completed executive coaching and post-test data for both groups had been collected. In fact, the delivery of executive coaching to both groups represented an additional strength in the research because it enabled a longitudinal investigation using the combined larger sample (where the control group became the second experimental group after receiving executive coaching) examining the impact of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour.

Whilst this design has much strength, mortality can be a problem in experiments that span an extended period of time where skill development is an intended outcome (Sekaran, 2000). Some participants may drop out and it is possible that those who do drop out, are in some way different from those who stay on until the end and take the post-test, meaning that mortality could offer a rival explanation for the difference between the pre-and post-tests (Sekaran, 2000). Campbell and Stanley (1966) conclude though that in true experimental research, if there are systematic differences in the dependent variables associated with levels of the independent variable, these differences are attributed to the independent variable when participants are randomly assigned, and all other influential factors are controlled. It is therefore commonly accepted in random assignment, when measuring the net effects, contaminating factors have been controlled for (Sekaran, 2000). With this research program, however it is important to acknowledge that

despite random assignment, given the small sample size it was impossible to control for factors like age, experience and responsibilities. Therefore, the data was also analysed to identify pre-existing differences between the training and control groups to reduce the risk of such shortcomings.

Study One and Study Two also provided longitudinal data through a one group pre-test – post-test design (Nardi, 2003; Zikmund, 2003). The main strength of longitudinal research is the capacity it offers to study change and development (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003; Ticehurst et al., 1999). This approach was adopted to answer the question, are changes in leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour sustained over time. Owing to the previously discussed limitations in sample size in this study, the combined sample (i.e. training and control group, after the control group received executive coaching) provided greater statistical power for this investigation. This of course, is offset by the fact that the one group pre-test – post-test design has some identified weaknesses that may jeopardise internal validity which a true experimental design overcomes. Common threats to internal validity though that exist with a pre-test and post-test experimental design are minimised in this research program because within each study there were originally training and control groups. Thus, testing effects where pre-tests given only to experimental (training) groups can sensitise participants and potentially influence their responses to the post-test, have been nullified in this research program because participants in both groups (i.e. training and control) received the pre-test questionnaire (Sekaran, 2000). Minimising further threat to internal validity, the subsequent post-tests were identical tests, eliminating instrumentation effects (Sekaran, 2000; Zikmund, 2003). Thus, it would be difficult

to sustain that testing effects threatened internal validity within this analysis. However, there could be other factors that the leaders were exposed to during the leadership development program, including the influence of experience gained over time, that contributed to the difference between pre-and post-test scores (Sekaran, 2000). Therefore, whilst this research design does present some limitations, it provided a measure of the dependent variables both before and after the intervention, it is frequently used in business research (Neuman, 2003; Ticehurst et al., 1999; Zikmund, 2003), and offered the best opportunity under the research conditions to measure whether executive coaching produced changes in leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour over time.

Study Three was designed to provide rich qualitative data to add depth to the quantitative information obtained in Study One and Study Two. The aim of Study Three was to gain a better understanding of how executive coaching works by examining the psychological variables, identifying behavioural outcomes and analysing whether the contextual environment impacted on the effectiveness of executive coaching. Johns (2001) says that qualitative data enables greater understanding of context. Given the purpose of this research was to increase knowledge about executive coaching in its natural setting, a qualitative method offered an ideal approach to reach this outcome (Nardi, 2003). Within Study Three, a subset of leaders from both Study One and Study Two participated. Working with a smaller number of leaders provided the opportunity to collect a manageable amount of qualitative data from the leader, their supervisor, two of their team members, and their executive coach. In total, forty interviews were conducted.

Research Analyses

The data for this research program were investigated using a variety of approaches. Studies One and Two used a combination of t-tests and ANOVAs to test the differences between groups and over time in SPSS version 13.0. Study Three consisted of qualitative interviews which were coded with NVivo 2.0 qualitative software

Independent groups and paired samples t-tests were utilised because they are regarded as the most suitable statistic for comparing means between two groups, particularly when the sample size is small (Nardi, 2003; Zikmund, 2003). A 2x2 mixed factorial ANOVA with a pre-post test design was also used because it is a common and powerful approach (Keppel & Wickens, 2004) which suited the studies. All participants were given a pre-test and a post-test, and these two measures together served as a within-subjects factor test. Within these studies, participants were divided into two groups. One group was the focus of the analysis (i.e. the training group) and one group was the base line (i.e. control) group. The aim with the pre-test, post-test design is that the experimental (i.e. training) group's post-test score changes appropriately after the intervention (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Ideally the pre-test scores for both groups will be equivalent; however, the post-test score difference between the experimental and control group will be significant and attributed to the intervention (Tabachnick et al., 2001).

In addition, for both Study One and Two, a repeated measures ANOVA was used. It is appropriate to use a repeated measures design when monitoring changes that occur over time with repeated exposure to the intervention (Sekaran, 2000;

Tabachnick et al., 2001; Zikmund, 2003), as was the case in these studies. With this approach, the results then indicate whether the means of the various groups are significantly different from one another (Sekaran, 2000). In these studies, the post-hoc analyses were interpreted with a Sidak adjustment to control for Type 1 error (Castaneda, Levin, & Dunham, 1993; Keppel et al., 2004; Klockars & Hancock, 1998).

Owing to the small sample size and the exploratory nature of this research, an alpha level of $p < .10$ was adopted for interpreting the results from Study One and Study Two. This criterion for statistical significance is deemed acceptable under such circumstances (Nardi, 2003) and is often used with small sample sizes (e.g. Jones et al., 2006; Kampa-Kokesch, 2001).

Study Three consisted of qualitative interviews which were taped, transcribed and coded with NVivo 2.0 qualitative software. Nvivo software provided an ideal platform for this data analysis because it is a flexible tool suitable for rich interview data (Richards, 1999). NVivo also offered the capacity to link ideas, search and explore the patterns of data, and in doing this, provided the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of study participants (Bazeley & Richards, 2000).

Conclusion

This research program examines the burgeoning area of executive coaching. It consists of three studies designed to capitalise on the value gained from utilising multiple methods of data collection. The purpose of the research program was to gather evidence about the psychological (self-efficacy, developmental support,

positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning) and behavioural (transformational leadership) effects of executive coaching on leader behaviour. The research was conducted in a large public sector organisation with approximately 1900 employees which implemented executive coaching as part of a year long leadership training program for senior managers. Of the sixty-seven leaders enrolled in the leadership program, fifty leaders chose to participate in executive coaching. So that the effects of executive coaching could be distinguished from the effects of the other elements of the program, the leaders were randomly assigned to training and control groups resulting in an experimental design. A range of statistical analyses were conducted during the research program including, independent and paired sample t-tests, a 2x2 mixed factorial ANOVA and a repeated measures ANOVA. The qualitative data was analysed through Nvivo. Together, the research provides powerful statistical examinations of the impact of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and leader behaviour and also collects rich in-depth data to further understanding of this new trend.

CHAPTER FOUR

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STUDY ONE

Introduction

Study One investigated the effect of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states. Twenty-three leaders participating in this study were randomly allocated to one of two groups, and within these groups, leaders were also randomly allocated to one of the five trained coaches involved in Study One. The first group of leaders began executive coaching immediately, whereas the second group of leaders served as a control group and did not commence executive coaching until after the first group had completed coaching. This delayed roll-out meant that it was possible to distinguish the effects of executive coaching from the effects of 360 degree feedback and the two day training workshop, and therefore compare the two groups to establish whether executive coaching had an impact on leaders' psychological states. Further, to assess the extent to which the effects on leaders' psychological states were sustained, the pattern of change over time was examined, comparing the measures at three time points. This is a valuable aspect of the study design as Bush

(2004) says there is currently a lack of longitudinal studies to show whether the gains from coaching increase, or are maintained over time.

This chapter outlines the first study and describes the method and findings from the study. This is followed with a discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions of the research. The chapter concludes by suggesting avenues for future investigation.

Hypotheses

This study empirically tests the outcomes of executive coaching on the psychological states that were identified in Chapter 2 as important effects for executive coaching. **Self-efficacy** has been shown to be an important predictor of behavioural learning in training situations (Bandura, 1977; Wood & Bandura, 1989) and affects performance (Locke & Latham, 1990b). Executive coaching should influence self-efficacy because learning in coaching is mostly achieved through ongoing performance, where performance goals are broken down into small achievable steps so the leader can achieve mastery and experience success. It is expected therefore that executive coaching will increase leader self-efficacy through supporting performance accomplishments and providing feedback (Popper & Lipshitz, 1992).

Similarly, the experience of **developmental support** in the work environment has been shown to be associated with improved transfer of learning (Burke & Baldwin, 1996; Cromwell & Kolb, 2004; Pidd, 2004). Developmental support is offered to the leaders through coaching, whereby the coach is committed

to the leader's success and demonstrates this by expressing confidence in the leader's ability to reach his or her goals whilst holding the leader to his or her commitments (Thach, 2002). It is predicted that executive coaching will therefore increase the leader's experience of developmental support by being encouraged towards, and held accountable for personal development.

Although **positive affect** has not been tested as a mediator of training outcomes, there is nevertheless much evidence showing that the experience of positive affect tends to be associated with higher performance and effectiveness (Castro et al., 2003; George, 1991; Williams et al., 1999). Additionally, there is also evidence in the literature to suggest that executive coaching will have an impact on participant's positive affect, demonstrated through favourable reactions to the executive coaching process and performance achievements (Andriopoulos, 2001; Erez et al., 2002; Isen et al., 1987; Smither et al., 2003). Thus, it is argued that the experiences throughout the coaching relationship will positively influence positive affect.

Openness to new behaviours was examined as exploring new ways of using transformational leadership behaviours in the workplace, and tends to be associated with a focus on continual improvement and innovation (Howell et al., 1993; Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003). Executive coaching centres on encouraging the leader to search for alternatives and trial new behaviours, rather than continuing to do more of what has been done in the past. In addition, after achieving small successes and receiving feedback from the coach, the leader should become more open to identifying a range of new behaviour options (Kampa-Kokesch et al., 2001; Kilburg, 1996; Wakefield, 2006). Given that executive coaching is tailored to the individual

needs of the leader, rather than a more generalist approach to development like that offered by many training programs, organisational members can specifically focus their developmental efforts on considering new behaviours that will benefit their work and professional development. Therefore, in the executive coaching relationship it is expected that one of the ways in which executive coaching has effects is by increasing the leader's openness to experiment with new behaviours.

Finally, goal setting, though not a psychological state, is known to bring about behavioural change (Locke & Latham, 1984; 1990a; Seijts, Latham, Tasa, & Latham, 2004), and in the executive coaching relationship it is a technique used to enhance leaders' approach to **developmental planning**. During the executive coaching program, leaders will work with their coach to set developmental goals, identify sources of feedback in the work environment, and develop an action plan. These are central components of executive coaching and developing effective approaches to these activities are seen as crucial elements of the executive coaching process. It is predicted that leaders then experience greater clarity about their developmental goals and how they plan to achieve their goals, and this therefore is the mechanism through which executive coaching should affect developmental planning outcomes.

Based on the arguments outlined above, Study One was designed to test the hypothesis that:

H1: Leaders in the training group who participated in executive coaching would experience greater self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning, when compared with leaders in the control group who had not yet participated in executive coaching.

One of the challenges for developmental interventions is to maintain effects once the intervention is over. Executive coaching has characteristics that should contribute to long-term change; first it represents an ongoing intervention, which previous research has identified as important in bringing about sustained change (Falk, 2003). Second, some of the techniques employed in executive coaching are designed to be adopted by the leader once the intervention has ceased. For example, executive coaching attempts to change the way the leader thinks about developmental planning. When coaching finishes, leaders are encouraged to identify other developmental opportunities and approach them in a similar manner which involves developing an action plan setting out goals, achievement dates and rewards. Additionally, the leader is encouraged to extend their existing individualised action plan prepared during the executive coaching process and continue to use it for development once the coaching relationship has finished. Finally, during the coaching process the leader is encouraged to acknowledge the successes that have been achieved. It is anticipated that this recognition of success would serve as a motivational tool to the leader increasing his or her confidence to pursue new

behaviours and persist with ongoing development once the coaching relationship has been disbanded.

This research program will therefore examine whether there is a continued psychological impact from executive coaching six months after the leaders have completed their final executive coaching session. This time frame provides a sufficient opportunity for the leaders to adopt (or not) executive coaching techniques into their work environment.

Therefore, it was further hypothesised that:

H2: Leaders who participated in executive coaching would show an increase in self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning from prior to commencing executive coaching to after completing six executive coaching sessions, and that this increase would continue to be sustained six months after completing executive coaching.

Method

Sample

Executive coaching was a voluntary option presented to leaders who were participating in a year long transformational leadership development program. Leaders were given the opportunity to participate in executive coaching after they had received their 360 degree feedback and attended a two day transformational leadership workshop. Nine of the thirty-two leaders in the program chose not to take

part in executive coaching and are not represented in this study. Study One participants, therefore, consisted of twenty-three senior level managers. The group consisted of eighteen males and five females, ranging in age from 33 years to 59 years, with the majority of participants aged 41 years or above (twenty-two leaders). Participants had been working in their current roles for between one year and fifteen years, with an average continuous tenure of two years (27.3%). The participants were highly educated, approximately 30% (six participants) were PhD qualified, six participants held a Masters qualification, five were educated to Graduate Certificate/Diploma level, two participants held degrees, one held a diploma and three participants had a certificate level of education.

Procedure

All leaders received 360 degree feedback and then participated in the two day leadership workshop designed to help them interpret their 360 degree feedback and provide an introduction to the transformational leadership model. At this time, leaders were also offered executive coaching. Leaders who took up this offer were randomly allocated to an experimental group (called the training group) and a control group, resulting in an experimental design. The twelve leaders in the training group were randomly assigned to one of five trained executive coaches and commenced coaching immediately after receiving 360 degree feedback. The eleven leaders in the control group did not commence executive coaching until approximately twelve weeks later, when the first group had completed coaching. These leaders were also randomly assigned to the coaches.

Leaders had a one hour session with their coach each fortnight (six sessions in total) and a follow-up with their coach six months later. The focus of the executive coaching was on developing leaders' transformational leadership behaviours as identified in the 360 degree feedback reports. Detailed information on the executive coaching sessions is found in Chapter 3.

Data were gathered throughout the coaching program. The collection periods are graphically presented in *Figure 4.1*, on page 98. Leaders' psychological states were assessed through a self report questionnaire containing measures of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning. The questionnaire items were completed by each leader (in the training and control groups) at least three times. Apart from the collection of the first set of pre-coaching measures (detailed below), the leader's coach administered the data collection by sending the leaders' questionnaires via email at the specified times. The leader could either return their completed questionnaires to their coach (who then returned the questionnaires to the researcher) or fax the completed questionnaires directly to the researcher. The leaders provided their name and other particulars (detailed in 'demographic information' below) in each questionnaire completed for this research program, which enabled matching of the questionnaires over time. This information also allowed the researcher to contact leaders and follow-up when questionnaires were not returned.

The pre-coaching measures were obtained from both groups via a self report questionnaire completed at the end of the two day leadership workshop and prior to commencing executive coaching (wave 1). No difference between the groups was expected for the pre-test effect. However, because the control group did not start

executive coaching until the training group finished their six executive coaching sessions (approximately twelve weeks later), these leaders completed an additional set of pre-coaching measures (wave 2) sent via an email from their coach just prior to commencing their first executive coaching session. Control group leaders then returned the completed wave 2 data to their coach at the beginning of their first session. Thus, there were two sets of “pre-coaching” measures for the control group leaders; these measures were also used for the post-coaching training and control group comparison (wave 2). At the same point in time (wave 2), data were collected from the training group as this represented the period when the training group had completed six executive coaching sessions, but was immediately prior to the control group commencing executive coaching. Wave 2 was therefore a critical data collection stage as it provided the basis for comparison between the training and control groups. It represented the time point at which the training group had experienced the effects of executive coaching, whereas the control group had not. The control group also provided data when they had completed six executive coaching sessions, and this is identified as wave 3 (no data were collected from the training group at this point in time). The final measures were obtained six months after the leaders’ sixth coaching session, when leaders checked in with their coaches. This is identified as wave 4 for the training group and wave 5 for the control group. These three data collection points: pre-coaching (wave 1 for the training group, and wave 2 for the control group); after six coaching sessions (wave 2 for the training group, and wave 3 for the control group); and six months after the completion of coaching (wave 4 for the training group, and wave 5 for the control group) were used to investigate the long-term impact of executive coaching. Graphically, the data collection stages are presented in *Figure 4.1*, on page 98.

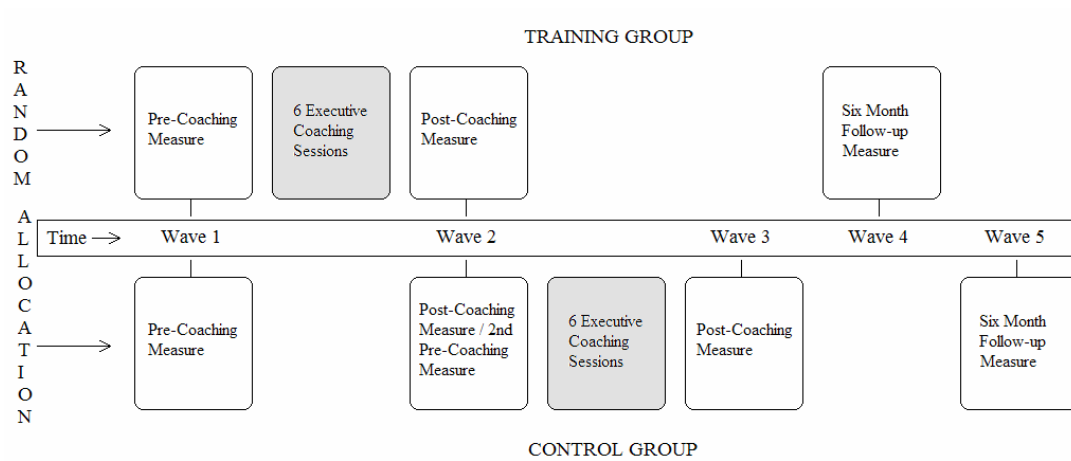


Figure 4.1. Psychological Measures – Major Data Collection Stages.

Measures

Demographic information

Demographic information was collected from the leaders through the 360 degree feedback questionnaire. This data included the participants’ name, gender, age, section of the organisation the leader was responsible for, number of people within this section, organisational classification of the leader’s current role, length of continuous tenure in the current role, and highest level of education completed. Additionally, leaders provided their name, and section of the organisation they were responsible for in each questionnaire completed for this research program, which enabled matching of the questionnaires over time.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was measured with the transformational leadership self-efficacy scale developed by Mason, Parker and Griffin (2005). This eleven item scale assessed the leader’s confidence that he or she could perform transactional and transformational leader behaviours. The authors reported an internal reliability

above .90 for this measure, and found that it correlated with both self and team members' ratings of the leader's transformational leadership. A sample item was "How certain are you that you can get your team to consistently perform above what is typical?" These items were measured on a scale ranging from 0 'Totally Uncertain' to 10 'Totally Certain' (converted to a scale of 1-5 for the analyses).

Developmental support

Developmental support was measured with five positively worded items, developed specifically for this study. This scale was designed to measure the amount of support the leader perceived was available during the developmental process. In line with the definition of support adopted for this research, this measure also assessed whether the leader felt accountable for reaching their goals. An example item was "I feel supported in my development efforts". This variable was measured on a 5 point Likert scale where 1 represented 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 represented 'Strongly Agree'.

Positive affect

Positive affect was measured using Mason et al.'s (2005) positive affect scale. This scale was used because it was included in the organisation's staff survey measures and the organisation wanted to keep its measures consistent. Mason et al.'s (2005) positive affect scale has been previously found to have an acceptable internal reliability of .75. This five item positively worded scale measures positive affect as a state. State positive affect changes in response to events and experiences as it asks participants to relate experiences to a given time period and situation (Clark et al., 1988). In the scale, respondents were asked to report how often they had felt, for

example, “energised” at work over the past month. These items were measured on a 5 point Likert scale where 1 represented ‘Not at All’ and 5 represented ‘All the Time’.

Openness to new behaviours

Openness to new behaviours was measured with four positively worded items, developed for this study. Based on the definition of the construct, the items were designed to assess the extent to which leaders examined their current approaches to managing their team and searched for alternative ways of behaving. These items were reviewed by three subject matter experts to ensure they were consistent with the construct. A sample item is “I explore alternative ways of behaving with my team”. This variable was also measured on a 5 point Likert scale where 1 represented ‘Strongly Disagree’ and 5 ‘Strongly Agree’.

Developmental planning

The measure assessing leaders’ developmental planning was also specifically designed and reviewed by subject matter experts for this study. The items measured leaders’ perceptions that they had specific and challenging developmental goals, for which they could identify a source of feedback. The scale consisted of five positively worded items, a sample item being “My developmental goals identify specific behaviours that I am trying to improve”. These items were measured on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 5 ‘Strongly Agree’.

The full questionnaire is presented in Appendix 1.

Results

The small sample size ($n=23$) meant that it was not possible to test the factor structure of all study measures together because, in total there were more items than participants. Even when limited to the measures developed specifically for this study, there were still insufficient participants to conduct a factor analysis. Despite this, these new measures were factor analysed together as a check of their factor structure and discriminant validity. A principle components analysis was used to identify the number of factors in the data to examine whether related items loaded together. The maximum number of eigenvalues larger than 1 was nine, however retention of nine factors is reported as being difficult to deal with, so sharp breaks in the size of eigenvalues were identified using the scree test (Tabachnick et al., 2001). The scree plot suggested between three to five factors. Three and five factor solutions were tested to investigate which best fitted the structure of the items. Maximum likelihood factor extraction and principle axis factor extraction were both run to clarify the structure of the data. Using principle axis factor extraction, one item factored on its own a problem which can happen in unstable covariance matrices occurring in small samples, such as in this study. Three factors were extracted using maximum likelihood factor extraction presenting three well defined, readily interpretable factors. This structure was adopted because it matched the intended structure of the items in the study and made the results theoretically more interpretable.

The results supported the expected three scales; namely developmental support, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning in that all items loaded significantly on their intended factors and there were no cross-loadings above

.24. Thus, the new study measures loaded onto their intended factors. The pattern matrix is presented in Table 4.1, below. Items with factor loadings lower than .3 were suppressed and are not presented in the table.

Table 4.1
Pattern Matrix

Item	Factor		
	1	2	3
I feel supported in my development efforts	.920		
I am encouraged to develop my leadership skills	.825		
I have enough support to achieve my development goals	.714		
I feel accountable for carrying out my development goals	.640		
I have a source of feedback form which I can determine whether I am achieving my goals	.460		
I step back and consider different approaches to running my team		-.922	
I try out new ways of managing my team		-.899	
I try out different ways of communicating with my team		-.838	
I explore alternate ways of behaving with my team		-.632	
I have identified specific steps towards achieving my development goals			.956
I have an action plan for reaching my development goals			.827
My development goals identify specific behaviours that I am trying to improve			.655
I know how I will evaluate my development on an on-going basis			.453
I know what information I will use to determine whether I am achieving my development goals			.303

The descriptive statistics and correlations among the full set of study measures are reported in Table 4.2, on page 103. Examination of the diagonal elements of Table 4.2 demonstrates that all of the study measures showed good internal reliability prior to executive coaching, with alpha coefficients above .80. The correlations reported in this table also support the discriminant validity of the study measures in that correlations were only moderately strong. A significant positive relationship was demonstrated between support and the following variables: positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. This indicates that when leaders feel supported they also experience increased enthusiasm

for the organisation, are more open to trying out new behaviours and have positive perceptions towards developmental planning. There was also a significant positive relationship between leaders' self-efficacy and developmental planning, indicating that when leaders' felt more confident, they also had greater clarity about their developmental plans.

Table 4.2
Pre-Coaching Psychological Measures – Training and Control Groups^a (Wave 1)
Correlations and Alpha Coefficients

Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5
1 Self-efficacy	3.87	.50	(α .91)				
2 Developmental Support	4.07	.56	.36	(α .84)			
3 Positive Affect	3.48	.62	.35	.50*	(α .85)		
4 Openness to New Behaviours	3.82	.72	.08	.38 [†]	.28	(α .90)	
5 Developmental Planning	3.73	.77	.42 [†]	.38 [†]	.30	.32	(α .83)

^a n=22.¹

[†] $p < .10$

* $p < .05$

Two tailed tests.

Before testing the first hypothesis, it was first necessary to determine whether the leaders who chose to participate in executive coaching (n=23) differed from the leaders who elected not to participate (n=9). Using the pre-coaching data collected at the end of the two day workshop, an independent groups t-test demonstrated non significant results on all of the measures, indicating that both groups of leaders (i.e.

¹ One leader did not provide data for wave 1

those who volunteered for executive coaching and those who did not) were essentially the same in terms of the psychological measures. Given the differing sample sizes for this analysis (twenty-three leaders compared against nine leaders), as expected, the Levene's test for the equality of variance did show significant variances in the two samples for the majority of measures. Thus, to take a conservative approach with all measures, the equal variances not assumed statistics are reported (Francis, 2004). The results were as follows: self-efficacy, $t(9.65) = .85, p > .10$; developmental support, $t(10.95) = 1.7, p > .10$; positive affect, $t(10.18) = 1.3, p > .10$; openness to new behaviours, $t(10.66) = 1.3, p > .10$; developmental planning, $t(11.03) = 1.1, p > .10$.

The Effect of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures

Hypothesis one predicted that the training and control groups would differ in their level of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning after the training group had completed executive coaching and prior to the control group commencing executive coaching (wave 2). Table 4.3, on page 105, presents the descriptive statistics for the training and control groups at wave 1 and wave 2. There was some attrition after the commencement of the coaching program (further discussed in the limitations section), which accounts for the reduced sample size. Confidence intervals of 90% are also presented for the means, representing the interval computed from the sample data which, were the study repeated multiple times, would contain the true effect 90% of the time (Zikmund, 2003). A narrow confidence interval, as reported, implies high precision and indicates a fairly precise estimate of the mean effect,

whereas a very wide interval may indicate that more data should be collected before anything very definite can be said about the parameter (Sekaran, 2000).

Table 4.3
Descriptive Statistics on the Psychological Measures – Training^a and Control^b Groups

Variable	Training group Pre-coaching (Wave 1)		90 % Confidence Interval		Control group Pre-coaching (Wave 1)		90 % Confidence Interval		Training group after six coaching sessions (Wave 2)		90 % Confidence Interval		Control group Pre-coaching (Wave 2)		90 % Confidence Interval	
	Mean	s.d.	Lower	Upper	Mean	s.d.	Lower	Upper	Mean	s.d.	Lower	Upper	Mean	s.d.	Lower	Upper
Self-efficacy	4.02	.55	3.72	4.31	4.02	.36	3.77	4.27	4.17	.39	3.87	4.48	3.70	.50	3.44	3.95
Developmental Support	4.23	.53	3.85	4.61	4.08	.61	3.76	4.40	4.29	.70	3.84	4.73	3.56	.65	3.19	3.93
Positive Affect	3.43	.58	2.98	3.89	3.58	.75	3.20	3.96	3.57	.62	3.12	4.02	3.45	.71	3.08	3.83
Openness to New Behaviours	4.04	.70	3.58	4.49	3.77	.68	3.38	4.15	4.32	.66	3.92	4.72	3.55	.56	3.22	3.88
Developmental Planning	3.62	1.10	3.05	4.20	3.80	.65	3.32	4.28	4.51	.47	4.10	4.93	3.16	.71	2.81	3.51

^a n=7.
^b n=10.

This hypothesis was tested using a 2 (group) x 2 (time) mixed factorial ANOVA with wave 1 data from the training and control groups providing the pre-coaching measure before either group had commenced executive coaching (i.e. collected at the end of the two day workshop). The post-coaching measure was collected from wave 2 data for the training and control groups. This represented the point in time where the training group had completed six executive coaching sessions, but was prior to the control group commencing executive coaching. This analysis therefore compared the training and control groups at the same points in time, before both groups commenced executive coaching, and then after the training group had completed executive coaching but immediately before the control group commenced executive coaching. The results are presented in Table 4.4, on page 106.

Table 4.4
Mixed Factorial ANOVA comparing Wave 1 and Wave 2 – Training^a and Control^b Groups

Variable	Time <i>F</i> (1,15)	Group <i>F</i> (1,15)	Group by Time <i>F</i> (1,15)
Self-efficacy	1.08	1.29	9.15**
Developmental Support	3.05(<i>p</i> = .101)	2.45	4.75*
Positive Affect	.00	.00	.95
Openness to New Behaviours	.06	3.29 [†]	3.23 [†]
Developmental Planning	.31	3.97 [†]	11.39**

^a *n*=7.

^b *n*=10.

[†] *p* < .10

* *p* < .05

** *p* < .01

In line with the hypothesis, the analysis revealed a significant group by time interaction for four of the five psychological measures (refer Table 4.4, above). However, as is depicted in *Figure 4.2* to *Figure 4.6*, on pages 107 to 109, where the training and control groups are compared after the training group received executive coaching, but prior to the control group commencing executive coaching, the interaction was not as predicted. The graphs show that the stronger effect was in fact a *decrease* on the study measures for the control group, rather than the anticipated increase from wave 1 to wave 2 for the training group. A Pairwise comparison carried out as a post-hoc analysis demonstrated that the training group had increased from wave 1 to wave 2 only on the measure of developmental planning, mean difference .89, *p* < .05. The most consistent pattern of change was a decrease from wave 1 to wave 2 for the control group shown on the measures of self-efficacy, mean

difference $-0.32, p < .01$, developmental support, mean difference $-0.52, p < .01$, and developmental planning mean difference $-0.64, p < .05$. Openness to new behaviours was significant in the test of within subject effects where there was greater power however, significant effects were not detected in the post-hoc analyses, limiting the amount of information reported for this measure. Positive affect demonstrated no difference for the training group, mean difference $.14, p > .10$, or the control group, mean difference, $-.13, p > .10$.

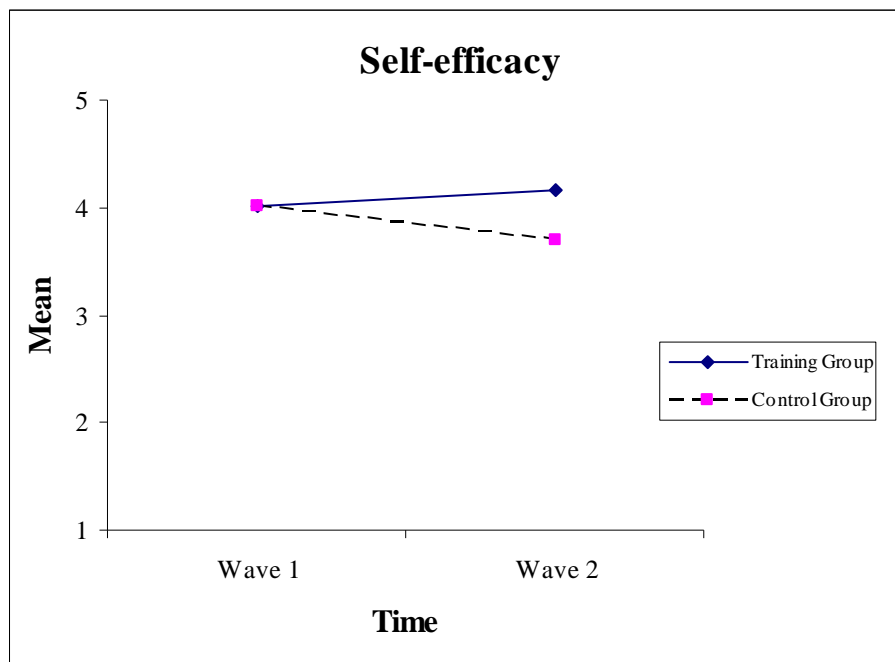


Figure 4.2. Comparing the Training and Control Groups before and after the Training Group received Executive Coaching – Self-efficacy.

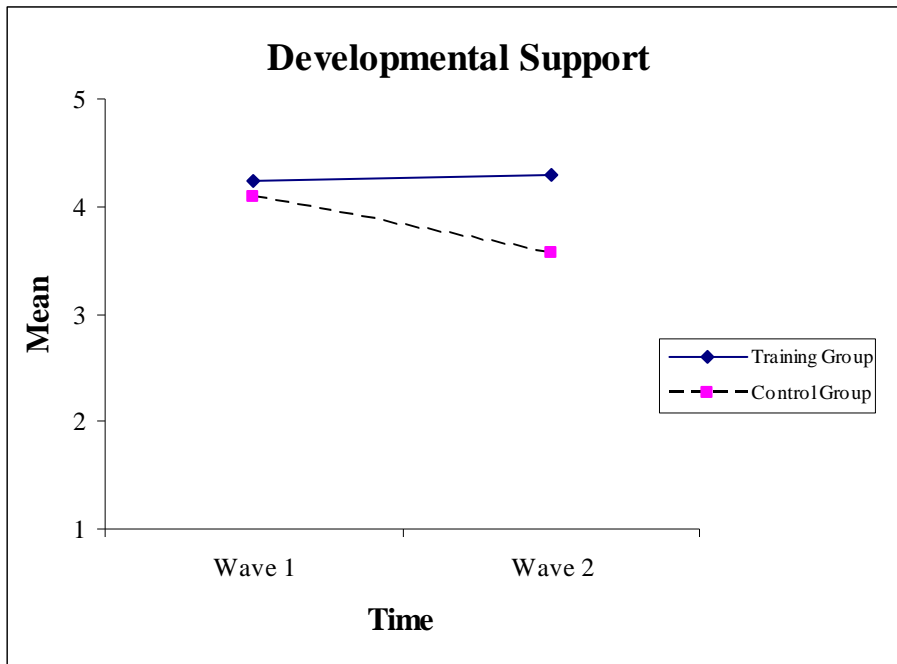


Figure 4.3. Comparing the Training and Control Groups before and after the Training Group received Executive Coaching – Developmental Support.

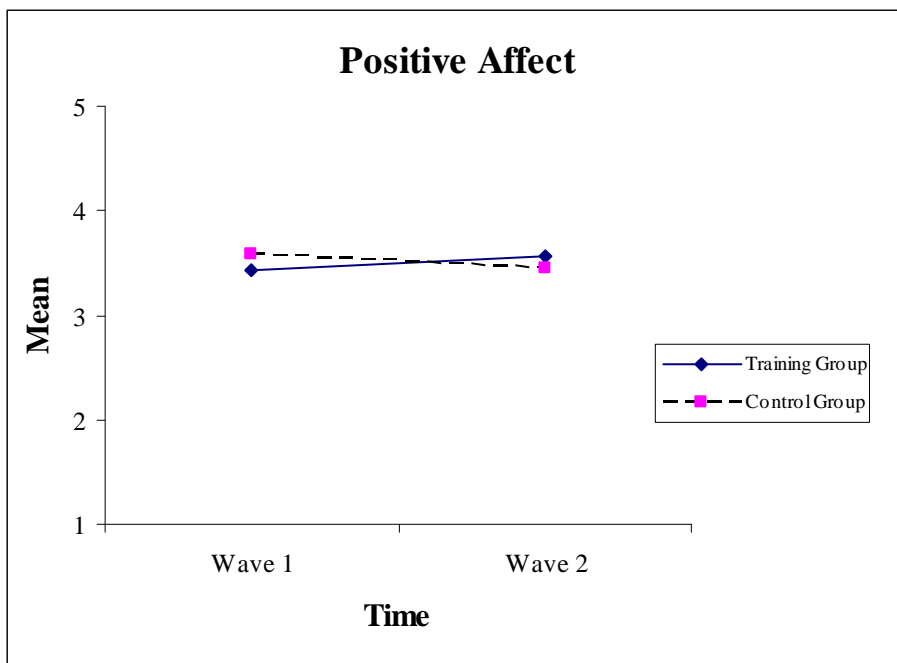


Figure 4.4. Comparing the Training and Control Groups before and after the Training Group received Executive Coaching – Positive Affect.

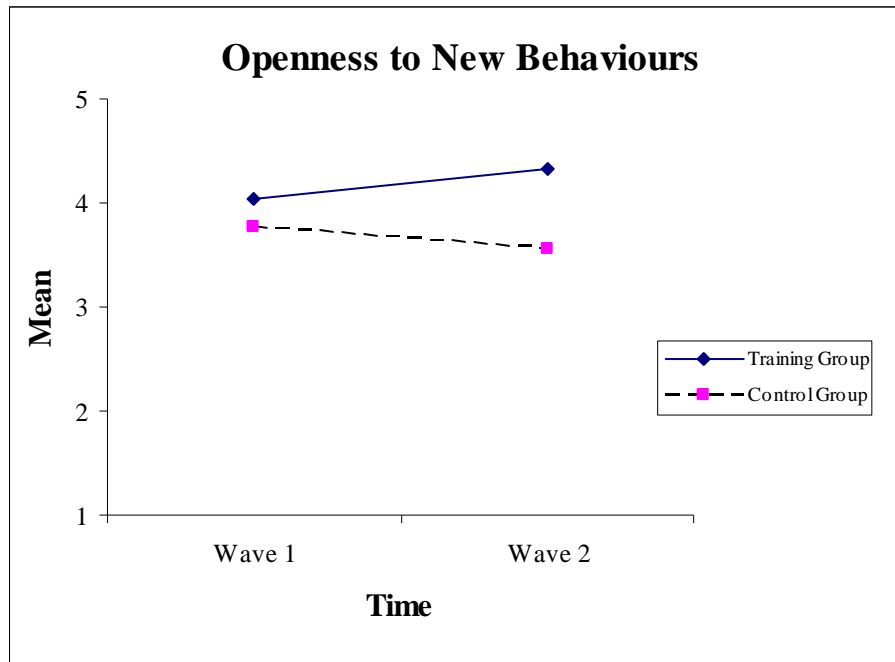


Figure 4.5. Comparing the Training and Control Groups before and after the Training Group received Executive Coaching – Openness to New Behaviours.

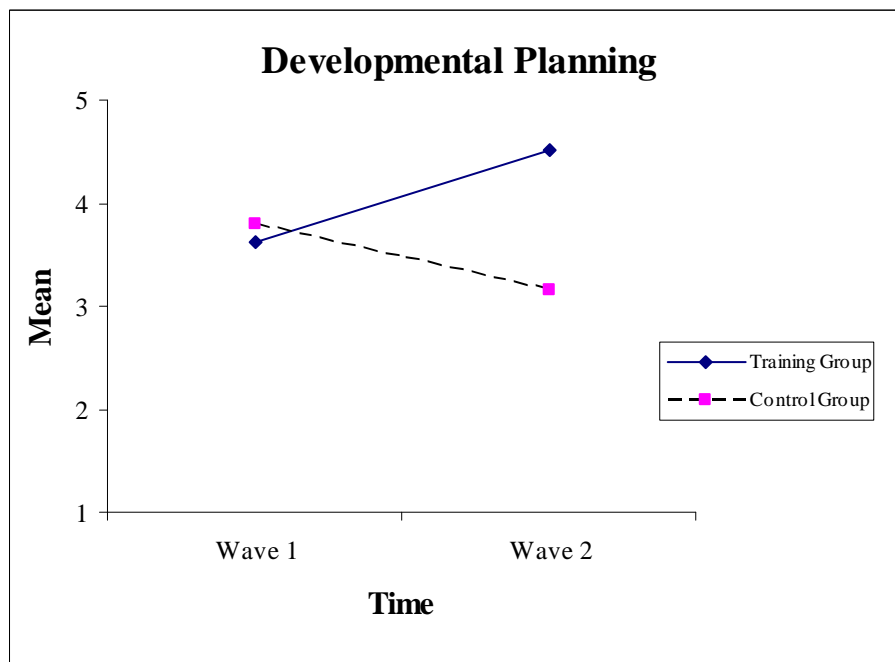


Figure 4.6. Comparing the Training and Control Groups before and after the Training Group received Executive Coaching – Developmental Planning.

Thus far, the results reported above have relied upon interpreting the p value. Given the unexpected outcomes, it is worth considering an alternative way of understanding this data. Denis (2003) suggests that the most commonly recommended alternative to p values is to determine the magnitude of effect by calculating the effect size. The use of effect sizes in social science research is frequently recommended in the literature as a complement to significance testing, e.g. Vaughan and Corballis, 1969; Huberty, 1987; Rosenthal, 1992 (cited in Denis, 2003). An effect size analysis compares the mean of the experimental (training) group with the mean of the control group and states the probability that the phenomenon is present in the population (Cohen, 1988). The larger the value, the greater the probability that the intervention has had an effect. In a repeated measure experimental design the training group mean will be the post-test score, but any of the other three means can be used as the control group mean (Wilson, Becker, & Tinker, 1995). For example, the training group post-test score could be compared with its own pre-test score, with the pre-test score of the control group, or with the second testing of the untreated control group (Wilson et al., 1995). It is generally suggested that Cohen's d is calculated by comparing the experimental group's post-test scores with the second testing of the untreated control group (in this case wave 2 for the training group with wave 2 for the control group) because measures taken at the same time would be less likely to be subject to history artefacts, and because any regression to the mean from time 1 to time 2 would tend to make that test more conservative (Wilson et al., 1995). In line with this suggestion, Cohen's d has been calculated for this sample comparing the mean of the training group's post-test scores (wave 2) with the post-test mean scores of the control group (wave 2), thus calculating the effect size for the psychological measures at the same point in time.

Table 4.5, below, presents these results which demonstrate large effect sizes for all psychological measures except positive affect (Cohen, 1988).

However, given the unexpected pattern where the most significant change has been a decrease in the control group scores at wave 2, another calculation of Cohen's d was computed using the means and standard deviations from the pre-coaching training group (wave 1) and the post-coaching training group (wave 2). For this calculation, it is important to use the original mean and standard deviations rather than the within subjects F value because of the likelihood of overestimation of the actual effect size (Dunlop, Cortina, Vaslow, & Burke, 1996). The results are reported in Table 4.5 and suggest quite different outcomes from those calculated when using the training and control group data, although the effects are all in the predicted direction. Small effect sizes are reported for all psychological measures except developmental planning, which is a large effect size.

Table 4.5
Measuring Effect Sizes for the Psychological Variables with Cohen's d

Variable	Training group & Control group Wave 2 (post-test)	Training Group Wave 1 and Wave 2
Self-efficacy	$d = 1.05$	$d = 0.31$
Developmental Support	$d = 1.08$	$d = 0.10$
Positive Affect	$d = 0.18$	$d = 0.23$
Openness to New Behaviours	$d = 1.26$	$d = 0.41$
Developmental Planning	$d = 2.24$	$d = 1.05$

Cohen's d small = 0.2; medium = 0.5; large = 0.8.

The Effect of Executive Coaching over time on the Psychological Measures

The second hypothesis predicted an increase in the psychological measures from prior to commencing executive coaching (wave 1 for the training group, and wave 2 for the control group) to after completing six executive coaching sessions (wave 2 for the training group, and wave 3 for the control group²), which would continue to be observed six months after completing executive coaching (wave 4 for the training group, and wave 5 for the control group). This hypothesis was tested using a repeated measures ANOVA. To maximise statistical power, the data from the training and control groups were combined for these analyses. The original sample consisted of twenty-three senior level leaders however, only leaders who had returned all questionnaires for the relevant time periods were able to be included in these analyses. Complete data were only available for thirteen (seven participants from the training group and six participants from the control group) of the original twenty-three executive coaching participants. Some participants failed to attend the follow-up held six months after the end of executive coaching (n=3) and thus have no wave 4/wave 5 data. Some participants withdrew during coaching for various reasons, e.g. illness (n=1) and resignation from the organisation (n=1), and others moved to different sections within the organisation which did not allow the continuation of executive coaching (n=3). A further two participants did not find coaching meeting their professional development needs and did not complete the coaching program.

² As the control group received executive coaching (after the training group had completed coaching), they are the second experimental group for this analysis, however, they will continue to be referred to as the control group to facilitate identification.

The means and standard deviations for each of the five psychological variables are presented in Table 4.6 (training group) and Table 4.7 (control group), on pages 114 and 115. The repeated measures analysis of variance revealed that, as predicted, there was significant change over time in participants' positive affect, $F(2, 24) = 6.09, p < .01$, openness to new behaviours, $F(1.3, 15.2) = 6.88, p < .05$, and developmental planning, $F(1.2, 14.76) = 18.66, p < .001$. However, the change in self-efficacy, $F(1.8, 21.7) = 2.28, p > .10$ and developmental support $F(2, 24) = 2.24, p > .10$ were not significant.

A Pairwise comparison of the post-hoc analyses with a Sidak adjustment for multiple ANOVAs identified the source of the significant overall effects.³ These analyses revealed that the pattern of change varied according to the variable under analysis. For **positive affect**, there was a significant increase from prior to executive coaching (wave 1 – training group, and wave 2 – control group) to after the six month follow-up (wave 4 – training group, and wave 5 – control group), mean difference .55, $p < .05$. **Openness to new behaviours** demonstrated a significant increase pre-coaching (wave 1 – training group, and wave 2 – control group) to after six executive coaching sessions (wave 2 – training group, and wave 3 – control group), mean difference .67, $p < .05$, but no change to the follow-up six months after the last executive coaching session (wave 4 – training group, and wave 5 – control

³ The Sidak adjustment is very similar to the Bonferroni adjustment and is used to control for inflated Type 1 error where a significant result may occur due to chance when multiple tests are conducted (Keppel et al., 2004). The adjustment provides the mean difference in the dependent variable between groups (Castaneda et al., 1993). Bonferroni is the preferred adjustment when the number of groups is small (Francis, 2004), however it has been criticised for being too conservative with not enough power to detect significant differences (Keppel et al., 2004). Thus, the Sidak adjustment was best suited for the multiple analyses undertaken in this research program because it provided the optimum opportunity to detect significant differences when the comparisons are independent (Klockars et al., 1998).

group). The measure of **developmental planning** increased significantly from pre-coaching (wave 1 – training group, and wave 2 – control group) to after six executive coaching sessions (wave 2 – training group, and wave 3 – control group), mean difference 1.16, $p < .05$ and from prior to executive coaching to the follow-up six months after the last executive coaching session (wave 4 – training group, and wave 5 – control group) mean difference 1.11, $p < .05$. The pattern of change over time on these variables is presented graphically on pages 115 to 117 (see *Figure 4.7* to *Figure 4.11*).

Table 4.6
Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures: Means and Standard Deviations – Training^a Group

Variable	Pre-coaching (Wave 1)		90 % Confidence Interval		After six coaching sessions (Wave 2)		90 % Confidence Interval		Six month follow-up (Wave 4)		90 % Confidence Interval	
	Mean	s.d.	Lower	Upper	Mean	s.d.	Lower	Upper	Mean	s.d.	Lower	Upper
Self-efficacy	4.02	.55	3.72	4.31	4.17	.39	3.87	4.48	4.08	.51	3.70	4.45
Developmental Support	4.23	.53	3.85	4.61	4.29	.70	3.84	4.73	4.06	.53	3.67	4.44
Positive Affect	3.43	.58	2.98	3.89	3.57	.62	3.12	4.02	3.71	.46	3.38	4.05
Openness to New Behaviours	4.04	.70	3.58	4.49	4.32	.66	3.92	4.72	3.89	.48	3.54	4.24
Developmental Planning	3.62	1.10	3.05	4.20	4.51	.47	4.10	4.93	4.29	.46	3.95	4.62

^a n=7.

Table 4.7
Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures: Means and Standard Deviations – Control^a Group

Variable	Pre-coaching (Wave 2)		90 % Confidence Interval		After six coaching sessions (Wave 3)		90 % Confidence Interval		Six month follow-up (Wave 5)		90 % Confidence Interval	
	Mean	s.d.	Lower/Upper Bound		Mean	s.d.	Lower/Upper Bound		Mean	s.d.	Lower/Upper Bound	
Self-efficacy	3.72	.57	3.25	4.19	3.82	.77	3.18	4.45	4.26	.69	3.69	4.83
Developmental Support	3.27	.59	2.78	3.75	3.80	1.07	2.92	4.68	4.53	.40	4.21	4.86
Positive Affect	3.35	.49	3.02	3.68	3.90	.58	3.43	4.37	4.40	.51	3.98	4.82
Openness to New Behaviours	2.92	.47	2.53	3.30	4.04	.51	3.62	4.46	4.21	.51	3.79	4.63
Developmental Planning	2.67	.84	1.98	3.35	4.13	.41	3.79	4.47	4.30	.55	3.85	4.75

^a n=6.

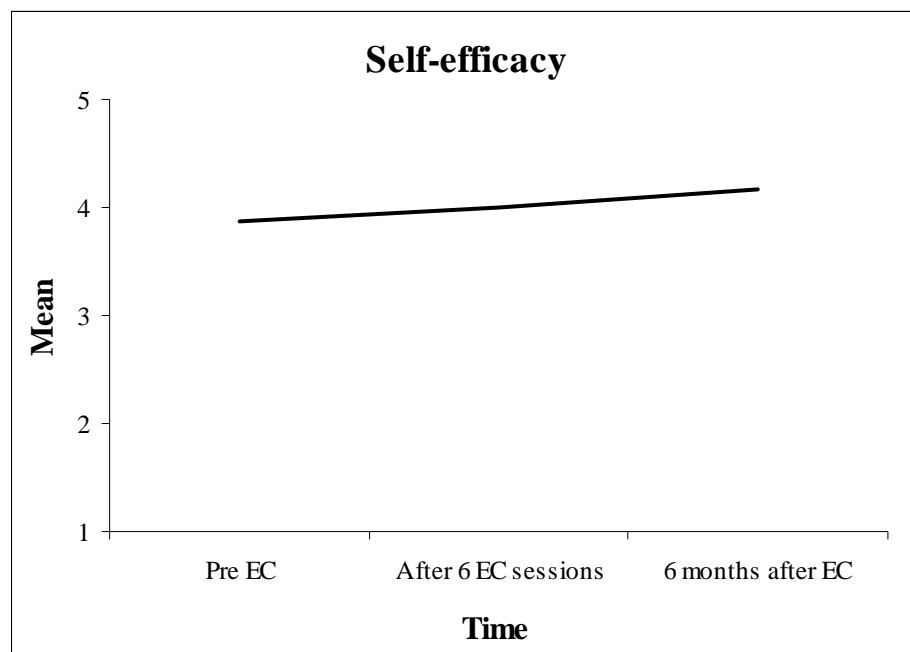


Figure 4.7. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Self-efficacy (Training and Control Groups).

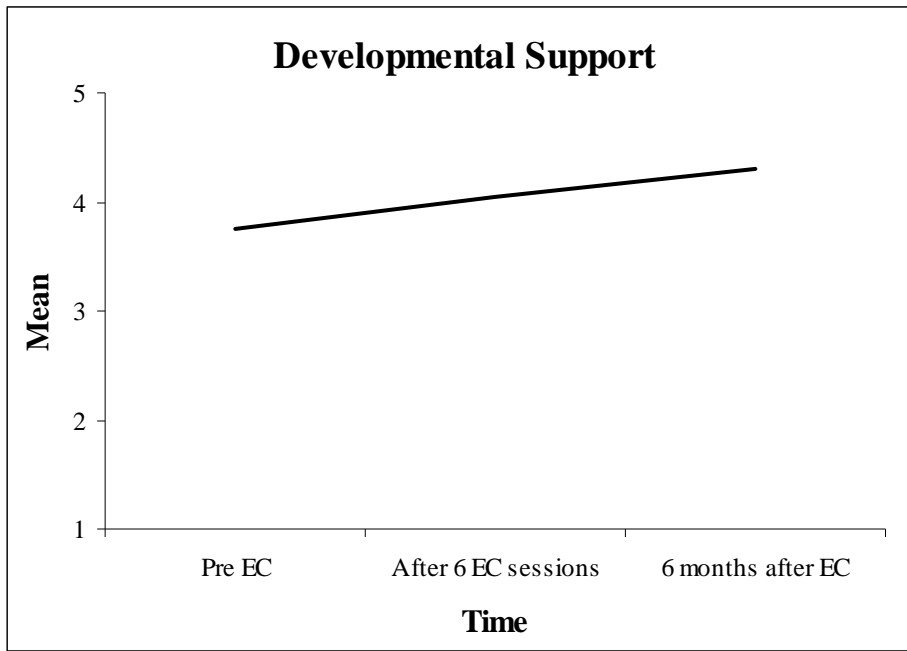


Figure 4.8. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Developmental Support (Training and Control Groups).

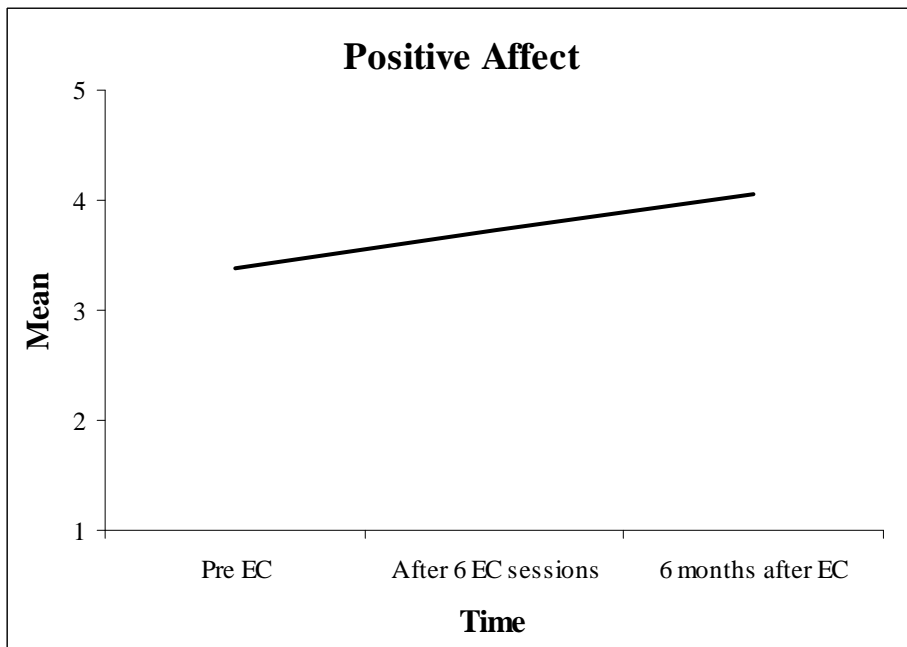


Figure 4.9. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Positive Affect (Training and Control Groups).

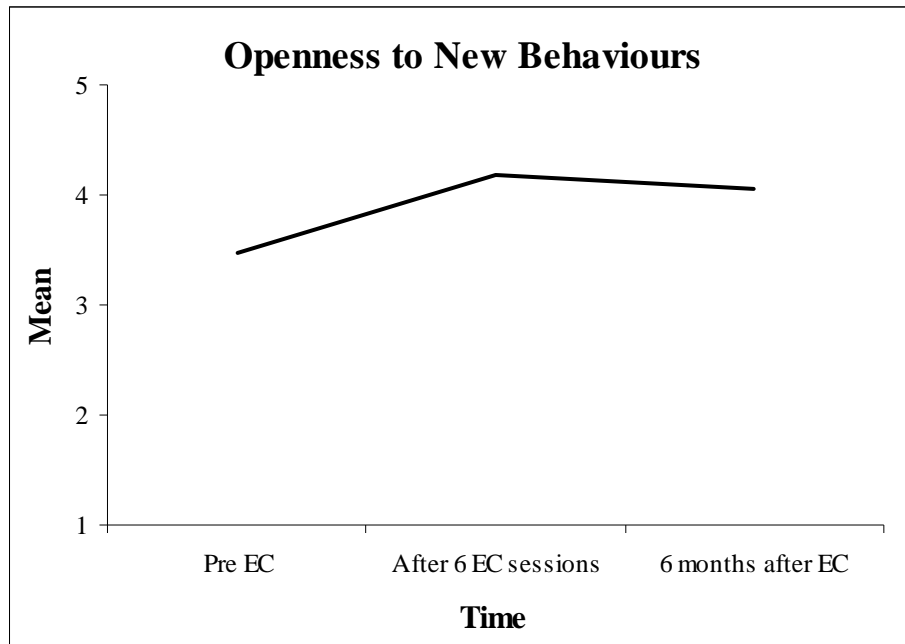


Figure 4.10. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Openness to New Behaviours (Training and Control Groups).

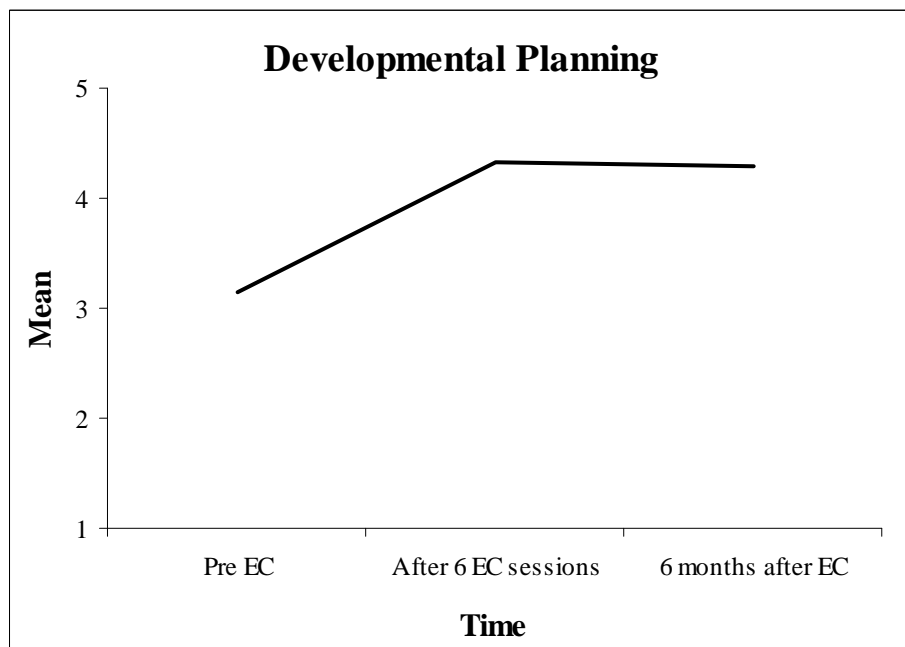


Figure 4.11. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Developmental Planning (Training and Control Groups).

These analyses only partially support Hypothesis 2, in that no changes were observed in participants' self-efficacy and developmental support. However, the ability to detect longitudinal effects for executive coaching may have been limited by collecting the pre-coaching data for the training group at the close of the two day workshop. Researchers have reported that participants often experience feelings of elation immediately after completing this type of training (Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, Traver, & Shotland, 1997; Warr & Bunce, 1995), and this elation may have translated to inflated scores on the study measures. This elated effect is unlikely to be sustained once participants return to the workplace to commence normal duties (Ruona, Leimbach, Holton, & Bates, 2002; Warr et al., 1995). The control group data, on the other hand, were collected immediately prior to the leaders commencing executive coaching (approximately twelve weeks after the workshop) and thus were less likely to be inflated. Therefore, this data provided a more accurate baseline from which to measure change. For this reason, the longitudinal data were re-examined, this time analysing the training group data and the control group data separately.

Training Group and Control Group Workshop Data

The possibility that the pre-coaching measures for the training group were inflated was supported by the fact that the pre-coaching data for the training group (wave 1), obtained at the close of the workshop, were significantly higher than the pre-coaching data for the control group (wave 2), obtained approximately twelve weeks later, self-efficacy, $t(9) = 2.6, p < .05$; developmental support, $t(9) = 5.88, p < .001$; positive affect, $t(9) = 1.86, p < .10$; openness to new behaviours, $t(9) = 2.48, p < .05$; and developmental planning, $t(9) = 4.50, p < .001$. These results are not affected by pre-existing differences between the two groups of participants, because

there were no differences between the training group and the control group on the measures collected at the workshop (self-efficacy, $t(20) = -1.33, p > .10$; developmental support, $t(20) = -.55, p > .10$; positive affect, $t(20) = -.67, p > .10$; openness to new behaviours, $t(20) = .63, p > .10$; developmental planning, $t(20) = -.41, p > .10$).

Thus, if indeed the pre-coaching data collected from the training group were inflated, it may have contributed to the pattern where some non-significant results were observed for the longitudinal analyses, namely in the measures of self-efficacy and developmental support. To examine the data further, the longitudinal analyses have been repeated, focusing on the control group data to see the emergent pattern. This sample though, was very small ($n=6$), so the analyses must be interpreted with caution.

Longitudinal Analyses based on data from the Control Group

The repeated measures ANOVA carried out on the data from the control group revealed a significant effect of time on all of the study measures: self-efficacy $F(2, 10) = 6.40, p < .05$; developmental support $F(2, 10) = 8.75, p < .01$; positive affect $F(2, 10) = 11.58, p < .01$; openness to new behaviours $F(2, 10) = 29.83, p < .01$; and developmental planning $F(2, 10) = 54.25, p < .01$ (refer Table 4.8 on page 122). The effect size, measuring the magnitude of a treatment effect independent of sample size, was calculated for the variables (Lipsey & Wilson, 1993). There are a number of indices that measure effect size, in a repeated measures ANOVA the most commonly used measures to calculate effect size are Eta squared (η^2) and partial Eta squared (η_p^2) (Bakeman, 2005; Levine & Hullett, 2002), which has been reported in

Table 4.8, on page 122. Eta squared and partial Eta squared are estimates of the degree of association for the variables (Levine et al., 2002).

A Pairwise comparison, with a Sidak adjustment to control for familywise Type 1 error, was used for the post-hoc analyses to examine the nature of the time effect. These analyses revealed that participants' feelings of **self-efficacy** increased significantly pre-coaching (wave 2) to the follow-up six months after completing executive coaching (wave 5), mean difference .54, $p < .05$, and **developmental support** from pre-coaching (wave 2) to the follow-up six months after the last executive coaching session (wave 5), mean difference 1.3, $p < .05$. **Positive affect** increased from pre-coaching (wave 2) to the follow-up six months after completing executive coaching (wave 5), mean difference 1.05, $p < .05$, and also significantly increased from after six coaching sessions (wave 3) to the follow-up six months after completing executive coaching (wave 5), mean difference .50, $p < .10$. **Openness to new behaviours** demonstrated significant increases pre-coaching (wave 2) to after six executive coaching sessions (wave 3), mean difference 1.13, $p < .05$, and pre-coaching (wave 2) to the follow-up six months after the final executive coaching session (wave 5), mean difference 1.3, $p < .05$. **Developmental planning** also demonstrated significant increases from pre-coaching (wave 2) to after six executive coaching sessions (wave 3), mean difference 1.47, $p < .05$, and pre-coaching (wave 2) to the follow-up six months after completing executive coaching (wave 5), mean difference .16, $p < .05$. Thus, when the analysis was focused on the data collected from the control group, the data were more consistent with Hypothesis 2, although not all variables demonstrated a significant increase from pre-coaching (wave 1) to after six coaching sessions (wave 3). However, the lack of findings could be

attributed to low statistical power. A power analysis, based on Cohen (1988) using a G Power Test (Faul & Erdfelder, 1992) suggested that a sample of 210 participants would be required for this effect to be significant for self-efficacy and developmental support (which only demonstrated significant change from pre coaching (wave 2) to 6 months after completing executive coaching (wave 5)). The power analysis also indicated that there was only a 19% chance of getting a significant effect with this small sample from pre-coaching (wave 2) to six months after completing executive coaching (wave 5) (Faul et al., 1992), yet this pattern of results was demonstrated for all psychological variables. Therefore, the key question underlying the longitudinal analysis: whether the psychological effects associated with executive coaching would be maintained six months after regular coaching sessions had ended, was answered. The post-hoc analyses indeed demonstrated that all measures remained above their pre-coaching level when they were measured at the six month follow-up. The pattern of change over time on these variables (for the control group) is presented graphically on pages 122 to 124 (see *Figure 4.12* to *Figure 4.16*).

Table 4.8
Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures: Means, Standard Deviations and ANOVA Statistics – Control Group data^a

Variable	Pre-coaching (Wave 2)		After six coaching sessions (Wave 3)		Six month follow-up (Wave 5)		<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	η_p^2
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.			
Self-efficacy	3.72	.57	3.82	.77	4.26	.69	6.40*	(2, 10)	.56
Developmental Support	3.27	.59	3.80	1.07	4.53	.40	8.75**	(2, 10)	.63
Positive Affect	3.35	.49	3.90	.58	4.40	.51	11.58**	(2, 10)	.70
Openness to New Behaviours	2.92	.47	4.04	.51	4.21	.51	29.83**	(2, 10)	.86
Developmental Planning	2.67	.84	4.13	.41	4.30	.55	54.25**	(2, 10)	.92

^a n=6.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Two tailed tests.

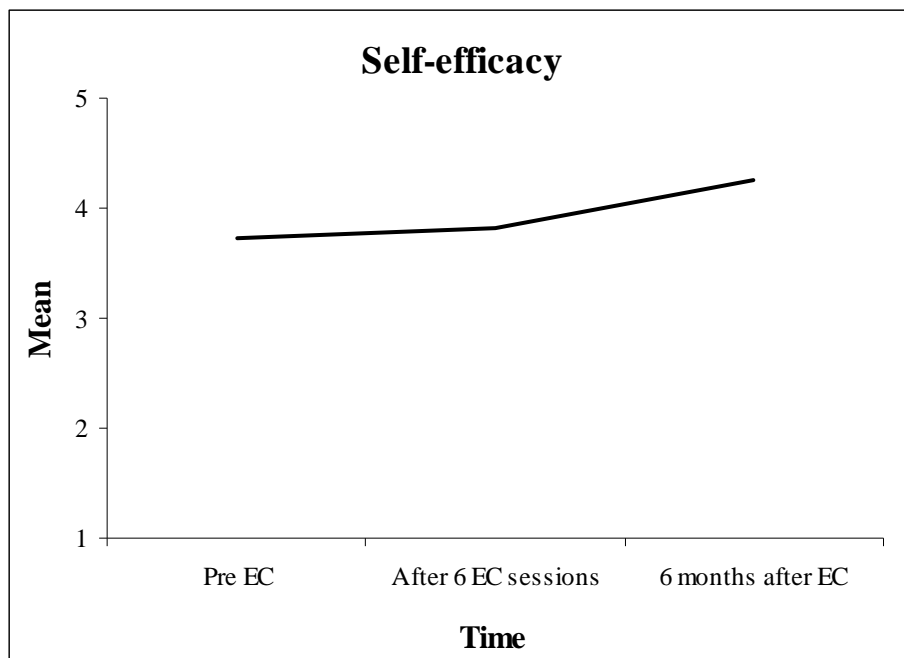


Figure 4.12. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Self-efficacy (Control Group).

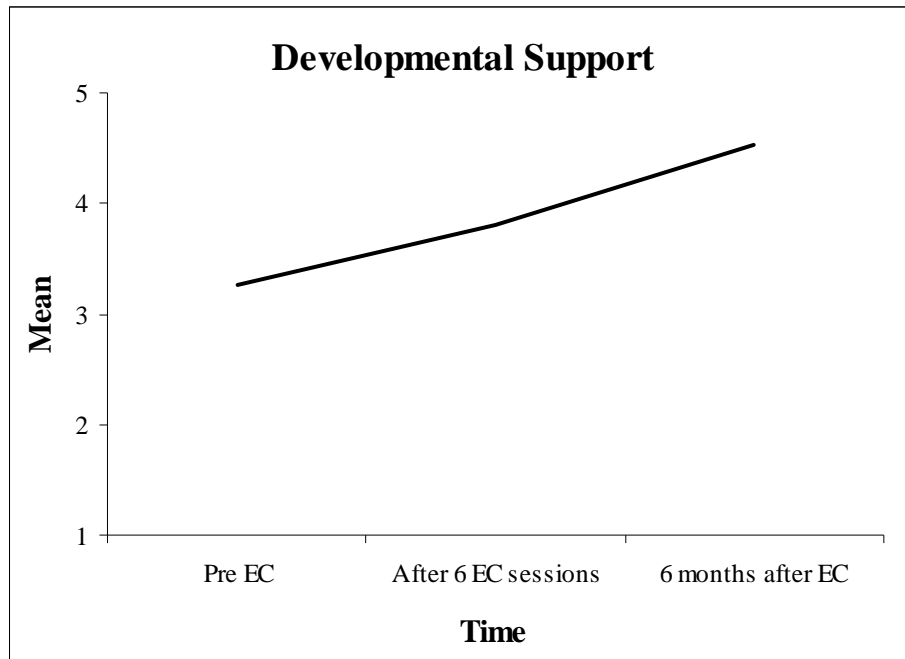


Figure 4.13. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Developmental Support (Control Group).

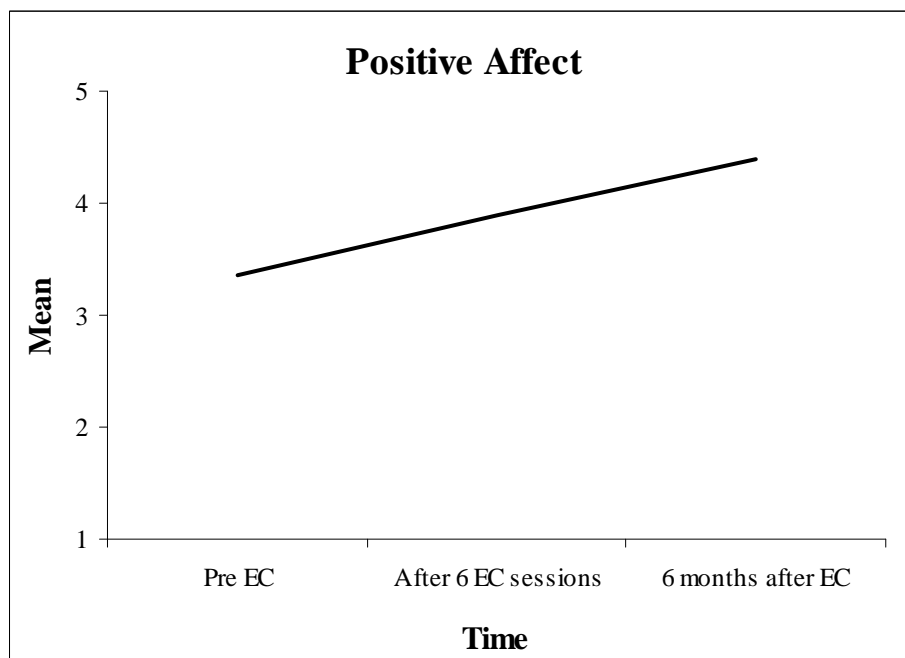


Figure 4.14. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Positive Affect (Control Group).

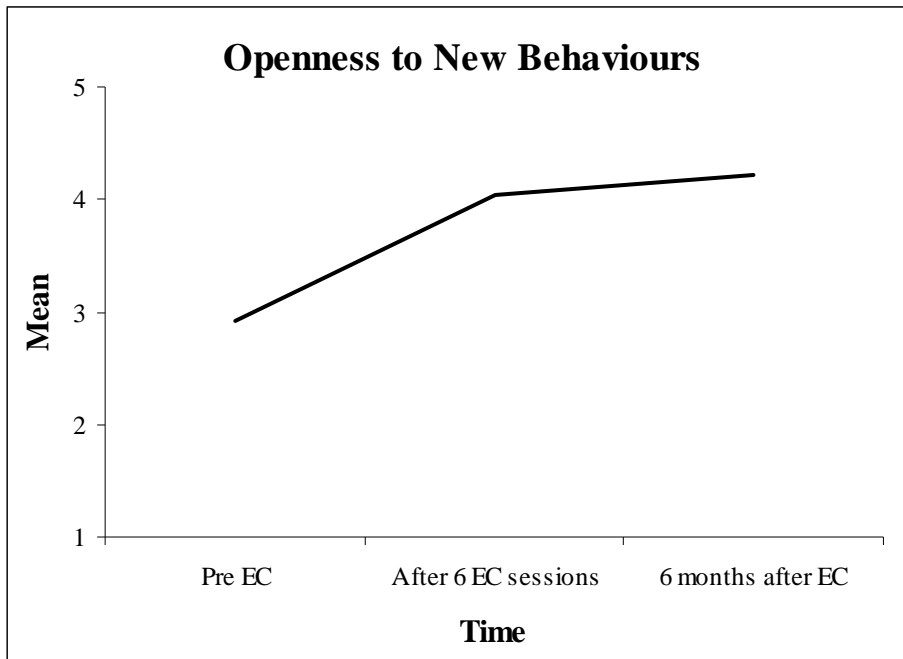


Figure 4.15. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Openness to New Behaviours (Control Group).

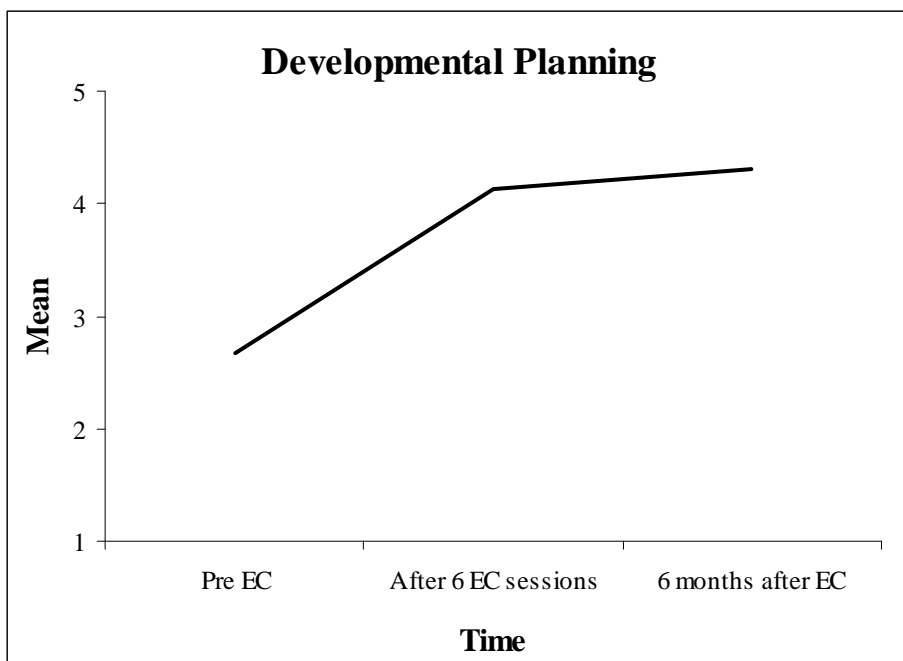


Figure 4.16. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Developmental Planning (Control Group).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to establish the effects of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states, specifically, their self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. Two approaches were used to investigate these effects. First, an experimental design was used to establish the impact of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states. Second, longitudinal analyses were used to examine whether the effects of executive coaching were sustained over time. The results of both analyses provide support for the study hypotheses, though they must be interpreted with some caution, due to the small sample size.

In the first analysis, the training group who had received six sessions of executive coaching, reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy, developmental support, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning compared with the control group, although no significant effects were observed for positive affect. However, the significant differences between the training group and the control group occurred because the control group decreased (from the first pre-coaching measure – wave 1, to the second measure collected after the training group had completed six executive coaching sessions, and immediately prior to the control group starting coaching – wave 2), rather than because the training group showed an increase on the psychological measures. This differed from the effect expected as a result of the training group receiving executive coaching.

The design of this study, wherein leaders were randomly assigned to executive coaching after completing other developmental activities was a deliberate

choice to help distinguish the effects of executive coaching from other developmental interventions (e.g. 360 degree feedback and the two day training workshop) which can cause differentiation, and subsequent interpretation difficulties (e.g. Thach, 2002). At this stage in the data collection process, there were no significant differences between the training and control groups although, notably, with a small sample it is impossible to control entirely for factors like age, experience and level of responsibility. However, an examination of the demographic characteristics suggested the leaders were evenly spread through random assignment. Therefore, it was expected that any differences between the training and control group at wave 2 (after the training group had received executive coaching, but before the control group commenced) could be attributed to the effects of executive coaching. However, the pattern of results measuring the differences between the two groups at wave 2 did not demonstrate this outcome. Even though there was a significant difference at wave 2 for all variables except positive affect, this prediction is difficult to support because the post-hoc analyses revealed that it was the control group, rather than the training group, which showed the most change on the study measures from wave 1 to wave 2. This is despite the fact that the control group did not experience any intervention during this period. Further confounding the difficulties interpreting the results, the pattern of significant change for the control group represented a decrease rather than an increase on measures of self-efficacy, developmental support and developmental planning. There was no significant decrease in the control group noted for openness to new behaviours, although there was equally no significant increase reported by the training group. Developmental planning did significantly increase for the training group between wave 1 and wave

2, but a significant decrease in the control group ratings was also noted. There were no significant effects for positive affect.

There are two possible ways to interpret these unexpected results. First, the decrease from wave 1 to wave 2 for the control group could be due to resentful demoralisation, which is an issue in controlled experiments in which participants in the control group become resentful of not receiving the experimental treatment (Cook et al., 1979). These participants may become angry, depressed, uncooperative, or non-compliant. This may lead to significant systematic differences in the outcome of the control group, whereby a post-test difference between the treatment and non treatment groups occurs. This obscures the results of the study and threatens its validity when the difference between groups is attributed to the planned treatment, yet in fact it is actually due to inadvertent resentful demoralisation experienced by the control group (Cook et al., 1979). Resentful demoralisation, however, is most likely to occur when the experiment is obtrusive and the control group receives no treatment or less desirable treatment (Cook et al., 1979). This situation does not accurately describe the management of the control group within this study. Participants in the control group knew that they were to receive executive coaching within approximately twelve weeks of the training group commencing their coaching sessions. Anecdotal feedback from control group participants did not support the notion that they were angered or depressed with waiting. It was quite the opposite actually, with some training group respondents inquiring as to whether they could move into the control group; and leaders who were in the control group pleased they had time to prepare for executive coaching. Nonetheless, there is no

evidence to rule out the fact that resentful demoralisation could be responsible for the decrease demonstrated.

An alternate explanation is that this pattern of results occurred because the pre-coaching measures were obtained at the end of the two day training workshop, when the psychological measures may have already been relatively high. If this is the correct interpretation, then the effect of executive coaching appears to have been to sustain the impact of the workshop. On the other hand, for the control group who did not experience follow-up through executive coaching immediately after the workshop, the psychological measures decreased to their normal levels pre the two day training workshop. There is support in the literature for this proposition. As discussed previously, researchers have reported a common immediate outcome of training is that participants experience feelings of elation and leave with a moderate “buzz” from the energy and enthusiasm generated by the training (Alliger et al., 1997; Dearborn, 2002; Ruona et al., 2002; Warr et al., 1995). These feelings however, are unlikely to be sustained back in the workplace, and are therefore a criticism levelled against the short-term impact of training workshops (Dearborn, 2002). This explanation supports the proposition that the pre-coaching measures (wave 1) used as the baseline in this study, might have been inflated because they were collected at the end of the training workshop. Furthermore, the decrease on the study measures shown by the control group, who received no further intervention between wave 1 and wave 2, is also consistent with this suggestion.

This second explanation seems more accurate within the organisational setting in which executive coaching occurred. If indeed it does explain the unexpected results, then it would be appropriate to state that for the training group,

executive coaching, which took place in the context of an on-going training program, maintained the relatively high levels of self-efficacy, developmental support, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning generated by the two day training workshop. Despite the fact that this was not the anticipated effect predicted from executive coaching, it is still advantageous because it suggests that executive coaching offers a means of sustaining the positive effects of training over time. Further interpretation about the effect of executive coaching for the control group can be gained from the longitudinal analysis discussed shortly.

An alternate interpretation of the results was calculated with Cohen's *d*, which measures the effect size or magnitude of a treatment effect, independent of sample size (Cohen, 1988). According to Cohen's (1988) criteria, all of the effect sizes reported here comparing the post-coaching training group means with the post-coaching control group means (i.e. at wave 2) qualify as large (Cohen, 1988). The exception was positive affect which had a small effect size. These effect sizes support the explanation that executive coaching is impacting positively on the psychological measures and provide useful information for practitioners wishing to predict the effectiveness of executive coaching as a developmental intervention (Sigurdsson & Austin, 2007). Care must still be taken though generalising from small sample sizes due to sampling error inherent in such situations.

The longitudinal investigation was designed to ascertain whether the observed effects of executive coaching would be sustained over time⁴. The results, (when restricted to the control group leaders whose pre-coaching measures were not as high as the training group) revealed significant change over time on all of the study measures, from prior to executive coaching, to six months after the completion of executive coaching. These results provide some support for the suggestion that the impact of executive coaching is sustained over time.

However, because it is not possible to confidently explain why the control group decreased from their first set of pre-coaching measures (wave 1) to the second set of control group pre-coaching measures collected (wave 2, before they received executive coaching), the longitudinal analysis using the combined sample from the training and control groups should also be considered. The combined results revealed significant change over time on positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning from prior to executive coaching, to after six executive coaching sessions (openness to new behaviours and developmental planning); and from prior to executive coaching, to six months after the completion of executive coaching (positive affect and developmental planning). These analyses partially support the second hypothesis (with the exception of self-efficacy and developmental support), but with a less consistent pattern than that observed when only interpreting control group data.

⁴ In line with the design of this study, the control group had received executive coaching by this time and provided data for the investigation. The control group is therefore the second experimental group however they will continue to be referred to as the control group to facilitate identification.

The pattern of change on the control group data observed most consistently from the analyses was different from what was expected. It was expected that executive coaching would bring about an improvement on the study measures from prior to coaching to session six, and the interest was in determining whether the effect would be sustained over the six month period after regular coaching sessions ended. However, it was not expected that there would be any additional increase in the study measures from session six up to the six month follow-up. The most consistent effect observed in the data though was a significant increase from pre-coaching to the six month follow-up. In other words, there was a tendency for the measures to continue to increase in the period between completing the sixth session and the six month follow-up. Unlike traditional forms of training which do not seem to have a sustained impact (Conger et al., 2003; Warr et al., 1995), it may be that the effects of executive coaching are enhanced over time because the leaders are learning and practising techniques that they should continue to use after coaching finishes. However, because there was not a control group at the time of the six month follow-up, further testing is required before any firm conclusions about the long-term effects of executive coaching can be drawn. It is possible that other events occurring during this six month period (e.g. follow-up training workshops) contributed to the trend observed.

Although these findings must therefore be viewed as tentative, they are consistent with the idea that more long-term interventions such as coaching should improve developmental outcomes (Tobias, 1996). According to Falk (2003) development should take place over a long period of time, with regular sessions. The findings of the current research support the need for leadership interventions to be

more than a “once-off” or short-term program, and the design of executive coaching appears to meet this need.

It is worth noting that the observed pattern of change over time on the control group data was not entirely consistent for the different dependent variables. The most immediate impact (a significant change from pre-coaching to session six) was observed for the measures of openness to new behaviours and developmental planning, suggesting that executive coaching had a fairly immediate effect on these measures. In contrast, the measures of self-efficacy, developmental support and positive affect increased more gradually, from pre-coaching to the follow-up six months after executive coaching. This pattern of change is consistent with existing research, which suggests that goal setting (a key element of developmental planning) is a precursor of motivation and job satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 1984; 1990b; 2002; Yearta, Maitlis, & Briner, 1995), and that creating openness to change is a precondition for bringing about other changes (Lewin, 1947). These initial effects of executive coaching may serve as precursors for subsequent effects on self-efficacy, developmental support and positive affect. Whilst sample size limitations preclude this analysis from being conducted within this study, it is a direction future research could examine.

The fact that the measures of self-efficacy, developmental support and positive affect did not show the expected change from pre-coaching to session six, and instead only showed an overall change from pre-coaching to six months after executive coaching may perhaps be attributed to the small sample size. The power analysis indicated that a much larger sample would be required for a significant effect to have a good likelihood of being demonstrated. However given the inherent

difficulties collecting executive coaching data and the substantial time commitment necessary for coaching each leader, collecting data from such a large sample was not feasible for this research program. The significant effects that were obtained from the study analyses are impressive given that the power analysis indicated that there was only a 19% chance of getting a significant effect with this small sample (Faul et al., 1992).

Although the results for the longitudinal analysis focusing on the control group have to be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size, it is reassuring that similar patterns of change were demonstrated for the combined training and control group sample. That is, the longitudinal analyses for the combined sample also demonstrated significant change from pre-coaching to after six executive coaching sessions for leaders' openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. Significant differences were also reported from pre-coaching to six months after the completion of executive coaching for positive affect and developmental planning.

However, as some of the effects confirming the impact of executive coaching over time were only demonstrated when the control group data was analysed, taking into account the very small sample, re-testing the longitudinal psychological effects associated with executive coaching would be beneficial. Indeed, although the difference in scores from the training and control groups has been attributed to inflated pre-coaching data as a consequence of the workshop, an alternative explanation already offered is that having to wait for coaching actually deflated the second round of measures collected from the control group (i.e. the data collected immediately prior to the control group commencing executive coaching). To avoid

this situation again in future, research pre-coaching measures should be collected immediately prior to the leaders commencing executive coaching rather than at the end of a training workshop.

Theoretical Implications

Much of the existing coaching literature extols the virtues of executive coaching, yet is deficient in empirical evidence to support such commendations (Byrd, 2001; Day, 2000; Hall et al., 1999; Olesen, 1996; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992; Smith & Sandstrom, 1999). Thus, this research has made significant and timely contributions to the limited body of executive coaching literature. First, the experimental design of this research, utilising training and control groups, attempted to ensure that the effects reported were due to executive coaching and not other interventions used in the leadership effectiveness program. In terms of advancing research in this area, this is an important contribution as much of the previous executive coaching research could not clearly delineate the effects of executive coaching from other training interventions (Olivero et al., 1997; Thach, 2002), or requirements of the training program (Smither et al., 2003). In contrast, the design of the current research, though not without limitations, facilitates a better understanding of executive coaching outcomes distinct from other leadership interventions.

Additionally, the longitudinal design provides a long-term test of executive coaching and its outcomes, again providing a valuable input to the limited empirical research. Both analyses (i.e. the combined training and control group analysis, and the control group only analysis) investigating the pattern of change over time revealed that prior to executive coaching leaders were not very open to thinking

about new behaviours or approaches to developmental planning, but that after just six executive coaching sessions, these psychological states were significantly increased. The analysis investigating the pattern of change over time for the control group leaders demonstrated though that executive coaching appears to take longer to impact on leaders' feelings of self-efficacy, developmental support and positive affect, but once influenced, these changes continue to increase six months after completing executive coaching, thereby having an ongoing effect. These findings are suggestive about the psychological processes through which executive coaching works.

Practical Implications

These findings also make several important practical contributions. This research justifies the use of executive coaching as a tool for supporting leaders in the workplace, because it suggests that leaders experience psychological benefits as a result of participating in executive coaching. Furthermore, the current research provides an enhanced understanding of the types of outcomes executive coaching should achieve, and thus, when executive coaching is likely to be beneficial for participants. The findings suggest that executive coaching should be particularly beneficial when leaders lack confidence in their leadership role (for example, during times of career transition), when there is a lack of developmental support in the work environment (such as when the leader is geographically isolated or engages in flexible working arrangements), when there are barriers to experimenting with new behaviours (such as ingrained habits or a strong organisational culture), and when leaders do not have the skills to develop their own plans for addressing their developmental needs. Current organisational environments often present these scenarios.

This research also suggests that the impact of executive coaching may be sustained six months after regular coaching sessions have ended. Although the sample from which to draw this conclusion was very small, if substantiated this finding adds much practical value to organisations faced with a range of training and developmental options. The existing research into training alternatives suggests that few programs can adequately transfer back to the workplace (Conger et al., 2003; Warr et al., 1995). Training workshops and seminars typically cease in providing value shortly after the individual returns to the workplace, demonstrating a “half-life” of a few days or weeks after the sessions end (Conger, 1992). However, the results for the control group suggest that executive coaching may have a more long-term psychological impact than traditional forms of training. This outcome strengthens the adoption of executive coaching as a viable development option.

Limitations

This research has contributed to theory and practice, but there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. Most obviously, the small sample size restricted the statistical power of the analyses, particularly the analyses comparing the training and control groups, and the longitudinal analyses based on control group data. This does mean that interpretation of these results must be made with caution as it raises issues about the reliability and generalisability of the findings, such that a replication of the findings would be desirable.

Compounding this, the fact that the data were obtained from one organisation may also limit the generalisability of these findings. At the time when the study was conducted, the organisation was undergoing a major change process involving a

merger of a number of departments and also an independent review of their processes. Comments from organisational representatives and leaders themselves suggested that these factors increased both the workloads, levels of stress experienced and general uneasiness over job security. Feelings of concern and anxiety about this change expressed by organisational members may have impacted on the overall health of the organisation. These factors may have influenced leaders' reactions to executive coaching and should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings from this research. Thus, it is further recommended that replication of these findings be carried out in another organisational setting.

Further, it is important to acknowledge that seven of the original twenty-three leaders participating in the study did not complete the six executive coaching sessions, and this could present a threat to validity. Two leaders withdrew because they were not finding coaching beneficial and were having difficulty establishing a successful relationship with their coach. Three other leaders reported that they were forced to withdraw because they moved to a different section within the organisation which did not allow the continuation of executive coaching. A further two other leaders withdrew from executive coaching due to retirement (one participant) and illness (one participant). As is often the case where research extends over a period of time, attrition is a concern (Nardi, 2003) and indeed quite common in this type of research (e.g. Conway, 1999; Jones et al., 2006; Saling, 2005a; Thach, 2002). Thus, given there was some participant attrition, it is not possible to say that executive coaching will have beneficial effects for all leaders in all work circumstances, however, it does not appear (apart from the two leaders identified above), that the leaders who withdrew from executive coaching did so because they were having a

negative experience with coaching. Had this been the case, and therefore only leaders who were positively experiencing executive coaching remained in the program, there would be a more serious threat to validity.

The interpretation of results presented in the first analysis whereby the impact of executive coaching was to sustain the positive effects from the workshop for the training group must be regarded as speculative, as there were no measures collected from either group before the commencement of the workshop. The assumption that the workshop increased scores for both groups from an (unmeasured) baseline, and that the control group subsequently returned to this (unmeasured) baseline whereas the training group did not, is entirely speculative. There is no evidence that the workshop actually created positive outcomes for the participants in the first place, and as identified above, there are alternate explanations presented for this pattern of results. Thus, it is recommended that in future research, pre-coaching data is collected independently of other leadership development interventions.

Finally, this study was based on self report data. Self report data is acceptable when it measures affective experiences or individual's self perceptions (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; McEnrue, 1989; Spector, 1994), as was the case here. However, there is still the possibility that there may have been placebo effects and self report biases present in this data which have inflated the reported results. Thus, further evaluation of the effects of executive coaching would benefit from using non-self report measures.

Further research

Given that executive coaching research is in its infancy, there are many opportunities for additional research. First, as identified above, data collection needs to be carefully timed. As was also discussed, collecting non-self report data about the impact of executive coaching would be of enormous benefit to the field and represents a key area for future research, as it would avoid the biases associated with self report measures. It would be valuable to measure whether others (e.g. leaders' team members or supervisors) identify changes in the leader as a result of executive coaching.

Furthermore, while this study investigated the effect of executive coaching on leaders' self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning, a next step would be to examine whether these psychological changes are accompanied by changes to the leader's behaviour. It is suggested by Smither et al. (2003) that individualised criteria of behaviour change should be utilised to measure such behavioural change, as relying on 360 degree feedback is too broad a measurement to detect the impact of executive coaching.

Finally, to conclusively determine the sustained impact of executive coaching, it would be beneficial to collect additional data after all contact between the leader and the coach has ceased. For this study, the final wave of data was collected in a follow-up session, which was held after a six month break in executive coaching. Thus, there is the chance the results were affected because the leader knew the coach was coming back to check on progress. It would be interesting to

measure whether the impact of executive coaching is sustained at a time when executive coaching had been completed and there were no future sessions scheduled.

Conclusion

To conclude, executive coaching represents a modern approach to developing leadership skills. Yet, there is very little evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach or anticipated outcomes expected from executive coaching. This research has supported the conclusion that executive coaching has a beneficial impact on leaders' psychological states. The use of longitudinal measures demonstrated the impact of executive coaching over time on the psychological states and suggested that the impact of executive coaching is sustained over time.

Study Two, described in Chapter 5 addresses some of the limitations associated with this study and extends the research by examining whether the psychological changes reported here were accompanied by observable changes in leader behaviour as perceived by other organisational members. This additional research will provide an opportunity to empirically assess the effectiveness of executive coaching as judged by others and provide further theoretical and practical contributions to this burgeoning field.

CHAPTER FIVE

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STUDY TWO

Introduction

Study Two explored the behavioural effects of executive coaching on transformational leadership development. To date, there have been six previous studies identified which examined the behavioural impact of executive coaching (Conway, 1999; Kampa-Kokesch, 2001; Olivero et al., 1997; Saling, 2005a; Smither et al., 2003; Thach, 2002). In particular, the research undertaken by Kampa-Kokesch (2001) was the only study to measure whether executive coaching increased transformational leadership behaviour. The design and contextual environment of these studies though means it is difficult to separate, with any certainty, the effects of executive coaching from other interventions, namely, the training program, 360 degree feedback, environmental factors, or prior exposure to coaching (Conger, 1999; Kampa-Kokesch, 2001; Olivero et al., 1997; Smither et al., 2003; Thach, 2002). These limitations have been discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The current research is designed to address these limitations. Apart from the research by Smither et al. (2003) which adopted a non-randomised experimental and control group design, the design of the other behavioural research meant that it was difficult to conclusively attribute effects to executive coaching. The study by Smither et al. (2003) though also had limitations, in that leaders were not randomly assigned to executive coaching, and had an increased sense of accountability to act on feedback from 360 degree feedback reports because the reports could be used to influence compensation and promotion benefits. The research from this thesis, however, breaks new ground by utilising a rigorous, randomly assigned post-test only control group design where the experimental group (called a training group) and the control group differed only in their exposure to the executive coaching intervention.

This study examined the effects of executive coaching on leaders' transformational leadership behaviour by collecting measures from leaders' supervisors, team members, and the leaders themselves. Two analyses investigating the behavioural impact of executive coaching were conducted. The first, using a post-test only control group design examined whether, after the executive coaching intervention, the training group leaders received higher ratings of transformational leadership behaviour compared with control group leaders. The second analysis combined the data from the training and control groups (after both groups completed executive coaching) to examine the impact of executive coaching over time. This longitudinal analysis measured the change from pre-to post-executive coaching on measures of transformational leadership behaviour. However, because executive coaching is an individualised developmental approach where leaders work on

specific skill areas Smither et al. (2003) suggest that 360 degree feedback ratings may be too broad a measurement tool to detect the impact of executive coaching. One recommendation from their study is that future research examine more individualised criteria of behaviour change (Smither et al., 2003). Thus, this second analysis examined change in behaviour by focusing on items assessing the leaders' specific developmental areas (as opposed to the full set of transformational leadership behaviour items used in the first behavioural analysis).

This chapter outlines the second study in this research program and presents the method and results. This is followed with a discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions of the research and concludes by suggesting avenues for future investigation.

Hypotheses

To date the existing literature examining the behavioural impact of executive coaching on leadership behaviour provides evidence which suggests that this new approach to leadership development does indeed affect leaders' behaviour (Conway, 1999; Kampa-Kokesch, 2001; Olivero et al., 1997; Smither et al., 2003; Thach, 2002). Adding to the existing evidence, the research by Kampa-Kokesch (2001) specifically explored the effects of coaching on transformational leadership behaviour and found that leaders' reported significant improvements for Idealised Influence – Attributed, which was designed to measure charismatic leadership that was attributed to the leader, or that impacted on the follower in some way. However, the common theme in the existing research is the need for further investigation into

executive coaching and leadership development (Conway, 1999; Kampa-Kokesch, 2001; Olivero et al., 1997; Smither et al., 2003; Thach, 2002).

One aim of this study was to demonstrate that executive coaching had an observable effect on transformational leadership behaviour. The existing body of literature on executive coaching is limited, particularly in terms of rigorous research; this study therefore provides a significant enhancement to the field. In the current study, executive coaching was carried out in the context of a leadership training program which specifically sought to increase leaders' transformational leadership behaviours. Leaders were encouraged to work with their coaches to identify how they might improve their transformational leadership behaviour. In this context, it was expected the behavioural effect of executive coaching would be demonstrated as an improvement in participants' transformational leadership behaviour. The following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: Leaders in the training group who participated in executive coaching would show greater transformational leadership behaviour, as rated by leaders, supervisors and team members, when compared with leaders in the control group who had not received executive coaching.

Executive coaching tends to focus on leaders' specific developmental areas. Thus, whilst all leaders were working towards improving their transformational leadership behaviour, they were encouraged to use their 360 degree feedback and other available information to identify specific behaviours to improve through the coaching relationship. Each leader might therefore focus on improving different aspects of their transformational leadership behaviour. For this reason, and in line

with the recommendation by Smither et al. (2003), the behavioural effects of executive coaching were also examined by getting coaches to identify the three transformational leadership items from the questionnaire which best reflected the leader's developmental focus. Change in transformational leadership behaviour was then examined on these three items. Thus, a second hypothesis was proposed:

H2: Leaders who participated in executive coaching would show an increase in transformational leadership behaviour specific to their individual development area from prior to commencing executive coaching to after completing six executive coaching sessions, as rated by leaders, supervisors and team members.

A further aim of Study Two was to re-examine the psychological impact of executive coaching on the psychological variables: self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. These variables were measured in Study One and produced an unexpected pattern of results where the significant difference between the training and the control group was due to the control group decreasing before they commenced coaching, rather than because the training group increased after participating in executive coaching. This unexpected effect was attributed to the fact that the training group's pre-coaching measures were obtained during a training workshop and therefore might have been inflated. Therefore, in this study pre-coaching measures were obtained immediately prior to commencing coaching, so that they were not likely to be affected by participation in the workshop. As before, the impact of executive coaching was examined by comparing the training and control groups, after the training group received executive coaching. Additionally, because the research was

conducted in an applied setting where the control group also received executive coaching (after the training group had completed their coaching), the between group differences were measured to confirm the direction of the change. The following hypothesis was tested:

H3: Leaders in the training group who participated in executive coaching would experience greater self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning, when compared with leaders in the control group who had not yet participated in executive coaching.

The longitudinal examination of the psychological variables (conducted in Study One) was also replicated in Study Two. In addition to the pre-coaching measure (obtained immediately before the leaders commenced coaching), data were also collected after leaders completed six executive coaching sessions and again after six months to measure whether changes were sustained over time. As before, the training and control group data were combined for this analysis. To examine the longitudinal impact of executive coaching on the psychological measures it was hypothesised that:

H4: Leaders who participated in executive coaching would show an increase in self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning from prior to commencing executive coaching to after completing six executive coaching sessions, and that this increase would continue to be sustained six months after completing executive coaching.

Method

Sample

Study Two data came from the participants in the second year of the transformational leadership development program described in Chapter 3. Of the thirty-six leaders participating in the second year of the program, a total of twenty-seven leaders volunteered to take up executive coaching.

The twenty-seven participants were all senior level managers; there were eighteen males and nine females, ranging in age from 29 years to 55 years. Continuous tenure in the participants' current role ranged from one year to eighteen years, with an average tenure of one year (25.9%). Participants were asked to indicate the highest level of education completed and of the twenty who supplied this information, 4% of participants held an associate diploma qualification, 11% had completed a degree, 11% had undertaken a graduate certificate or diploma, 44% had Masters level qualifications and 4% held a PhD.

As is typical of studies of this kind, evidenced for example in the research by Bernthal et al. (2001), Conway (1999), Saling (2005a) and Thach (2002) there was some participant attrition. Of the original twenty-seven participants in the study, only twenty-one completed all six sessions of coaching. Two of the twenty-seven leaders who volunteered for executive coaching left the organisation prior to commencing coaching. An additional four leaders who originally volunteered for executive coaching, but did not commence, were unable to do so because of extensive organisational change precluding them from continuing to participate in the leadership program. Nonetheless, data from some of these leaders was collected

prior to their withdrawal from the program, and is presented in some analyses.

Despite this level of attrition, there were no distinguishing characteristics that differentiated leaders who completed executive coaching from leaders who did not, thus, those who did participate in executive coaching appeared to provide a representative sample of the population.

Procedure

The study participants were randomly allocated to one of two groups⁵. The first group (called the training group) consisted of eleven leaders who were then randomly assigned to one of nine trained executive coaches participating in Study Two. These leaders commenced executive coaching after receiving 360 degree feedback and completing the two day training workshop. The second group (n=12) served as a control group and did not commence executive coaching until approximately twelve weeks later, when the first group had completed coaching. These leaders were also randomly assigned to an executive coach.

The behavioural and psychological measures were collected by questionnaires distributed throughout the executive coaching process (see *Figure 5.1*, on page 151, for an overview of the data collection stages). The analyses of the behavioural measures examined the impact of executive coaching by comparing change in leaders' transformational leadership as rated by the leaders, their supervisor, and their team members (a minimum of five team members per leader).

⁵ Four participants who originally volunteered for executive coaching withdrew from the program prior to random allocation, thus reducing the total number of leaders for random allocation to twenty-three. A further two leaders who were randomly allocated to the control group provided some pre-coaching data for the analyses; however they did not subsequently commence executive coaching.

The first analysis (H1) used a post-test only control group design to compare the training and control group at the same point in time (wave 2), after the training group had completed six executive coaching sessions and prior to the control group commencing executive coaching. The longitudinal examination (H2) combined data from the training and control groups and measured the change over time by comparing data collected before the commencement of executive coaching (wave 1 – training group, and wave 2 – control group) with data collected after leaders had completed six executive coaching sessions (wave 2 – training group, and wave 3 – control group). Leaders' coaches were asked to identify the area the leader was developing by selecting three questions from the questionnaire items. By identifying the leader's developmental area, this analysis was able to measure individualised behavioural effects associated with executive coaching, rather than the overall change in transformational leadership behaviour measured for H1.

The measures of transformational leadership behaviour used in this study were derived from the 360 degree feedback questionnaire (referred to in this chapter as the "full" 360 degree feedback questionnaire, and described in more detail below) used in the overall transformational leadership development program to provide developmental feedback to leaders. The full 360 degree feedback questionnaire provided the pre-coaching measure of transformational leadership behaviour for the training group (wave 1 – see *Figure 5.1*, below, for an overview of the data collection stages) and the post-coaching measure of transformational leadership behaviour for the control group (wave 3). To test the study hypotheses, pre- and post-coaching measures of transformational leadership behaviour were also required for both the training (post-coaching measure) and control (pre-coaching measure)

groups at wave 2. To avoid participant fatigue, a shortened version of the questionnaire (called the “mini” 360 degree feedback questionnaire, and described in more detail below) was administered when leaders in the training group had completed their six executive coaching sessions, but before the control group commenced executive coaching (wave 2). These questionnaires were posted to all leaders in the program, their supervisors, and at team members. Leaders were asked to supply a list of team members’ names and questionnaires were sent to approx eight team members on the list. A minimum of five team member responses were required for aggregation.

The psychological measures were assessed by obtaining leaders’ ratings of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning through a questionnaire that was completed by each leader at least three times. The leaders’ coaches emailed the questionnaires to the leaders and they either returned them by email to the coach or faxed them directly to the researcher. The questionnaires contained the leader’s name (and other demographic information, outlined shortly), so the researcher was able to follow-up directly with leaders who did not return the questionnaires. Pre-coaching measures were obtained prior to the leaders commencing executive coaching (wave 1 for the training group, and wave 2 for the control group). The problem which occurred in Study One, where the training group’s pre-coaching data were apparently inflated because they were collected at the end of the training workshop was addressed in this study. There was a short period between the end of the workshop and the commencement of executive coaching when the questionnaires were emailed to leaders before they started their coaching sessions. The next set of measures were

collected after leaders completed their sixth executive coaching session (wave 2 and wave 3), and the post-coaching measures were obtained six months after the sixth coaching session, when leaders checked in with their coaches (wave 4 and wave 5).

The nature and timing of all the measures used in this study are summarised in

Figure 5.1.

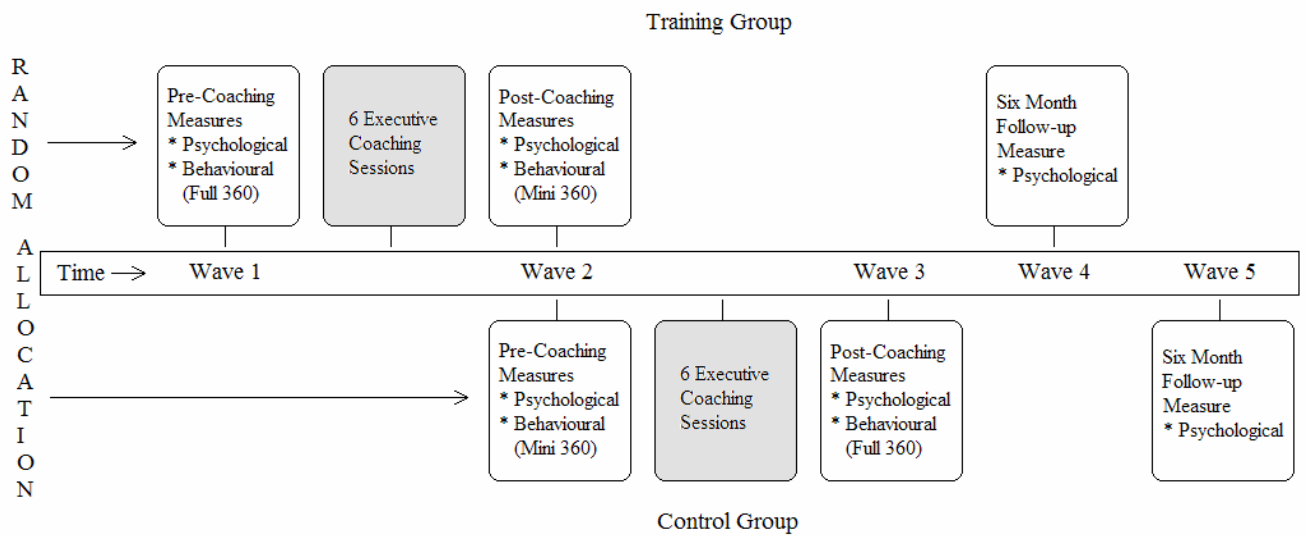


Figure 5.1. Psychological and Behavioural Measures – Major Data Collection Stages.

Measures

Demographic Information

Demographic information was collected from the leaders through the larger 360 degree feedback questionnaire, which was administered as part of the larger transformational leadership development program. These data included the participants’ gender, age, section of the of the organisation the leader was responsible for, number of people within this section, organisational classification of the leader’s current role, length of continuous tenure in the current role, and highest level of education completed. Additionally, leaders provided their name, and section

of the organisation they were responsible for in each questionnaire completed for this research program, which enabled matching of the questionnaires over time.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership

Mason et al.'s (2005) 360 degree feedback questionnaire measuring transformational leadership (the "full" 360 degree feedback questionnaire) formed the basis of the measure of transformational leadership behaviour used in this study. Their measure used a combination of items from existing transformational leadership scales (with a few original items added), which were chosen to suit the organisational culture and the outcomes the organisation wanted to achieve from their leaders in the leadership program. For this study, a sub-set of twenty behavioural items identified from the larger pool of one hundred 360 degree feedback items in Mason, et al.'s (2005) questionnaire was also chosen to measure transformational leadership (the "mini" 360 degree feedback questionnaire). A reduced set of items was used to minimise participants' time when completing the instrument and to avoid over surveying, as data was collected from study participants a number of times during the study. The subset of items was chosen because they were deemed to be consistent with executive coaching, and also to provide representation of all four identified transformational leadership dimensions (namely, individualised consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and idealised influence) and transactional leadership. This study was not designed though to test for each transformational leadership dimension, rather to measure the effect of executive coaching on transformational leadership represented through these items.

Individualised consideration was measured with four items, a sample item was “In my role as a leader, I listen attentively to my team members’ concerns”; inspirational motivation was measured with four items, a sample item was “In my role as a leader, I inspire my team members to set higher standards for their performance”. Intellectual stimulation (four items), a sample item being “In my role as a leader, I share important information relating to the team with my team members”, and idealised influence (four items), a sample item was, “In my role as a leader, I provide a good model for my team members to follow”. Four items measuring transactional leadership behaviour were also included a sample item was “In my role as a leader, I set goals for my team members’ performance”. The items were appropriately worded depending upon who was completing the survey, namely leaders, supervisors, or team members. All items were measured on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 5 ‘Strongly Agree’. Additionally at the request of the organisation, measures assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of the organisation’s strategic plan were also included in the mini 360 degree feedback questionnaire; these four items do not form part of the analysis undertaken in this research program and are thus, not included. Appendix 2 contains the items making up the mini 360 degree feedback questionnaire.

To measure leaders’ specific development areas (H2), the following process was followed: after leaders had completed their six executive coaching sessions, the coaches were asked to identify the three items out of the twenty items in the mini 360 that most accurately represented their leader’s development area. These three items were averaged in the analysis. The leaders were unaware of this request and the coaches similarly did not see the leaders’ responses to the mini 360, thus neither the

leaders' or coaches replies were influenced in any way by the coaches providing this information. However, this information provided for an analysis measuring the impact of executive coaching on the leader's specific developmental area.

Psychological Measures

To replicate Study One, the same measures were used to assess leader self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. These measures are described in detail in Chapter 4 and presented in Appendix 1.

Results

The main aim of this study was to measure the behavioural impact of executive coaching in terms of transformational leadership behaviour. Correlations and descriptive statistics on the pre-coaching study measures are reported in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2, on pages 155 and 156. An examination of the diagonal elements of Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 demonstrate that all of the study measures showed acceptable internal reliability prior to executive coaching, with alpha coefficients above .70, with the exception of positive affect which was slightly low at .62. The correlations reported in this table also support the discriminant validity of study measures in that correlations were only moderately strong.

In Table 5.1, there was a positive relationship between team members' and supervisors' perceptions of leaders' transformational leadership behaviour. This supports the reliability of the transformational measures. There was however no relationship between self ratings and team member or supervisor ratings. The pre-

coaching psychological measures are reported in Table 5.2; a significant positive relationship between leaders’ self-efficacy, openness to consider new behaviours and approaches to developmental planning is evident. There was also a significant positive relationship demonstrated between openness to new behaviours and developmental planning.

Table 5.1
Pre-Coaching Behavioural Measures (Full 360 Degree Feedback) – Training and Control Groups^a Correlations and Alpha Coefficients

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3
1 Transformational Leadership (Team Member rated)	3.38	.49	(α .98)		
2 Transformational Leadership (Supervisor rated)	3.57	.72	.49*	(α .97)	
3 Transformational Leadership (Self rated)	3.91	.48	-.28	-.27	(α .93)

^a n=20⁶.

* $p < .05$

Two tailed tests.

⁶ One leader who did participate in executive coaching is not represented in these analyses as he did not complete the full 360 degree feedback tool.

Table 5.2
Pre-Coaching Psychological Measures – Training (Wave 1) and Control (Wave 2) Groups^a Correlations and Alpha Coefficients

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5
1 Self-efficacy	3.41	.75	(α .96)				
2 Developmental Support	3.55	.73	.13	(α .84)			
3 Positive Affect	3.32	.45	.22	.14	(α .62)		
4 Openness to New Behaviours	3.61	.57	.51*	-.05	.29	(α .79)	
5 Developmental Planning	2.89	.69	.37 [†]	.32	.23	.55*	(α .81)

^a n=21.

[†] $p < .10$

* $p < .05$

Two tailed tests.

Before testing the first hypothesis, it was necessary to determine whether the nine leaders who did not volunteer to participate in executive coaching were different from the twenty-seven leaders who did participate in executive coaching. An independent groups t-test analysed leaders' responses to the psychological items in the full 360 degree feedback questionnaire conducted prior to the commencement of the transformational leadership development program. One leader who did participate in executive coaching is not represented in these analyses as he did not complete the first 360 degree feedback tool. Therefore the sample for this analysis consists of twenty-six leaders who originally chose to participate and nine who did not participate in executive coaching. Given the differing sample size for the two groups and because the samples had quite different standard deviations, a conservative approach was adopted to interpret the results for all variables, reporting

the equal variances not assumed statistics (Francis, 2004). The results were as follows: self-efficacy, $t(16.21) = -.41, p > .10$; developmental support, $t(11.70) = .92, p > .10$; positive affect, $t(16.77) = .60, p > .10$; openness to new behaviours, $t(16.34) = .27, p > .10$; developmental planning, $t(10.76) = .95, p > .10$. Thus, both groups of leaders (those who chose to participate in executive coaching and made up the sample for this study, and those who did not choose to participate in executive coaching) were essentially the same prior to commencing executive coaching.

The Effect of Executive Coaching on Transformational Leadership

The first analysis was designed to determine whether there was a difference in transformational leadership after the training group completed six executive coaching sessions but before the control group commenced executive coaching (H1). Thus, both groups were compared at the same point in time to measure the impact of executive coaching on leader behaviour (wave 2). Self report, team member and supervisor ratings were collected through the mini 360 degree feedback questionnaire. Data from twenty-three leaders, twenty-three supervisors and 110 team members were used in this analysis⁷. An independent groups t-test demonstrated significant differences in perceptions of transformational leadership behaviour between the training group and the control group, as rated by their team members, however, there was no significant difference in the ratings from supervisors, or in leader self ratings. The results are reported in Table 5.3 and *Figure 5.2* and represent partial support for H1.

⁷ This number reflects the eleven leaders who were randomly assigned to the training group, and the twelve leaders who were randomly assigned to the control group. One leader did not receive feedback from his team members, thus his team member ratings are not reported in the team member output presented.

Table 5.3
The Effects of Executive Coaching on Transformational Leadership Behaviour: Means, Standard Deviations and Independent Groups T-Test Statistics – Training and Control Groups at Wave 2^a

Rater	Training Group		Control Group		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.			
Team member	3.73	.31	3.38	.55	1.74 [†]	20	.79
Supervisor	3.79	.63	3.62	.44	.74	21	.32
Self	3.87	.44	3.88	.46	-.03	21	-.01

^a n=23 refer footnote 7.

[†] *p* < .10

Two tailed tests.

Cohen’s *d* small = 0.2; medium = 0.5; large = 0.8.

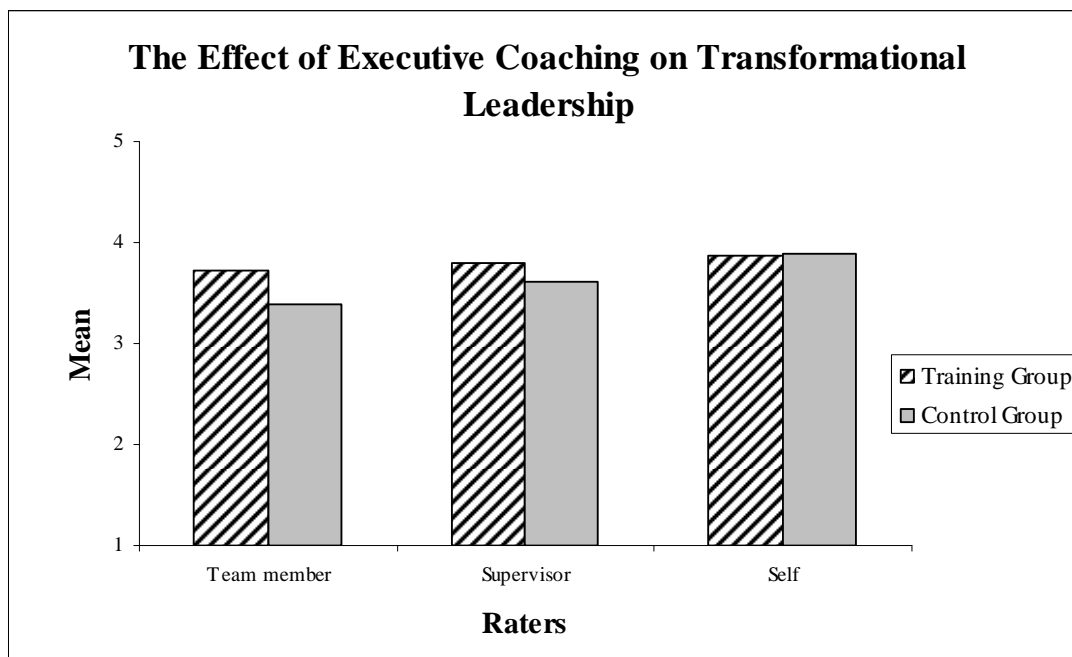


Figure 5.2. The Effect of Executive Coaching on Transformational Leadership – Training and Control Group at Wave 2.

Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Transformational Leadership

The second way in which this study examined the effects of executive coaching on transformational leadership behaviour was by exploring change, from pre-coaching (wave 1 for the training group, wave 2 for the control group) to post-coaching (wave 2 for the training group, wave 3 for the control group), in leaders' specific development areas. Hypothesis 2 proposed that after six executive coaching sessions there would be behavioural increases specific to the individual leader's development area as rated by leaders, their supervisors and team members. These analyses were undertaken using the combined sample, consisting of leaders from the training and control group (n=20)⁸. Data were returned from twenty leaders, their supervisors (n=20) and team members (n=100). A paired samples t-test was used to compare the leaders' self, supervisor and team member ratings on the average of the three items measuring leaders' specific developmental areas, pre-and-post executive coaching.

Providing partial support for H2, the results indicated that team members' ratings showed a significant improvement in the leader's individual developmental areas, after executive coaching. However, the feedback from the supervisors and the leaders themselves did not change significantly over time (refer Table 5.4, on page 160). The results are graphically presented in *Figure 5.3*, on page 161. Cohen's *d*

⁸ One leader did not have team member data and has been excluded from this analysis, and an additional two leaders who were in the control group for the first analysis (H1) did not undertake executive coaching and therefore could not be included in this analysis (H2) as they had no identified development areas. In line with the design of this study, the control group had received executive coaching by this time and provided data for the investigation. The control group is therefore the second experimental group however they will continue to be referred to as the control group to facilitate identification.

calculations are also presented in Table 5.4 using the original means and standard deviations for computing the effect size, rather than the paired t-test value. The original data were used to minimise the likelihood of overestimation of the actual effect size (Dunlop et al., 1996).

Table 5.4
Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Transformational Leadership: Means, Standard Deviations and Paired Samples T-Test Statistics – Training and Control Groups (with Leaders' Specific Development Areas Identified)^a

Rater	Pre-Coaching		Post-Coaching		Paired Differences		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.			
Team member	3.42	.54	3.61	.50	.19	.32	2.71*	19	.37
Supervisor	3.51	.80	3.58	.67	.08	.75	.45	19	.09
Self	3.93	.40	3.78	.69	-.15	.71	-.94	19	-.27

^a n=20.

* $p < .05$

Two tailed tests.

Cohen's *d* small = 0.2; medium = 0.5; large = 0.8.

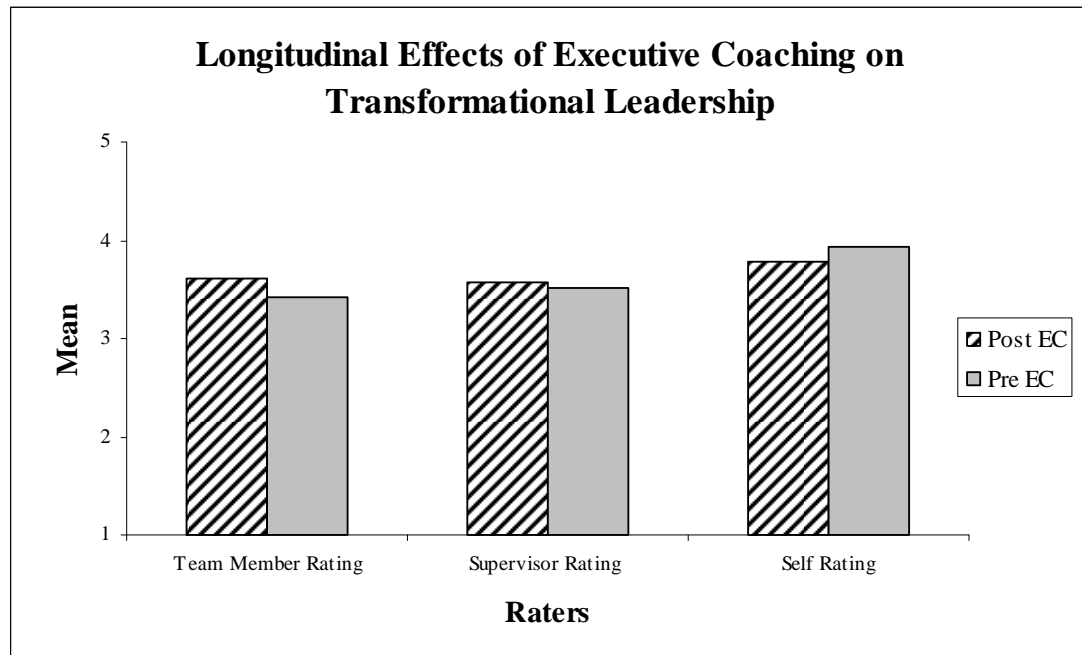


Figure 5.3. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Transformational Leadership – Training and Control Groups combined (with Leaders’ specific development areas identified).

The Effect of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures

The third hypothesis predicted that the training and control groups would differ in their level of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning after the training group completed executive coaching, and prior to the control group commencing executive coaching (i.e. wave 2). Before testing for these differences a series of independent groups t-tests were conducted to confirm that the training and control groups did not differ on the psychological measures before the coaching intervention. The results of these initial analyses using pre-coaching data revealed that prior to coaching, the training and control groups did not differ significantly on any of the measures, specifically, self-efficacy, $t(20) = .89, p > .10$; developmental support, $t(20) = .30, p > .10$;

positive affect, $t(20) = -.56, p > .10$; openness to new behaviours, $t(20) = .28, p > .10$; and developmental planning, $t(20) = .50, p > .10$.

Table 5.5, on page 163, presents the descriptive statistics for the training and control groups, pre (wave 1 – training group, and wave 2 – control group), and post (wave 2 – training group, and wave 3 – control group) executive coaching. The hypothesis (H3) was tested using a series of independent groups t-tests, reported in Table 5.6, on page 163. The independent groups t-tests indicated that, compared with the control group at wave 2, the training group was significantly higher in self-efficacy, $t(18) = 2.00, p < .10$; their experience of developmental support, $t(18) = 2.16, p < .05$; openness to new behaviours, $t(18) = 4.24, p < .01$; and developmental planning, $t(18) = 5.41, p < .01$. However, the training and control groups did not differ significantly in their reported levels of positive affect, $t(18) = .88, p > .10$. Thus, Hypothesis 3 received partial support; leaders in the training group (who received executive coaching) were higher on all variables except positive affect, when compared, at the same point in time – wave 2 – with the control group (who had not received executive coaching). *Figure 5.4*, on page 164, depicts the differences between the two groups of leaders on the study measures graphically.

Table 5.5
Descriptive Statistics for the Psychological Measures – Training^a and Control^b Groups

Variable	Training Group Pre-coaching (Wave 1)		90 % Confidence Interval		Control Group Pre-coaching (Wave 2)		90 % Confidence Interval		Training Group after Six Coaching Sessions (Wave 2)		90 % Confidence Interval		Control Group after Six Coaching Sessions (Wave 3)		90 % Confidence Interval	
	Mean	s.d.	Lower/Upper Bound		Mean	s.d.	Lower/Upper Bound		Mean	s.d.	Lower/Upper Bound		Mean	s.d.	Lower/Upper Bound	
Self-efficacy	3.58	.49	3.16	4.00	3.22	.97	3.66	4.23	3.95	.61	3.66	4.23	4.03	.41	3.74	4.32
Developmental Support	3.72	.56	3.32	4.12	3.46	.86	3.06	3.86	4.12	.44	3.87	4.37	4.36	.47	4.11	4.61
Positive Affect	3.32	.43	3.06	3.58	3.36	.50	3.10	3.62	3.58	.61	3.26	3.90	3.72	.56	3.40	4.04
Openness to New Behaviours	3.95	.51	3.69	4.21	3.25	.44	2.99	3.51	4.25	.19	3.93	4.57	4.08	.19	3.75	4.40
Developmental Planning	3.02	.70	2.63	3.41	2.80	.72	2.41	3.18	4.20	.40	3.96	4.44	4.34	.46	4.10	4.58

^a n=10.
^b n=10.

Table 5.6
Comparing the Training and the Control Groups on the Psychological Measures at Wave 2^a: Means, Standard Deviations and T-Test Statistics

Variable	Training Group		Control Group		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.			
Self-efficacy	3.95	.61	3.22	.97	2.00*	18	.90
Developmental Support	4.12	.44	3.46	.86	2.16**	18	.97
Positive Affect	3.58	.61	3.36	.50	.88	18	.39
Openness to New Behaviours	4.25	.19	3.25	.44	4.24***	18	1.90
Developmental Planning	4.20	.40	2.80	.72	5.41***	18	2.40

^a n=20.
 * *p* < .05
 ** *p* < .01
 *** *p* < .001
 Two tailed tests.
 Cohen’s *d* small = 0.2; medium = 0.5; large = 0.8.

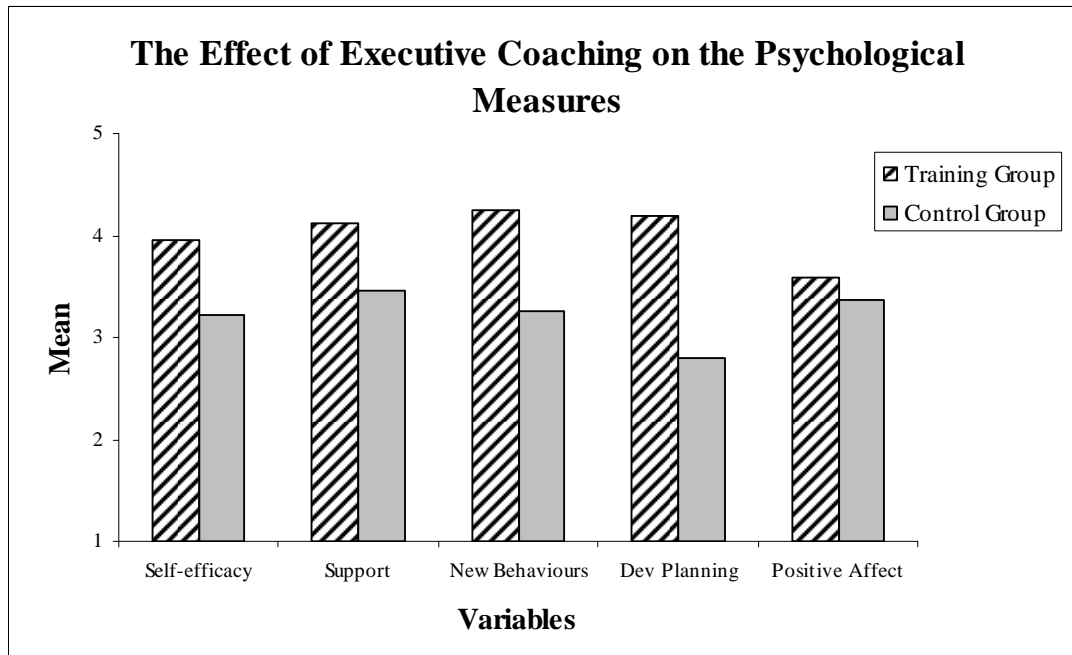


Figure 5.4. Comparing the Training and the Control Group on the Psychological Measures at Wave 2.

After testing both groups of leaders at the same point in time and discovering that all variables, except positive affect, were significantly different after executive coaching, a 2 (group) x 2 (time) mixed factorial ANOVA was used to check that this between group difference did not reflect the control group decreasing, as it had in Study One. The analyses revealed that there was significant variation in participants’ self-efficacy $F(1, 18) = 14.52, p < .001$, developmental support $F(1, 18) = 13.85, p < .05$, positive affect $F(1, 18) = 7.23, p < .05$, openness to new behaviours $F(1, 18) = 15.75, p < .001$ and developmental planning $F(1, 18) = 52.18, p < .001$ when measured after six executive coaching sessions. A Pairwise comparison of the post-hoc analyses, with a Sidak adjustment to decrease the chance of error in multiple comparisons, identified sources of the significant overall effects. These analyses revealed that the training group ($n=10$) did not demonstrate significant increases after executive coaching on any of the psychological measures, except developmental planning, which was significant with a mean difference of 1.18, $p < .001$. However,

the control group ($n=10$)⁹ did demonstrate significant increases after executive coaching on all psychological variables as follows: self-efficacy, mean difference .81, $p < .05$; developmental support, mean difference .90, $p < .05$; positive affect, mean difference .36, $p < .05$; openness to new behaviours, mean difference .83, $p < .05$; developmental planning, mean difference 1.55, $p < .001$. Examining both randomly allocated groups of leaders did not provide any insight into the pattern of results displayed in the training and control groups. It is acknowledged that with a small sample size the ability to truly distribute leaders in a random manner is somewhat limited, nonetheless there were no obvious distinguishing features in terms of leaders' age, gender, and level of experience or education that could provide insight into the results. Further, there were no statistical differences between the groups of leaders on the psychological measures prior to executive coaching.

The Effect of Executive Coaching over time on the Psychological Measures

Additional analyses were undertaken to measure the long-term impact of executive coaching on these variables over time (H4). One aim with this analysis was to overcome the measurement problem identified in Study One, where the pre-coaching data from the training group appeared to be inflated as a result of being collected on the final day of the training workshop. In this second study, (and similarly in Study One) data from the training and control groups were combined⁹, but this time, the training group data were collected immediately prior to the leaders commencing executive coaching, rather than at the end of the workshop as in Study

⁹ In line with the design of this study, the control group had received executive coaching by this time and provided data for the investigation. The control group is therefore the second experimental group however they will continue to be referred to as the control group to facilitate identification.

One. This analysis identified whether the psychological measures increased from prior to coaching (wave 1 for the training group, and wave 2 for the control group), to after six executive coaching sessions (wave 2 for the training group, and wave 3 for the control group), and then if the effects of this change were sustained post-coaching, at the six month follow-up (wave 4 for the training group, and wave 5 for the control group).

The sample consisted of 16 leaders who returned all questionnaires for the relevant time periods. A repeated measures ANOVA was used to analyse these data and test for change over time. The results for each of the five variables are presented in Table 5.7, on page 169. The analyses revealed that there was significant variation over time in participants' self-efficacy $F(2, 30) = 11.48, p < .001$, developmental support $F(2, 30) = 3.17, p < .10$, positive affect $F(2, 30) = 3.09, p < .10$, openness to new behaviours $F(2, 30) = 8.73, p < .001$ and developmental planning $F(2, 30) = 29.65, p < .001$.

A Pairwise comparison of the post-hoc analyses, with a Sidak adjustment to decrease the chance of error in multiple comparisons, identified sources of the significant overall effects. These analyses revealed that the pattern of change varied according to the variable under analysis. For **self-efficacy** there was a significant increase from pre-coaching to after six coaching sessions, mean difference .39, $p < .05$, and from pre-coaching to the six month follow-up, mean difference .46, $p < .05$. The same pattern was reported for **openness to new behaviours**, with a significant increase from pre-coaching to after six coaching sessions, mean difference .47, $p < .05$, and pre-coaching to the six month follow-up, mean difference .53, $p < .05$. As predicted, there was no significant change on either of these variables from after six

executive coaching sessions to the follow-up six months later. These results support H4, leaders did show an increase from pre-executive coaching to after six executive coaching sessions, and this increase was sustained six months after completing executive coaching.

The pattern of change associated with the measures of **developmental support** and **developmental planning** differed slightly. As before, there was an increase from pre-coaching up to the sixth coaching session (mean difference .44, $p < .05$, developmental support, and mean difference 1.15 $p < .05$, developmental planning) and for developmental planning (but not developmental support) there was also a significant increase from pre-coaching to six months after completing executive coaching, mean difference .79 $p < .05$. However in this instance there was also a significant decrease after six coaching sessions to the post-coaching data collected at the six month follow-up, (mean difference -.39, $p < .10$, developmental support; mean difference -.36 $p < .05$, developmental planning). Though for developmental planning, the decrease was not to the pre-coaching level. There was still a significant effect reported for developmental planning from pre-coaching, to after six executive coaching sessions, which was higher than the pre-coaching level when measured six months later. Therefore, the results for developmental planning still support H4 as some of the effect associated with executive coaching was sustained over the long-term. The results for developmental support, on the other hand, did not support H4 as the change was not sustained six months after executive coaching ceased.

Positive affect did not demonstrate significant effects in any of the Pairwise comparisons with either the Bonferroni or Sidak adjustments for multiple

comparisons¹⁰. There was overall change in positive affect demonstrated in the test of within-subject effects where there was greater power (showing increases from pre-coaching, to after six executive coaching sessions, to six months later, with a significance level of $p < .10$). However, the change was not powerful enough to be detected in the post-hoc analyses. Thus, the results for positive affect did not support H4.

Therefore, H4 was partially supported in that effects of executive coaching on self-efficacy, openness to new behaviour, and developmental planning were observed up to six months after regular coaching sessions ended. However, effects on developmental support were not sustained over the long-term, and the longitudinal effects on positive affect were not powerful enough to be revealed by the post-hoc analyses (although the pattern of change over time was in the predicted direction). The pattern of change over time on these variables is presented on pages 169 to 171 (refer *Figure 5.5* to *Figure 5.9*).

¹⁰ The Sidak adjustment is more likely to identify significant differences because the analysis has more power than the Bonferroni to detect differences (Keppel et al., 2004).

Table 5.7
Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures: Means, Standard Deviations and ANOVA Statistics – Training and the Control Groups^a

Variable	Pre-Coaching		After Six Coaching Sessions		Six Months After Coaching		<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	η_p^2
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.			
Self-efficacy	3.55	.61	3.94	.53	4.01	.34	11.48***	(2, 30)	.43
Developmental Support	3.74	.66	4.18	.46	3.79	.73	3.17*	(2, 30)	.18
Positive Affect	3.34	.45	3.63	.64	3.65	.69	3.09 [†]	(2, 30)	.17
Openness to New Behaviours	3.67	.59	4.14	.61	4.20	.55	8.73***	(2, 30)	.37
Developmental Planning	3.08	.63	4.24	.42	3.88	.35	29.65***	(2, 30)	.66

^a n=16.
[†] $p < .10$
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$
Two tailed tests.

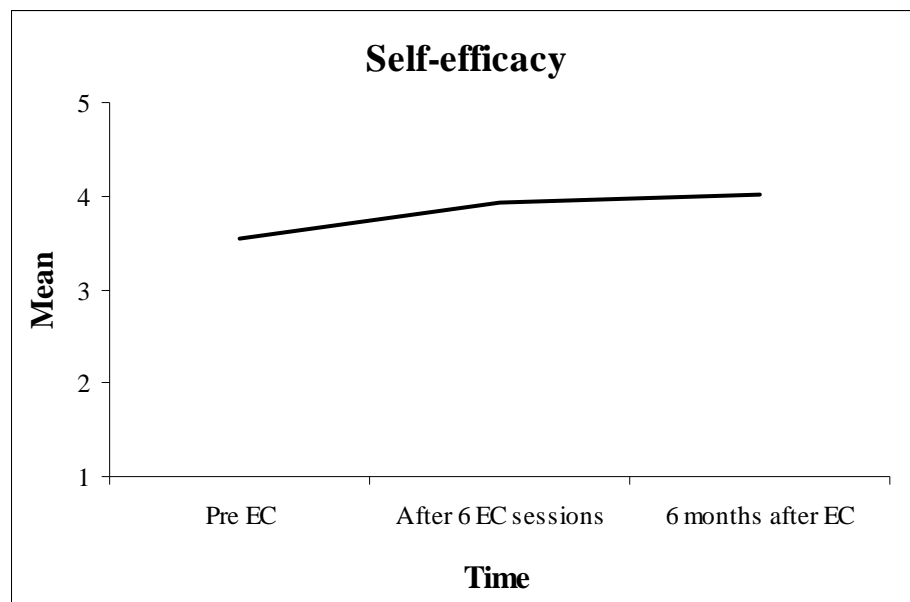


Figure 5.5. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Self-efficacy (Training and Control Groups).

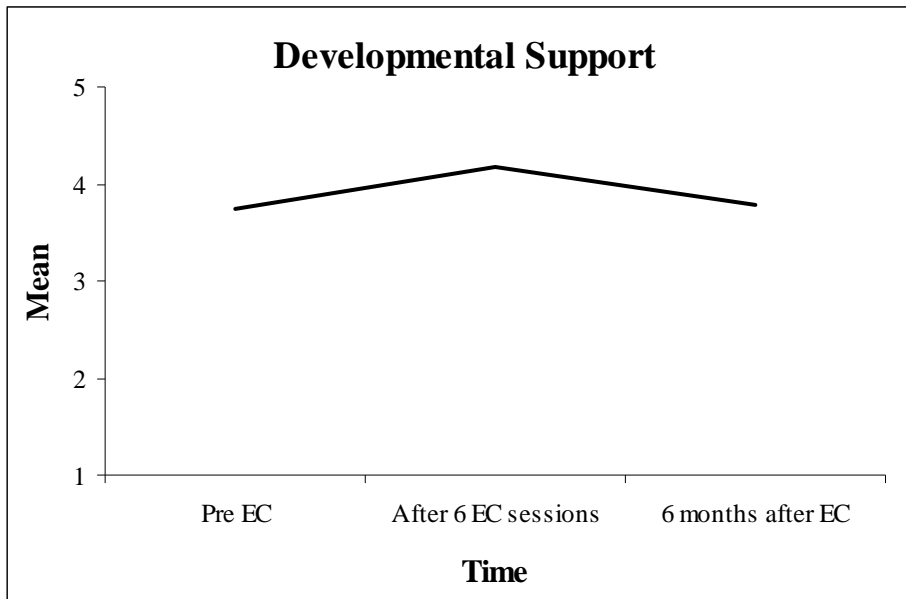


Figure 5.6. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Developmental Support (Training and Control Groups).

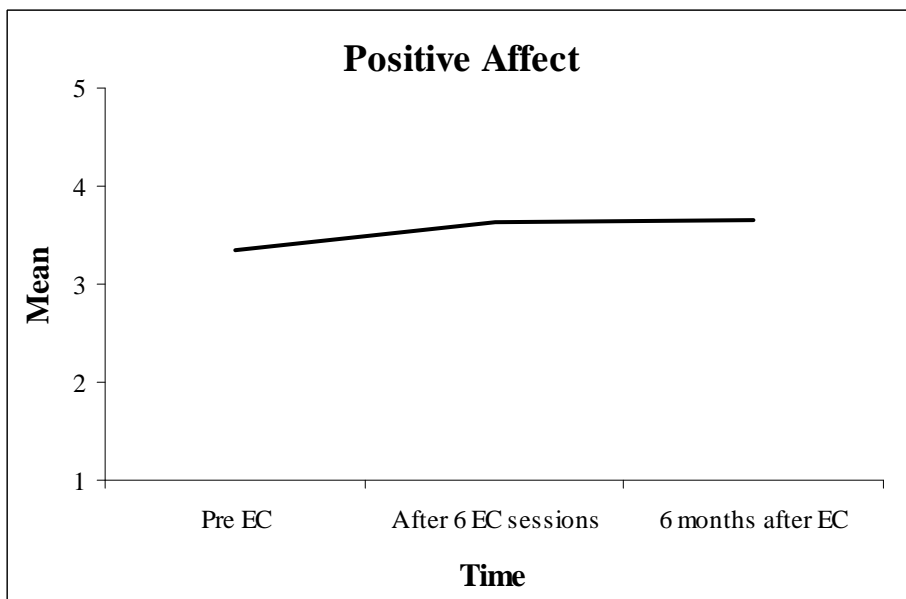


Figure 5.7. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Positive Affect (Training and Control Groups).

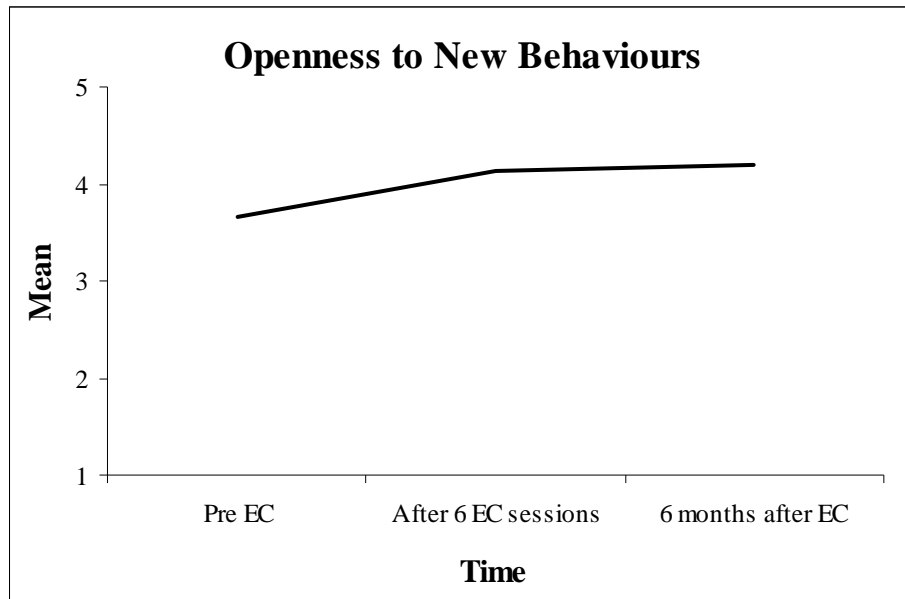


Figure 5.8. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Openness to New Behaviours (Training and Control Groups).

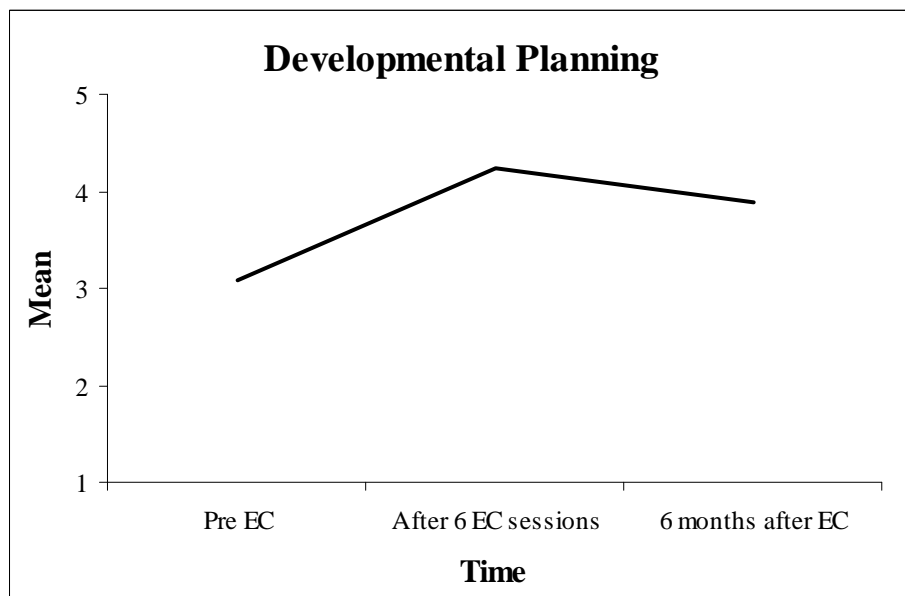


Figure 5.9. Longitudinal Effects of Executive Coaching on Developmental Planning (Training and Control Groups).

The Effect of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures – Study One and Study Two Data Combined

Having completed all of the planned analyses for this study, there remained some ambiguity as regards the effect of executive coaching on the psychological measures. Specifically, the effect tested in the analysis where the training group was compared with the control group at the time when the training group had completed executive coaching and the control group was yet to commence executive coaching. In Study One (reported in Chapter 4), post-hoc testing revealed that the significant difference between the training and control groups occurred because there was a decrease in the control group before they commenced executive coaching, rather than because the training group increased after executive coaching. In Study Two it was found that there was no change on the psychological measures for the training group (except on the measure of developmental planning); but the control group demonstrated significant differences after executive coaching on all of the psychological variables.

Both studies were based on relatively small sample sizes, thus it was possible that the failure to observe the predicted improvement associated with the coaching intervention for the training group was due to a lack of statistical power. By combining the samples from the two studies (Chapter 4 and 5)¹¹ this problem could be reduced. It was appropriate to pool this data because both samples experienced the same intervention, completed the same measures, and were operating in the same

¹¹ Data were utilised from both the training and control groups in Study One and Study Two. As the control groups in each study also received executive coaching (after the training groups had completed coaching), they are the second experimental group, however, they will continue to be referred to as the control group to facilitate identification.

organisational context. Therefore, a final analysis was conducted in this study utilising available data from the leaders for the relevant time periods from Study One and Study Two combined (n=34). The purpose was to provide a more conclusive answer about the effect of executive coaching on the psychological measures.

The combined analysis was designed to test, with a series of paired samples t-tests, the difference between leaders' responses to each of the psychological measures, pre- and post-executive coaching. The first paired samples t-test demonstrated statistically significant differences after leaders had completed executive coaching on all psychological variables (refer Table 5.8, on page 174). An examination of the effect sizes with Cohen's *d* calculations is also presented. The original means and standard deviations have been used to compute the effect sizes rather than the paired t-test value. The original data was used to minimise the likelihood of overestimation of the actual effect size (Dunlop et al., 1996). The results are reported in Table 5.8, on page 174, and demonstrate an association between executive coaching and psychological change on all the measures.

Table 5.8
A Pre and Post Examination of the Effects of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures: Means, Standard Deviations and Paired Samples T-Test Statistics – Study One and Study Two (Training and Control Groups)^a

Variable	Pre-Executive Coaching		Post-Executive Coaching		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.			
Self-efficacy	3.63	.71	3.99	.53	3.32***	33	.57
Developmental Support	3.75	.69	4.19	.66	3.31***	33	.65
Positive Affect	3.42	.50	3.70	.58	3.22***	33	.52
Openness to New Behaviours	3.65	.65	4.18	.57	4.59***	33	.87
Developmental Planning	3.14	.80	4.31	.44	8.06***	33	1.81

^a n=34.

*** $p < .001$

Two tailed tests.

Cohen's *d* small = 0.2; medium = 0.5; large = 0.8.

The results displayed in Table 5.8, provide strong support for the impact of executive coaching on the psychological variables. To validate these results, an additional paired t-test was conducted on the combined data from Study One and Study Two, but using only data from the training group. This additional analysis using only the training group data was deemed necessary to ensure that the statistically significant change demonstrated in Table 5.8, (which was evidenced when combining data from the training and control groups), could be replicated when only data from the training group was examined. This was an important post-hoc analysis because the previous examination of the training group data from both Study One and Study Two did not demonstrate statistically significant increases for any of the psychological measures (except developmental planning). Without this post-hoc analysis, the statistically significant increases displayed in Table 5.8 could have been due to the influence of the control group, rather than because of actual change

demonstrated by the training group. As the results of the post-hoc analysis confirm though (refer to Table 5.9, below) there were also significant differences on all the psychological measures, except positive affect, when only the training group data were analysed. Thus, the effects of executive coaching on the psychological measures were replicated in both the training and control groups.

Table 5.9
A Pre and Post Examination of the Effects of Executive Coaching on the Psychological Measures: Means, Standard Deviations and Paired Samples T-Test Statistics – Study One and Study Two (Training Group)^a

Variable	Pre-Executive Coaching		Post-Executive Coaching		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.			
Self-efficacy	3.76	.55	4.04	.53	4.13*	16	.52
Developmental Support	3.93	.59	4.19	.55	1.95 [†]	16	.46
Positive Affect	3.36	.49	3.58	.60	1.47	16	.40
Openness to New Behaviours	3.96	.57	4.28	.61	2.52*	16	.54
Developmental Planning	3.27	.92	4.33	.45	5.12***	16	1.46

^a n=17.

[†] $p < .10$

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Two tailed tests.

Cohen's *d* small = 0.2; medium = 0.5; large = 0.8.

Discussion

In this study the effects of executive coaching on transformational leadership were explored using two approaches. In the first instance, a traditional experimental design was used to investigate whether leaders in the training group who had been exposed to executive coaching received higher ratings in transformational leadership behaviour compared with leaders in the control group. In the second instance this study examined whether change in transformational behaviour was observed in those areas that were the focus of leaders' developmental efforts (i.e. the three items that reflected the leaders' specific developmental areas from executive coaching). Both approaches yielded similar findings in that the team member feedback identified significant improvement in leaders' transformational leadership behaviour after executive coaching. Team members are working closely with the leaders, thus placing them in a good position to notice such improvements.

There were however no significant changes in leaders' self or supervisor ratings after executive coaching. The supervisor results were moving in the right direction in both the behavioural analyses, but were not significantly increased. Supervisors do not interact with the leaders as frequently and therefore have less chance of seeing change in leader behaviour, particularly leaders' behaviour with their team members (Morgenson, Mumford, & Campion, 2005; Pfau & Kay, 2002). Additionally, as the change in leader behaviour was measured after six executive coaching sessions – which was approximately twelve weeks, the timeframe may not have been sufficient for supervisors to observe such change given their less frequent interaction with the leaders.

There was also no evidence that the leaders viewed improvement in their transformational leadership behaviour as a result of executive coaching. Rather, there was a non-significant trend in the reverse direction for both analyses. These results are consistent with the correlations reported for the pre-coaching measures using the full 360 degree feedback measures. The correlations showed that, although not significant, leaders' ratings were negatively associated with supervisor and team member ratings. This may have occurred because leader self-ratings were higher than the ratings of the team members and supervisors at the first data collection, and as leaders became more self-aware through executive coaching, a more accurate assessment of behaviour resulted. Certainly the research suggests that when self-raters over rate their behaviour, their subsequent ratings tend to decrease as a result of feedback (Atwater et al., 1995; Atwater, Waldman, Atwater, & Cartier, 2000; Eichinger & Lombardo, 2003; Luthans et al., 2003).

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) further support this proposition. They reported that one third of feedback interventions they reviewed resulted in negative changes in performance. They argue that after feedback the individual's awareness is heightened and their focus of attention is moved from general work performance issues to more specific issues to do with the individual self. This pattern was displayed in Saling's (2005a) research. After leaders received the feedback, training and coaching intervention, their scores decreased rather than increased (Saling, 2005a). Luthans and Peterson (2003) propose that self-awareness through coaching leads to less incongruence between self and other ratings in 360 degree feedback. The findings of their study indicated that the coachees self-ratings did not increase over the coaching period, but that others' ratings did increase. Similarly, in Thach's

(2002) study measuring executive coaching and 360 degree feedback as a leadership intervention, she reported that although the leaders' self reported increases after executive coaching, they reported slightly lower levels of self-rated leadership than their peers, subordinates and managers. Thus, it seems that after receiving feedback, leader self-ratings may not be consistent with ratings from other sources, and frequently decrease to become more congruent with others' ratings.

The team member ratings of transformational leadership behaviour can be considered more valid and reliable than supervisor and self-ratings for a number of reasons. First, team members are well placed to observe leader behaviour; second, their ratings are based on at least five responses, rather than the supervisor feedback which consists of one single response (Atkins & Wood, 2002a). The self-rating on the other hand, may be affected by bias (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). Thus, it is concluded that executive coaching has observable effects on transformational leadership behaviour when rated by leaders' team members.

Consistent with the Study One findings, in this study statistically significant effects (differences between the training and control groups) were demonstrated for four of the five psychological states, namely self-efficacy, developmental support, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. Once more, a significant effect was not observed for the measure of positive affect.

However, because of the unexpected findings associated with Study One, these findings were examined further by carrying out a pre vs. post experimental group design with two experimental groups, namely the training group and the control group (who by this time had received executive coaching). This analysis

once again revealed an unexpected pattern of change over time. That is, whilst the control group displayed the expected improvement from pre-coaching to post-coaching, this pattern was not evidenced for the leaders from the training group, where a significant increase was only reported on the measure of developmental planning. Thus, the observed difference between the training group and the control group at the time when the training group had completed coaching but the control group had not, appeared to be due to the fact that the control group had lower pre-coaching measures than the training group.

These results are interesting as there were no significant differences between leaders in the training and control groups prior to commencement of the study, and the pre-coaching data from both groups of leaders was collected immediately before leaders commenced executive coaching. However, the pre-coaching data for the control group was lower than the pre-coaching data from the training group leaders. A similar pattern was observed in Study One, where this difference was attributed to the fact that the training group results were inflated as a result of being collected at the end of the two day training workshop. However, in Study Two, the pre-coaching data were collected from the training and control groups immediately prior to leaders commencing executive coaching to minimise inflation effects associated with the training workshop. In spite of this change to study protocol, it remained true that for the training group, the period of time between the end of the workshop and the beginning of coaching was minimal. The higher means for this group on all the psychological measures before executive coaching suggest that the training group's pre-coaching data may still have been positively influenced by the training workshop.

On the other hand, it is possible to speculate that the lower pre-coaching measures for the control group may have occurred because the control group had to wait approximately twelve weeks while the training group completed six executive coaching sessions before they commenced executive coaching. Anecdotal feedback from leaders though would suggest otherwise, with requests from leaders (prior to random allocation, and not taken into account) for the second (i.e. the control group), rather than first coaching group. Nonetheless, it may be that there was some resentful demoralisation from control group leaders while they waited for executive coaching (Cook et al., 1979) and hence were more negative when they completed their pre-coaching questionnaire resulting in lower responses than the leaders in the first training group.

Thus, the planned analyses from Study One and Study Two did not provide conclusive evidence about the effect of executive coaching on the psychological measures as observed differences between the training and control groups were not associated with the expected increase over time for the training group on the psychological measures. To ensure this negative result was not due to statistical power, one final investigation was conducted. To increase power, a larger data set consisting of all leaders who participated in Study One (Chapter 4) and Study Two (Chapter 5) were used. These results measuring change in leaders' psychological states from pre- to post-executive coaching were significant and confirmed that after executive coaching leaders experienced greater self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning, when compared with leaders' pre-coaching measures. This effect was still observed when data for the Study One and Study Two training groups were examined in isolation.

Thus, when the data from the two studies were combined, the effect of executive coaching on the psychological measures is observed, and the expected pattern of change over time (improvement from pre-coaching to post-coaching) could also be discerned.

The data from the two studies, when combined, provided evidence that executive coaching produced psychological changes in leaders which improved their confidence, and desire to consider alternate ways of behaving with their team. Executive coaching also increased the amount of support the leader perceived was available for their future developmental needs and their positive feelings towards the organisation. Thus, it is concluded that leaders experience psychological benefits from participating in executive coaching.

A third issue addressed by this study was whether these psychological effects were maintained once regular coaching sessions had ended. Thus, leaders were asked to complete the psychological measures again, six months after their sixth coaching session. The pattern of change over time (from pre-coaching, to immediately post-coaching, to the six month follow-up) was analysed and varied somewhat. After six executive coaching sessions, all variables, (except positive affect) demonstrated significant increases from their pre-coaching measurement. When the data was collected again, six months after regular coaching sessions had ended, self-efficacy, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning remained significantly higher than their pre-coaching levels. The effect of executive coaching on developmental support was not sustained at the six month follow-up. The latter finding, though unexpected, is understandable in that there was a concrete change to the support available to leaders with, and without, executive coaching. During the

executive coaching program the leaders had fortnightly contact with their coach, who provided support and also accountability for fulfilling actions. The end of regular coaching sessions therefore represented the end of a salient form of developmental support.

The longitudinal pattern exhibited by the measure of developmental planning also differed somewhat from the trend exhibited by the other psychological measures. Whilst the six month follow-up measure was significantly higher than the pre-coaching measure, there was a significant decrease from post-coaching to the six month follow-up, suggesting that *some* of the impact of executive coaching on developmental planning is lost once regular coaching sessions end. Further research is required to explain this pattern. It may be that as a result of executive coaching the leader's psychological approach to planning for the future has been permanently altered. The decrease between the second (six sessions) and third measures (six months) may be more of a stabilising effect down from the large initial increase that occurred because leaders had not given much thought to developmental planning prior to executive coaching. Thus, it may be that leaders do indeed continue to plan for their future success, but not at such an elevated level.

Positive affect did not display significant effects in any of the post-hoc comparisons, however the repeated measures ANOVA, which has higher statistical power (Greene, 1996; Keppel et al., 2004), identified significant increases over time. Thus, executive coaching may still have had an impact on positive affect, but the effect size may not have been sufficiently large to overcome the relatively low statistical power associated with the between-group analysis. Cohen's *d* (Cohen,

1988) confirmed that the effect size for positive affect was moderately small at $d=.39$ compared with large effect sizes for the other variables.

One reason why a smaller effect size may have been seen for the measure of positive affect (compared to the other study measures) is because this measure is not very specific in its focus. Whereas the other study measures were concerned with leadership and development, the measure of positive affect asked respondents about their experience of positive affect over the past month at work. Some leaders commented during executive coaching sessions, that whilst they “felt excited about the executive coaching”, they were “not necessarily excited about the organisation as a whole at the moment”. At the time, the organisation was in a period of turbulence arising from planned mergers and unexpected public investigations at this affected leaders’ feelings about the organisation. For example, one leader commented that after fifteen years of being employed by the organisation, he had never seen it in such upheaval from ongoing public investigations, political disgraces and public protest. These factors would have reduced the size of the effect on positive affect.

These findings regarding the long-term psychological effects associated with executive coaching contrast somewhat with those from Study One (Chapter 4). In Study One, when using the control group data only, there were significant increases from the pre-coaching data to the data collected six months after executive coaching on all the psychological measures. In fact, the Study One analyses based on the control group also revealed a tendency for psychological measures to continue to improve from post-coaching up to the six month follow-up. Thus, whilst both studies suggest that executive coaching has long-term psychological benefits, the results for the Study One control group were more positive in that they were

exhibited for all measures. However, the Study One findings for the control group must be viewed cautiously because the sample from which the conclusions were drawn was very small. Even though the findings for Study Two do not support sustained improvement on all the variables as hypothesised, these results are more credible because the sample is larger and the conclusions were drawn from the combined training and control group data (as opposed to the control group only in Study One). Thus, the pattern of change over time from the Study Two analysis will be further examined.

Study Two findings suggest that it is possible to differentiate the psychological effects of executive coaching in terms of whether they are short-term or sustained. Effects of executive coaching on self-efficacy and openness to new behaviours appear to be sustained. However, developmental support and to a lesser extent, developmental planning measures, which are specifically concerned with leaders' development, do not show sustained impact. Bandura (1977) argues that a person's self-efficacy is largely determined by previous performance. Thus, successes experienced during executive coaching are likely to increase leaders' feelings of confidence into the future. After achieving small successes, leaders are more open to identify a range of new behaviour options, as they seek to achieve mastery (Wakefield, 2006). The maintenance of positive change in leaders' psychological states after executive coaching is an important outcome of this study because it suggests that executive coaching has an impact that is not evidenced in many training programs. Conger (1992), for example, noted that most leadership programs had a half-life of a few days or weeks after the training ended with the

transfer of knowledge back to the workplace deteriorating rapidly with the passage of time.

In this study, the psychological effects from executive coaching have been confirmed. There is also evidence of the behavioural impact of executive coaching as evidenced by the improvement in team members' perceptions of the leaders' transformational leadership behaviour. These findings are important because they offer support for the effectiveness of executive coaching as an alternate leadership development tool. There are also theoretical and practical implications arising from this study which provide enhanced information about executive coaching.

Theoretical Implications

Current research into the field of executive coaching is in the early stages with a limited number of rigorous experimental investigations available (Grant, 2005). This study has contributed by increasing understanding of leaders' experience with executive coaching. The combined analysis (using data from leaders in Study One and Study Two) has provided evidence to confirm that after executive coaching, leaders positively changed in all of the psychological states. This finding adds to the earlier contribution by establishing that leaders do indeed experience psychological benefits in positive affect (which was previously not significant) along with self-efficacy, developmental support, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. Further, the longitudinal analysis has shown that the effects of executive coaching continue to positively influence self-efficacy, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning six months after the completion of executive

coaching. Therefore this study provides an empirical contribution about impacts of, and outcomes from, executive coaching.

This information is augmented by the non-self report contributions from this study demonstrating the effect of executive coaching on leaders' transformational leadership behaviour. In these analyses, team members reported behavioural change in leaders as a result of executive coaching, thus confirming a change in observable leader behaviour. The team member feedback is an important source of information on the effects of executive coaching because it provides support to the non-self reported feedback in the literature attesting to the benefits from executive coaching (Jaramillo, Carrillat, & Locander, 2005).

Practical Implications

The outcomes from this study provide useful information for organisations about the value of executive coaching as an alternate leadership development approach. The non-self report data is an important source of information which demonstrates the effectiveness of executive coaching for developing transformational leadership behaviours in the context of an overall developmental program aimed at supporting transformational leadership behaviour. This information, combined with the existing evidence of positive outcomes for the leader, their team members and the organisation (Bass, 1999; Hater et al., 1988), suggests that the investment in executive coaching will be worthwhile for organisations.

Further practical outcomes are provided by this research. The longitudinal data demonstrated that leaders' experience of self-efficacy and openness to new

behaviour are expected to be sustained in the longer term after executive coaching has been completed. On the other hand, developmental support decreased after the coaching sessions were completed. The research by Thach (2002) indicated that the amount of support the leader perceived was an important determiner of overall success. Practically, coaches and organisations may wish to consider establishing mechanisms for providing ongoing support for leaders to complement the benefits from coaching. This could be attained by pairing together leaders who have completed executive coaching with a peer support person, to provide, like the coach does, encouragement and accountability for ongoing development when regular coaching sessions finish.

Limitations

As has been discussed, these results contribute to research and practice in the field of executive coaching, but some limitations must be acknowledged. First, the small sample size limited the statistical power of the analyses, nonetheless though, significant results were still demonstrated on the behavioural measures from team members. Additionally, the results from the combined analysis offer strong support for the effects of executive coaching on the psychological measures, and a greater understanding of the effects of executive coaching on these measures over time has been provided. However, a larger sample collected outside the current organisation would still be desirable to establish the reliability and generalisability of the findings.

An important finding from this study was that executive coaching was associated with an improvement in team members' ratings of leaders' transformational leadership behaviour. However, it must be acknowledged that

leaders' team members knew whether their leader was in the training or control group when they completed the leaders' mini 360 degree feedback questionnaire. This prior knowledge may have influenced their responses. Yet, given that the team member feedback was the average of at least five responses, the data is more valid and reliable. The aggregated responses should accurately report the improvement in transformational leadership behaviour. It would be unusual for five independent team members to be influenced by their leaders' participation in leadership development. Further, team members voluntarily participated in providing the feedback; they were not obliged to respond and there was no way to identify their individual responses. Thus, a high degree of confidentiality was guaranteed for team members. Team members were further aware that leaders would not receive feedback reports (containing aggregated team member responses) unless at least five team members replied, again maintaining confidentiality of feedback and reducing pressure upon team members to reply in a socially desirable manner. Therefore, it is concluded the responses from team members about change in leader behaviour were not likely to have been affected by this prior knowledge, and are an accurate representation of their observations.

It should also be recognised that six of the original twenty-seven leaders participating in the study did not complete executive coaching. However, these leaders withdrew from the coaching program because they moved divisions, resulting in changed work structures and reporting relationships which prohibited them from undertaking executive coaching, or left the organisation. According to Bernthal et al. (2001) their research was also plagued by similar problems as they report that 25% of their participants were promoted into other positions, thus changing both their

reporting structure and job responsibilities during the executive coaching program. There is no evidence though to suggest these six leaders were different from the leaders who remained in the study, however, as not all leaders completed the program, equally it can not be concluded that executive coaching will have beneficial effects for all leaders in all work circumstances.

Additionally, the effects observed on transformational leadership may not be reported if executive coaching is not being carried out in a context where the organisation is supporting the development of these behaviours through, for example, training workshops which augment the coaching. Finally, the results could be limited because the leaders in this study volunteered to participate in executive coaching and therefore might not be representative of all leaders.

Further research

This research has established psychological effects and behavioural effects of executive coaching for leaders. The items in this study collecting the behavioural measures on the effect of executive coaching were designed for team members; it is acknowledged that future items should be more carefully considered. In order to observe behavioural effects of executive coaching through supervisor ratings for example, it would be useful to design questionnaire items to measure behaviours that supervisors are likely to observe. Further, in this study the behavioural measure of transformational leadership was not intended to test the effect of executive coaching on the individual transformational leadership dimensions. However, this information would be useful for organisations in tailoring their leadership development, and therefore presents an opportunity for future investigation.

Previous research has linked psychological increases in self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning through goal setting, to transfer of training, behavioural learning, improved performance and effectiveness, and increased innovation (Bandura, 1977; Barling & Beattie, 1983; Burke & Baldwin, 1996; Castro et al., 2003; Cromwell et al., 2004; George, 1991; Locke & Latham, 2002; Pidd, 2004; Tannenbaum et al., 1991). Further research could investigate the impact of executive coaching on these and other outcomes, for example turnover, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. There is existing research which links the psychological variables self-efficacy, positive affect and developmental planning (enacting goal setting), to increased productivity (Cote, 1999; Locke & Latham, 1990b; 2002; Robbins et al., 2003); thus, the relationship between executive coaching and productivity warrants further investigation to extend the work of Olivero et al. (1997) who found that when training was augmented by executive coaching, there was an average increase in productivity by 88%.

The findings from this study suggest that executive coaching is unique in having a sustained impact on participants (compared to other developmental interventions which have been criticised for only having short-term effects). This finding though needs to be confirmed with a more rigorous test of the sustained impact of executive coaching; this would involve delaying the delivery of executive coaching to the control group until after the six month follow-up.

Most importantly, it would be useful to collect qualitative data to triangulate the research and investigate some of the outstanding questions raised by this study. Through qualitative research richer information about executive coaching can be

gained from leaders, their supervisors, team members, and coaches, which would help clarify how executive coaching has its psychological and behavioural effects. Qualitative research would also provide the opportunity to discuss whether there are additional factors which are important in the success of executive coaching. In particular, the previous studies have identified a number of areas for further investigation well suited to qualitative research. For example, during the executive coaching program, the organisational environment presented challenges for leaders, which were identified to their coaches. This anecdotal feedback suggested that the ongoing public investigations, political disgraces and public protest, in addition to the planned merger, and subsequent changes in workload made for a very difficult environment during the time the executive coaching was conducted. However, it is not known whether these contextual issues limited the effectiveness of executive coaching. Further investigation is necessary.

Further, collecting qualitative data for all of the psychological variables examined in the quantitative studies would help broaden the theoretical understanding of how executive coaching has its effects and contribute practical strategies organisations and coaches may find useful. For example, the quantitative results from Study One and Study Two examining positive affect were only significant once Studies One and Two were combined. Perhaps the qualitative data can provide a greater understanding of how executive coaching increases leaders' feelings of enthusiasm and excitement towards their work. Also, the role of developmental support has been acknowledged by leaders as a contributor towards a successful executive coaching outcome. It would be helpful to have a greater understanding of what this entails. In-depth information about how developmental

support is provided through executive coaching could be acquired by interviewing leaders and their coaches to identify the specific aspects that contribute to the significance of this psychological variable. Likewise, understanding the factors associated with developmental planning would be useful, for example, the role of goal setting and action planning in developmental planning. In addition, confirmation of the effects of executive coaching on the study measures would provide support for the quantitative results presented.

Conclusion

To conclude, executive coaching is increasingly being used to develop leadership skills. However until now, there has been very little evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of executive coaching on leaders' transformational leadership behaviour. The ratings from leaders' team members changed over time, revealing improvement in their leader's transformational leadership behaviour after completing executive coaching. Additionally, the results demonstrated that after executive coaching leaders experienced greater self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning, which in the case of self-efficacy, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning were sustained six months after regular coaching sessions ended.

The opportunity now exists for triangulation of techniques in this research program. Study Three, described in Chapter 6 will follow-up the anecdotal feedback received from leaders during the coaching program. This study will also provide information on executive coaching from perspective of the coach, supervisors, team members and the leaders themselves. The less structured nature of the qualitative

interviews will allow the opportunity to examine the five psychological variables from the quantitative research in more depth and may also identify additional psychological states not addressed in this research program. Transformational leadership behaviour will be further investigated to examine the effect of executive coaching on the individual transformational leadership dimensions. Together, this information will provide further insight into how executive coaching contributes to leader development.

CHAPTER SIX

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STUDY THREE

Introduction

The final study in this research program was designed to build upon the findings from Study One and Study Two, employing a qualitative approach to triangulate the previous quantitative research. The purpose was to provide an enhanced understanding of how executive coaching had its effects. This was done by collecting additional information through semi-structured interviews with leaders, their supervisors, team members and coaches to further explore the psychological measures (identified in Study One and Study Two) and investigate the effectiveness of executive coaching as a transformational leadership development approach. Additionally, by interviewing leaders at least twelve months after the completion of their sixth executive coaching session, Study Three examined whether improvements were sustained over time. As a final point, this study sought to understand the contextual issues surrounding the research program by exploring whether there were personal and environmental factors that facilitated or impeded the usefulness of executive coaching for the leaders.

The previous research showed that after six executive coaching sessions leaders' did report change in self-efficacy, positive affect, developmental support, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. Further, the effects for self-efficacy, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning were also sustained over time. The qualitative interviews were designed to confirm the effects of executive coaching on all the variables, and, through additional examination of specific psychological variables (discussed shortly), provide a greater understanding of how executive coaching had its impact. To do this, some of the variables warranted further investigation. In the prior studies, positive affect was not significant until data from Study One and Study Two were combined. Anecdotally during the coaching program many leaders expressed enthusiasm and excitement about executive coaching to their coaches. In Chapter 4, it was argued that the experience a leader had during executive coaching would positively influence their feelings toward the organisation (measured through positive affect), yet this effect was not being consistently demonstrated in the quantitative results, so further exploration was important. Particularly as the existing literature confirmed that positive affect was associated with positive outcomes like higher performance and effectiveness (Castro et al., 2003; George, 1991; Williams et al., 1999). Therefore gaining an increased understanding of the relationship between positive affect and executive coaching through the qualitative interviews provided both theoretical and practical benefits.

Developmental support was another psychological variable examined in greater depth through Study Three. The rationale for this additional investigation arose due to the complexity of the construct. Previous research suggested that

holding leaders accountable for their development and providing feedback through executive coaching were features of the relationship between the leader and coach (Bush, 2004; Ennis, 2004; Hall et al., 1999; Rogers, 2004; Smeltzer, 2003; Thach, 2002). To acquire a deeper understanding of the importance of these characteristics and how they were affected through executive coaching, specific interview questions explored these components.

Finally, the psychological variable developmental planning was further investigated to understand the contribution of goal setting and action planning when leaders were preparing for their future. The existing literature extols the virtues of goal setting because it is known to bring behavioural change when people regulate their performance by the goals they set (Locke & Latham, 1990b). Yet there is little recognition of action planning in the executive coaching literature, though Grant (2001, p. 50) in his coaching research, does discuss the importance of “action planning and action” to complement goal setting. Barling et al. (1996) conducted an investigation into short counselling sessions, used in conjunction with formal training, to develop transformational leadership. The authors’ explained that action plans were developed, but did not provide detail on what this entailed, nor measure the importance of the action plan in facilitating the development of transformational leadership behaviours. This research clarified the value of these techniques for assisting leaders after they had conceptualised what they were trying to improve.

Study Three also examined transformational leadership, with a particular focus on identifying the specific dimensions (namely inspirational motivation, idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration) affected by executive coaching. Studies One and Two demonstrated that team

members noticed significant improvements in leaders' transformational leadership behaviour, and further that improvements in transformational leadership were sustained over time. However, the quantitative investigation identifying these improvements was not designed to provide specific information about which dimensions of transformational behaviour were most affected by executive coaching.

Therefore, Study Three sought to acquire greater depth surrounding these dimensions and other improvements in leadership behaviour due to executive coaching. First, it was anticipated that leaders would communicate more effectively with their team members, becoming more aware of team members' abilities, opportunities for development and professional aspirations, as a result of executive coaching. Developing effective communication skills was one of the most common areas addressed through executive coaching in this research program and was expected to be an underlying theme that affected all dimensions of transformational leadership. For example, increased communication displaying understanding, support and recognition to team members was one expected outcome. In terms of the transformational leadership dimensions, these characteristics are associated with the dimension individualised consideration (Bass, 1985) which has previously been associated with executive coaching (Gegner, 1997).

Executive coaching was also expected to affect, to a lesser degree, intellectual stimulation, where leaders empowered team members toward the organisation's shared values, then encouraged them to question the way things are done and develop their own solutions to work problems (Conger, 1989; Sarros & Santora, 2001). Inspirational motivation, described as providing followers with challenge, purpose and an understanding of mutual objectives (Bass, 1985), may also be

developed as a result of executive coaching. Kampa-Kokesch (2001) has previously identified increased idealised influence as an outcome of executive coaching. In this current study it may be identified if it is reported leaders are setting standards for team members to aspire to, and establishing goals for team members to reach (Bass, 1985). Insight into the dimensions of transformational leadership affected by executive coaching provides practical assistance to organisations in identifying the most suitable approach for tailoring leadership development to leader needs.

The final area examined in this study was the research context. Throughout Study One and Study Two the organisational environment was undergoing substantial change. Services were centralised which resulted in changes in reporting relationships, mergers of existing teams and, due to increased external competition, greater accountability for results. At the same time, there were demanding and rigorous public investigations occurring within the organisation which were widely reported in the media. Anecdotal feedback from leaders to their coaches during these turbulent times suggested that the environment did influence the effectiveness of executive coaching. Therefore understanding accurately the impact of these challenges was crucial to interpreting the research findings. The existing transfer of training literature suggests that work environments play a central role in the successfulness of training transfer to the organisation (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Fecteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, & Kudisch, 1995; Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavanagh, 1995).

Further, the existing training research has reported a number of external variables which may lie outside the actual training experience, but may influence the effectiveness of the transfer of training. These include the opportunity for trainees to

apply what they have learned to their jobs (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Lim & Johnson, 2002); the nature of workplace constraints, namely high workloads and time pressures to get tasks done, which prohibit the implementation of training; lack of reinforcement of the training; and an absence of feedback on performance (Clarke, 2002). Any of these restrictions mean training may not penetrate to use on the job (Noe & Ford, 1992). Anecdotal feedback from leaders (during executive coaching sessions) suggested that some of these conditions were evident during the executive coaching program. For example, because the organisation was undergoing significant staffing changes as a result of the departmental mergers, leaders often talked about high workloads, altered reporting relationships and conflicting demands impacting on the effectiveness of executive coaching. Whilst these conditions were unusual, and may not be present in other organisations utilising executive coaching, they may have affected the outcomes in this research program. Thus, further investigation to accurately interpret the impact of these organisational conditions on the effectiveness of executive coaching was warranted.

To investigate the areas discussed above, the following research questions were examined to gain an enhanced understanding about the effectiveness of executive coaching. The emergent themes contribute to an improved awareness of the impact of executive coaching on the psychological variables and greater knowledge of the transformational leadership dimensions affected by executive coaching. This chapter presents the emergent themes, followed by discussion and interpretation of the outcomes. To conclude, the theoretical and practical contributions will be offered.

Research Questions

The data obtained through Studies One and Two provided evidence to demonstrate that executive coaching impacted on leaders' psychological states and contributed to change in transformational leadership behaviour. The previous studies have also shown that some of these differences are sustained over time. Thus, the program of research has been successful in answering the research questions proposed in Chapter 1. This third study provided an opportunity to extend the quantitative investigations by examining the impact of the organisational environment on the effectiveness of executive coaching as well as confirming the effect of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and leadership behaviours.

The qualitative approach was used in a complementary manner to help assign meaning to the quantitative results by examining the data from more than one perspective to cross-validate the results (Abusabha & Woelfel, 2003; Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar, & Newton, 2002; Bartunek & Seo, 2002; Cohen & Manion, 1986). There is recognition of the benefits of triangulating the research so that a combination of methodologies study the same phenomenon because it provides a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1996; Amaratunga et al., 2002; Jick, 1979) and more thorough answers to the research questions. The three questions underlying this research program were used to guide the four research questions developed for Study Three.

- 1. How does executive coaching contribute to changes in leaders' psychological states?*
- 2. How does executive coaching improve transformational leadership behaviours?*
- 3. Are changes in leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour sustained over time?*
- 4. What effect does the organisational environment have on executive coaching?*

Method

Sample

The executive coaching program examined in Study One and Study Two was described in Chapters 4 and 5. In Study Three randomly identified participants from both these studies participated in interviews held at least twelve months after leaders had completed their sixth executive coaching session. The following approach was adopted to identify these participants. At the end of the transformational leadership program the 360 degree feedback questionnaire was repeated and leaders received a post-360 degree feedback report. The results from the post-360 degree feedback reports provided the basis for identification of leaders to participate in Study Three. Leaders were separated into two groups, those whose post-360 degree feedback results increased and those whose results showed no change or decreased. Once separated into these groups, four leaders who displayed improved overall

effectiveness scores on their post-360 degree feedback report (two leaders from Study One and two leaders from Study Two) and four leaders whose post-360 degree feedback questionnaire data showed no change or a decrease over time (two leaders from Study One and two leaders from Study Two) were randomly selected using the SPSS sort function. One leader declined to participate in the interviews and another leader was randomly identified from the same group. For each leader participating in the study, one supervisor, two team members, and the leader's coach were also interviewed. Leaders were asked to identify their supervisor, and nominate two team members for the interviews. One of the nominated team members declined to participate and the leader was asked to provide details of another team member. Leaders' coaches were identified through the administrative information held by the coaching coordinator. In total, forty qualitative interviews, involving the leaders (n=8), their supervisors (n=8), two team members (n=16) and the leader's coach (n=8) were conducted. Appendix 3 provides demographic data for the leaders and information on participating team members, supervisors and coaches. Numbered identification codes were given to each participant during the research to ensure confidentiality.

Procedure

To guide the research process, a research protocol was designed as suggested by Yin (1994). Yin (1994) asserts that a research protocol increases the reliability of the research because it outlines the instruments to be used as well as general procedures and rules to be followed during the data collection process. This helps keep the research targeted on the subject and provides a standardised approach for each participant (Yin, 1994). The following protocol guided this study: a letter was

sent to the randomly identified leaders inviting them to participate (refer Appendix 4). The interview questions for the leader, their supervisor, team members and coach were also attached to the invitational letter for the leader to preview before committing to the interviews (refer Appendix 5). Follow-up was made with the leader within one week of letter receipt to determine if the leader and his/her supervisor and team members wished to participate. Once the leader and participants agreed confirmation was also sought from the leader's coach.

The interview questions developed for each participant (leader, supervisor, team members and coach) were designed to be open-ended so that the question did not presume an answer (Seidman, 1998). The semi-structured format enabled direct comparability of responses and maintained the interviewer's neutrality (Cooper & Schindler, 2006) but also provided the opportunity for participants to construct their experiences and give their own emphasis to what was, or was not, important for them (Seidman, 1998). Thus, there was no set interview length, with length being determined by the responses provided by the interviewee and the amount of probing and follow-up undertaken.

The interviews were conducted over the telephone and were tape recorded with the interviewee's consent. Patton (2002) recommends taping the interviews to assist with transcription. Given the interview process was not conducted face-to-face, active listening for understanding was vital. Establishing a partnership with each participant prior to commencing the interview was also valuable for acquiring more depth during the interview (Weiss, 1994). The development of this partnership commenced as soon as the phone conversation started. It was achieved by thanking the participant for agreeing to be involved and very briefly initiating an open-ended

discussion about leadership (no information from this discussion was transcribed).

This was followed by asking the participants if they had any questions about the interview process. Although brief, it served to put the interviewee at ease.

Measures

The interview questions were developed for this study and aimed to assess the leader's experience of the psychological variables, and supervisor, team member and coach perceptions of the change in the leader's transformational behaviour associated with executive coaching. They were designed to complement the quantitative items.

There were sixteen semi-structured questions developed for the leaders, although the first question was designed to put the leader at ease, rather than provide information used in the study. Therefore responses to fifteen questions provided general information about executive coaching and information directly related to the five psychological measures from Study One and Study Two. These questions also gathered information about the impact of executive coaching on changes in leader behaviour, and information specific to the leaders' work environment. Supervisors and team members were asked six questions and coaches' seven questions about the impact of executive coaching on changes in leader behaviour and information relating to contextual issues. Appendix 5 contains the interview questions for all the participants.

Demographic information

Demographic information was collected previously from the leaders through the 360 degree feedback questionnaire. Refer to Appendix 3. There was no demographic information collected about the other participants in this study.

The questions measuring the psychological variables are discussed below. These questions were presented to the leaders, but not the other participants in this study. To review the interview questions, refer to Appendix 5.

Self-efficacy

The interview question measuring leaders' self-efficacy was designed to confirm the quantitative results and asked leaders to discuss whether they felt more confident in their leadership role during the coaching process. Depending upon their response, they were then asked to detail the influence of increased confidence on their leadership behaviour.

Developmental support

The questions measuring development support were designed to acquire a greater understanding of the components of the construct and confirm the impact of executive coaching on the psychological variable. Therefore leaders were asked to discuss the influence the feedback received from their coach and organisational members had on their development. Leaders were also asked to discuss the influence of support and accountability from their coach on their development.

Positive affect

Positive affect was an area for further investigation owing to the differing results in Study One and Study Two. In this study leaders were asked whether they felt more positive or enthusiastic at work during the coaching process. If they reported feeling more positive, they were also asked to discuss the influence positive affect had on their leadership behaviour.

Openness to new behaviours

To measure the leaders' openness to new behaviours, leaders were asked to discuss the influence exploring alternative ways of behaving with their team had on their leadership behaviour. The aim of this question was to confirm the quantitative results from the earlier studies.

Developmental planning

The aim for developmental planning was to acquire a greater understanding of the impact of goal setting and action planning on this measure. To achieve this, leaders were asked to discuss the influence setting specific goals and breaking down the steps toward goal accomplishment had on their development.

Leadership improvements

A range of questions surrounding leadership improvements were presented to the leaders, their supervisors, team members and coaches. Leaders, for example were asked to describe the improvements (if any) they had experienced from executive coaching. The other participants in the study were asked whether, based

on their observations, executive coaching had made the leader better. Additional questions on leadership improvements are presented in Appendix 5.

Environmental conditions

A question investigating the impact of environment was asked of all participants. Participants were asked to discuss whether there were any factors in the leader's work or personal environment that may have diminished the benefits experienced from executive coaching.

Thematic Analysis

This study was conducted at the individual level of analysis to gain an understanding of how executive coaching had its effects and how it successfully changed transformational leader behaviour. The study also investigated long-term outcomes from executive coaching. This knowledge was acquired through thematic analysis of the data.

A deductive approach to the analysis was used in the first instance because the intent was to align the main themes from the qualitative data with the psychological and behavioural measures from Study One and Study Two. Therefore 'down' nodes were created capturing the five previous psychological measures from Study One and Study Two (QSR, 2002). Additional major emergent themes were also discovered inductively during the coding process, using a decision rule of at least 10 coded items to create a theme. These emergent themes were created as 'up' nodes (Cassell, Buehring, Symon, Johnson, & Bishop, 2005; QSR, 2002; Spradley, 1979).

These patterns were recorded by the researcher in Nvivo 2.0 as free nodes until more obvious conceptual relationships evolved. Sets were also used to manage the data into appropriate categories (e.g. leader data, supervisor data, team member data and coach data). Using the free nodes as a guiding structure for the broad themes identified by the researcher, the interviews were then coded by two independent coders, in addition to the researcher, to minimise researcher bias. King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) assert the use of independent coders because it allows for inter-rater reliability comparisons to be evaluated. Discussions were held prior to coding to increase inter-rater reliability. In the first instance, these discussions centred on each coder's interpretation of the broad themes. Then using a sample of the interview data, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) further discussions were held to clarify where each person would place particular threads of text. This process continued with the two independent coders and the researcher exploring the themes and discussing the similarities and differences, until consensus was reached on the sample interview data. Given inter-rater reliability is dependent upon the ability of two or more individuals to be consistent (Miles & Huberman, 1994), it was important that there was uniformity among the raters prior to commencing the coding process. After the data coding was completed, the independent coders did not see the data again, the researcher made the final decision on the coded themes when there were differences recorded by the coders. There was though, a high degree of consistency among the coders. Most often the differences that occurred were due to different coders including a more or less inclusive section of the same interview text into a common theme, rather than because they had placed the data under a different theme.

After this initial coding, the aim was to establish categories that emerged from the data to enable the analysis to move beyond sheer description, taking qualitative inquiry beyond coding and retrieval (Merriam, 1998). NVivo aided in exploring the nodes in more depth to analyse fine details which helped with understanding. However, after the NVivo coding, the initial coding documents were also manually re-analysed to support interpretation of the themes and identify more specific sub-themes within each major theme, thus sorting bits of information into groupings that had something in common (Merriam, 1998). This process is defined as clustering by Miles and Huberman (1994) and it occurs when certain pieces of data seem to fall together to form a category. These sub-themes were then more tightly defined and the text that had been stored in the free nodes was moved into 'tree nodes', which enabled relationships to be identified. Interlinking parent and child nodes demonstrated the relationships, as the child nodes served as sub-categories under the broad parent themes, demonstrated in Table 6.1, on page 211.

Thus, the NVivo 2.0 software was an aid to the organisation of the material, and helped with the management of emerging themes, but was not used as the interpretive tool (King, 2004). The data was manually interpreted until plausible conclusions could be drawn. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that manual interpretation should form the basis for study findings.

Emergent Themes and Findings

The purpose of this study was to provide an enhanced understanding of the impact of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour. The interview data revealed ten main, and nine sub-themes which are presented in Table 6.1. The initial interpretation of themes was guided by a deductive approach flowing directly from research in Study One and Study Two, thus, the five psychological variables were identified as main themes. Five additional main themes which emerged from the data are also listed. Beside these major themes are the sub-themes that clustered around the major themes and helped to explain and clarify the data. The data supporting the main themes and sub-themes (with frequencies indicated) are presented in the table.

Table 6.1
*Main Themes and Sub-themes identified during the Qualitative Analysis – with
 Frequency of Occurrence indicated*

Main Themes	Frequency	Sub-themes and Frequency		
Self-efficacy	(18)			
Developmental Support	(10)	Accountability (13)	Someone to discuss things with (6)	Feedback (11)
Positive Affect	(16)			
Openness to New Behaviours	(19)	Reflective journaling (7)		
Developmental Planning	(23)	Goal setting (14)	Action planning (9)	
Transformational Leadership	(29)	Individualised consideration (17)	Intellectual stimulation (6)	Inspirational motivation (8)
Communication	(28)			
Greater Control	(14)			
Sustained Improvement	(43)			
Environmental Factors	(29)			

Self-efficacy

Previous research established that self-efficacy was an important predictor of behavioural learning in training situations (Bandura, 1977). It was proposed that executive coaching would influence self-efficacy because learning in coaching is achieved by breaking goals down into small achievable steps enabling the leader to achieve mastery. This success, combined with the support and feedback provided

through executive coaching should affect self-efficacy. Indeed, the quantitative studies confirmed that the leaders did experience greater self-efficacy as a result of participating in executive coaching. The purpose of this study was to acquire a richer understanding of how executive coaching influenced leader self-efficacy.

This insight was attained by asking leaders whether they felt more confident (self-efficacy was termed confidence in the interviews) during executive coaching. Some leaders indicated they did. These leaders were then asked to discuss the impact of increased confidence on their leadership behaviours to provide a greater understanding of how executive coaching had its effects. Many leaders identified that the confidence they gained through executive coaching encouraged them to try out new ways of behaving with their teams. One leader commented that executive coaching made him “*more confident to push ahead with ideas that are fundamentally sound.*” He compared this to his previous behaviour which he said was quite different in that he “*tended to come up with ideas, look at them and shelve them*” [L7]. His supervisor also commented that “*he’s more confident now and he’ll sort of get in and do things...he’s more self-directed and self-initiated, he’s been able to solve team member problems, he’s able to do a lot more of that independently. So I see he’s developed more self-confidence to solve problems rather than refer and seek assistance*” [S7]. These comments provided some support that executive coaching improved leader self-efficacy, which increased leaders’ willingness to try out new ways of behaving with their teams. This was similarly confirmed by a coach: “*he’s confident now to try new things out and [has] demonstrated confidence in the way his team plays a part in the organisation*” [C3].

Although team members, supervisors, and coaches were not specifically asked about the effect of coaching on leader confidence, they too identified that executive coaching had affected self-efficacy. For example, a team member said executive coaching had *“certainly given [name] the confidence to know what’s she’s doing and that she’s doing a good job, now she is able to deal with most situations with authority”* [T9]. This sense of increased authority from enhanced self-efficacy also came through again with a supervisor commenting that *“he’s prepared to stand for what he believes in...he’s stronger and more confident”* [S6]. The data suggested that increased self-efficacy may also have had an impact on decision making as it was identified as an outcome a number of times. For example, a leader commented: *“my coaching made me feel that I could handle some of the problems that came up a bit better”* [L5] and a team member said: *“he’s more confident now and that’s had an influence on his decision making”* [T13] and further, a coach said: *“he developed more confidence in his decision making...and now he’s more focused and on track”* [C7].

Not all leaders felt that executive coaching improved their confidence though. One leader said *“I’ve been a manager for...over 20 years...so I think that I’ve got to the stage in my life that if I’m not confident now, then I don’t think I’m going to get any more so”* [L8] and when asked the same question, another stated *“more confident...probably not particularly”* [L6]. Further, not all team members felt the leaders needed to improve their confidence: *“she would be one of the exceptional managers that I’ve had, and I think the rest of the team think the same, so really I don’t think it’s made a lot of difference to her confidence, but then she probably didn’t have a lot of changes to be improved upon”* [T3]. The leader though still

reported that she “*felt slightly more confident of [her] ability...*” [L2] and this is also supported by her supervisor: “*I do notice that she’s become more confident in what she does*” [S2]. This data seems to suggest that the effect of executive coaching on self-efficacy may not occur for leaders who are already high in confidence.

However, most of the feedback from a range of participants identified increased confidence after executive coaching. The majority of leaders also confirmed that they experienced greater confidence as a result of executive coaching. “*The most useful part of it [executive coaching] is my confidence, I feel a lot more confident than I did some time ago...straight away it [executive coaching] helped my confidence a lot*” [L1].

An analysis of the data presented in this theme suggests that when executive coaching increased leaders’ self-efficacy there were positive outcomes. It is identified in the feedback that increased self-efficacy influenced leaders’ belief in their ideas, decision making and willingness to try out new ways of behaving with their teams.

Developmental Support

The quantitative studies (reported in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5) proposed that executive coaching would increase a leader’s experience of developmental support. It was suggested that this was achieved by encouraging the leader towards, and holding them accountable for personal development. The results corroborated this and demonstrated that leaders do experience greater feelings of developmental support after executive coaching. Despite this outcome, developmental support is

not well understood. Aside from the research undertaken by Thach (2002) there is little examination of this construct in the executive coaching literature. This qualitative study therefore provided the opportunity to acquire a greater understanding of how developmental support was realised.

Developmental support, as indicated in the responses, was influenced by the relationship formed between a leader and coach: *“I got on really well with my coach, I always felt very comfortable and open with her...she kept me going...the support was invaluable”* [L2]. Another leader said *“I thought it was a very good influence. I saw my coach as a friend, a mentor and someone capable of providing unbiased options and I found it all to be very, very helpful and supportive”* [L7]. One leader likened his coach to a role model: *“My coach was extremely supportive and always very positive in her approach and constructive in her comments and helpful, so I couldn’t ask for more. She was a good role model”* [L8].

When probed further to acquire a deeper understanding about how the support offered through executive coaching was realised, one leader stated: *“The comments from my coach were supportive and certainly acknowledged the situation. The coach certainly listened to what I had to say and listened to my comments in good faith and was non-judgemental and supportive from the point of acknowledging the difficulties I had...I had support in the fact that I wasn’t told I was obviously on the wrong track or doing something wrong...I did feel that I had a good relationship with my coach and this was something that would be useful in the long-term”* [L6].

Analysing the interview data further revealed clusters associated with the notion of support. These were identified as the following: the support provided

accountability; the support provided feedback; and the support provided someone to discuss things with. This cluster is well demonstrated by this leader's comment, "*I really liked the support...the **follow-up, discussion and support** from my coach was really good, I actually miss it. **I miss having that reminder and follow-up.** I found it a very supportive process*" [L5]. One aim of this study was to further explore the construct developmental support to acquire a deeper understanding of the importance of accountability and feedback within it. These sub-themes and the emergent sub-theme, someone to discuss and bounce ideas off, are discussed below.

Accountability

The leaders discussed how their coach had helped them retain their focus by keeping them accountable for their development. All the leaders talked about the importance of this form of support during executive coaching: "*Executive coaching helped me to keep the focus...it's easy to come up with the plan...coaching, along with accountability associated with it, helped make sure that the implementation would definitely happen*" [L3]. One leader's description of executive coaching exemplifies this: "*Executive coaching was about someone to help you focus...it was very positive to report to someone else...I used that opportunity as a motivation...and challenged myself to beat the plan. I enjoyed getting a lot more things done and a lot earlier*" [L4]. Another leader rationalised the importance of accountability, although noted that this aspect of developmental support was not valuable for him: "*I believe that sort of accountability is a big motivator for people. I can see the benefits of having someone who you feel accountable to, someone who has regular meetings and there are regular things to do for each of the meetings. I*

see that as a good organisational approach and on another occasion I might have found it more useful if I hadn't been quite as motivated' [L6].

However, accountability to assist leaders become more organised was an important outcome for other leaders: *"the accountability was very important because I think that ongoing...I have to report back...I better get organised"* [L2]. The coaches also confirmed this: *"she liked the accountability of the coaching...knowing that each fortnight she had to have particular things done because there was follow-up by the coach"* [C5].

The following leader's discussion illustrated the role accountability played in developmental support: *"The accountability was very important...[my coach] would give me a task to achieve by the next time we met or spoke. It was good to have that time frame on me to achieve what I was meant to achieve and be able to report back....It is good that [your coach] does hold you accountable for what you said you would do. I'm the only one that I'm accountable to, so I can put off or do something in my own time frame. Having someone that I'm accountable to made me realise that I need better time management"* [L8]. It is obvious from the leaders' interview responses that being held accountable for development was a significant part of developmental support and subsequent achievement during executive coaching. It is also a feature that distinguishes executive coaching from other forms of training.

Feedback

This study also sought to investigate how important receiving feedback from a range of sources was as part of developmental support in executive coaching. The

interview comments suggested feedback played a valuable role, and indeed, not just feedback from the coach: “*the feedback was really beneficial... feedback from the coach was really good, but the feedback from the organisational members was really good too because I was encouraged to share with them [options being explored during executive coaching]...then they joined in and helped keep me on track*” [L2]. Another leader said: “*You need that feedback*” [L4] which was not only provided by the coach, but also as a result of the coaching process, and seems to have encouraged the leaders to seek feedback from other people: “*he’s had good feedback from another lab about how well his innovations were working*” [C3]. Equally, the fact that the leader is “*giving and asking them [team members] for feedback*” [C1] is important. This allowed the team members to recognise that leaders were “*taking on board what we were saying, in a very strong way*” [T8] in the pursuit of their developmental efforts.

It is proposed that feedback is a key element of developmental support which may serve to support leaders’ confidence in their developmental efforts as suggested by this comment: “*constructive feedback that you’ve achieved something and it’s all been worthwhile is useful*” [L8]. Developmental support encouraged the leaders’ to actively seek this feedback because it is not always readily available in busy organisational settings. As demonstrated in the interview comments, receiving feedback on performance efforts is clearly valuable.

Someone to discuss/bounce ideas off

The leaders also identified the opportunity to discuss issues with someone else was another key element of developmental support through executive coaching.

This sub-theme provided insight into what the leaders appreciated: *“it was really motivating...in terms of the listening, the answers weren’t there, but it really made me sort of think about it so that I had the answers for myself ‘cause I knew I was going to be asked those questions. I found it really, really useful, really supportive, and it was nice to have someone sort of external to the normal working environment that you’re in that you could bounce ideas off. That was really useful”* [L5].

Despite this positive feedback about this element of developmental support, there was initial resistance (which was consequently overcome) from some leaders towards executive coaching. *“I started off lukewarm but towards the middle it was probably a bit better than lukewarm and towards the end I was quite enthusiastic and had warmed to the idea...and in many respects, I wished I could do more sessions...it was good to have someone from another area altogether who you can bounce your ideas off...I’d like to continue, perhaps two or three times a year, give them a call or they give you a call and discuss issues”* [L8].

The above feedback also demonstrates that leaders valued the external perspective offered by this executive coaching program. However, prior to commencing executive coaching within the organisation, a number of meetings were held with key stakeholders to plan and discuss the implementation of the program. One area where concern was raised by the organisational executives was around the coach’s ability to work with leaders when they did not have a thorough knowledge of the organisation or the leader’s job requirements. It was put to the executives that, rather than being detrimental, the outside perspective offered many positive prospects for leaders to openly discuss work related issues. The leaders’ feedback has confirmed this. *“It was great having the opportunity to bounce ideas off another*

professional who was not actively involved in your management or organisation...someone capable of providing unbiased opinions, I found it to be a very, very useful exercise” [L7].

This unbiased, non confrontational setting offered the leaders “*an environment to talk ideas through without fear of repercussions or seeming silly, the coach was someone to bounce ideas off” [C1].* It was further identified (quite appropriately) that the coach did not provide the leader with answers, but helped steer the direction of the conversation to enable the leader to discover, and own, their solutions. “*During sessions we talked about issues with questions like, ‘what do you think’; ‘what are you going to do?’ Everything I came up with was questioned, but questioned in a very positive manner. Never once did I ever feel intimidated, my coach was very, very constructive right throughout. And if I was heading down the wrong direction, the questions that were put to me would make me realise that it’s perhaps not the best way to go about it, but I was never told what I should and shouldn’t be doing. It was good to have someone to mull things over with before making decisions” [L1].*

The interview feedback presented under this main theme has demonstrated that developmental support through executive coaching incorporated components of accountability, feedback and having someone external to the organisation to discuss things with. This combination of effects distinguished executive coaching from other approaches to development, and likely contributed to its effectiveness.

Positive Affect

Positive affect was highlighted for further investigation in the qualitative interviews because of the differing outcomes demonstrated in the quantitative studies. Analysing the qualitative data for this psychological measure presented an opportunity to acquire greater understanding about it. Leaders were asked whether they felt more positive or enthusiastic at work during the coaching process, and some did: *“I actually went down to the AGM this year, and normally when I’ve gone to those things, I’ve been hum har, terribly boring, but this time I picked up a lot and when I came back, I actually shared this with staff in a very positive manner. I have a more positive outlook towards the future, I found myself preaching to the other staff”* [L1].

For another leader the executive coaching provided stability in a time of immense change (discussed in ‘environmental factors’). *“Executive coaching was very positive and it certainly motivated me...it made me feel that I could handle some of the problems that came up better. And you know, I think I felt more stable and I wasn’t going through that rollercoaster as much”* [L5].

Yet other leaders who indicated that executive coaching made them feel more positive at work were unable to convey what this meant for them. Equally, some leaders did not feel that executive coaching contributed to positive feelings at all, either because of the workload: *“it was a very difficult time for me at work, with the workload that I had, so I don’t think the coaching necessarily had any influence on that...I was overwhelmed with the workload that I had and that was having an adverse effect on me”* [L6]. Or simply for the reason that they already felt positive

about their work: *“I honestly can’t say that I felt more enthusiastic. I guess as I became involved in the coaching I became more enthusiastic about the coaching itself. But I’m not sure that it did influence me to become more enthusiastic about work. I guess I’ve always been enthusiastic and loved the work that I do”* [L8].

The qualitative evidence has demonstrated that the impact of executive coaching on positive affect is complex. This is similarly supported by the quantitative results. Some leaders were more positive at work as a result of executive coaching, but the qualitative evidence does not allow the conclusion to be drawn that all leaders were more enthusiastic. It appears to have had limited impact for leaders who were already feeling positive at work.

Openness to New Behaviours

Openness to new behaviours was also examined in the qualitative interviews. It was proposed (refer Chapter 2) that one of the ways executive coaching had its effects was by increasing the leader’s willingness to consider different approaches to managing, communicating and behaving, rather than continuing to do more of what had been done in the past. The quantitative results confirmed that leaders were more open to considering new behaviours after executive coaching.

When answering the interview questions, leaders did discuss how the thought process they utilised changed after they participated in executive coaching:

“Executive coaching gave me the opportunity to broaden my thinking and explore different ways of doing things...rather than just doing the things you may do out of habit” [L4]; and *“I think a lot more of the consequences before I take action now and*

I'll calculate the risk of doing something new. I've been someone who has sort of managed by crisis in the past. But this gave me a different way of looking towards the future" [L1].

Although only the leaders were asked about their openness to considering new behaviours, there was feedback from a range of participants on this topic demonstrated leaders actually did things differently after executive coaching. The common theme though that emerged was that the leader needed to feel confident before they considered doing things differently: *"He's confident now to try new things out" [C3].* Once a level of confidence was attained, options for new behaviours were considered: *"the coaching really made me step out of my comfort zone" [L1]* and trial new things: *"I certainly had some experiments and some worked not so well. But I think I tried new things and I guess I analysed more the outcomes" [L5].* *"There was a better planning process to his work which was very obvious...he's a remote manager, so he's often travelling, and before [executive coaching] he would schedule those trips to do half a dozen different things while he's there, but not complete anything. Now it's more 'I'm going to do that trip and this is what I'm going to focus on' ...it's much more focused planning. That's certainly been the biggest change I've observed, he's confident to try something differently than in the past" [S4].*

The qualitative research has confirmed the quantitative findings, after participating in executive coaching leaders were more open to new behaviours. However, the quantitative research did not provide insight into how this occurred through executive coaching. The following leader's comment is useful because it demonstrates the link between being more open to change and actually doing things

differently. *“The biggest improvement is that I’ve learnt not to blunder on to do something, but to take a bit of time to organise my actions to achieve what I’m about to do. This has helped me to appreciate that even if it does seem mundane and day-to-day, that if you just sit back and look at it differently you might be able to come at it from a different perspective and achieve a better result. Now when I have a particular project or something to achieve, I do sit back and think about the best ways of achieving that and generally write them down. If you don’t write them down, you tend to forget them. The important thing is that then I don’t do anything for a day or so and generally found that ‘oh yes, I can do that differently or I’ll take this step to it’. You don’t want to rush into your plan, you need time to think about it, to let it mature and maybe come up with another solution”* [L8]. This feedback summarises the process of developmental planning in executive coaching, and has confirmed that executive coaching increases leaders’ willingness to think about alternate behaviours. There also appears to be follow through from thinking about doing things differently to actually changing behaviours, but increased confidence seems to be a key factor influencing a leaders’ openness to experiment with new behaviours.

The interview data further indicated that for some leaders, reflecting on the outcomes of their attempts to change behaviour, and then subsequently analysing new approaches to changing behaviour, was very important in being open to experiment with new behaviours. This was captured in the emergent theme, ‘reflective journaling’.

Reflective Journaling

As part of development through executive coaching, leaders were asked to keep a private journal for reflection purposes. When some leaders discussed their openness to trialling new behaviours, they raised the reflective journal and discussed its usefulness in raising self-awareness. One leader outlined the benefits he gained from keeping the journal: *“As a technique the journaling was very useful. I am still keeping a journal because it is good to be able to go back through it and see how much I’ve changed, I like to do that...and I reflect on how I do things and how that might be interpreted by others”* [L1].

Another leader talked about the way she used journaling to help analyse her current behaviour and plan for future change, *“I tend to analyse interactions that I’ve had with people and sort of document success and failure and analyse that for future change, so that’s my journal keeping, and that’s definitely continued”* [L5]. Again, using the journal to raise self-awareness about current and future behaviours was also identified by a coach: *“I would say the most benefit was the reflective journal, from what she said to me and her developing self-awareness about how she was doing things, how she was operating on a day-to-day basis. At first she wasn’t that keen on the reflective journal but then she found it quite valuable for reflection and change”* [C2].

Although not identified by all leaders during the interviews, the comments indicated that some leaders drew upon the reflective journal to develop self-awareness. Lotz-Becker (2007) found that in executive coaching leaders used reflection to make meaning of their experiences. Gaining insight by reflecting on

current behaviour enabled the leaders to analyse current approaches to behaving and, using that increased knowledge, identify a range of new approaches to effective leadership behaviours. Kiel, Rimmer, Williams, and Doyle (1996) state that self-understanding is the foundation of long-lasting developmental change.

Developmental Planning

Developmental planning in the executive coaching relationship centred on preparing leaders to think about their future and organising the path to get there. There is a lot of existing literature about the relationship between goal setting and behaviour change (Locke & Latham, 1984, 1990a). The argument presented in Chapter 2 proposed that through developmental planning, executive coaching should affect a leader's ability to conceptualise what it is he or she is trying to improve, and how he or she plans to achieve that improvement. The quantitative results demonstrated that leaders' approach to developmental planning was significantly influenced by executive coaching.

The qualitative interviews provided the opportunity to explore whether developmental planning was achieved through the mechanisms suggested in Chapter 2. It was proposed that by setting developmental goals, identifying sources of feedback in the work environment (discussed above) and action planning, leaders' developed a process to change behaviour. The sub-themes goal setting and action planning emerged from the data examining developmental planning and are discussed below.

Goal setting

The critical importance of goal setting was acknowledged by all of the eight leaders interviewed. Some leaders questioned their ability to complete their development without setting specific goals, which aligned with the definition of developmental planning proposed in Chapter 2. The interview feedback indicated that by introducing goal setting techniques the leaders were able to identify what they were trying to improve and how to reach their desired outcomes: *“having those specific goals was useful because it would have been easy to just keep drifting on the way I had been doing and hoping...it was a mechanism for clearly defining the way I was going to do these things”* [L6]. Other leaders talked about goal setting making *“the goals seem more achievable”* [L7] for keeping them focused: *“it made me focus on the things that I needed to do”* [L3]. Some coaches also discussed the usefulness of goal setting in developmental planning because it: *“helped him to accomplish a certain goal more quickly than he would have otherwise done”* [C4] and *“by getting him focused and on track”* [C7].

Goal setting and action planning were identified as powerful techniques: *“Executive coaching’s been useful in that it’s helped me to set goals and to develop a plan to achieve those goals...you probably realise you put things off, and put them off, and put them off forever and they don’t get done because you can’t find the time or you forget about them...that’s the biggest help for me on a practical level. The action plan showed me if you do take a bit of time before you start something and actually stick to your plan, you’re more likely to achieve it. That’s been a big help in my own development. Not promising too much has also been an important lesson”* [L8]. These important insights from the interviews (i.e. goal setting, taking the time

to plan, using an action plan (discussed below) and not promising too much) help explain how developmental planning contributed to improved outcomes.

Action Planning

Action planning was a sub-theme associated with developmental planning which positively added to the leaders' experience of executive coaching. “[The action plan was a] systematic approach to improving... I established the action plan which I probably wouldn't have bothered with if I didn't have a coach and I challenged myself to beat the plan” [L4]; “breaking down the steps was vital...I don't think I would have been able to even tackle it otherwise” [L2].

The structure, focus and direction provided through action planning were commonly cited benefits of developmental planning: “It definitely gave me a much clearer picture of where I was heading...a way to look down the track towards the future. Both in terms of my personal development and what I've been doing here, and it gave me time to set plans and get organised with things” [L1]; “it was less of ‘oh we need to get this done, and let's run at this like a bull at a gate’, because sometimes it doesn't work. Having it broken down into steps made it more achievable” [L7].

For some leaders, action planning had a lasting impact changing subsequent behaviours: “By breaking down your objectives and setting out what you want to achieve and how to achieve it, then putting a time frame on it and measuring it – that's all been a big help in my own development and how I now approach goals and what tasks I have to achieve in my work” [L8]; further confirming the benefit of the

action plan, another leader says he “*still has the action plan up on the wall with the points marked on it*” [L7] and yet another, whilst acknowledging the usefulness of the action plan, admitted that she had not continued to follow it: “*the action plan tended to focus the task; I certainly like the fact that I was achieving steps in the process rather than the whole thing...I found this really useful, but I let it slide when I stopped the coaching, so I’m trying to pick that up*” [L5].

The interview responses have provided strong support for the use of goal setting and action planning as key techniques facilitating developmental planning. This approach to developmental planning enabled leaders to think about, and articulate what they wanted to achieve in terms of their leadership development. Executive coaching provided the process and support necessary for leaders to reach their desired outcomes and has clearly been beneficial.

The themes presented above have confirmed the quantitative findings, thus triangulating the research. Additionally, the qualitative data has provided a deeper understanding of how executive coaching affects the psychological variables. In addition to further understanding the psychological measures, the interview questions also examined improvements that had occurred as a result of executive coaching. The responses from participants recognised changes in leadership behaviour that were linked to the transformational leadership dimensions. These dimensions are discussed below.

Transformational Leadership

The quantitative research demonstrated that team members noticed improvements in leaders' transformational leadership behaviours. This was further reinforced through the qualitative interviews. The theme that was most frequently cited by all participants interviewed (leaders, supervisors, team members and coaches), was that the leaders had made noticeable changes and become 'better leaders' as a result of executive coaching. Leaders' remarked they were better and more effective: *"I have been noted by a few people that my management style and my leadership style had improved...executive coaching did have a big influence on my leadership role. I do think I'm a better leader"* [L1]. Supervisors also made comments about improvements as a result of executive coaching. This quote captured the overall theme conveyed during the interviews: *"From his coaching...he's...made a very, very serious and significant attempt to change his behaviour. Is that going to make him a better leader? I would say yes, most definitely. Executive coaching has been extremely worthwhile and extremely beneficial...he's more cognisant of his staffs' needs...and that makes him a better leader. He's been reinvigorated as far as his leadership aspirations were concerned"* [S1]; and as is displayed below, this theme is repeated by team members and coaches.

However, the purpose of this study was to investigate **how** leaders became better leaders. It was predicted that certain dimensions of transformational leadership, namely, individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation would be more affected by executive coaching than idealised influence. The qualitative interview data provided the opportunity to

explore this further. Other improvements in behaviour, which did not fit under the transformational leadership framework, also emerged. These are presented below, after the transformational leadership dimensions have been explored.

Participants' were asked to discuss what they meant by 'better leader', specifically, they were asked to comment on what they noticed had changed as a result of executive coaching. Definite outcomes were identified which formed clusters under the theme transformational leadership. The most frequently cited improvement was that leaders were more approachable after participating in executive coaching. This outcome links directly to the transformational leadership dimension individualised consideration, and is discussed below.

Individualised consideration

The improvements in leader behaviour were predominantly identified by the people most likely to benefit from these changes, their team members. One team member commented that her leader was *“more interested and involved in the people she works with now...she basically wouldn't pay any attention to you...but now she's much more interactive with the staff and is more involved in following up things. She makes an effort to come out and talk to people”* [T10]. This increased level of involvement and approachability came through many times in other team member feedback, for example: *“He gets more involved in areas that before he'd rely on someone else to be looking after. So he's taken an interest in them and following them right through from beginning to end, rather than so much delegating and expecting someone else to just sort it all out, he makes sure he follows up with us on how issues are progressing or he'll take an active role himself in resolving*

issues...he gets more involved...so I think he's more hands on with staff, more interactive and open...and we feel he's more approachable" [T16].

The team members also reported that their leaders were a lot “*more open...it's definitely had an impact" [T1 and T4]* and offered increased help in finding solutions to their problems: “*He's made himself available to us more...I had a problem lately and he was there to help and listen and find solutions" [T12].* This change was also noticed by the supervisors as well: “*He's more consultative and he interacts much more with his peers and superiors" [S1]* and has “*become more inclusive of his team" [S3].*

Team members, supervisors and coaches also said leaders showed increased interest in team members. “*She's more considerate. She thinks more and reflects more around what needs to be done. She takes an interest in their lives in general" [S5].* “*I think coaching has improved the way he operates within the organisation. I think he's now recognised the need to be out there so people can see him and be more involved in the day to day management. Because as a manger you can lock yourself away in your office and find lots of things to do and avoid staff if you want to. You're often isolated from your staff, but I think he's making a more proactive effort to get out there and be involved in the day to day in what's happening around him" [T16].* The coaches also reported similar change in leaders as well, for example one coach said: “*He's more approachable by being available to staff, more frequently and more often" [C6].* Another coach said her leader was “*no longer remote from the team" [C3];* “*He understood what was going on for them" and, because of this, "that made them [team members] appreciate him as a leader more" [C4].*

When improvements were mentioned by leaders, they were asked how they had changed, one leader replied: *“I’ve become more approachable, I think that my attitudes have changed and overall I’m probably more receptive to people coming up and talking to me...actually I found that I was using the executive coaching at home as well”* [L1]. Thus, *“the coaching has helped incredibly in the way [they] interact in team[s]”* [S4].

In particular, as a result of executive coaching leaders displayed a heightened awareness of individual differences, as is apparent through this selection of comments: *“She’s learnt to take into account more individuals’ different styles and react accordingly without just expecting people to get it done”* [S5]. *“He’s certainly improved...as an effective leader he’s empathising with his staff and subordinates”* [T1] and *“...he’s making more of an effort to appreciate other people”* [T7]. Spending more time with team members was also noted: *“He’s got more time to know about your problems and he takes more responsibility for his interactions with people”* [T11]. Overall, the change in leader behaviour is summed up well by this statement from a team member: *“I would say without a question. Unequivocal. Executive coaching has made [XXX] a better leader...I can see the way he behaves with others, not just me, he treats people equally, but differently, being aware of people’s differences”* [T2].

This interview feedback has provided convincing evidence that there was a very noticeable change in leaders’ transformational behaviour as a result of executive coaching. In particular, the comments above have demonstrated that individualised consideration is developed through executive coaching. Leaders have changed: they

genuinely care about their team members, they empathise with team members' individual needs and make interpersonal connections them.

The interviews have also suggested some change in the dimensions intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation occurred as a result of leaders' participating in executive coaching. The data supporting the changes in these dimensions is presented below.

Intellectual stimulation

Leaders displayed improvements in intellectual stimulation by challenging the existing way of doing things in an effort to identify more effective approaches. In doing this, leaders also encouraged their team members to look for better ways to do things. From the interview feedback, this involved leaders inviting team members to have a say by putting forward their own ideas, rather than promoting a 'follow the leader' mentality. Although this dimension of transformational leadership was not identified frequently during the interviews, the feedback from the participants who did discuss it presented a convincing argument that leaders were displaying more of these characteristics with their team members after participating in executive coaching.

Team members said there had been changes in communication, whereby their leaders were encouraging input and involvement in decision making: "*His communication style has improved...he's more open, he'll listen and let you vent what you think should be happening*" [T1], and "*He's been doing a bit of mentoring...he's developing those kind of relationships... he's given more authority*

to us and lets us make decisions” [T12]. One of the coaches similarly identified these changes in behaviour, “he gave staff opportunities that he probably wasn’t giving to his staff...rather than thinking he had to do everything...he started to delegate tasks...that improved the skill level of the staff, so he looked at the benefit that it gave to staff...and it relieved him of some tasks that were overwhelming for him” [C6].

Intellectual stimulation was not identified with the frequency that individualised consideration was, but it nonetheless appears to have been influenced, to some degree, by executive coaching. Most notably in terms of leaders delegating tasks to employees and empowering them to make decisions. In a similar way, the interview participants also identified changes in characteristics of inspirational motivation which will be discussed below.

Inspirational motivation

Leaders display inspirational motivation when they inspire their team members to higher levels of performance by keeping them informed about organisational developments and clarifying the direction of the organisation (Bass, 1990). Thus, leaders are creating a strong sense of purpose among team members by aligning individual and organisational needs.

Leaders, supervisors and team members all said there was an increased emphasis on information flow after executive coaching. One leader said he was *“interacting more with the staff on a daily basis and letting them know that I was aware of some of the issues happening in their workplace. Just doing a brief walk*

around of the lab and chatting informally for five to ten minutes rather than just going directly to my office means staff are better informed about...the bigger picture. I'm helping the staff understand more [about] the laboratory and this has impacted on the whole performance of the lab" [L3]. This leader's supervisor also noted that he was using increased communication to *"keep team members up to date about the progress"* [S3].

Team members also made similar comments, appreciating the increased information flow to keep them better informed with respect to organisational issues, for example: *"he's letting us know what's going on"* [T12] and because of that, *"the world will probably be a better place for him taking a bigger picture role and sharing that with us"* [T6]. The feedback further suggested that being *'in on things'* was important during the upheaval within the organisation: *"the coaching has given her a lot of guidance in how to manage difficult situations and managing a large group of people through a great period of change that we're undergoing. And she's making a very concerted effort to keep the team informed with what's happening and making sure that people feel comfortable to go and speak to her with any concerns arising with regards to the change and the future. I've been very impressed with that, and the way she's been communicating with the team has been very useful"* [T9]. This feedback has demonstrated that leaders have changed their behaviour by providing increased information about the organisation and the path for moving forward. By doing this, they are displaying characteristics of the transformational leadership dimension, inspirational motivation.

Reviewing the data presented, the interview evidence has demonstrated that executive coaching has the greatest impact on individualised consideration. This

transformational leadership dimension inspires team members to further achievement and growth. In addition to the dimensions of transformational leadership discussed above, there were other themes identified by participants during the interviews. The themes, namely communication, greater control and sustained improvement, were not entirely consistent with the transformational model, but nonetheless, revealed important aspects of the leaders' development through executive coaching. They are presented below.

Communication

Communication was identified by the coaches as one of the most common developmental areas the leaders were improving through executive coaching. Therefore it is pleasing that enhanced communication emerged as a key outcome from executive coaching. The leaders, their supervisors, team members, and coaches all confirmed this.

One leader described the changes he made after participating in executive coaching: *"I went very much into treating them as a team, even though they are a virtual team, an invisible team...I think not only has coaching helped my interaction with them, it's given them a group identity. I've certainly encouraged them to interact more with each other...so I can interact more efficiently with them"* [L7].

Another said: *"Since doing executive coaching, I've made a point of daily just speaking to as many people as I can and if there's something positive to be said, or even if there isn't, just the fact that you do talk and listen to people. So I've changed, that's helped me to behave differently with the team. It's not that I didn't talk to people, it's just that I only talked to the people that I needed to talk to, to do the*

things that I needed to do. But now I make a point of going to say hello to as many people as possible” [L8]. This is a key outcome, executive coaching increases leaders’ communication, which impacts positively on team members. The increased use of active listening, another communication tool, was also identified by the leaders as an outcome of executive coaching: *“I listen more, don’t interrupt and also give positive feedback to the staff”* [L1].

Supervisors, who dealt less frequently with the leaders than team members, recognised the changes: *“He’s more consultative, he communicates and...it’s more effective”* [S1] and *“more inclusive”* [S3]. Other improvements identified related to leaders being *“more assertive. He’s become more ready to actually discuss things that he feels that he can contribute to”* [S8]; *“he is prepared to stand for what he believes in”* [S6] and *“she’s taken the initiative in a lot more stuff...I’ve seen a change from what she’s learnt”* [T10].

However, it was the team member data that provided the most evidence of improvements the leaders had made. Many team members described their leaders as more ‘consultative’, ‘open’, ‘listening’ and ‘sharing’. *“Some of the things I’ve noticed are more regular communication with staff across the area. He seems to be taking the time to listen, to come around and share information. He’s doing a better job of relating to the team and in communication”* [T12]. One team member contrasted the change in her leader’s communication with his previous approach. She says it was *“a very dramatic change. He used to be very confrontational, but he’s not like that any more...he’s got more time now for me. I’ve had much more personal and phone contact with him. He used to deal with me only when there was a difficult issue, but he talks to me more now”* [T11].

While the coaches focused on the outcomes: “*increased communication with his team has reduced the errors that his team was making...because he asked for their input*” [C1]. They were also able to identify the cross-over between personal and professional outcomes: “*Executive coaching has really had a major impact on his relationship with his wife and with his staff. In the sense that he understood them better, thought more about what he would say, he gave more time to think about how he would handle situations to achieve more positive outcomes...they got to know him [leader] better and he got to know them [team] better*” [C6].

The evidence collected from leaders, supervisors, team members, and coaches, has developed a convincing argument that executive coaching improved leader communication. Further, these improvements resulted in positive outcomes which were most evident to the leaders’ team members. Team members also identified that leaders displayed greater control from participating in executive coaching. This theme, which emerged from the data, will be examined below.

Greater Control

Predominantly the discussion around greater control focused on the leader demonstrating more control over his or her behaviour as a result of behavioural changes made throughout executive coaching. This emerging theme further augments knowledge of how change is realised through executive coaching. Interestingly though, the increased control displayed by the leader was identified by others – team members, supervisors and coaches, rather than by the leader. Although, one leader did state that he felt “*in more control than 12 months ago*” [L1], and this was supported by his supervisor who commented that executive

coaching had enabled him to control his emotions more effectively: *“He is able to fly off the handle less and he is certainly able to control his emotional state of mind”* [S1].

Another supervisor commented that executive coaching had enabled her subordinate (the leader) to be more rational in her evaluation of situations as well as more organised in her behaviour: *“she seems to be able to manage stressful situations much better, she seems to be able to rationalise better. The coaching has made her aware of not being overwhelmed by a task and taking a good look at it. And her organisation and time management, I think that’s one area that she’s improved. To the point that she’s actually managing me, you know, that’s a good thing. And we’ve now arranged to meet on a weekly basis. She’s recognised what was making her life stressful and recognising the problems rather than floundering”* [S5].

Team members also commented on leaders’ behaviour change, identifying that leaders were now more organised: *“he’s a lot more organised now in the workplace. In terms of getting things done and working with tasks”* [T13] and *“she’s definitely become very organised, able to manage a number of tasks that she has to carry out in one day and she doesn’t get too flustered by it and is able to manage all these different tasks at one time”* [T9]. This sentiment was echoed by a coach, *“she [leader] said that time management had definitely helped her. She was able to actually get out of work on time. She was never able to do that in the past. This meant that she didn’t feel so overwhelmed at work because she was more in control of her day”* [C5].

Greater control was an unexpected theme that emerged from the qualitative interviews. It contributes to the executive coaching field by providing information on how executive coaching has its effects. It centred on emotional control of feelings and increased control over behaviour. The enhanced control displayed by leaders was visible to others and possibly engendered an increased sense of personal competence in leadership.

The data presented has provided substantiation of the effects of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states, thus confirming the quantitative results from the earlier studies. The qualitative interviews have also contributed richer information about the impact of executive coaching on leader behaviour. Particularly by identifying the dimensions of transformational leadership most influenced by executive coaching. One further aim of this study was to investigate the long-term nature of these changes by collecting interview data at least twelve months after leaders had completed their final executive coaching sessions. The theme sustained improvement emerged from the interviews and is examined below.

Sustained Improvement

The leaders were asked to discuss whether the changes from executive coaching had been sustained after the coaching was completed. The responses from leaders, supervisors, and team members confirmed the improvements had indeed been maintained. Some leaders identified ongoing psychological change, through increased self-awareness: *"It's an awareness of my habits. I'm much more aware and I'm much more likely to reflect on what I did than before I did coaching"* [L2]; *I have certainly continued the analysing of my own behaviours and my interactions so that I*

look for positive ways and successes versus failures” [L5] and an awareness of others: “It did have a big influence on my leadership role and I have really tried to keep implementing what I learnt. I think it has made me focus on situations more than I had in the past and focus on what people want, what people require, and I keep asking myself what would my coach say...what would we discuss...think before you open your mouth” [L1].

However, the more frequent sustained changes noted were linked to improvements in leader behaviour, with time management often cited: *“One of the things that we really worked on was me trying to organise my day and my tasks because I have a lot of staff and a lot of tasks and one of the things was really planning my day and working out what my limits are. I’ve maintained the daily organisation and prioritisation of things that I started off doing in coaching and this is something that I do routinely and still consistently use and it makes me feel a lot better about the work” [L5]; “It’s probably more effective time management is the biggest thing I’ve taken out of executive coaching” [L8]; “I’m still using the techniques for more efficient use of time and resources” [L7]; “I’m much more likely to work off a to-do list now, after my coaching” [L2].*

Other leaders talked about maintaining the work they had started in executive coaching by continuing to work on their developmental areas after they ceased working with their coach: *“it was a process that was implemented throughout the coaching process and once it was set in place, it was a matter of keeping it going...and it is ongoing now...it’s easy to continue” [L3]. “The areas that we tried to target during the coaching period, I’ve done my best to keep up with them and I’ve found that trying to do that has brought its own rewards. The coaching encouraged*

me along the way because of the regular nature and the regular task, it got me into a routine that I could carry on after I finished...so I've continued to move forward on several goals that were outlined through the coaching period...I haven't lost sight of the goal or the action plan" [L7].

The cross-over from executive coaching at work, to the use of techniques in personal situations was also discussed by one leader: *"I've found that I'm using the executive coaching, a lot of it, at home as well. Particularly with my children...they come and talk to me and I don't interrupt them...so I get along better with the kids as well" [L1]* and identified by a coach: *"executive coaching has really had a major impact on his relationship with his wife" [C6].*

Supervisors too, talked about long-term changes they noticed in leaders after the cessation of executive coaching. Their comments follow the psychological and behavioural themes identified by the leaders themselves. Psychologically, the change is noticed as an increased awareness of others: *"he's taken time to get to know members of his team personally and individually. To get some of the anecdotal information about them and what their interests are and the sort of things they do outside work" [S4].* Behaviourally, the notion of leaders planning was also discussed by the supervisors: *"he's much more planned and scheduled and focused, focused planning" [S4]* and *"he's improved in the way he does the job and I think he feels that the executive coaching has been helpful for him in giving some guidance" [S7].*

The coaches were not in a position to discuss sustained change because they had not been in contact with the leaders since regular coaching sessions ended. However, throughout the interviews they discussed the changes the leaders'

implemented during executive coaching, and the interview data from the other participants (leaders, supervisors and team members) emphasised continued use of these techniques. Thus, executive coaching contributed to improved leadership behaviour which was still maintained when the interviews were conducted twelve months after the last coaching session. This evidence provides support for the longitudinal quantitative data (from Study One and Two) and is a particularly important outcome of this study. The transfer of training research (presented previously) indicates that there is limited transfer back to the work place after training has ceased. The effects from executive coaching on the other hand continue to be sustained in the work place twelve months later.

The final area this study sought to gain a greater understanding of centred on the organisational context for this research program. As has been highlighted previously, there were extenuating factors present during the studies which may have impacted on the results. Accurately understanding the research context is therefore crucial for correctly interpreting the results, and if desired, replicating the study. This is the last theme discussed and concluded the qualitative data collection for the research program.

Environmental Factors

There were various indicators that the organisational environment was difficult for staff. First, anecdotal feedback from leaders to their coaches during the coaching program highlighted problems. Second, intense and extended media coverage provided ongoing awareness of the organisational environment. Third, regular communication between the researcher and key stakeholders of the

transformational leadership development program confirmed the challenges.

Therefore, the qualitative interviews purposely set out to investigate the impact of the environment on the effectiveness of executive coaching.

These comments attest to the fact that the organisational environment was difficult: “*there are lots of changes going on in the organisation in terms of changing positions, secondments*” [C2] meaning “*the last 12 months or so have been quite frantic...we’ve had staff changes, and changes in testing, on top of the actual move into the new premises...I haven’t had a lot of time to test the coaching ideas in the workplace yet*” [L8]. Additionally, “*there were technology time barriers to getting things done with other parties and organisations involved in the technical department*” [C5].

Leaders and supervisors also talked about ‘*high work load*’, “*I was positive and determined, but overwhelmed with the workload that I had and that was having an adverse affect on me*” [L6], ‘*conflicting demands*’ and ‘*the impact of the different staffing resources*’ that added pressure – for example: “*the level of workload is extremely high and I know at times that causes conflict between what he needs to do and what he would like to do*” [S4]. These conditions, coupled with “*secondments*” to other positions, “*changing roles*” and “*extensive work-related overseas travel probably has the potential to undermine the impact of coaching*” [L3] because there are the “*constant dynamics of being here and not being here*” [T1].

The organisational effects were wide-spread. Mergers, changes and investigations affected different departments whose leaders were participating in executive coaching. For one leader the environment was overwhelming: “*she’s been*

in a very extraordinary situation and her staff has grown considerably...it's made her life exceptionally stressful...she wasn't able to focus, she had to have time off because of work related stress" [S5]. "She's been under exceptional pressure and media and ministerial scrutiny" [T10]. Such that the demands became too much to cope with: "There was a ministerial taskforce and review that interrupted my normal day-to-day duties and really changed my focus...as a result of all the things that were happening, I had seven weeks off" [L5].

For other leaders, major organisational restructuring resulted in large role changes with potentially negative outcomes: *"the leader's position was superseded, certainly there's a lot of restructuring and change...those challenges might have diminished the opportunities that he had" [S8]. "There's been a change in the organisational structure...his area of strength is in the field that the other supervisor has...the staff he actually works with and his reporting manager has changed...there's been that sort of upheaval in the work environment that he's had to work with" [T16], "but executive coaching has allowed him to take on his new role without disrupting the way he's working in light of the change of role, which has been a big change" [T15]. The role changes also blurred reporting boundaries for the leaders, and as a result, made the workplace rather "disorientating" [S6]. "I expect he feels pressured and torn between who's his line manager and where the authority comes from...because at the State wide, multidiscipline level it's he and I, but other people are saying now that he's here [in X department] he should be our worker and under our control" [S7].*

The evidence collected through the interviews provided strong support that some of the benefits from executive coaching may have been constrained by the

environment. Some leaders had limited opportunity to practise the skills in the workplace and others were simply feeling too overwhelmed to focus completely on leadership development. The impact of these exceptional organisational conditions must therefore be considered when interpreting these results.

The following discussion will commence by analysing the qualitative data aligned to the psychological measures. Pertinent links will be drawn with the results from Study One and Study Two. This will be followed by an interpretation of the inductive themes and discussion of the characteristics of transformational leadership.

Interpretation and Discussion

This study was designed to explore the psychological and behavioural effects of executive coaching using qualitative data to triangulate the quantitative results from Study One and Study Two. The purpose was to provide an enhanced understanding of how executive coaching had its effects on leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviours and to investigate the impact of the organisational environment on the effectiveness of executive coaching. There is a dearth of evidence about executive coaching; this final study provides a balanced insight into its use as a leadership development tool.

The quantitative findings from Studies One and Two indicated that after leaders had completed six executive coaching sessions there were significant differences in self-efficacy, developmental support, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. When the combined sample from Studies One and Two was measured positive affect was also significantly different. Further, team members

confirmed that leaders' demonstrated increased transformational leadership behaviour after participating in executive coaching. This study, guided by four research questions, provided confirmation of these outcomes and investigated particular issues arising from the earlier research. The results are discussed below.

One aim of this study was to confirm the effects of executive coaching on leaders' self-efficacy and openness to new behaviours. The interview data demonstrated that executive coaching did indeed impact on most leaders' feelings of self-efficacy as their confidence increased. However the qualitative data indicated that for some of these leaders executive coaching did not increase their confidence because they already felt confident about their role. It is important to note that the sample from which this research was drawn consisted predominantly of leaders well established in senior level positions and therefore, it could be expected, reasonably confident in their ability to lead others. Despite this, most leaders, and in particular, the less experienced leaders talked about how executive coaching improved their feelings of confidence. The relationship between executive coaching and confidence has been discussed in previous research by Bush (2004) and Hall et al. (1999). They both suggest that executive coaching can increase feelings of confidence for most leaders (Bush, 2004; Hall et al., 1999). The results from this study supported the conclusion that executive coaching increased leaders' self-efficacy, however the effect may be moderated by the leaders' existing level of confidence in their ability to lead others. This is an area for follow-up through further research.

Self-efficacy though, may influence leaders' willingness to consider new behaviours. The results from Study One and Two demonstrated that leaders were more open to thinking about new ways of behaving with their team after participating

in executive coaching. The interview data confirmed these findings and provided knowledge of how the psychological change occurred. Openness to new behaviours started when the coach encouraged the leader to think about stepping outside his or her comfort zone and plan for a different future by considering things not previously taken into account. In addition to supporting a new way of thinking, the leaders also indicated that executive coaching provided them with the space and confidence to consider alternate approaches to managing a team which facilitated openness to new behaviours.

In the previous quantitative studies (refer Chapter 4 and 5), the leaders' perceptions of developmental support were significantly greater after executive coaching. Likewise, the role of support in the executive coaching relationship was identified in the interview data. However, in this study the interview questions specifically sought to understand how the leaders' perceived support through executive coaching. Three themes emerged, namely, support in the form of accountability to keep the focus, feedback about development, and someone to discuss things with. The previous executive coaching literature identified the value leaders placed on the coach's role as a listener and sounding board (Hall et al., 1999; Hurd, 2002) and the results of this study were no different. Access to an unbiased resource entirely focused on the leader who acted as a 'safe' sounding board for current issues, combined with the development of feedback channels, not only from the coach, but channels for receiving feedback from team members, peers and supervisors were important aspects of the executive coaching relationship.

Interestingly the leaders frequently cited that it was positive that the coaches were external to the organisation. This is an important finding because often there is

resistance from organisers implementing a coaching program to use external coaches even though organisations rarely have the resources in-house to provide executive coaching. Yet this study, and previous executive coaching research (Bush, 2004; Hall et al., 1999; Stevens, 2005) indicate that external coaches are seen favourably by leaders because they offer a kind of “safe haven” resulting from the confidentiality they provide along with experience, a wider range of ideas (Hall et al., 1999) and an outside perspective (Thach, 2002). Although Hall et al. (1999) also identified that occasionally external coaches bring their own agenda to executive coaching, they suggest this is rare. Certainly there was no negative feedback about the presence of external coaches within this program. Thus, this outcome should offer reassurance to organisations seeking to bring in external coaches for their coaching programs.

Another key aspect identified by the leaders, and discussed in Thach’s (2002) research, is the importance of accountability in the executive coaching relationship. In this current study, without the regular follow-up from the coach, leaders recognised how easy it was to put off attending to developmental needs. Accountability through executive coaching is a feature that distinguishes it from other training approaches. For leaders, the knowledge that regular follow-up is part of the development process serves to motivate continued progress toward action steps detailed in the action plan. Whilst the existing executive coaching research has not examined the significance of the action plan in the coaching relationship, Grant (2001) reports that goal setting and action planning need to be complemented by monitoring and evaluation in coaching situations. Certainly in the current study,

accountability towards action steps was identified as an important part of moving forward. This clearly has implications for practice.

During the interviews leaders also discussed how vital they felt it was to get on well with their coach, and this is a topic that has received considerable attention in the executive coaching research (Bergquist, Merritt, & Phillips, 1999; Crane, 2002; Flaherty, 1999; Hurd, 2002; Sztucinski, 2001; Witherspoon, 2000). Certainly the evidence from previous researchers suggests that it is important for the leader and the coach to establish rapport to ensure the coaching dialogue commences and the leader feels comfortable openly expressing his or her thoughts (Flaherty, 1999; Lyons, 2006). One leader described his coach as a role model, this is identified in the Executive Coaching Handbook as one of the crucial tasks of the coach in a coaching relationship (Ennis, 2004; Rogers, 2004). The data has provided an insight into the nature of developmental support and identified potentially important aspects of the coaching experience that could be investigated through further research.

The quantitative results (refer Chapters 4 and 5) also showed that after executive coaching leaders did report greater developmental planning than before commencing executive coaching. The purpose of the qualitative data was to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of goal setting and action planning in developmental planning. These are tools the leader utilises to set and achieve goals. Most leaders said the behavioural outcomes they achieved through developmental planning occurred because they identified their goals and broke down the steps toward goal achievement. A few leaders though did discuss a change in thought processes, which they connected to successful behavioural change. All the interview responses were positive about the effectiveness of developmental planning.

In particular, goal setting and action planning were said to facilitate developmental planning. The importance of goal setting has previously been identified in the executive coaching research. For example, Smither et al.'s (2003) study found that leaders who worked with an executive coach set more specific goals than leaders who did not work with a coach. The research by Bush (2004) and Hurd (2002) suggested that clear, specific goals were identified by leaders as the key element that made executive coaching work. Without goal setting significant change is unlikely as there is no direction and no measure of success (Rogers, 2004). Goals provide a measure of performance, and without goals individuals do not value feedback as important and do not take action in response to it (Locke & Latham, 1990b).

Goal setting is an important leadership responsibility (Winters & Latham, 1996). This research has demonstrated that goal setting, combined with action planning, resulted in successful outcomes, one of which appeared to be leaders' experiencing greater control over their feelings and behaviour. Previous goal setting research recognised the importance of setting goals and using action plans (Plumb, 1987) and this is supported in coaching practice by Grant (2001) who asserts that while goal setting is necessary, "plans must be developed and enacted" (Grant, 2001, p. 50). Executive coaching offers the support necessary for leaders to develop action plans, fulfil action steps and reach goals. This research confirmed the importance of developmental planning for improving the way leaders' plan for the future. By changing thought processes, the leaders have an enhanced focus to clearly identify what to do and how to get there.

To this point, the qualitative data has confirmed the quantitative results and provided a greater understanding of how executive coaching has its psychological effects. The quantitative results examining the impact of executive coaching on leaders' feelings of enthusiasm and excitement for the organisation (positive affect) were not so clear, however, once the data from Study One and Study Two were combined, there were significant effects. This final study sought to understand these results further.

To investigate positive affect leaders were asked whether they felt more positive and enthusiastic at work during the coaching process. Prior to the interviews, some leaders had commented to their coaches that whilst they were excited by executive coaching, they were not as enthusiastic about the organisation. So for these leaders, the responses to the interview questions centred on executive coaching being a very positive experience which increased their feelings of control over work related issues, yet was not associated with increased feelings of enthusiasm at work.

A greater understanding into why the excitement from coaching did not always transfer to the leaders' work was gained by investigating whether factors in the leaders' work or personal environment diminished the benefits experienced. For many, the organisational environment affected feelings towards their work. At the time of the executive coaching program, the organisation was in a period of turbulence (discussed in further detail shortly). The impact of the environment seemed to contribute to the ambivalence displayed in leaders' responses both in the quantitative and qualitative studies. For example, leaders commonly gave responses of 3 (out of a score range from 1, not at all, to 5, all the time) in the quantitative data

measuring positive affect. During the qualitative interviews, some leaders indicated they did feel positive about their work, but struggled to be descriptive about what this meant for them. It appears that the organisational environment impacted on leaders' feelings of positive affect and contributed to the weaker quantitative effects for this measure.

One of the aims of the current study was to investigate the environmental conditions to determine the impact they had on the effectiveness of executive coaching. During the time of the coaching program, the organisational environment was characterised by staff and positional changes through a merger, a move to new premises and intense public investigations. These conditions were summed up as being "quite frantic" and were identified by both leaders and supervisors as limiting the effectiveness of executive coaching. Participants acknowledged that the environmental conditions had undermined the impact of executive coaching because there were diminished opportunities to trial new behaviours in the workplace. Thus the influence the organisational environment impacted on transfer of learning to the workplace consistent with previous research. Baldwin and Ford (1988) and Lim and Johnson (2002) reported that the opportunity for trainees to apply what they have learned to their jobs is crucial for training to penetrate to use on the job (Noe & Ford, 1992).

Despite the contextual limitations, the quantitative research conducted in Study One and Study Two demonstrated that after the leaders had completed the coaching program, executive coaching did have an ongoing effect on leaders' psychological states and, as reported by team members, on transformational leadership behaviour. Therefore, despite the difficulties arising from the

organisational environment there is evidence that the long-term outcomes from executive coaching remain. The qualitative data has demonstrated that for some leaders, sustained change has been achieved through an increased awareness in general and in particular, of personal habits and analysis of personal behaviour which has improved their relationships with others. Frequently cited, sustained change has come from using much improved planning and organisational techniques and continuing to follow the action plan for guiding the development process. Overall, the lasting change seems to have occurred because psychologically leaders have changed their thought patterns which were limiting their previous behaviour. In doing this they have developed more effective new habits and become confident in the ensuing behavioural change, the outcomes of which they see as beneficial. Leaders receive positive feedback about their changes and desire to continue the new way of doing things to achieve sustained change.

This program of research also examined whether executive coaching improved transformational leadership behaviour. The most frequently occurring theme from all participants was that the leaders 'became better' after executive coaching. The previous research into executive coaching also found that leaders improved after participating in executive coaching (Bush, 2004; Hall et al., 1999; Hunt, 1999; Sztucinski, 2001; Turner, 2003). This was an encouraging outcome given the aim of the executive coaching program was to develop transformational leaders because, as the existing research has indicated, transformational leaders are better leaders (Bass, 1990). The interview data collected twelve months after the last executive coaching session confirmed these improvements.

Of the four dimensions of transformational leadership identified by Bass (1985), three dimensions were evident in the data, with individualised consideration most obvious. For example, leaders were said to be more aware of individual differences, yet conscious of treating team members equally, empathising more with staff, being more considerate and open towards team members, listening and helping them more and displaying increased opportunities for communication where team members feel comfortable to speak to the leader. The feedback also indicated that leaders were giving team members more opportunities for growth by involving them more in the work and then providing support through positive feedback to encourage team members' continued performance. These responses are consistent with individualised consideration which is displayed when leaders treat followers as individuals and provide coaching, mentoring and growth opportunities (Bass, 1985).

Increased use of the transformational leadership dimension, intellectual stimulation was demonstrated by the leaders after executive coaching. This was evidenced by leaders giving staff opportunities not previously offered, delegating tasks, mentoring team members and helping them find solutions to problems. Leaders communicated more with team members and allowed them to put forward their view points. Leaders also provided team members with the authority to make decisions. By trusting their team members more and providing them with responsibility, leaders were freeing up their own time to work on other activities. One other transformational leadership dimension, inspirational motivation was also noted. Communicating more by keeping team members informed about issues within the workplace that affected them and providing team members with information on the bigger picture was discussed most often in the interview data

surrounding this dimension. Improved communication was also one of the main outcomes of executive coaching that team members and supervisors identified. It is a vital element of leadership which influences the relationship between the leader and his or her team members (Conger, 1991).

Communication appeared to underlie multiple transformational leadership dimensions. Previous research has identified the significance of effective communication for improved team member satisfaction (Miles & Mangold, 2002). Clutterbuck and Hirst (2002) suggest that leaders must become role models for communication in organisations. The interview data indicated that noticeable changes in communication had taken place since the implementation of executive coaching in the organisation. Indeed communication was raised so frequently when team members discussed improvements in leader behaviour, it is argued that the fact that leaders were seen to have improved their communication provided additional evidence that transformational leadership behaviour had improved. Thus, this research suggests that communication is at the core of the transformational leadership dimensions.

The research that emerged from this program provided an alternative source of evidence (from the quantitative results) to demonstrate that leaders made noticeable improvements in transformational leadership behaviour after executive coaching. This evidence is important, because every interview participant noted improvement in all leaders' behaviour. However, according to the quantitative study (Chapter 5) only team members reported improvements in leaders' transformational leadership behaviour after six executive coaching sessions. In addition, in the post 360 degree feedback reports distributed to leaders at the completion of the

transformational leadership development program, not all leaders improved their leadership. Three leaders who participated in this study decreased on their post 360 degree feedback, whilst there was no change in one leader's post 360 degree feedback. Thus, contradictory results emerged which will now be examined.

One leader in this study decreased on his post 360 degree feedback report, yet this leader, his supervisor and team members all identified improvement in his leadership behaviour. His supervisor said: "*He's more cognisant of his staffs' needs...and that makes him a better leader*". Aligned with this, both his team members identified communication improvements: "*His communication style has improved*" and "*he's displaying a more effective way of managing and integrating with staff...communication is a key role in that*". This leader also discussed changes in his communication both on a professional and personal level, and concluded that he became "*a better leader*". Executive coaching has previously been identified with enhancing personal and professional outcomes (Bush, 2004; Hurd, 2002). Given the extent of this leader's improvement (as discussed by his supervisor and team members), it is difficult to understand why these positive changes were not established in his post 360 degree feedback report where the same supervisors and team members provided quantitative feedback about his leadership behaviour.

A similar pattern emerged for two more leaders who participated in this study. Both these leaders did not improve on their post 360 degree feedback reports, yet these leaders were given positive feedback about their leadership improvements from their team members, supervisors and coaches during the qualitative interviews. These results have identified a problem with using just 360 degree feedback tools to give leaders' information on their development. This has been noted previously,

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) for example reported that only one third of the individuals receiving performance appraisal feedback in their study improved. Atwater, Waldman and Brett (2002) propose that it is expecting too much to anticipate change that is dramatic enough to detect, when results are averaged together over a large number of behaviours.

The question of whether 360 degree feedback accurately reports improvements raises concern. In this study, the evidence is convincing that the leaders have improved, yet some did not receive formal positive feedback on their development through the post 360 degree feedback (after the completion of the executive coaching and the transformational leadership development program). This must surely be happening in other development programs. Given that 360 degree feedback potentially serves to motivate (or de-motivate) continued improvement in behaviour (Atwater et al., 2002), this research demonstrates awareness must be given to the emphasis placed on one single approach for measuring the outcomes of leadership development programs. A combination of feedback sources should be considered.

To summarise, the qualitative data has provided strong evidence that executive coaching had positive outcomes, thus confirming the quantitative findings. This study offered an increased understanding of how executive coaching affected leaders' psychological states, clarifying key elements of developmental support and developmental planning and demonstrated which dimensions of transformational leadership were most affected by executive coaching. The results have also provided an important source of information about leader improvements which formal development measurement tools, in this case 360 degree feedback, did not identify.

Given the data for this study were collected at least twelve months after leaders had completed their sixth executive coaching session, the feedback provides vital information on the long-term changes that have been sustained from executive coaching. This evidence contributes to opportunities for further research. These will be discussed below, along with the theoretical and practical implications of this research.

Theoretical Implications

This research increased the existing knowledge of how executive coaching had its effects and examined the consequences of the organisational environment on the effectiveness of executive coaching as a leadership development tool. Triangulation of the methods confirmed the quantitative findings surrounding the impact of executive coaching on the psychological variables, and provided a rich descriptive data set of the measures. In particular, the qualitative research has refined the conceptualisation of developmental support and developmental planning (both discussed shortly) in an executive coaching relationship. The research data has also provided an enhanced understanding of the dimensions of transformational leadership that are developed during the executive coaching relationship and provided evidence of the long-term impact of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviours.

This study has contributed to an increased understanding of the concept developmental support in an executive coaching relationship. Developmental support has three characteristics, first, developmental support is provided predominantly by an external coach who acts as a safe sounding board for leader

discussions. Second, the role of accountability in developmental support is a key feature which distinguishes executive coaching from other training interventions. The coach holds the leader accountable for their actions to keep the leader focused and on track for development. Finally, during the coaching relationship the coach provides, and encourages the leader to seek feedback. The feedback reinforces good behaviours and minimises ineffective choices. This deeper understanding of developmental support also assists in extending the measure for future use.

The data has also indicated that general support offered by the coach during executive coaching reaches further than the three characteristics of developmental support identified above. The coach provides support for the leader to identify behavioural choices not previously considered and in doing so, increases the leaders' openness towards new behaviours and approaches to developmental planning.

A greater insight into the psychological measure, developmental planning has been acquired through this research. The importance of goal setting and action planning as developmental tools are discussed as practical implications. In terms of enhancing knowledge, this research has confirmed that executive coaching supports leaders as they begin their coaching journey to contemplate their future and how they intend to get there. Planning for the future appears to increase leaders' feelings of control and may contribute to other positive psychological states not considered in this study.

The qualitative research has confirmed that, in this research program, the environmental factors present, namely high workloads, conflicting demands, and changing organisational conditions which included an organisational restructure

resulting in a move to new premises, associated staff changes, and changes in procedures, did impede the effectiveness of executive coaching. This aligns with the existing transfer of training literature which suggests that contextual factors outside the training program do impact on transfer of training back to the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Facticeau et al., 1995; Tracey et al., 1995). Acknowledging the negative impact of these factors is important for accurate interpretation of these results, however, there will be times when environmental factors facilitate development, particularly where there is a lack of change obstructing the future direction for the organisation. Potentially there is a balance needed to support advancement, this is presumably somewhere between when the organisational environment is too stable vs. when it is too dynamic. Identifying this point presents an opportunity for future research.

The qualitative data also provided insight into the effect of executive coaching on transformational leadership. The executive coaching literature is calling for research to identify specific behavioural impacts (Smither et al., 2003). This research has been able to commence this investigation as the previous quantitative measure of transformational leadership did not aim to separate out the effect of executive coaching on the four characteristics of transformational leadership. This research now suggests that executive coaching has greater effects on individualised consideration, and to a lesser extent, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation. Theoretically, an investigation can be commenced linking executive coaching to, in particular, development in the dimension individualised consideration. This is known to fulfil the individual's need for self-actualisation,

self-fulfilment, and self-worth, and naturally propels followers to further achievement and growth (Bass, 1999).

The improved theoretical understanding provided by this research has also raised some useful practical findings. Increased awareness of practical applications for executive coaching may enhance coaching's effectiveness as an approach for developing transformational leadership behaviour.

Practical Implications

A number of practical suggestions will be discussed arising from this program of research. The first implication is centred on how organisations measure leadership development. The data demonstrated that the 360 degree feedback tool may not be the most appropriate mechanism for measuring change in leadership skills. Some leaders' post-coaching, 360 degree feedback reports indicated that they had not made any improvement in their leadership or indeed, had regressed. Yet, a very different story came out when these same leaders' team members and supervisors were interviewed. They provided evidence of the positive changes in their leader's behaviour that had occurred post-executive coaching. Organisations implementing training programs where 360 degree feedback is used to provide developmental feedback may consider combining 360 degree feedback with alternate feedback approaches. For example, a combination with executive coaching would allow a coach to collect formal feedback from team members and supervisors to augment the information contained in 360 degree feedback reports. This would provide leaders with an additional source of information that they can use for their ongoing development. This is important because leaders' continued motivation to

change is frequently determined by the outcomes of feedback reports, with negative reports serving to de-motivate future attempts to improve (Atwater et al., 2002).

When 360 degree feedback reports are not capturing the full picture, they may be detrimental to sustained changes in behaviour.

This research has confirmed that executive coaching does develop transformational leadership behaviour. However some dimensions of transformational leadership behaviour appear to be more receptive to change through executive coaching than other dimensions. The most commonly cited change was in individualised consideration where leaders used improved communication to get to know their team members better and as a result, individualised the support and development they offered to them. Within this research program, communication was the most frequently developed skill area and individualised consideration develops from improved communication skills. Communication is recognised in the research as an important attribute for successful leadership (Conger, 1991) and according to the data from Tait (1996), one of the skills necessary for directing and guiding a large organisation. The effect executive coaching had on individualised consideration was noticeable as leaders used improved communication to build better relationships with their team. From an organisational perspective, there is an opportunity to capitalise on this finding by offering targeted leadership training through executive coaching.

Another key finding from the research was the confirmed benefits attained by providing leaders with external coaches. During the development of this leadership program, there was concern expressed by senior organisational members about using external coaches as they would not know the culture, or understand the work of the

leaders. This issue was actually a positive rather than a negative in the coaching relationship, because it forced leaders to explain what and why they did things, and often through this explanation, allowed the leaders to identify new and improved approaches to behaving, rather than continuing to do more of what they had done in the past. The leaders indicated that the biggest benefit of using an external coach was the increased confidentiality an external person brought to the relationship. The opportunity to build rapport and trust with the coach in a safe environment where there was support to bounce around ideas and the opportunity to receive unbiased feedback was identified by the leaders as a very useful part of the executive coaching process. Thus, bringing external coaches into a program is advantageous rather than detrimental.

The importance of structure for maintaining changed behaviour was noted by the leaders as a determiner of success. This has similarly been identified by participants in other executive coaching research (Flaherty, 1999; Hall et al., 1999; Hunt, 1999; Kleinberg, 2001; Laske, 1999; O'Neill, 2000; Sztucinski, 2001; Turner, 2003; Witherspoon, 2000). Yet the outcomes from following a structured, individualised action plan for development have not been thoroughly addressed in the executive coaching literature. The action plan, which incorporated the steps to reach goal attainment, was a crucial part of long-term change in this coaching program. It may be that the structure provided through the action plan gave leaders a sense of direction for moving forward and was particularly important during the extreme upheaval experienced in this development program. The knowledge about the importance of structure gives practitioners valuable information for designing future executive coaching programs.

Finally, the interview data provided insight for managing a dynamic organisational environment. There were certain aspects of the environment identified as especially damaging for leaders in this program, namely excessive workload and limited resources. Both these factors made it hard for leaders to cope during the extreme change experienced. High workload and limited resources have been identified as issues which restrict leaders successfully fulfilling the requirements of their jobs, and are further associated with decreased satisfaction and performance (Carlopio, Andrewartha, & Armstrong, 2005). In this research program, the environment did impact on the effectiveness of executive coaching because the workload and lack of resources restricted opportunities leaders had to trial new behaviours at work. The organisation should monitor workload and resource issues because they can potentially undermine positive outcomes from training and development.

Limitations

This research contributes to the emerging executive coaching literature by increasing understanding about the psychological and behavioural impacts of executive coaching. However, there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. As has been previously discussed in earlier chapters, collecting data for this research was difficult. There were a small number of people who participated in the interviews and there are limitations with the generalisability of these findings because the data was collected from one organisation. However, the organisation was a large public sector workplace consisting of many different departments each with their own culture. The data was collected from a number of

these unique departments, so this increased the ability to apply these findings to other settings.

The environmental context was particularly powerful in this study. The organisation was under pressure with a large change effort and a number of public investigations. Therefore the environment played a fairly substantial part in examining the effectiveness of executive coaching and may not be as important in other contexts. This could raise questions about the findings because the difficulties experienced did negatively impact on the effectiveness of executive coaching for some leaders. However, there is evidence that executive coaching served to support other leaders during this difficult time. Therefore, measuring the same program in another organisation may produce different results.

Further research

The findings presented through this study are noteworthy and do support further opportunities to contribute to the limited body of existing research. One of the major outcomes from this study is the impact of the environment on the effectiveness of executive coaching. The evidence collected during the interviews suggested that contextual factors had a negative effect on the transfer of training to the workplace and perhaps, leaders' feelings of positive affect. This area deserves further attention. Comparative studies, one examining the outcomes of executive coaching within a stable environment and the other investigating the effects of executive coaching during rapid change would be useful to explain how the organisational context influenced the effectiveness of executive coaching. This

research would also and help identify the optimum environment to foster transfer from executive coaching to the work place.

This research program was designed to investigate the psychological impact of executive coaching and acknowledged that there were additional measures outside those studied, which may be affected. A new psychological effect has emerged from this study that is worthy of further investigation. The interview data suggested that executive coaching increased leaders' feelings of control over work related activities (identified as greater control). The findings of this study have also clarified the psychological variables of developmental support and developmental planning. The added understanding gained through this study has been discussed previously. There is now an opportunity to develop these measures, incorporating the additional elements identified, to confirm the effect of executive coaching on developmental support and developmental planning. Further research should consider examining these variables as they provide insight into the mechanisms that executive coaching operates through.

This research program also investigated the effectiveness of executive coaching as a tool for developing transformational leadership. The earlier quantitative data provided evidence from team members that leaders' were more transformational after executive coaching. The qualitative data provided deeper insight suggesting that executive coaching may have a greater impact on certain dimensions of transformational leadership, in particular, individualised consideration, and to a lesser extent, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation. These are however exploratory findings that could be further investigated through additional research.

Conclusion

Executive coaching is being used more in organisations. This study, by triangulating the research methods with the previous two studies in this research program, provided additional information about the impact of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and confirmed the effectiveness of executive coaching as a transformational leadership development approach. It also verified the sustainability of executive coaching for developing leaders and identified that environmental factors, like workload and resource shortages, are contributors which limit the effectiveness of executive coaching.

The less structured nature of the qualitative interviews permitted the examination of the five psychological variables in more depth, and in particular, key elements of the measures, developmental support and developmental planning. An additional psychological state, identified as greater control, also emerged from the research. This information has provided further insight into the mechanisms through which executive coaching contributed to behavioural change and provided interesting opportunities for future research.

As a transformational leadership development approach, executive coaching is successful and contributes to long-term change. This research examined the four dimensions of transformational leadership and identified that executive coaching contributes most significantly to individualised consideration. Executive coaching also considerably improves leader communication, which team members and supervisors linked to improved leadership behaviour.

Overall, the research has confirmed that executive coaching is a useful approach for developing transformational leaders. The final chapter of this thesis will adopt a holistic approach to make deductions from the quantitative and qualitative research. It will present conclusions that are a valuable source of reference for researchers and practitioners in this emerging field.

CHAPTER SEVEN

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DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this program of research was to investigate the impact of executive coaching on leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour. Three studies were conducted which together provided a much needed basis for establishing the practical value of executive coaching. The first study utilised an experimental design where leaders were randomly assigned to either the training group or the control group to examine the effect of executive coaching on self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning. Then to assess the extent to which these effects were sustained over time, the pattern of change on these variables was measured by comparing them at three time points, namely prior to commencing executive coaching, after the completion of six coaching sessions, and at the final follow-up held six months after the completion of coaching session six. As has been discussed previously, these psychological variables are generally agreed to be desirable. This

research suggested that executive coaching had benefits for the participants on all of the variables measured.

This experimental design was used again in the second study to investigate effects of executive coaching on leaders' transformational leadership behaviours, comparing the training group leaders with the control group leaders, after the training group had completed executive coaching. Measures of transformational leadership behaviours were collected from leaders' supervisors, team members, and the leaders themselves. The findings from these analyses established that team members (but not leaders or supervisors) observed improvement in leaders' transformational leadership after executive coaching. This study also examined the change in transformational leadership behaviour over time by comparing leaders' pre- and post-executive coaching. Once again, team members' ratings showed improvement from pre-executive coaching to after six executive coaching sessions. Thus, this study built upon the first by revealing that in addition to having psychological benefits for leaders, executive coaching has observable effects on leaders' behaviour.

The final study explored the longer-term effects of executive coaching through interviews held with a random selection of leaders, their supervisors, team members, and coaches, at least twelve months after the leaders' last executive coaching session. By adopting a qualitative methodology in this third study (in contrast to the quantitative approach of the first two studies), this study was able to provide a validation of the psychological processes and contribute a deeper understanding of how executive coaching worked. It also provided contextual information about the impact of the organisational environment on the effectiveness of executive coaching.

The combination of methodologies utilised in this research program have provided a thorough test of executive coaching and its outcomes. The results of this research have made a substantial contribution to the body of theoretical knowledge about executive coaching, culminating in a proposed theory of how executive coaching effects change in transformational leader behaviour (presented below). According to Lowman (2005), there is no substitute for empirical evaluation into the field of executive coaching. Practically, the findings have provided knowledge for organisations in making informed judgments about the benefits of executive coaching. Kilburg (2000) suggests this information is indispensable as he believes executive coaching has suffered significantly from a lack of attention in the professional literature. This program of research has also contributed to the field by identifying areas for future investigation, which will continue to build the body of knowledge about executive coaching.

To complete this program of research this chapter draws together the empirical findings from the three studies and considers how these findings address the three research questions posed at the outset. A discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions of the research follows. The chapter concludes by acknowledging some limitations associated with the research and discusses the directions for future investigations into executive coaching.

Research Question One

The first research question explored whether executive coaching contributed to change in leaders' psychological states. This question was examined quantitatively in Study One and Study Two. Although the sample sizes in both studies were small the results across the two studies were fairly consistent. Further, to address the limitations of sample size an additional analysis was undertaken using the combined sample from Study One and Study Two. Together, the studies confirmed the effect of executive coaching on all the psychological states (self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, developmental planning). This outcome was then augmented with Study Three, which continued to examine the psychological variables through interviews with the leaders, their supervisors, team members, and coaches. The qualitative study provided additional evidence for the quantitative findings and further helped to explain how executive coaching affected leaders' psychological states.

Whilst the effect of executive coaching on all the psychological states was confirmed in the combined analysis, findings relating to a few of these variables are worthy of additional discussion. The first of these is self-efficacy. Whilst all three studies provided evidence that executive coaching increased leader self-efficacy, comments from a small number of leaders in the third study suggested that this effect may be moderated by the leaders' existing level of confidence in their ability to lead others. Although most leaders did say they felt more confident after executive coaching, the effect appeared to be greater for less experienced leaders. Examining the findings overall, the evidence confirmed that executive coaching was valuable for improving leader self-efficacy, in particular, when leaders have lower confidence.

The second variable for further discussion is positive affect. The effect of executive coaching on positive affect was not supported until the final analysis, where there was greater power because leaders from Study One and Study Two were measured together. The organisational context, raised in detail during the qualitative interviews, may have contributed to the weak effects associated with positive affect. In the qualitative interviews, leaders were asked whether, during the coaching process they felt more positive or enthusiastic at work. For those who did, the positive feelings arose because they felt more in control, less overwhelmed and better able to manage their emotional responses. On the other hand, executive coaching apparently had limited impact for leaders who were already feeling positive at work. There were also a small number of leaders who did not experience more positive affect whilst at work, these leaders, despite being excited about the coaching, were not enthused about the organisation. At the time when this research was conducted, the organisation was undergoing major change and a number of very prominent investigations. These factors appear to have contributed to the weak effects observed across the studies. Thus, it is concluded that executive coaching has a relatively weak effect on positive affect in the context of an organisation experiencing high levels of change and stress.

Therefore, in terms of answering the first research question, it is confirmed that executive coaching contributed to improvements in leaders' psychological states. The quantitative analysis on the entire sample with a pre-test – post-test design demonstrated that executive coaching produced psychological changes in leaders which improved their confidence, approach to future planning and willingness to think about alternate ways of behaving with their team. Executive coaching also

increased the amount of developmental support the leader experienced and their positive feelings towards the organisation. Previous research indicates that these variables in turn contribute to positive individual and organisational outcomes, for example, increased organisational citizenship behaviour, increased performance, flexibility and reduced stress (George, 1991; Jones et al., 2006; Locke & Latham, 1990c; Thach & Heinselman, 1999). They consequently provide a foundation for embracing executive coaching in the workplace.

Research Question Two

The second research question investigated whether executive coaching improved transformational leadership behaviour. The quantitative results provided evidence that team members perceived improvement in their leaders' transformational leadership behaviour associated with executive coaching, however, neither the leaders themselves nor their supervisors reported significant change. Other research suggests that the people most likely to identify change in leaders' transformational leadership are indeed the leaders' team members (Bycio et al., 1995; DeGroot et al., 2000; Howell et al., 1993; Kirkpatrick et al., 1996; Koh et al., 1995; Lowe et al., 1996; Sosik et al., 1997). Thus, the lack of effects associated with leaders and supervisors is not surprising because leaders' team members are in the best position to identify the type of changes in behaviour that was assessed in this study.

This research question was followed-up during the Study Three qualitative interviews. The most frequent comment from all interviewees (i.e. leaders, supervisors, team members, and coaches) was that the leaders were 'better,'

‘improved’ and ‘more effective’ after executive coaching. These comments were explored through the interviews and it emerged that improved communication was the key driver for change in leader behaviour. Whilst communication is not explicitly identified as a dimension of transformational leadership, it appears to be an underlying factor for improvement in leader behaviour.

When all the interview comments relating to change in leader behaviour were categorised, it was found that they related to three of the five dimensions of transformational leadership behaviour, namely, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration (behaviours falling into the latter category were reported most frequently). Thus, whilst the second study provided evidence that executive coaching brought about observable changes in leaders’ transformational leadership behaviour; the third study provided more detailed information about the nature of this change. It suggested that executive coaching led to leaders’ displaying an increased awareness of team members’ individual differences, and subsequently tailoring opportunities for team member growth by involving them more in the organisation’s work. The leaders also provided more ongoing support and feedback to encourage team members’ performance, whilst increasing team members’ feelings of responsibility through appropriate empowering and delegating.

The conclusion from this research program is that executive coaching does contribute to improvements in transformational leadership behaviours, particularly from the viewpoint of team members, and for those transformational leadership behaviours classified as intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration. Given that transformational leadership behaviour is

associated with positive organisational outcomes (Kelloway & Barling, 2000b), these findings provide further support for the use of executive coaching in organisations.

Research Question Three

The final question in this research program examined whether changes in leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour were sustained over time. To assess long-term change in the psychological variables, leaders' psychological states were compared prior to commencing executive coaching, after leaders had completed six executive coaching sessions and at a follow-up session held six months after regular coaching sessions had ended. The qualitative interviews also collected information on the long-term changes in the psychological variables at least twelve months after leaders had completed their sixth executive coaching session. Transformational leadership behaviour was assessed by comparing leader, team member and supervisor ratings of leaders' transformational leadership behaviour before and after six executive coaching sessions. Qualitative data was also collected through interviews with leaders, their supervisors, team members, and coaches, at least twelve months after leaders completed their sixth executive coaching session.

The results from Study Two and Study Three will be used to draw the final conclusions about the long-term change in leaders' psychological states. Study Two data are more conclusive; the issues identified in the timing of the data collection during Study One were overcome in Study Two. It was argued in Study One that the data collection at the end of the workshop artificially inflated the measures. Thus, in

Study Two the data was collected immediately prior to the leaders' commencing executive coaching to reduce these effects.

Two distinct patterns in the psychological states over time emerged: the effects for self-efficacy, openness to new behaviours and developmental planning increased after six executive coaching sessions and were sustained six months after executive coaching, (though developmental planning also showed a decrease but not back to its pre-coaching level so there was some long-term sustained change). The effect for developmental support on the other hand increased after six executive coaching sessions, however decreased when measured again six months after executive coaching. Developmental support and developmental planning more directly reflect processes which occur during executive coaching sessions, whereas self-efficacy and openness to new behaviours appear to be more independent of these processes and thus do not diminish when coaching sessions end.

The effect of executive coaching on developmental support was only sustained for as long as regular coaching sessions were maintained. It is understandable that leaders' feelings of support may decrease after executive coaching. During the executive coaching program the leaders had regular, ongoing contact with their coach, who supported them to move forward. When this regular contact stopped, the leaders' experience of support also decreased.

Similarly, the measure developmental planning also revealed a decrease after executive coaching stopped, however a slightly different pattern presented. There was an improvement in the measure from pre-coaching to after the sixth coaching session was completed, yet there was a decrease from the sixth coaching session up

to the six month follow-up, suggesting that without the support received during executive coaching, the leaders' ongoing approach to developmental planning is not maintained in the same manner as it was during executive coaching. Further investigation revealed however, that the post-coaching score did not decrease to the pre-coaching level, indicating that leaders still utilised techniques associated with developmental planning after executive coaching had concluded.

In addition to collecting evidence about the long-term effects on leaders' psychological states, this research program investigated whether changes in leaders' transformational leadership behaviour, specific to their individual development area, were sustained over time. The quantitative analysis examined the change in transformational leader behaviour from prior to commencing executive coaching to after completing six executive coaching sessions, as rated by leaders themselves, their supervisors, and team members. The results of this longitudinal analysis demonstrated a similar outcome to the earlier effects displayed for transformational leadership, namely, that team members did notice a significant difference in their leader's behaviour after executive coaching. However, the data from the supervisors and the leaders themselves did not show significant change in ratings of transformational leadership behaviour. It is argued that these negative findings carry less weight than the positive findings for team member ratings. Leaders' team members' work closely with the leaders and therefore have more opportunity to observe change over time in leader behaviour than supervisors, who do not interact with the leaders as frequently. In contrast, the effect of executive coaching on leader self-ratings may be to increase critical self-analysis of personal development which

would decrease the likelihood of leaders' ratings showing improvements in their transformational leadership behaviour, even if such improvements did occur.

However, with the benefit of time, further support for the long-term effects of executive coaching on transformational leadership behaviour emerged in the interview data collected at least twelve months after the last executive coaching session. This longer time period provided sufficient opportunity for all interviewees (leaders, supervisors, team members, and coaches) to report that executive coaching had brought about improvements in leader behaviour which continued to be displayed. Baldwin and Ford (1988) say that the effectiveness of any training program is evaluated by the length of time that trained skills continue to be used on the job, that is, how long maintenance of the behaviour continues. These results support the ongoing effects of transformational leadership development through executive coaching which are not evidenced in many programs post-training, and are consistent with the notion that more long-term interventions improve developmental outcomes (Tobias, 1996).

The findings from this research program assert that the psychological and behavioural effects of executive coaching are, in the main, sustained after regular coaching sessions end. This outcome provides for the following theoretical contributions.

Theoretical Contributions

The focus of this research has been on exploring the psychological and behavioural effects of executive coaching and the extent to which these effects are sustained over time. These questions are practical in their focus; nevertheless, this research contributes to the development of theory about executive coaching. Grant (2003, p. 4) states that, “if coaching is to become a widely respected cross-disciplinary profession whose primary purpose is to enhance well-being, improve performance and facilitate individual human and organisational change, then it must rest on a solid foundation. This foundation should be one of shared empirically-validated knowledge”.

This program of research contributes to building the foundation of knowledge. First these findings add clarity to the anecdotal feedback about executive coaching. Commonly participants are very positive about their experience with executive coaching (e.g. Hall et al., 1999; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992) and this psychological investigation provides insight into where the sense of benefit comes from. This research has demonstrated that the strongest psychological effect from executive coaching is on leaders’ approach to developmental planning. The interview data further provided evidence of an association between developmental planning and the experience of greater sense of control (which will be discussed shortly). Executive coaching also has strong affects on leaders’ self-efficacy and openness to new behaviours. Thus, the current research suggests that leaders’ positive reactions to executive coaching (widely reported in the literature) are due to changes in leaders’ psychological states. These positive reactions though are

presumably not related to behavioural change as leader self-ratings of transformational leadership behaviour do not show improvement over time.

A second theoretical contribution of this research is to shed light on the processes which may underlie the effect of executive coaching on leaders' behaviour. Whilst the two quantitative studies were not designed to explore mediation of the effects of executive on leader behaviour, evidence from the third qualitative study supports the proposition (presented at the outset of this research) that the psychological effects could potentially serve as mediators of change in leader behaviour. In Study Three, this question was explored by looking at participants' perceptions of how executive coaching supported their behaviour change efforts. Based on the leaders' description of their experience of executive coaching, and the previous research findings, a proposed model of how executive coaching brings about change in transformational leader behaviour is presented here. Viewed holistically the main themes that emerged during the qualitative analysis are presented in *Figure 7.1*, on page 284. Whereas initially, the theory of transformational leadership informed the design of this research, the findings from this research in turn provide insight into the processes associated with executive coaching and the development of transformational leadership behaviours. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this research to draw causal conclusions about the data, it is valuable to examine the emerging pattern with a view to identifying avenues for future research.

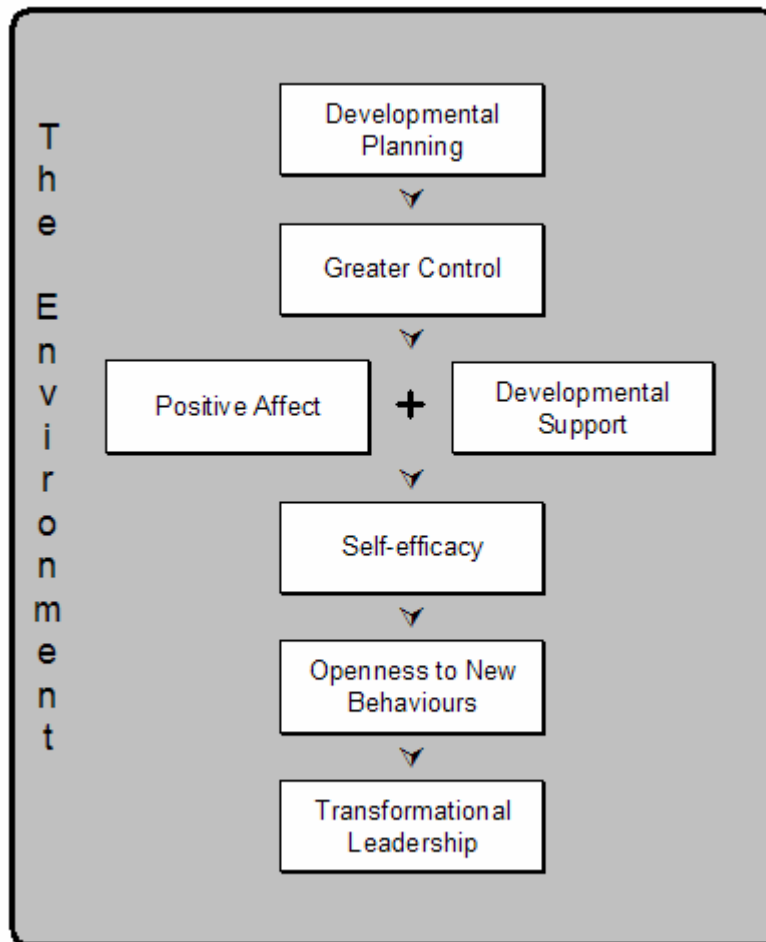


Figure 7.1. Proposed Theory of how Executive Coaching Effects Change in Transformational Leader Behaviour.

According to the leader interview data, leaders felt that the executive coaching process began with engagement in developmental planning. Leaders discussed how goal setting and action planning provided direction, resulting in greater feelings of control. The link between setting goals and increased control aligns with the previous findings on goal setting. Goals provide employees with a sense of control over their work outcomes (Menon, 2001; Spence-Laschinger & Havens, 1996; Umstot, Mitchell, & Bell, 1978) and personal control over the course of their behaviour (Claessens, Van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2004; Erez & Kanfer, 1983; Gibson, 2001; Staw, 1986).

Increased feelings of control have been linked to positive outcomes (Spence-Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2004) and are inversely correlated with feelings of stress and strain (Claessens et al., 2004; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005; Jex & Elacqua, 1999). Minimising stress and strain is important because both are known to have negative personal and professional impacts which make people feel unhappy (Crampton, Hodge, Mishra, & Price, 1995; Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Johnson et al., 2005; Vagg & Spielberger, 1998). The interview data suggests that executive coaching does increase the feelings of control a leader perceives, resulting in positive feelings at work. If this subsequently assists in the management of stress and strain, this is an additional outcome for organisations and individuals from executive coaching which needs confirmation through further research.

The effect of executive coaching on leaders' experience of developmental support was mentioned by many leaders. According to the leaders, through developmental support they felt accountable for, but also supported in, their development. Some leaders said that where there is no sense of accountability, there is little impetus to change, and if there is no support, it is easier to abandon goals when progress is slower than expected. Thach and Heinselman (1999) have suggested there is a relationship between support in executive coaching and reduced stress levels because, through coaching, leaders have access to an external person with whom they can confidentially and objectively discuss issues. In this research, one leader did identify that the increased support through executive coaching had contributed to reduced feelings of stress. However, predominately in the interviews, support was identified as a positive aspect of executive coaching which improved the leaders' feelings of confidence to succeed. Support though, also has other benefits;

the existing research prescribes that the experience of support in the work environment is important because it is associated with improved transfer of learning (Cromwell et al., 2004; Pidd, 2004). This demonstrated association between support and transfer of training may rationalise the success of executive coaching for transformational leadership development.

To acquire a deeper understanding of the impact of executive coaching on leaders' self-efficacy, the leaders who identified increased confidence were asked to clarify what this meant for them. Many leaders reported that having increased confidence encouraged them to try out new ways of behaving. This feedback corresponds with the existing literature on self-efficacy which identifies the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulation, goal setting, motivation and performance (Franyne & Latham, 1989; Gist, 1987; Olivero et al., 1997). When individuals felt more confident about themselves they were inclined to monitor their behaviour and make subsequent changes.

Thus, it appears that as a result of executive coaching, leaders' feelings of self-efficacy improved over time, commencing with the adoption of planning techniques which resulted in greater control. Subsequently, some leaders then reported feeling more positive, and this, combined with the support through executive coaching, may have further improved their feelings of self-efficacy.

The interview data also revealed that breaking old habits required a certain amount of confidence to try new things. The leaders' increased belief in their ability to perform proved helpful when they were stepping out of their comfort zone and persisting with new behaviours, even when experiments did not always work as well

as expected. During this time, leaders also talked about how reflecting on performance resulted in the identification of alternate, often more successful, approaches for development. This fits the existing research which indicates that successful task experiences lead to increased confidence in subsequent performance (Gardner & Price, 1998). The interview feedback from all sources demonstrated that all leaders became better leaders as a result of executive coaching, thus reinforcing the usefulness of executive coaching as a transformational leadership development approach.

Together, these findings suggest a causal pathway to transformational leadership development, where executive coaching first impacts on developmental planning, and as a result of planning, increases the feelings of control a leader experiences over their work. As a result of greater control, leaders feel more positive, and these feelings, combined with developmental support increase leader self-efficacy. When leaders feel more confident they are then more open to considering new behaviours. The outcome is increased transformational leadership behaviour. By identifying this suggested causal pathway in the development of transformational leadership behaviour this thesis suggests a potential extension of transformational leadership theory, incorporating psychological processes associated with the development of transformational leadership behaviour.

Contextual Implications

It is not possible to assess the contribution of this research program until the impact of the research context is considered. Johns (2006) and Rousseau and Fried, (2001) strongly assert that understanding the context within the research environment

is crucial for interpreting the findings. The current research program derived all of its findings from the same organisational context, thus there may be restricted generalisability. During the time of the executive coaching program and the data collection, the organisation was undergoing a major organisational change process involving the merger of geographically separated departments, an independent review of their processes, and a number of very public investigations. It is reasonable to say that this organisational context may have influenced leaders' reactions to executive coaching, in either a positive or negative manner, as discussed below. Certainly, the effect of the organisation was apparent as the research was conducted. Comments from organisational representatives and leaders themselves suggested that the extreme organisational conditions increased both the workloads, levels of stress experienced and general uneasiness over job security. The qualitative data have demonstrated that leaders, their supervisors, and team members felt that feelings of concern and anxiety about these conditions had a negative impact on leaders' ability to benefit from coaching. However, some leaders also suggested that having the support of a coach enabled them to cope better with the upheaval during these difficult times. This analysis aligns with Thach and Heinselman's (1999) suggestion that there may be a correlation between support through executive coaching and reduced stress levels. Executive coaching may well be particularly useful for supporting organisational members through periods of change and stress, which are endemic in many organisations.

There are additional contextual factors about this research program that must be considered. The executive coaching program was designed to develop transformational leadership and was delivered within a leadership development

program that also utilised training workshops and 360 degree feedback assessment. These conditions are fairly typical of those underlying the uptake of executive coaching in many organisations however they may have influenced the findings by providing an environment which was conducive for the effects of executive coaching. It is not possible from this research to determine whether executive coaching is more powerful delivered in combination with a larger development program or in isolation. This is also an area for further inquiry.

Additionally, within the transformational leadership development program, the delivery of the executive coaching was standardised. This is not necessarily common for executive coaching programs as many organisations implementing executive coaching bring in a number of external coaches who each bring their own coaching approach. However, there are significant benefits in standardising the coaching program. First, it provides increased control over the executive coaching and an opportunity to ensure that the coaching process is executed properly containing the elements identified within this research as constituting executive coaching. It is important to recall that executive coaching is as yet a highly unregulated profession which increases the likelihood that differing definitions of, and approaches to executive coaching abound. Second, the direct control over the process has enabled the collection of longitudinal data and multiple measures from the participants to test the hypotheses; this may not have been available with other executive coaching programs. Thus, it is suggested that this standardised approach to the delivery of executive coaching should be adopted. The effects associated with executive coaching in this research may not be achieved when a range of coaches and approaches are used to deliver executive coaching within an organisation.

All these contextual factors are important to consider when evaluating the outcomes from this research program. It is therefore recommended that this program of research is conducted in another organisational setting where these conditions do not exist to test the generalisability of the findings reported here. In addition to providing practical strategies for organisations to address when implementing executive coaching programs, the contextual issues also suggest avenues for future research, which will shortly be discussed.

Practical Contributions

Establishing the practical value of executive coaching is essential for its longevity. Currently there is a lack of empirical research on the effectiveness of executive coaching (Smither et al., 2003). As a result, coaching is said to be under used in some organisations (Barker et al., 2001) and ineffectively used in others because there is insufficient understanding about how to best utilise this relatively new approach to training and development (Sperry, 1993). This research program has identified some of the outcomes executive coaching should achieve and, as a result, has been able to distinguish when executive coaching is likely to be beneficial for participants and also offer suggestions for organisations implementing executive coaching programs. This information should assist organisations in making credible decisions regarding the effectiveness of executive coaching and the economic viability of spending on executive coaching.

This research suggests that executive coaching is likely to be of benefit when organisations want to positively affect the psychological variables (self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours and

developmental planning), or improve transformational leadership. Furthermore, the finding from Study Three was that effects on self-efficacy were stronger for leaders with lower levels of confidence. Thus, executive coaching offers itself as a useful tool for enhancing leader confidence after promotion to leadership roles. In the same way, it can also be used for new members coming into the organisation who are to be working with an established team of existing employees. This type of situation can call for greater self-efficacy, particularly while the new leader settles into the role.

Additionally, leaders experienced increased developmental support after they commenced executive coaching. Perhaps the developmental support through executive coaching can help reduce isolation problems experienced by some organisational members. In particular those members for whom either geographical distance or flexible working arrangements preclude them from receiving similar development opportunities offered to other organisational members. If these members continue to feel isolated the likelihood of turnover is potentially increased. Executive coaching may offer a very realistic short-term solution for these situations because of its flexible approach to delivery.

Findings from Study Three also suggested that executive coaching was seen to be most effective in bringing about improved leader communication and team management skills. Often in organisational settings leaders are specialists in their particular fields, but have received little “soft” management training to enable them to effectively get work done through others, which is a critical management skill. Leaders are frequently ill-equipped to work with others in managerial roles. Executive coaching offers practical solutions for this type of skill development within the work setting.

Another practical recommendation deriving from this research is that to assist in maintaining the positive outcomes achieved in executive coaching, organisations may wish to plan for the cessation of the coaching program as soon as it has commenced. This research found that six months after the final executive coaching session leaders were experiencing less developmental support and displaying a reduced approach towards developmental planning. To extend the longevity of these psychological effects, organisations could consider coordinating support partnerships with other organisational members after coaching. With this arrangement, leaders who have been coached could simultaneously offer support to one another, particularly in the first six months post-coaching. Saling (2005b) suggests that support helps leaders maintain a positive view of their efforts during the trial and error process of trying new behaviours. Leaders' supervisors could also be involved in offering support after executive coaching, as supervisory support enhances transfer (Van der Klink, Gielen, & Nauta, 2001), which may extend leaders' feelings of support back in the workplace. The interview feedback from the leaders confirmed they valued the support they received during executive coaching. Creating these support partnerships post-coaching may help to encourage the maintenance of these positive feelings.

To summarise, executive coaching is a popular intervention with a range of applications. These research findings provide useful information to organisations and coaches in the effective adoption and implementation of what appears to be a very powerful approach to individual development.

Limitations

Theoretically and practically this research program has provided valuable contributions to the field of executive coaching. There are however some limitations which must be considered and subsequent opportunities for future research.

The most notable limitation of this research is the relatively small sample sizes associated with the two quantitative studies. The sample size however should be viewed in context with the difficulties acquiring participants. It would have been beneficial if it had been possible to collect data from a number of leadership development programs across a range of organisations because the number of participants and generalisability of findings would have increased, however this was not an option in this research program. On the other hand though, this would have also presented some issues when comparing the different coaching programs and subsequent outcomes. Given the time intensive nature of executive coaching, and difficulty obtaining willing participants (both leaders and coaches), sample size may continue to be an issue for executive coaching researchers. Therefore a high degree of rigour is of particular importance in studies to ensure the effects of executive coaching are maximised and can be identified through statistical analysis.

Second, in this research program, the use of training and control groups was beneficial for the cross-sectional analyses, but the longitudinal data were collected without a control group. The inclusion of a control group would strengthen the design and enable firm conclusions to be drawn about the impact of executive coaching on the psychological and behavioural measures over time.

There were also some contextual considerations within this research program which have to be considered. First, to facilitate matching of the questionnaires over time, leaders provided their name and section of the organisation they were responsible for in each questionnaire completed. Although leaders could return the questionnaires to the researcher's university and not to their coach if desired, there is the possibility that this identifying aspect of the data collection created pressure for the leaders to respond positively.

Another feature specific to this program (although often common in executive coaching programs) was the voluntary nature of executive coaching, whereby the leaders could self-select into the program. This was a deliberate decision because executive coaching relies on the leader taking responsibility for individual development, demonstrating willingness to change and having the time to commit to action. Voluntary coaching recognises that not all leaders are in this position; mandatory coaching on the other hand, has the potential to result in a negative experience for both the coach and the leader. However, this environment does mean that these findings may not generalise to situations where executive coaching is a compulsory development tool.

Although there were some limitations in this program of research, they do not seriously compromise the findings. Significant effects were still demonstrated in the analyses spite of the lower power. Additionally, there was no evidence that leaders felt compelled to respond positively as they did identify specific problems where appropriate. Therefore, the results of these studies do provide a robust contribution to the field of executive coaching and identify directions for future research to continue to build knowledge about this popular intervention.

Future Research Directions

There are further opportunities for research arising from this program. In the first instance, this research program was specifically focussed on measuring executive coaching as a transformational leadership development approach. Executive coaching can be tailored to the goals of the individual or organisation, thus, there are potentially other behavioural outcomes from executive coaching that need to be investigated and additional psychological states that may also be affected by executive coaching. Exploration of a wider range of behavioural and psychological outcomes would clarify the possibilities and limitations of executive coaching, providing valuable information for organisations and coaches.

Based on these research findings and the perceptions of research participants, a tentative model of the psychological processes through which executive coaching brings about change in leader behaviour has been presented to conclude this program of research. However, further research is required to test this model. This study has provided evidence that executive coaching contributed to improved transformational leadership behaviours. By identifying a range of potential mediator variables this model has suggested a possible process through which executive coaching may contribute to improvements in transformational leadership behaviour. It was however beyond the scope of this program of research to examine this process in greater detail, therefore at this point in time, there is insufficient evidence to assert this pattern accurately captures the executive coaching process. It may be that some of the psychological processes translate more effectively into transformational leader behaviour than others. Future research opportunities now arise for a thorough investigation of the executive coaching process. A model of the processes through

which executive coaching brings about change in transformational leadership behaviour will be useful in understanding how to capitalise on the strengths of executive coaching. This knowledge will be beneficial because the existing body of research into transformational leadership has demonstrated that it is a constructive form of leadership which has many positive outcomes for the leader, their team members and the organisation.

Additionally, it was anticipated that executive coaching would be associated with improved feelings of positive affect at work. The power of the combined analysis confirmed this effect however the earlier analyses did not support the relationship. As has been discussed previously, the organisational context appears to have impacted on positive affect for some leaders and may have contributed to the weaker results. Whilst the effect of executive coaching on positive affect was supported in the combined analysis, additional research in a less volatile environment would be useful to corroborate these findings.

This research also found that executive coaching was associated with increased openness to try out new behaviours. This finding suggests other potential outcomes may arise from executive coaching. In the future research could examine whether encouraging leaders to identify new ways of behaving flows on to bring about improvements in innovation, creativity and continual improvement. Previous research has found that transformational leadership behaviours is associated with these outcomes (Howell et al., 1993; Jung et al., 2003). If similar outcomes are attained through executive coaching, additional applications for coaching are therefore identified.

During the qualitative interviews the leaders reported the usefulness of the planning and goal setting elements of executive coaching. The evidence of the many positive outcomes associated with setting goals is well established in the literature, for example, Erez and Zidon (1984) and Strang, Lawrence, and Fowler (1978). In particular the research by Locke and Latham, identifies self-management, improved motivation, commitment and productivity as some of the benefits (Locke & Latham, 1984; 1990a; 2002; 2006). Future research could compare executive coaching with goal setting for the purpose of delineating outcomes from executive coaching and goal setting. This information would demonstrate whether executive coaching is more than goal setting aided by facilitation through a coach and thus whether the additional time commitment and expense associated with executive coaching (as compared to goal setting) is justified.

Finally, an area worthy of further research is the relationship between the leader and the coach. During the qualitative interviews leaders identified some characteristics defining the relationship, for example the leaders said it was important to feel comfortable and get on really well with the coach. More comments described the coach as a friend and mentor, and a role model who was a good influence. Executive coaching was, for these leaders, a positive experience. Conversely, unsuccessful relationships between two leaders and their coaches resulted in their withdrawal from the coaching program. The role the coach plays in contributing to a successful executive coaching experience is not clearly understood, though it is expected to be substantial. Previous executive coaching research has identified the relationship between the leader and coach as important (Bluckert, 2005; Hall et al., 1999; Wasylyshyn, 2003). However the partnership has to be balanced so that the

coach is able to support the leader and hold them accountable whilst providing honest, open feedback. A deep, trusting, and mutually respectful coaching relationship is needed to support the leader to reflect, make meaning, and take action (Lotz-Becker, 2007). These sometimes conflicting requirements present challenges, and as stated by Kiel et al. (1996, p. 67) are a “formidable task”. They are however, important considerations for further investigation in terms of the specific qualities of a coach, the characteristics of a successful coaching relationship and the impact of these factors on successful executive coaching outcomes.

The area of executive coaching is continuing to evolve. At this point in time there are few empirical studies (Grant, 2005) however, given the popularity of executive coaching in organisations, the ever increasing number of coach training schools and subsequent growth of coaching as a profession worldwide, the field is ripe for investigation. Answers to some of the questions posed above will continue to provide valuable theoretical contributions and practical strategies which will benefit the reputation of the industry.

Conclusion

The importance of leadership in organisations is undisputed and executive coaching presents a modern approach to developing such skills. Yet, there has been very little evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of, or the anticipated outcomes expected from, executive coaching. Rigorous research into this burgeoning area is demanded by stakeholders and has, to some extent, been answered through this research program.

This research program used an experimental design to enable differentiation of the effects of executive coaching from the effects of the other elements of the transformational leadership development program. Three research questions guided the investigation, examining the psychological and behavioural impacts of executive coaching, and measuring the long-term effects of executive coaching on these variables.

The studies revealed that executive coaching positively enhanced the psychological states of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning. Impressively, the results also showed that executive coaching had sustained effects on some of the psychological states, and on team members' perceptions of their leader's transformational leadership behaviour. It is therefore concluded that executive coaching represents a potent approach for developing leaders, such that every interview participant in the third study noted that leaders displayed improved leadership skills after executive coaching. Practically, this finding justifies the use of executive coaching when organisations are evaluating the many options for training and developing members. Theoretically, this program of research augments the limited body of knowledge in this area.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

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Appendix 1

EXTENDED COACHING CHECKUP

This survey instrument represents one of the tools through which we will be evaluating the usefulness of the coaching process. The survey allows us to determine whether participants find the coaching process useful and supportive. We ask coaching participants to complete this survey prior to commencing coaching as well as during the coaching process.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Your individual responses to this survey will NOT be reported back to anyone at XXX.

Your responses will also contribute to the research project being conducted at Queensland University of Technology. This project seeks to understand the processes through which executive coaching translates into effective outcomes for leadership development. Again, any publications or presentations emerging from this project will only report aggregated data.

For further information about this survey, please contact Fran Finn on 3138 1323. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this project, please contact the QUT Research Ethics Officer on 3138 2340.

Coaching Check Up

Throughout the executive coaching process you are trialling ideas about new ways of behaving and being encouraged think about how you might move forward in terms of your development as a leader. In addition, you have received feedback about your own behaviour. Each of these processes is fairly challenging, and it is worth taking some time now to do a “coaching check up” – to review how you feel and think about your development as a leader.

Date: _____

Your name: _____

Which section of the organisation you lead: _____

Please circle the number that best describe your responses to the items that follow:

These questions concern your confidence about various aspects of your role as a leader.

In relation to the team you manage, how certain are you that you can:	Totally uncertain			Moderately certain				Totally certain			
1. Ensure your team makes no mistakes?.....	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. Get your team to achieve its objectives?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. Get your team to consistently perform to an acceptable standard?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. Get your team to perform above and beyond expectations some of the time?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. Get your team to consistently perform above what is typical?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Get your team to achieve outstanding results all of the time?.....	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. Get team members to think in new and innovative ways?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. Build team members' confidence?.....	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9. Promote trust within your team?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. Treat your team members as individuals, as well as members of a team?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11. Foster high team morale?.....	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

These questions concern how you have been feeling recently.

How often over the past MONTH have you experienced the following while at work:

	<i>Not at all</i>					<i>All the time</i>
1. Feeling energised	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Feeling enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Feeling proud	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Feeling happy	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Feeling delighted	1	2	3	4	5	

These questions are concerned with your goals for your development as a leader:

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>					<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1. I have an action plan for reaching my development goals	1	2	3	4	5	
2. I have identified specific steps towards achieving my development goals	1	2	3	4	5	
3. My development goals identify specific behaviours that I am trying to improve	1	2	3	4	5	
4. I feel accountable for carrying out my development goals	1	2	3	4	5	
5. I know what information I will use to determine whether I am achieving my development goals	1	2	3	4	5	
6. I have a source of feedback from which I can determine whether I am achieving my goals	1	2	3	4	5	
7. I know how I will evaluate my development on an on-going basis	1	2	3	4	5	
8. I have enough support to achieve my development goals	1	2	3	4	5	
9. I am encouraged to develop my leadership skills.....	1	2	3	4	5	
10. I feel supported in my development efforts	1	2	3	4	5	

These questions are concerned with your approach to your work.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>					<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1. I explore alternative ways of behaving with my team.....	1	2	3	4	5	
2. I try out new ways of managing my team.....	1	2	3	4	5	
3. I step back and consider different approaches to running my team.....	1	2	3	4	5	
4. I try out different ways of communicating with my team.....	1	2	3	4	5	

**PLEASE FAX YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY BACK TO FRAN FINN
on 3864 1313**

Thank you for participating in executive coaching and taking the time to complete this survey. We will provide you with feedback showing how your reactions have changed from your pre-coaching checkup to session 3 to session 6, to assist you in understanding your ongoing leadership development.

Appendix 2

360 DEGREE FEEDBACK INSTRUMENT FOR LEADERS

Team member version (2)

How will the survey be used?

This survey is a tool to support the development of leaders at XXX. Experience has shown that leaders can learn a great deal from the feedback of people they work with. A 360 degree survey provides a comprehensive view of the leader's behaviour by obtaining feedback from team members and supervisors. Your role in completing this survey is to provide feedback on the leader's behaviour, based on your perspective as a member of the team that he or she leads.

The data from this survey will not be used to inform selection or promotion decisions, and each leader's results will only be fed back to the leader. Individual leaders' survey results will not be released to anyone else in the organisation unless the leader chooses to do so him or herself. A profile of leadership ratings for XXX leaders averaged together will be provided to the XXX Executive. Data from this survey will also be used to evaluate and inform leadership development activities within XXX and the XXX, and to inform research conducted by the Queensland University of Technology.

Who will see my responses?

Your individual responses to this survey are confidential, and will not be released to your leader. Your responses will be sent directly to researchers at the Queensland University of Technology, who will be responsible for compiling responses and generating reports. Each leader will receive a report indicating how his or her behaviour was rated "on average". Each leader will be rated by at least 4 other team members so it will not be possible to identify how you personally rated the leader. To ensure the confidentiality of your responses, we will not give the leader feedback unless at least five people rate your leader's behaviour. Your participation in this survey is voluntary.

Who do I ask for further information?

If you have any questions relating to this survey, please contact either XXX, or Fran Finn (QUT) on 3864 1323 or at f.finn@qut.edu.au. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this project, please contact the QUT Research Ethics Officer on 3138 2340.

Please enter the name of the leader that you are rating here: _____

About how long have you been reporting to this person? ____ yrs ____ months

This survey consists of various statements describing different types of behaviour your leader may or may not exhibit. We would like you to indicate how well *each statement* describes your own leader's behaviour by circling a number from 1 to 5. For example, if you strongly disagree that the statement applies to your leader, you should circle the number "1", whereas if you strongly agree that the statement describes your leader's behaviour, you should circle the number "5".

Please note: In the context of this survey, the term "team member" refers to the people who work directly with and report to the leader.

Returns

Please return the survey in the reply paid envelope provided by the **28th October, 2005**.

For each item, please circle a number to indicate whether you agree or disagree that this statement describes your own leader's behaviour

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
My leader:							
1.	Sets goals for my performance	1	2	3	4	5	
2.	Discusses what objectives I should be working towards	1	2	3	4	5	
3.	Ensures I receive feedback on my performance	1	2	3	4	5	
4.	Acknowledges improvements in my work performance	1	2	3	4	5	
5.	Listens attentively to my concerns	1	2	3	4	5	
6.	Shows concern for my well-being.....	1	2	3	4	5	
7.	Tries to see things from my perspective.....	1	2	3	4	5	
8.	Makes an effort to understand my point of view	1	2	3	4	5	
9.	Inspires confidence by saying positive things about the team.....	1	2	3	4	5	
10.	Convinces me that I can perform at higher levels than I would have thought possible	1	2	3	4	5	
11.	Inspires me to set higher standards for my own performance.....	1	2	3	4	5	
12.	Makes me aware of the importance of the work I do.....	1	2	3	4	5	
13.	Shares important information relating to the team with me	1	2	3	4	5	
14.	Shares information about the bigger picture (e.g., strategic issues)	1	2	3	4	5	
15.	Allows me to participate in making decisions that affect me	1	2	3	4	5	
16.	Gives me the authority to make decisions and implement them without his/her prior approval	1	2	3	4	5	
17.	Sets an example by his/her own behaviour.....	1	2	3	4	5	
18.	Demonstrates that he/she is concerned about the consequences of his/her actions for others.....	1	2	3	4	5	
19.	Provides a good model for me to follow	1	2	3	4	5	
20.	Stays in touch with what is going on to ensure that our work goals are achieved.....	1	2	3	4	5	
21.	Has been communicating about his/her strategic initiative to organisation members	1	2	3	4	5	
22.	Has implemented actions from his/her strategic initiative.....	1	2	3	4	5	
23.	Can identify progress in the roll out of his/her strategic initiative.....	1	2	3	4	5	
24.	Has achieved his/her goals for his/her strategic initiative.....	1	2	3	4	5	

Which option best describes your current relationship to the leader?

- I currently report directly to the leader
- I currently report to the leader in an indirect way
- I have reported to the leader in the past
- I am a colleague/peer of the leader
- The leader reports to me

The space below has been provided so that you may make further comments if you wish to do so. Feedback identifying specific behaviours that the leader should perform more often is likely to be particularly useful. Your comments will not be reported back to the leader verbatim, but we will provide feedback to him or her in terms of the general themes that were mentioned.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
 Please return your completed surveys to in reply paid envelope to:
 Fran Finn, Work Effectiveness Research Program
 School of Management
 Queensland University of Technology
 PO Box 2434 Brisbane Qld 4001

Appendix 3

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA - STUDY THREE PARTICIPANTS

Id code	Gender	Relationship to leader	Age (leader only)	Highest level of education achieved (leader only)	Additional information	Post 360 degree feedback Change
L1	M	Leader	57	Certificate	A supervisor, rather than a leader. Was acting in higher level position for some time during the coaching	Decrease
T1	F	Team member				
T2	M	Team member				
S1	M	Supervisor				
C1	F	Coach of leader				

Id Code	Gender	Relationship to Leader	Age (leader only)	Highest level of education achieved (leader only)	Additional information	Post 360 degree feedback Change
L2	F	Leader	53	Grad Certificate/ Diploma		Increase
T3	F	Team member				
T4	F	Team member				
S2	M	Supervisor			New to Supervisor role, but familiar with leader	
C2	F	Coach				

Id Code	Gender	Relationship to Leader	Age (leader only)	Highest level of education achieved (leader only)	Additional information	Post 360 degree feedback Change
L3	M	Leader	43	PhD	Leader's work required that he undertake substantial overseas travel, making him absent for extended periods of time	Decrease
T5	F	Team member				
T6	F	Team member				
S3	M	Supervisor				
C3	F	Coach				

Id Code	Gender	Relationship to Leader	Age (leader only)	Highest level of education achieved (leader only)	Other information	Post 360 degree feedback Change
L4	M	Leader	43	Certificate		Increase
T7	M	Team member				
T8	F	Team member				
S4	M	Supervisor				
C4	F	Coach				

Id Code	Gender	Relationship to Leader	Age (leader only)	Highest level of education achieved (leader only)	Other information	Post 360 degree feedback Change
L5	F	Leader	29	Grad Certificate/ Diploma	New to leadership role, was promoted a number of levels to current position unexpectedly	Minor decrease
T9	F	Team member				
T10	F	Team member				
S5	F	Supervisor				
C5	F	Coach				

Id Code	Gender	Relationship to Leader	Age (leader only)	Highest level of education achieved (leader only)	Other information	Post 360 degree feedback Change
L6	M	Leader	46	Degree		No change
T11	F	Team member				
T12	M	Team member				
S6	M	Supervisor				
C6	F	Coach				

Id Code	Gender	Relationship to Leader	Age (leader only)	Highest level of education achieved (leader only)	Other information	Post 360 degree feedback Change
L7	M	Leader	Not provided	Not provided		Increase
T13	M	Team member				
T14	M	Team member				
S7	M	Supervisor				
C7	F	Coach				

Id Code	Gender	Relationship to Leader	Age (leader only)	Highest level of education achieved (leader only)	Other information	Post 360 degree feedback Change
L8	M	Leader	53	Masters Degree		Increase
T15	M	Team member				
T16	F	Team member				
S8	F	Supervisor				
C7	F	Coach				

Appendix 4

LETTER TO STUDY THREE PARTICIPANTS

(Letter outline – QUT letterhead)

Dear

Thank you for participating in Executive Coaching. We would like to invite you to discuss your experience of Executive Coaching in a short interview of approximately 20 minutes duration conducted over the telephone. We would also like to conduct a similar interview with your supervisor and two of your team members (the team members would be people that you nominate). For your information, I have attached a copy of the questions that we propose for the interviews.

You have been randomly identified for this interview process, and your participation is entirely voluntary.

The interviews are intended to serve two purposes:

- Feedback – we would like to hear your opinions about Executive Coaching and understand further how executive coaching has its effects
- Evaluation – an opportunity to check whether the Executive Coaching has been effective in providing you with a sense of how to move forward with your development as a leader

Your participation and that of your supervisor and team members in these interviews are voluntary. Individual responses to these interviews will NOT be reported back to anyone at XXX. We will however, provide you and XXX a summary of the general findings, with all identifying information removed. Your responses will contribute to the research project being conducted at Queensland University of Technology. This project seeks to understand the processes through which executive coaching translates into effective outcomes for leadership development. Any publications or presentations emerging from this project will only report aggregated data.

For further information about these interviews please contact Fran Finn on 3864 1323. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this project, please contact the QUT Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340.

I will contact you within one week to answer any queries you may have and determine whether you would like to participate in these interviews; alternatively you may send an email to f.finn@qut.edu.au if you do not wish to participate.

Yours faithfully,

Fran Finn
School of Management
Phone: (07) 3864 1323

Appendix 5

QUALITATIVE OVERVIEW AND QUESTIONS

The goal for study three is to interview the **leader**, their **supervisor**, **two team members** and the **coach** to investigate leaders' behavioural changes as evidenced from a range of perspectives, similar to the sources in the 360 degree data collection tool. Both leaders who showed improvements (in their 360 degree feedback) and those who did not will be interviewed.

Purpose:

- Longer term follow up data
- Investigate whether improvements, if identified, are sustained over time
- Refine our understanding of how executive coaching works and validate the psychological variables identified in study one and study two
- Identify any personal and work factors that may have facilitated or impeded the usefulness of executive coaching.

Structured Interview with leader:

Thank you for participating in executive coaching and for your time in answering these questions, it is very much appreciated. Today I would like to ask you some questions that enable you to give us some feedback on executive coaching and provide us with a greater insight into how executive coaching has its effects. This interview will be taped do you agree to participate in the interview?

- 1 Do you have any questions about this process?
- 2 How have things been going for you since you finished executive coaching?
- 3 Overall, how has executive coaching been most useful to you?
- 4 Please describe the improvements (if any) that you have experienced from executive coaching.
- 5 Were there any factors in your work or personal environment that may have diminished the benefit (or potential benefit) you experienced (may have experienced) from executive coaching?
- 6 What influence did the feedback you received from your coach and organisational members have on your development?
- 7 What influence did the support you received from your coach have on your development?

- 8 What influence did the accountability provided by your coach have on your development?
- 9 During the coaching process, did you feel more confident in your leadership role? If yes, what influence did it have on your leadership behaviour?
- 10 During the coaching process did you feel more positive or enthusiastic at work? If yes, what influence did it have on your leadership behaviour?
- 11 What influence did setting specific goals and then breaking down the steps towards goal accomplishment have on your development?
- 12 During the coaching process, you were encouraged to explore alternative ways of behaving with your team. What influence did this have on your leadership behaviour?
- 13 What changes have you maintained that were achieved through coaching?
- 14 What techniques have you learnt from coaching that you continue to apply?
- 15 How did you feel at the completion of your executive coaching sessions, compared with how you felt half way through your executive coaching sessions? (*Use prompt questions as necessary: felt relieved, felt a sense of loss, less confident, less support etc*)
- 16 Is there anything additional you would like to add or comment on?

Structured interview with supervisor:

Thank you for participating in this short interview to collect information on executive coaching, the time you are providing to answer these questions is very much appreciated. During 2004/2005 [Leader's name] participated in executive coaching, these questions will provide feedback on executive coaching, from your perspective, and provide us with a greater insight into how executive coaching has its effects. This interview will be taped do you agree to participate in the interview?

- 1 Do you have any questions about this process?

- 2 What changes have you observed in [NAME] as a result of their participation in executive coaching?

- 3 Are you aware of any factors in [NAME'S] work or personal environment that may have diminished the benefit (or potential benefit) [NAME] experienced (may have experienced) from executive coaching?

- 4 How has executive coaching made [NAME] more effective as a leader?

- 5 How has executive coaching changed the way [NAME] interacts with their team members and others within the organization?

- 6 Based on your observations, would you say that executive coaching has made [NAME] a better leader?

- 7 Is there anything additional you would like to add or comment on?

Structured interview with team members:

Thank you for participating in this short interview to collect information on executive coaching, the time you are providing to answer these questions is very much appreciated. During 2004/2005 [Leader's name] participated in executive coaching, these questions will provide feedback on executive coaching, from your perspective, and provide us with a greater insight into how executive coaching has its effects. This interview will be taped do you agree to participate in the interview?

- 1 Do you have any questions about this process?
- 2 What changes have you observed in [NAME] as a result of their participation in executive coaching?
- 3 Are you aware of any factors in [NAME'S] work or personal environment that may have diminished the benefit (or potential benefit) [NAME] experienced (may have experienced) from executive coaching?
- 4 How has executive coaching made [NAME] more effective as a leader?
- 5 How has executive coaching changed the way [NAME] interacts with their team members and others within the organization?
- 6 Based on your observations, would you say that executive coaching has made [NAME] a better leader?
- 7 Is there anything additional you would like to add or comment on?

Structured Interview with Coach:

Thank you for participating in this short interview to collect information on executive coaching, the time you are providing to answer these questions is very much appreciated. During 2004/2005 you provided executive coaching to [Leader's name], these questions will provide feedback on executive coaching, from your perspective, and provide us with a greater insight into how executive coaching has its effects. This interview will be taped do you agree to participate in the interview?

- 1 Do you have any questions about this process?
- 2 What do you feel has been most beneficial about executive coaching for [NAME]?
- 3 What changes do you believe have occurred for [NAME] as a result of participation in executive coaching?
- 4 Are you aware of any factors in [NAME'S] work or personal environment that may have diminished the benefit (or potential benefit) [NAME] experienced (may have experienced) from executive coaching?
- 5 What improvements did [NAME] identify in their feedback to you?
- 6 How has executive coaching changed the way [NAME] interacts with their team members and others within the organization?
- 7 Would you say that executive coaching has made [NAME] a better leader?
- 8 Is there anything additional you would like to add or comment on?