Executive coaching: A tool for advancing blacks into senior management positions

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Abstract

The shortage of blacks in senior management and executive positions is a South African phenomena. Following decades of academic and economic segregation by the apartheid regime, many black individuals find themselves lacking the necessary technical and soft skills to operate effectively in organisations. This study explores whether executive coaching can be used to bridge the soft skill gap. The study further explores the characteristics of the coachee, the coach and the coaching relationship required for a successful intervention.

A qualitative exploratory research was undertaken with fifteen one-on-one interviews conducted with qualifying black managers to capture their perceptions about the use of executive coaching as a developmental tool.

This research has shown that executive coaching can be used as a viable developmental tool to prepare black managers for senior positions. A profile of an ideal candidate, an ideal coach, and an ideal coaching environment has been put together in a proposed framework that will hopefully facilitate the achievement of the goal.

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

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CHAPTER ONE

Research Problem Definition

1.1 Introduction

As part of the historic deal struck in 1994 to ease the way for democracy, South Africa's whites ceded political power to the ANC and in return the ANC accepted that the mainly white-run capitalism would continue. The ANC however, vowed to take action to redress the injustices and inequalities that had come about as a result of 40 years of apartheid (The Economist, 2006)

To date, the ANC led government has achieved the creation of a small elite of rich and politically connected black business men and women. The estimated 22% to 40% proportion of blacks in the middle class has come from a rising number of blacks in public-sector jobs, where the government has been able to effect the desired changes. In contrast, the proportion of blacks in senior jobs in the private sector has grown slightly since 1995 to an estimated 25%. The government consequently decided that the private sector was not playing its part in addressing the issues raised in the mid 1990s (The Economist, 2006).

The country's desire and vision of a transformed South Africa and the slow progress in the private sector has led to a number of policies, strategies and charters that attempt to meet the needs and dreams of all citizens of the country.

These interventions aim to bring about structural reform in order to redress racial and gender discrimination, to promote equity and equality.

In order for South Africa to be a global competitor, it has to address competitiveness at an individual level, then at an organisational level (Porter, 1990). Among a number of issues identified by the government in 2004 as those holding back the country from achieving competitive growth, skills shortage and a lack of black professionals were identified as the two biggest contributors (Republic of South Africa, 2002).

The introduction of the FSC and the desire by banks to transform has elevated the need to find effective and sustainable ways to develop blacks and prepare them for promotion into senior management positions and to support them. Indeed a need exists to find ways of ensuring that a pipeline of ready-to- perform black individuals exists and is fully packed. Further, in order for blacks to be economically viable, there needs to be interventions directed at preparing black individuals for position at senior management and executive positions while attempting to ensure their representation in positions that have historically, predominantly been occupied by whites only. The aim is to make inroads towards a situation where the demographics of senior positions in organisations is reflective of the demographics of the country.

1.2 Research scope

The scope of the research will be governed by the following definitions:

1.   Black people will refer to people who are citizens of the Republic of South Africa by birth or descent and are African, Coloured or Indian.

2.   Banks will refer to the five large South African banks namely Absa, First National Bank, Nedbank, Investec Bank and Standard Bank.

3.   Middle to senior managers will include employees in possession of, or studying towards a professional or postgraduate qualification who perform a function that is regarded in the chosen bank as a management position. Care is taken that some candidates in this category will perform specialist roles without any line authority with subordinates reporting to them, these will be included in the definition.

The research scope will be limited to black male managers who are employed on a full time basis by the investment bank that will be selected.

1.3   Research motivation

Concerns about the lack of black individuals at the top of many private corporates, including banks in South Africa have been voiced by prominent government officials and the media.

Stovin-Bradford (2007) writing in the Sunday Times, quoted Brian Molefe, CEO of the Public Investment Corporation as having publicly criticised the lack of transformation on the boards of FirstRand, Standard Bank and Nedbank's parent company, Old Mutual. Molefe is joined by a number of politicians and journalists in voicing their dissatisfaction with the slow pace of transformation. The situation is even worse at senior management and executive levels, where positions are still mostly occupied by whites (Stovin-Bradford, 2007).

A special report in the financial mail noted that twelve years after South Africa's first democratic elections, the empowerdex figures show that senior management positions are still mostly occupied by whites, while progress is starting to show at junior and middle management levels (Financial Mail, 2007).

In a BEE survey of 298 companies launched by KPMG on 29 June 2007, it was found that financial services sector scored the highest in black ownership targets, but was the lowest in skills development. The Deputy President, Phumzile Mlambo-Ncquka expressed disappointment at the results given that the financial sector is well resourced to support mentorship and development since the sector has good resources and client networks to create training opportunities.

The 7th Annual Report of the Commission for Employment Equity (Republic of South Africa, 2007), which was compiled using 4 394 employer reports submitted to the Department of Labour, South Africa in 2006, paints a similar picture. Out

of a total 15 311 top managers, only 1 728 (11.3%) were African, 720 (4.7%) were Coloured and 945 (6.2%) were Indian. This translates to 22.4% of all top positions being held by blacks, who make up 87.2% of the economically active population of South Africa.

Killian et al. in Groves (2007) articulated specific career advancement challenges that people of colour often face in corporate environments, including a lack of mentors and personal networks, stereotyping and a lack of visible and challenging assignments

Finally, Feldman & Lankau (2005) states that academic research on executive coaching has lagged far behind practitioner literature. There is very little theoretical research that examines how or why executive coaching should work, when it will be most successful and under which conditions it will translate into organisational effectiveness. Natale and Diamante (2005) attest that there remains a paucity of research investigating the efficacy of executive coaching.

1.4   Research problem

Clearly, from the evidence above, the vision of a representative and diversified senior management workforce in private corporates in South Africa is slow in coming. Legislation on its own has not yielded the desired results; affirmative action has not been successful in diversifying the top brass, especially in

strategic positions. Further, some of the accusations frequently levelled at affirmative action are that affirmative action appointees are less competent than their white counterparts and lack the necessary skills, and that they are appointed to fill quotas or to window-dress (Van Jaarsveld, 2000).

The research will attempt to get a deeper understanding of the perceptions of respondents about the use of executive coaching as a tool for advancing black managers into senior management positions. The research will set out to establish:

- Whether respondents think executive coaching is a viable intervention for advancing blacks into senior positions;

- The calibre (skills and personal traits) of black managers who would be suited to an executive coaching interventions;

- What, in the opinion of the respondents are the elements that will make them trust and work with a coach;

- What factors respondents think will either hamper or foster a positive outcome from the intervention;

- What impact if any, will cultural differences between the coach and the black manager have on the outcome of the intervention; and

- What, in the opinion of the respondents will constitute a successful executive coaching intervention.

1.5   Research lay-out

The research layout has been specifically constructed to facilitate a thorough narrative and examination of the situation giving rise to the need for the study, the theoretical background to the study, relevant research questions, the methodology used in the research, the results and findings of the study and concluding with a framework for the findings.

Chapter 1:   Introduction

Chapter one provides background context to some of the key driving factors that have led to the need for the study of emergence of executive coaching as an established practice in the development of executives globally. It also outlines the purpose and objectives of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter two is a review of the literature pertinent to transformation and executive coaching. It also highlights some of the critical success factors for a successful coaching intervention.

Chapter 3: Research Proposition

In this chapter the research questions for this study are addressed.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Chapter Four describes the population and sample used and details the methods used for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

The results of the data analysis are presented in tabular and graphical form. No attempt is made, at this point, to interpret the findings.

Chapter 6: Interpretation of Results

The results of the data analysis are discussed in this chapter. This is done in the context of the research question and the literature review.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Chapter seven comprises the recommendations and conclusions arising from the study. It also suggests possible areas for future research.

Chapters 8 and 9:

Chapters 8 and 9 are administrative, covering references and appendices.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Summary

2.1 Introduction

Executive coaching is one of the areas where the practice is way ahead of the theory. While executive coaching has become an established practice over the past two decades, however, it still is ill-defined" (Joo, 2005). Eggers and Clark (2000) agree that there is limited amount of literature available, both in academic journals and the popular press. This chapter reviews available academic and popular literature, seeking to explore and investigate the topics below in order to establish a launch-pad for the research questions to be discussed in chapter three. There exists a plethora of literature on affirmative action, traditional learning and development strategies, and these will be discussed only to set the backdrop and will not be explored in any great detail.

The following topics are explored in this chapter:

2.2 Affirmative action and employment equity

2.3 Learning and development strategies

2.4 Executive coaching as a developmental tool

2.5 Executive coaching models

2.6 The coaching process

2.7 Critical success factors in an executive coaching intervention

2.8 Outcomes of an executive coaching intervention

In chapter one, the business and regulatory need for the research was explored while chapter two will explore the theoretical need, based on the literature review.

2.2 Affirmative Action and Employment Equity

2.2.1 Affirmative Action

Defining affirmative action without reference to justice and equality is impossible. According to Van Jaarsveld (2000), the concept of justice can be divided into two categories: distributive justice which refers to an obligation to expand actions for the beneficiaries, and correctional justice refers to equitable conduct in order to achieve the goal of equality. With a history such as South Africa's, both forms of justice are required and the challenge for the government is the extent to which the two forms interplay and which of the two, if any, should take priority.

The South African government promulgated three acts related to affirmative action, a form of correctional justice, namely the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, the Promotion of Equality and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 and the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act 5 of 2000. The intention of the acts was and still is to govern the promotion of social justice and to eradicate inequalities in the workplace (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

Among others, the main purpose of the acts is to achieve equity in the workplace by implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, and to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Both affirmative action and employment equity are statutory requirements, enforcing quantitative representation of blacks in the South African workforce. However, diversity moves past the two, it is a company driven strategic effort to change the company's workforce from a qualitative standpoint (Grobler et al, 2002).

2.2.2 From affirmative action to diversity

"Sooner or later, affirmative action will die a natural death" (Thomas, 1990, p. 107). He asserts that affirmative action fails to deal with the root cause of prejudice and inequality and does little to develop the full potential of every man and woman in the company. Van Jaarsveld (2000) agrees that affirmative action grants a boarding pass for members of protected groups who have potential in order to ensure representation at all levels of the organisation, however, it does not improve their organisational effectiveness.

Previous research has typically classified diversity into two distinctions, demographic and cognitive (Erhardt et al, 2003). Examples of demographic diversity include race, gender, age, ethnicity and examples of cognitive diversity include knowledge, education, experience, values and personality characteristics

(Erhardt et al, 2003). Diversity results when people bring different resources and perspective to the workplace and have distinctive needs, preferences, expectations and lifestyles (Cummings and Worley, 2004).

In a study by Richard (2000), it was noted that diversity on its own does not enhance firm productivity, but instead he noted an increases in productivity for growing firms and reduced productivity for downsizing firms. This could be attributed to the fact that members of culturally homogeneous groups tend to communicate with one another more often and share worldviews (Richard et al (2004) allowing them to deal with the harshness of a downsizing firm. Erhardt et al (2003) found sufficient evidence to support the theory that demographic diversity at the executive board level was positively associated with both return on investment and return on assets, based on a study of 127 United States companies.

The framework represented in Figure 2.1 presents a general framework for diversity management proposed by Dass and Parker (1999) as cited in Robbins (2005) and suggests that an organisation's diversity approach is a function of either or both internal and external pressures. Affirmative action is the external pressure applied to corporate South Africa by the national government and the question is whether corporate SA has the internal impetus and strategies to implement diversity interventions.

Figure 2.1: The general framework for diversity management

External Pressures For and Against Diversity

Management's
Perspective
and Priorities

Strategic
Responses

Implementation

Internal Pressures For and Against Diversity
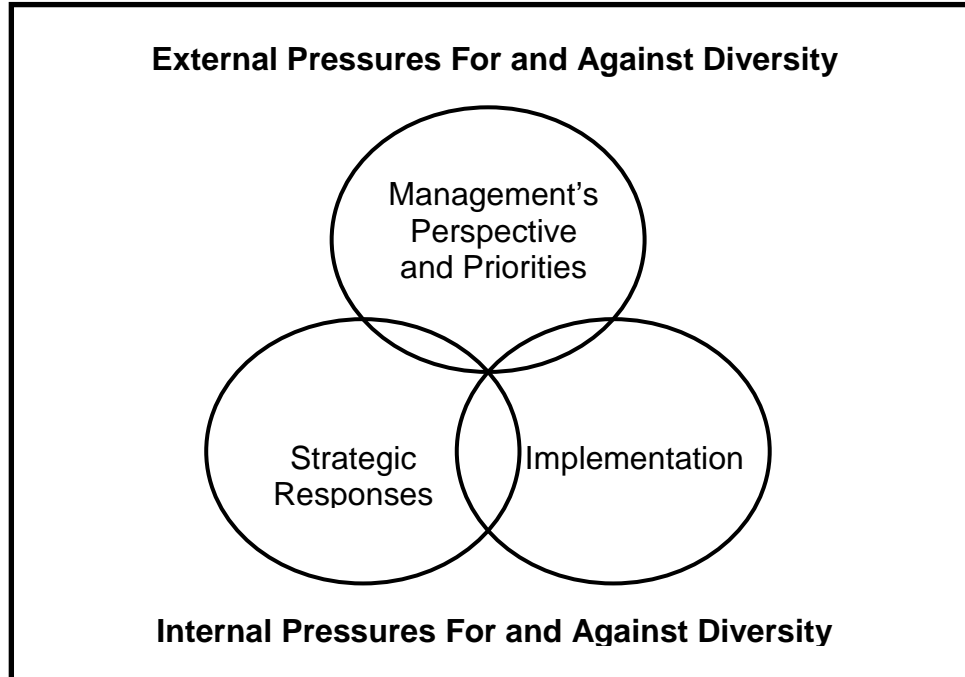
Source: Dass and Parker (1999) as cited in Robbins (2005)

In concluding this section, Erhardt et al (2004) found that demographic diversity was positively associated with returns for the organisation and its shareholders. It is therefore assumed that involvement of blacks at senior management levels will have the returns. The question that is now relevant is; how does corporate SA ensure they reap these benefits of a diverse senior management team.

2.3   Learning and development strategies

Adult learning and development theories emphasize the self-determination, self actualisation and self transformation of the individual candidate (Jarvis et al., 1998). Meyer and Allen (1997), cited by Thite (2001), argue that whether

employees are motivated by fear or acceptance of job insecurity (which is very high in Investment banks), their commitment and performance is likely to be influenced by the availability of opportunities for developing their "employability".

Thite (2001) argues that employees at different levels of the organisation will require different development and career management tools and that organisations need to fine tune their approach to suite the needs of different employees. Both the organisation and the individual need to accept and adjust to the notion that they both have a responsibility for the individual's career, meaning that organisations become less paternalistic and individuals become more self-reliant (Schein, 1996). The nature and level of the responsibilities may vary depending on the size of the organisation, the lifecycle of the organisation, the industry, the level of the employee in the organisation and national and organisational culture Thite (2001). Most adult learning interventions are as a result of needs that have been identified by the individual themselves.

Due to the level of product complexity and competitiveness in the Investment Banking industry, organisations in the industry need to attract and retain top achievers who will be committed to the organisation. In order to achieve this, organisations need to offer the individuals above average employment terms with great career support and advancement opportunities, amongst other things.

Before reviewing literature on our core topic, executive coaching, it is important to distinguish it from other adult learning and career management interventions (Reeves 2006). In his study of succession planning, Groves (2007) identified the following as best practice career development methods; 360-degree feedback, executive coaching, mentoring, networking, job assignment, and action learning. Reeves (2006) confined his comparison to only two of the methods above, i.e. mentoring and executive coaching, since the two are often confused.

2.3.1 Mentoring defined

Grobler et al (2006) define mentoring as the relationship, and the facilitation and development aspects of coaching. He argues that mentoring is concerned with the skills, philosophies and techniques that facilitate growth and development in the leaner. Thite (2001) found that the use of coaching and mentoring was a significant way that managers were able to improve career management for their staff, and he refers to these as hallmarks of transformational leadership.

According to HBE (2004, p76), "mentoring is the offering of advice, information, or guidance by a person with useful experience, skills, or expertise for another individual's personal and professional development". Mentors are usually 7 to 15 years older and are considered successful in their careers (Grobler et al., 2002). While mentoring is concerned with the development of the whole person and their career, coaching is limited to developing a narrow skill set. Coaching is seen as a subset of mentoring (HBE, 2004).

Research on mentoring relationships in organisations provides strong evidence that employees with mentors are much more likely to experience a range of positive outcomes, including enhanced job performance, greater promotions and compensations, organisational commitment, and job satisfaction Groves (2007).

2.3.2 Executive coaching defined

Hudson in Lester (2002) describes coaching as a new profession that emerged in the context of the turbulent 1970s and the 1980s. He puts the emphasis of coaching, calls it the core function, as the facilitation of self-development and self change. He differentiates three coaching strategies: individual (one-on-one), group, and systems coaching.

At its broadest level, coaching is defined as a "process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective" (Peterson and Hicks, 1995, p. 41). Liberi and Wasylyshyn (1998) define executive coaching as a helping relationship between a consultant and an employee with the intention of helping the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance within a formally defined coaching agreement. Rosinski (2003) emphasises that coaching is an art of facilitating the unleashing of people's potential to reach meaningful and important objectives. The objectives of the intervention could be

to overcome performance problems, to develop skills or to prepare individuals for promotion into senior positions (Rosinski, 2003).

Although Feldman (2001) confines his definition of executive coaching to improving effectiveness in the manager's current position, Feldman & Lankau (2005) classified recipients of executive coaching services into two categories;

(a)   Individuals who have performed highly in the past but whose behaviours are interfering with, or not sufficient for current job requirements, and

(b)   Managers who have been targeted for advancement to the executive level but are missing some specific soft skills.

Weller and Weller (2004) refer to two P's being potential and problems, which two typically turn organisations to executive coaching. Witherspoon and White (1996) suggested four types of coaching roles, coaching for skills, coaching for performance, coaching for development and coaching for the executive agenda. Finally, O'Shaughnessy (2001) concludes that executive coaching is the route to liberating not only the full potential of individual's careers, but also the full potential of an organisation. Coaches act as facilitators; they listen, ask questions, and enable the individual to discover for themselves what is right for their situation (Rosinski, 2003).

In summary, there are different definitions of coaching and mentoring. Some authors see coaching as a subset of mentoring and other the other way. For purposes of this study, executive coaching for development will be the focus, emphasising learning for a future position.

2.4 Executive coaching as a developmental tool

2.4.1 Parties to an executive coaching relationship

The basic stakeholders to an executive coaching relationship are the executive coach, the individual being coached and the client (Rosinski, 2003). The client represents a collection of interested parties within the individual's employer organisation, usually including the individual's direct manager who is a key player and the human resources department. In the case where the intervention is commissioned by the organisation, the organisation is liable for the fees of the coach. Natale and Diamante (2005) identified stakeholders as including the peers, direct reports and other people in the life of the individual being coached, as well.

The intervention will be successful when the three main stakeholders involved agree on explicit goals that genuinely further their own interests as well as the common good (Sherman and Freas, 2004). Further, Goldsmith (2006) noted that most of his time as a coach is not spent interacting with his clients but rather

spent interacting with co-workers of his clients. All stake holders in the process have a specific role to play and specific responsibilities in ensuring the success of the intervention; the next sections will explore the roles played by the coach and coachee.

2.4.2 About the coach

There is no industry accepted professional certification for coaches, and the jury is still out on who is best qualified to be an executive coach (Feldman and Lankau, 2005). According to Nasylyshyn in Feldman and Lankau (2005), a study of 87 executives coaching clients cited the following as important credentials for executive coaches: graduate training in psychology; experience in and under understanding of business, established reputation as a coach, listening skills, and professionalism. Feldman and Lankau (2005) concluded that psychology training was neither regularly nor universally recognised as important or relevant to the practice of executive coaching.

As such, the selection of a coach is based own criteria defined by the organisation and the individual concerned, the coaches demonstrated experience and some other factors (Emerald Group, 2006). Sherman and Freas (2004) note that perhaps the most important qualifications are character and insight distilled as much from the coaches experience as from formal training. Natale and Diamante (2005) refer to this process as the credibility assessment, where the

individual being coached or the organisation contracting the coach examines the background, credentials and past success stories of the coach.

The coach can be identified from within the organisation or from outside. There are pros and cons to both types of coaches; external coaches are usually more costly, but are perceived by executives as being more objective; whereas internal coaches usually cost less and understand organisational culture, but are perceived as a confidentiality risk Sherman and Freas (2004).

Research question: What skill set and personality traits would you, as a coachee, consider in choosing an executive coach, what qualities should they posses?

2.4.3 About the individual being coached

Shuit (2005) notes that executive coaching has been stigmatised as a tool for whipping problem executives in to shape but agrees that the modern trend is to use it as a tool for grooming top talent. Battley (2007) argues that the greater the potential and ambition of individuals, the more they can benefit from executive coaching. The intervention is beneficial to high potential individuals who may be holding back because of an annoying personality trait or a bad habit (Reeves, 2006). Eggers and Clark (2000) agree that executive coaching is not meant to

turn non-performers into performers but rather to facilitate and speed up an already capable individual to the next level of performance.

According to Joo (2005), it is important to qualify the individual to be coached using a systematic approach to evaluating the candidate's readiness and suitability for the intervention. He further identifies what he calls important coachee characteristics which include personality factors and motivation factors, one of which is being proactive. Bateman and Crant in Joo (2005) defined proactivity as an individual characteristic described as a belief in one's own ability to overcome constraints and the ability to affect change in the environment. Proactive individuals look for opportunities, show initiative, take action and are persistent in successfully implementing change (Joo, 2005)

Strumpf in Joo (2005) views executive coaching as transformative and as such requires the coachee to be developmentally ready to experience the transformation. Another important characteristic of the coachee is their openness to feedback and their willingness to change (Bacon and Spear, 2003)

Executive coaching is a costly intervention and "it is not surprising that the investment is more frequently made in people who are already big contributors and top performers in an organisation" Reeves (2006, p 48).

Research question: What, in your opinion are the characteristics of a candidate for an executive coaching intervention.

2.5 Executive coaching models

2.5.1 Theoretical basis

Four theoretical models guide the practice of executive coaching, according to Barner and Higgins (2005). The four theoretical models that are commonly used are the clinical model, the behavioural model, the systems model and (as a more recent development) the social constructionist model (SC Model). Table 2.1 provides a summary of the key similarities and differences of the theoretical basis. Barner and Higgins (2005) argue that, even though the executive coach needs to call on one or more of these models depending on the agreed needs of the person being coached, over time coaches tend to adopt a particular model.

Table 2.1: The Four Theoretical models anchoring coaching

Factor	Clinical Model	Behavioural Model	System Model	SC Model
What are the goals of coaching	Help the client change self-perceptions and personality	Help the client with some problematic area of behaviour	Help the client align personal goals and approaches with the organisation's	Help the client author new social realities
Where does change come from	From the inside; changes often extend across the workplace and personal spheres	From changing behaviour; thoughts constitute another form of behaviour	From changing interactions between the client, key "others", and organisational system	From changing the way clients "story" themselves and are "storied" by others
What is the coach's role	Counsellor and therapist	Advisor and trainer	Systems modeller	Ethnographer and narrative analyst
What is the focus of coaching	The underlying structure of the client's personality	Recurring ineffective behaviour	Ineffective patterns and feedback loops	The client's story

Source: Barner and Higgins (2005) pages 149 and 150

2.5.2 The GROW Model

The GROW model developed by Sir John Whitmore is probably the best-known and widely used coaching model in the United Kingdom.   According to Dembkowski and Eldridge (2003), many coach training programmes use the GROW technique as a framework for developing the coaching relationship. This technique is useful when the coach is dealing with an individual that already has the basic knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm for the task at hand (Di Scheina

and Ivarsson, 2005). The technique is heavily reliant on questioning the individual being coached.

The GROW technique can be summarised as follows (Di Scheina and Ivarsson, 2005):

- Establish the **G**oal

- Examine the **R**eality

- Consider all the **O**ptions

- Determine **W**hat next

2.5.3 The ACHIEVE model

Following a study of practicing coaches, Dembkowski and Eldridge (2003) proposed a new seven step model which they called "Achieve" coaching model. They argue that the model is transparent and allows those being coached to understand what actually happens in the coaching session.

The ACHIEVE technique can be summarised as follows:

- **A**sses current situation

- **C**reative brainstorming of alternatives to the current situation

- **H**one goals

- **I**nitiate options

- **E**valuate options

- **V**alid action programme design

- **E**ncourage momentum.

This study will not be restricted to any of the above techniques, but will attempt to build a foundation upon which further research can be undertaken to build a theoretical model that is relevant to the context.

2.6 The coaching process

Executive coaching is neither a pure science nor is it a pure art, there is no defined process of going from start to end; each intervention will be different depending on the coach and the person being coached and their needs (Natale and Diamante, 2005). Executive coaching can be highly tailored to the individual needs of the person being coached and the organisation's specific goals (Weller and Weller, 2004). This section explores consensus processes that are deemed the backbone of a successful executive coaching intervention.

Once the need for services of a coach has been identified, Johnson (2007) recommend, for an effective coaching intervention, the following three activities should be undertaken by the person to be coached;

- Identify their coaching goals, whether self-imposed or by the organisation, and agree these with the organisation;

- Follow a rigorous process for selecting the coach; and adopt a learning mindset by approaching the relationship with a readiness to change.

It is not usual for the individual requiring the intervention to be involved in the selection of the coach, this will have already been done by the organisation's training or HR function which would typically maintain a list of executive coaches who meet set criteria and have delivered results before (Johnson, 2007).

Natale and Diamante (2005) proposed that there are five stages of executive coaching. While the stages are sequential, they may shift back and forth until a resolution of each stage is reached.

Stage 1: The alliance check

An attempt to clarify to the client what the overall objective is, what the process to be followed will be and to clarify issues of confidentiality. The coach needs to create a safe enough environment for the client to take risks necessary to learn, develop and change (Bluckert, 2005).

Stage 2: The credibility assessment

During this stage, the coachee examines the coach in terms of background, credentials and experience; past success stories are a useful way to place the coachee at some degree of ease.

Stage 3: The likeability link

At this stage the coachee is already aware of the coach's credibility and ability and uses this stage to evaluate the coach's style, self-confidence, intensity and

business focus. Likeability does not necessarily mean similarity; the coachee could be looking for something new and different.

Stage 4: Dialogue and skill acquisition

The focus of this stage is self-discovery and self-awareness, analysis, verification and application.

Stage 5: Cue-based action plans

The final stage culminates in an action plan that is behaviourally and/or cognitively specific, clearly setting out what the coachee needs to do and when.

2.7 Critical success factors in an executive coaching intervention

According to Bluckert (2005), an effective coaching relationship is about achieving that fine balance between support and challenge. Over and above addressing the issues at hand, Kilburg in Bluckert (2005) outlined the following as major factors that will determine the successfulness of any coaching relationship:

- The coach should display respect, consideration and understanding for the complexities of the client's experiences;

- The coach should interact in an authentic and genuine fashion; and

- The coach should be professional and courteous.

- Respect for the client as a person

- Accurate empathy

Dembkowski and Eldridge (2003) highlight the importance of transparency, which they say increases trust in the coaching relationship. Rosinski (2003) agrees, he states that the coaching sessions should be strictly confidential, even from the commissioning organisation, to ensure candidness and openness in interactions, which are essential to effectiveness.

Research question: What are the major factors that will determine the successfulness of a coaching relationship for a black candidate?

2.8 Outcomes of an executive coaching intervention

Eggers and Clark (2000) summarise the main benefit of coaching as the fact that it forces an individual to focus and make time to focus on the issue that needs attention. Executive coaching allows the candidate the opportunity to get honest feedback from the coach and from self analysis about his own developmental needs.

The presumed outcomes of executive coaching are changes in behaviour with a presumed increase in organisational effectiveness (Feldman and Lankau 2005). According to Reeves (2006), some of the possible outcomes of coaching are:

- improved confidence or assertiveness;

- development of new skills or approach in preparing for a new role;

- improved interpersonal and communication skills;

- identification of goals and values; and

- enhanced use of experience and emotional intelligence.

Natale and Diamante (2005) list five reasons why they say the world uses executive coaching is being used:

1. Sharpening the leadership skills of high-potential individuals (86%);

2. Correcting management behaviour problems such as poor communication skills, failure to develop subordinates or indecisiveness (72%);

3. Ensuring the success or decreasing the failure rate of newly promoted managers (64%);

4. Correcting employee relations problems such as poor interpersonal skills, disorganisation, arrogant behaviour (59%); and

5. Providing the required management and leadership skills to technically oriented employees (58%).

However, measures of the successfulness of an executive coaching intervention are not standardised since the intervention addresses specifically defined goals and outcomes for an individual (Judge and Cowell, 1997). Feldman and Lankau (2005) argue that executive coaching lacks rigorous empirical research measures of the possible outcomes associated with it; and therefore the outcome of an intervention will depend largely on the objective of the intervention. It is

difficult to provide quantitative data to support the usefulness and effectiveness thereof.

Research question: What criteria should the coachee's organisation, as the sponsor, use in evaluating the success and usefulness of the coaching intervention?

2.9 Concluding literature review

Any theory review needs to culminate in a framework that serves as the basis for creating research questions that are relevant to the study. The following framework (Joo, 2005, p. 476), in figure 2.2, represents a conceptual framework of executive coaching in order to help formulate research questions.

Figure 2.2: A conceptual framework for Successful Executive Coaching

Coach Characteristics	Coaching Approach	Self Awareness	Individual Success
Coachee Characteristics	Coaching Relationship	**Behavioural Change**	
Organisational Support	Feedback Receptivity	Learning	Organisational Success
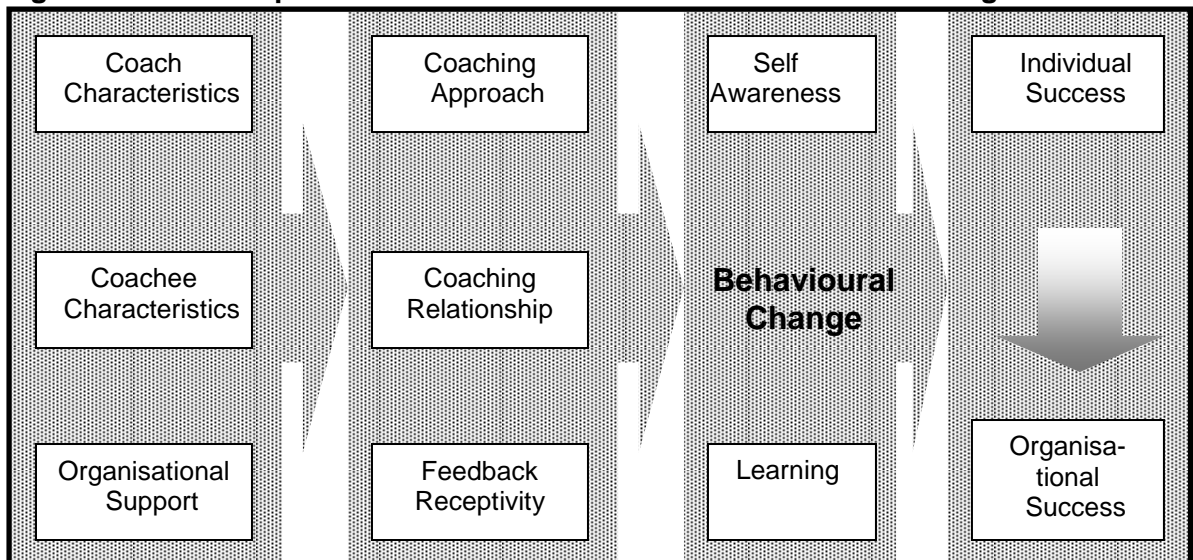
Source: Joo (2005), page 476

In chapter 3, five research questions are formulated based on the following components of the reviewed literature and the framework in figure 2.2:

- Characteristics of the coach

- Characteristics of the coachee

- The coaching relationship

- Feedback receptivity

- Learning

- Organisational Success and

- Individual Success

A study undertaken by Lester (2002) focused on the "Coaching approach"; the study interviewed practicing coaches in South Africa in an effort to develop theory that is based on perceptions of coaches. This study will focus on the perceptions of individuals who have either been coached or who in the opinion of the researcher could match the profile of a coachee based on the literature review.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Questions

Chapter two provided an extensive body of literature that reveals executive coaching as a tool for supporting executives. According to Lester (2002), the practice is entrenched in the US and the UK but is still at its infancy in South Africa. The purpose of this research is to collect and represent the perceptions of black managers and professionals on the use of executive coaching as a tool for advancing blacks into senior positions, including executive and board level positions, in the organisation.

With due consideration of the aforementioned, five questions were developed based on the literature review under chapter two, the questions follow:

Research question 1: Executive coaching as a development strategy

Can executive coaching be used as a viable tool to prepare and support black employees for senior management or executive positions?

Sources: Feldman and Lankau (2005) and O'Shaughnessy (2001).

Research question 2: Calibre of the coach

What skill set and personality traits would you, as a coachee, consider in choosing an executive coach, what qualities should they posses?

Sources: Emerald Group (2006), Natale and Diamante (2005), and Freas (2004).

Research question 3: Calibre of the coachee

What calibre black managers (skill set and personality traits) should be considered for the executive coaching intervention, what qualities should they display or posses?

Sources: Battley (2007), Bacon and Spear (2003), and Joo (2005).

Research question 4: Critical success factors

What are the major factors that will determine the successfulness of a coaching relationship for a black candidate?

Sources: Bluckert (2005), Dembkowski and Eldridge (2003) and Joo (2005)

Research question 5: Evaluation of a successful intervention

What criteria should the coachee's organisation, as the sponsor, use in evaluating the success and usefulness of the coaching intervention?

Sources: Eggers and Clark (2000), (Judge and Cowell, 1997), (Feldman and Lankau, 2005) and Joo (2005).

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

As already noted in chapter two, there is a paucity of academic literature and academic research on the use of executive coaching as a tool for achieving employment equity. This study seeks to get an in-depth understanding of and insights into executive coaching from different points of view and to gather perceptions from respondents. This study is perceived as "emotionally loaded" and requiring respondents to "talk freely and with some degree of insight about their thoughts, feelings and formative experiences" (Oppenheim, 2001, p. 67).

4.2. Rationale for the research method

Creswell (2003) defines a qualitative research approach as one in which the enquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (that is the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing theory or pattern) or advocacy or participatory perspectives (that is political, issue – oriented, collaborative of change oriented) or both. With this approach, the researcher collects open-ended and emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data.

The nature of the data required from this study is qualitative and highly subjective. Welman and Kruger (2001) mention that using structured questionnaires limits the respondents to the questions and how they are asked as well as the order in which they appear on the questionnaire schedule. Further, from table 4.1 below, Marshall and Rossman (2006) propose that individual (one-to-one) in-depth interviews are the best strategy for capturing people's life experience or deep seated perceptions. Zikmund (2003) notes that personal interviews allow the researcher to follow up questions by probing the respondent which allows the researcher some flexibility. The writer of the report, therefore, decided that the method best suited to the study is qualitative, with the technique being semi-structured in-depth interviews (Welman and Kruger, 2001).

It is noted, however, that this approach contains a measure of subjectivity and this is explained emotively by Miles (1979, p59), when he wrote "The analyst faced with a bank of qualitative data has very few guidelines for protection against self-delusion……How can we be sure that an earthly, undeniable, serendipitous finding is not , in fact wrong?".

Table 4.1: Qualitative genre and overall strategy

Genre	Main Strategy	Focus of Inquiry
Individual lived experience	In-depth interviews	Individuals
Society and culture	Case study	Groups or organisations
Language and communication	Microanalysis or text analysis	Speech events and interactions

Source: Marshall and Rossman (2006)

4.3.   Research process

An invitation letter was prepared and discussed with the head of human resources for the investment bank, detailing the topic and the purpose of the study (Welman & Kruger, 2001). This was done to get permission and to assure the organisation that the respondents to the study will be made to understand that the study was not commissioned by the company and that the findings of the study were not binding for the bank; that no emotional contracts would result from participation in this study.   The letter is enclosed in Appendix One.   An interview guide was compiled, detailing the topics that were covered within the interview (Welman & Kruger, 2001). This is enclosed in Appendix Two.

All respondents in the study were interviewed by the research writer, on a one-on-one basis.   Although this method was a time-consuming exercise, it was deemed appropriate for the topic being explored as noted in section 4.2.   All the interviews were conducted at the respondent's place of work.

The interview questions were pre-tested by interviewing a family member who is a qualified clinical psychologist and a holder of an MBA degree, they provided valuable feedback and assisted to improve the quality of the interview guideline. This approach enabled the interviewer to delve into the level of detail required and the respondents were also more responsive than may have been had the interview been conducted telephonically.   The interviews provided flexibility in ensuring that insightful comments that were made throughout the interview, that

were not responding to any direct question were captured under general comments.

4.4. Population of relevance and the unit of analysis

This population included individuals who are:

- black and are full time employees of a dynamic investment bank operating in South Africa;

- employed at a level P or higher in their current role in the organisation;

- studying towards or are in possession of a postgraduate degree such as an MBA; and

- in possession of a total working experience of 5 years or longer.

According to HBE (2004), female employees face more hurdles than their male counterparts due to lack or unavailability of female executive coaches and the potential for inappropriate relationships with other male coaches. Another potential hurdle is the creation of glass ceilings in organisations, which tend to prevent women from being promoted beyond a certain level of management, HBE (2004). Men and women experience different challenges in the work place and their perceptions would be different.

For these reasons the population was restricted to black males. The population was defined as all black males at management levels within a progressive and transforming investment bank within South Africa.

The unit of analysis was defined as a black male at management level employed on a full time basis.

4.5. Sampling method

The sample was selected using nonprobability purposive sampling technique. According to Zikmund (2003), the desired sample did not have to be representative but served a specific purpose. The study intended to investigate perceptions or experiences of black male employees about executive coaching. The sample was selected based on subjective judgement within the confines of the population as discussed above in section 4.4. Judgement sampling was utilized to determine the institution that could fairly represent the South African investment banking industry.

The investment bank that was chosen for the research is a South African company, affiliated with a global leader in the field of investment banking. The bank is not privately listed but is a division of a large listed commercial bank that does not only focus on investment banking. The investment bank employs approximately 900 employees, a large portion of who are young dynamic

professionals. This epitomises the culture of the investment bank, dynamic, results and bottom line driven. It appeared that management's view was that their key stakeholders are shareholders and every other stakeholder is there to increase shareholder value. The culture is progressive and pragmatic, but very ambitious. In terms of positioning in the market, it is rated as a leader in products it has chosen to differentiate itself in.

Obtaining a sample from each of the bank's 19 divisions was considered necessary; however, there were divisions that did not have staff members who met the criteria specified in section 4.4. The sample was thus selected from division that had qualifying staff members.

Based on theory Zikmund (2003), it was deemed that a sample size of between 15 and 20 would be sufficient to validate the interview method. A total of 25 individuals were identified and approached and a total of 15 accepted the invitation to participate in the individual interviews. It became apparent after a few interviews that the message coming from the respondents was the same as relating to research question 1 and 5. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the researcher needs to use own judgement to determine when they should stop interviewing. The criterion used to establish when to stop is called theoretical saturation, which represents a point where the researcher sees the same data over and over. This was the case in question for question 1 and 5, however, the researcher continued with the interviews to collect more data around questions 2,

3 and 4 and eventually interviewed all the respondent who responded positively to the invitation to participate in the research..

4.6. Data gathering tool design

In designing the interview guide, it was critical to ensure that the research questions stated in Chapter Three were captured accurately. As already indicated, interviews were conducted with the respondents. Due to the semi-structured, open-ended nature of the responses, it was appropriate that the interviewer record these electronically to allow the interviewer to focus on body language of the responded and to capture the content of the interview accurately.

The resultant data being qualitative in nature, the method that will be used for data analysis will be content analysis. According to Zikmund (2003), content analysis is a research technique that studies the message itself by systematically, as well as observationally, identifying specific information content.

The interview guideline was structures as follows:

- Introduction which gave the background of the study to the respondent.

- Demographics, qualifications and work experience of the respondents were noted.

- Different questions relating to each of the research questions described in chapter three

- Recommendations from the respondent's perspective

4.7. Research Limitations

The use of convenience sampling introduces bias as the research tends to converge around similar individuals.

The selected sample was not fairly representative of the bank. The interview process was inherently subjective due to reliance on personal contacts and referrals.

A semi-structured interview method required expertise on the part of the interviewer to ensure that information relevant to the research was obtained.

The data collected was value-laden, in terms of the interviewer's own interpretation and assumptions. This does introduce bias into the research.

The findings of this study can not be generalised across banks.

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Results

5.1 Introduction

A total sample of 25 black managers was selected and approached to participate in the research and a total of 15 were finally interviewed. All except one respondent interviewed are in possession of or studying towards a senior degree. They were all members of the same organisation, a dynamic Investment Bank that belongs to one of the big five local banks operating in South Africa with offices in Johannesburg.

The analysis of the research data for the 15 respondents was divided into three categories as follows:

- Category One: Demographics of the respondents in the research
- Category Two: Research questions and
- Category Three: Additional findings

5.2 Demographics of the respondents in the research

To this end, frequency distribution tables and graphs have been utilized to depict the profile of respondents by race, age group, academic qualifications and the number of years they have been employed. These measures were deemed as important since they speak to one's potential and readiness for senior management position.

Race:

The research was limited to black respondents as specified in the employment equity act 55 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998), which is African, Coloured and Indian. The racial make up of the respondent sample is represented in Table 5.1 below: Nine (60%) of the respondents were African, four (27%) of them Indian and Coloureds made up the remaining 2 (13%). The sample was not intended to be representative of the demographic profile of the population as defined in section 4.4 nor that of the country.

Table 5.1: Race composition of the sample

Race	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
African	9	60
Coloured	2	13
Indian	4	27

Age groups:

The average age group of the respondents to the research was 26 – 30 as represented in Graph 5.1 below: This is representative of the age group of the

organisation. Due to the 5 year working experience minimum requirement, there are no respondents under 25 years.

Graph 5.1: Age composition of the sample
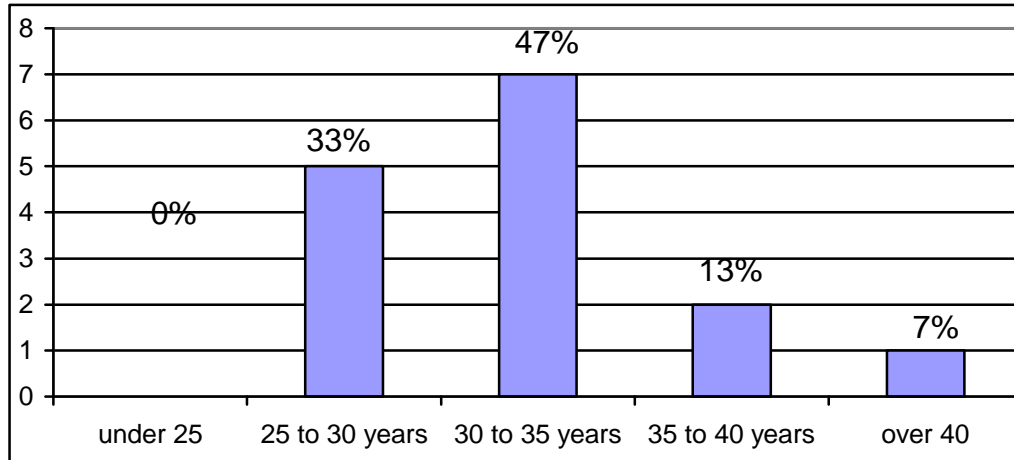
Academic qualifications:

All 15 respondents interviewed are in possession of a first degree, with all the respondents but one having attained or studying towards a senior degree. Their qualifications vary and span many fields from science to commerce. Senior degrees of the respondents included Masters Degrees in Accounting, Tax, Economics and Business Administration (MBA). Table 5.2 details the qualifications.

Table 5.2: Academic qualifications and job titles

	Current position	Junior Degree	Post graduate studies
1	Product Controller	B.Com	B.Compt Honours
2	Business Accountant	B.Com	CA (SA)
3	Consultant: Finance	B.Com	M.Com Tax CA (SA)
4	Interest Rate Economist	B.Com	None
5	Deal Structurer	BSc Actuarial Sc	BSc Honours
6	Consultant: Oil and Gas	BSc Chemical Eng	MBA
7	HR Business Partner	B.Com	B.Com Honours
8	Market Risk Analyst	BSc Physics	BSc Honours
9	Deputy Chair of the Board	BA	M.Com
10	Market Risk Analyst	BSc Computer sciences	BSc Honours
11	Head: Primary Markets PCG	B.Com Accounting	CA (SA)
12	Head: Fixed Income PCG	B.Com Accounting	CA (SA)
13	Quantitative Analyst	BSc	MBL
14	Consultant Primary Markets	B.Com Accounting	B.Acc
15	Head: Financial Strategy	BSc Statistics	MBA

Employment history:

The respondents were required to have been employed for a total minimum of five years with at least six months of that having been with the current employer. The average total working experience of the sample group is greater than 5

years at 9.8 years, while the average time employed at the current company is 3 to 5 years. The minimum time with the current employer was set as a criterion at six months and the longest is eight years. Graphs 5.2 and 5.3 below give a graphical representation of the working experience of the respondents both within the organisation and overall.

Graph 5.2: Time with the current employer
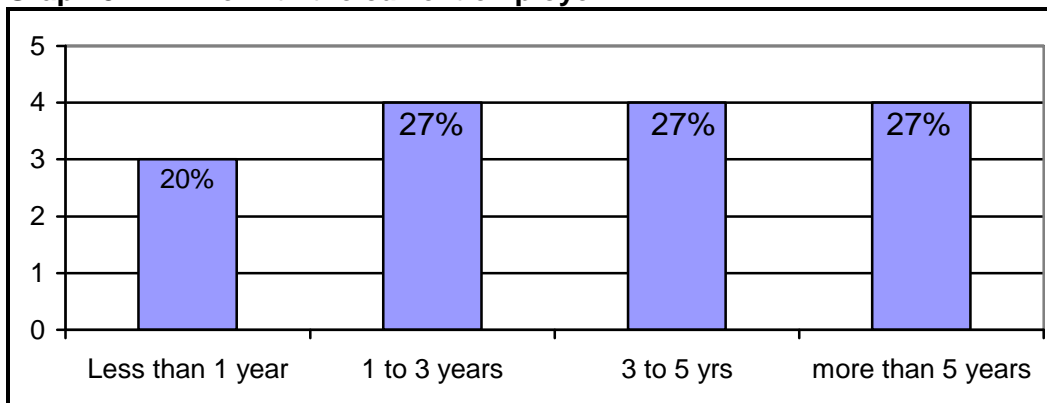
Graph 5.3: Total working experience
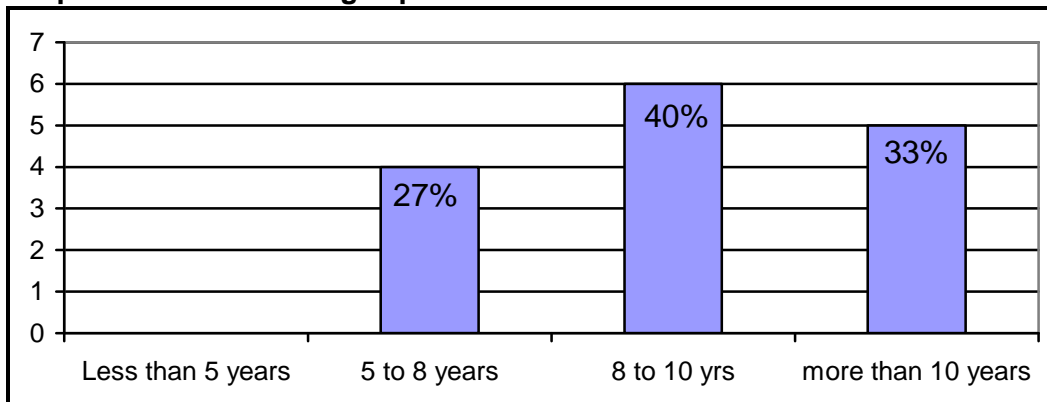
The sample for this study was selected on a non probabilistic basis; it was diverse with representatives from many of the divisions of the organisation, from across different levels of seniority and with diverse company and total work experience. In particular, the sample included a member of the board. The

diversity of the sample added a wealth of insight into the interviews conducted and perceptions developed.

5.3 Research questions

The responses extrapolated from these interviews were analysed through informal methods (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). This entailed initially categorising the data collected in terms of the specific research question that they related to. The responses were assessed in order to ascertain if there were common themes and patterns. Frequency analysis was utilised to determine whether perspectives were generally shared by the respondents, or whether these were the isolated views of the individual. Similarities and dissimilarities between respondents were gauged.

The interview schedule, included as appendix two, covers questions on executive coaching as derived from research question detailed in chapter 3 and these were used to guide the interviews. This section will attempt to analyse the data collected in respect of the interviews, per research question.

Research question 1: Executive coaching as a development strategy

Can executive coaching be used as a viable tool to prepare and support black employees for senior management or executive positions?

Interview question: Can executive coaching be used as a viable tool to prepare and support black employees for senior management or executive positions?

The interviewer did not assume that the respondents were familiar with executive coaching, and spent a few minutes explaining it. The major differences between executive coaching and mentoring were highlighted to the respondents to differentiate the two and to focus the interview on executive coaching (Bell, 1998; HBE, 2004; Groves, 2007; Wasylyshyn, 1998; Rosinski, 2003 and Feldman & Lankau, 2005). The respondents were asked if they thought executive coaching, as explained, could be used as a developmental tool to prepare black individuals for senior management positions. Table 5.3 indicates that all (100%) the respondents felt that indeed executive coaching could be used as a developmental tool for black candidates within the organisation.

The respondents are numbered 1 to 15 and each of their responses and relevant comments (if any) are included in table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Perception on the use of executive coaching for black advancement

Number	Response	Comments
1	Yes	• A good development tool.
2	Yes	• Would help black employees break out of their shell. • If executive coaching does not happen, how then do we hope to transform senior management levels in the bank?
3	Yes	• Should not be differentiated as an intervention for black employees.
4	Yes	• Could fill emotional intelligence gaps that may exist in clever individuals. • Could help improve self presentation.
5	Yes	
6	Yes	• Should be a support intervention open to all employees. • Should start with the line manager who is the first line of development for the upcoming individual.
7	Yes	
8	Yes	• Have seen it work else where and believe that it is a better option for the bank to use.
9	Yes	• It would be a great disincentive to have a programme that is specific for black employees.
10	Yes	• The success of the intervention will depend on the quality of the coach.
11	Yes	• An investment bank's culture has a strong European influenced and executive coaching could assist people of a different culture to adapt and thrive in an investment bank.
12	Yes	• With a big proviso that the intervention be open to all employees and not labelled as an intervention for black employees. • Does not want to be given special treatment.
13	Yes	• Most definitely, senior management roles are about interpersonal dynamics which require the intervention of an executive coach.
14	Yes	• It would force the company to look at and identify black talent.
15	Yes	• Necessary to help individuals break through limitations implicitly imposed by the environment.

Research question 2: Calibre of the coach

What skill set and/or personality traits would you, as a coachee, consider in choosing an executive coach, what qualities should the coach posses?

Interview question: If you were to be nominated for a coaching intervention, what skill set and personality traits would you, as a coachee, consider in choosing an executive coach, what qualities should they posses? Give 5

The question sought to establish a profile for an executive coach that the respondent would be comfortable opening up to and working with. The respondents were asked to provide five factors but some were not able to do so, providing as many criteria as would make them comfortable. Table 5.4 summarises the responses to this question. The figures in the brackets represent the number of respondents who gave the same or similar factor.

Table 5.4: Skill set and personality traits of an executive coach

Coaching Experience (14)	**Cultural observation (11)**
• Previous success stories	• Understanding of company culture
• Success in and outside the organisation and across industries	• International exposure; exposure to many other cultures
• Prominent clients' success stories	• Must have "struggle" credentials
• Must be a success story in own right	• Must appreciate and acknowledge where I come from as a person, being black
• Must have a reputation for success in the market	• Empathetic to backgrounds of previously disadvantaged people
• Have coached blacks successfully in the past	• Must have been previously disadvantaged, not just black
	• Be sensitive to my background
Coaching / human science qualification (6)	• Must appreciate the dynamics of diverse racial backgrounds
	• The heart and not skin colour must be right
• Qualified in the field of coaching	
• Must belong to a professional body	
• Must be accountable to an ethics professional body	
Values (7)	**Personality and ethical issues (9)**
• Alignment of personal values	• Personality should be compatible with that of the coachee
• Professionalism	• Must establish a rapport and click with the coachee during the early stages of the intervention
• Must respect my personal value system	• Effective communication skills
• Should not be arrogant and intimidating	• Someone the coachee likes, respects and can relate to
• Must be open and impartial	
• Must be pragmatic and flexible	
• Must display integrity and objectivity in the initial stages	
• Must have the same religious beliefs	

Race and politics (7)	Other traits
• Must not be white (3) • Must be same race (3) • Must have stayed in the country during the years of the struggle against apartheid • Must be politically astute and connected	• Must have business / industry working experience (3) • Understand the imperative for transformation • Must have experience in a leadership position within an organisation

Research question 3: Calibre of the coachee

What calibre black managers (skill set and personality traits) should be considered for the executive coaching intervention, what qualities should they display or posses?

Interview question: What calibre black managers (skill set and personality traits) should be considered for the executive coaching intervention, what qualities should they display or posses? Give 5

The respondents were asked to choose or create an ideal candidate for an executive coaching intervention, and to highlight five characteristics that they deem important. It appeared from the interviews that the respondents felt that a coaching intervention was meant to address personality (soft) issues with 73% requiring the candidate to already be technically competent. Table 5.5 categorises the responses derived from the interviews.

Table 5.5: Skill set and personality traits of the coachee

Academic/Technical performance (11)	Previous/current performance (6)
- Technical competence - Not a token - Academic excellence - Talented and knowledgeable - Must be bright	- Must be in the top 25% - Must make an impact in current position
Drive and ambition (5) - Ambition to be in senior position - Hard working - Drive will produce performance - Desire to be the best - Willingness to go the extra mile - Keen, determined and driven to succeed	**Potential leadership ability (9)** - Destined for leadership position - Based on personality test - Show limited leadership ability - Even if no line authority - Invested in developing and sharing knowledge with others - Actively mentoring others
Environmental factors (5) - Must have an appreciation of factors facing South Africa - Must illuminate a positive attitude in the midst of negativity and pessimism - Must fit the culture of the organisation - Must have been disadvantaged, not only in principle - Must be respected by fellow peers	**Personal growth ()** - Must be apparent to organisation leadership - Be humble and aware of own strengths and weaknesses - Must display high potential - Must have matured under constrained situation and put the pain behind - Has proactively taken on more challenging responsibilities in the past - Must have a proven track record of grabbing and converting opportunities

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Learning and development (8)

- Must take initiative in developing self
- Must know and continually seek to address own developmental needs
- Aptitude to learn/ keen learner
- Must be challenging and questioning
- Be willing to learn and develop self
- Be willing to accept constructive criticism
- A good listener with a teachable spirit
- Must be adaptable

Research question 4: Critical success factors

What are the major factors that will determine the successfulness of a coaching relationship for a black candidate?

Interview question: In your opinion, what factors would enhance the successfulness of a coaching relationship? Give 3

The respondents were asked that now that they have been nominated as a coachee in an intervention, and they have profiled a coach that they would prefer to work with, what relational issues would make the intervention successful. They were asked to perhaps think of factors that would make them walk away from the intervention.

Ten (67%) of the respondents said that the sessions must be interactive and involving, that it should not be a teacher student relationship where the coach is

always right and just delivers a packaged solution. One respondent added that they need to have the liberty to agree and buy into the proposed solution.

On the issue of respect, six respondents deemed mutual respect as an important ingredient, citing such issues as punctuality and switching off of cell phones during sessions. This issue included respecting one's uniqueness and respecting differences in perceptions that may arise during the intervention.

Five respondents said commitment to the process from both the coach and the coachee was critical for a successful intervention. They must both be committed to the success of the intervention and see this success as their own. They should both have a sense that the other party is here to ensure that the outcome of the coaching intervention is a success.

Regarding open and honest communication; four respondents felt that they would prefer to be told the truth irrespective of how painful and uncomfortable it would be. They further preferred ongoing feedback on progress made, citing that it would be encouraging to and motivating to know that they are making progress or if they need to apply themselves more for the intervention to work. The coachee need to have the will to learn and to accept constructive criticism form the coach and others outside the intervention.

Understanding and a genuine appreciation of the background and situation of the coachee was another factor mentioned by three respondents. Other words used by the respondents in this regard included compassion, empathy to the coachee's situation. The coach should have an overall appreciation of the implication of South Africa's history on blacks and an appreciation of the need for these interventions to succeed in order to facilitate the transformation of the workforce.

The following issues were mentioned by individual respondents but are highlighted as important by the interviewer:

- Accurate identification and articulation of the problem; two respondents felt that they would not have confidence in the solution being proposed unless they had bought into the diagnosis for the problem. They want to feel that the coach is genuine in the analysis of the situation and that he is not assuming that the respondent is black and would experience life like another black person.

- Iterative sessions: two respondents felt that they need to see progress being made, that the solution will not be a 'balloon' solution at the end of the intervention.

In concluding the question around factors that are necessary for a successful intervention, table 5.6 summarises the analysis.

Table 5.6: Factors affecting the successfulness of an intervention

Interactive intervention • Coach should not be overbearing • Coach must not see the coachee as a passive patient but as an individual seeking to develop themselves **Commitment** • To the success of the intervention • To seeing success as their own	**Respect** • Mutual respect • That people are unique and different • For time and privacy **Open and honest communication** • Honest feedback even if painful • Ongoing feedback on progress being made during the session • The coachee must be willing to be honest in accepting and learning from this honest constructive criticism

Research question 5: Evaluation of a successful intervention

What criteria should the coachee's organisation, as the sponsor, use in evaluating the success and usefulness of the coaching intervention?

Interview question: What criteria should the organisation consider in order to judge the success of the coaching intervention?

The respondents were asked to assume a role of a senior manager at the organisation and to give two methods they would use to evaluate the success of the intervention. All the respondents commented that it would be difficult and cumbersome to attempt to quantify the outcome of the intervention using

commonly known evaluation tools. Two themes came out of the responses and they are tabled in Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7: Criteria for evaluating the success in executive coaching

<u>360 degrees feedback</u>	<u>Observation</u>
• Eight (53%) of the respondents felt that the outcome of a 360 degree feedback evaluation should be used to evaluate whether the coachee exhibits desired characteristics following the intervention. Two (26%) were completely opposed to the idea of involving peers and subordinates on the basis that they could not necessarily trust their competition to give honest feedback.	• All 15 respondents (100%) felt that the senior managers who identified the need for the intervention must evaluate, on the job, whether the intervention met the need and whether there is a noticeable improvement in the coachee.
• Three respondents suggested that feedback from both the coach and the coachee be used to evaluate the outcome of the intervention.	• Five (33.3%) respondents said that an increased load (exposure and/or responsibility) should be given to the coachee and he must then be subject to the normal performance management evaluation and management.
• Two respondents maintained that the evaluation should be performed prior and after the intervention, on the same group of individuals.	• Most of the respondents felt that the most important method for evaluating the success of the intervention was through a real life situation with observation by the coachee's line and senior managers.

5.4 Additional findings

A number of respondents acknowledged that Investment Banking was a very technical and specialised working environment and as such required specific skill sets. They believed though that the bank was not doing anything visible to ensure that these specialist skills were transferred to black employees. They felt that requirements for recruitment and promotion opportunities that were available were only suitable to those who had worked overseas, and this excluded blacks from poor background and did not have access to overseas employment opportunities.

To conclude, the respondents were asked whether they were aware of any initiatives undertaken by the bank to develop blacks for senior management positions in their organisation. All respondents were aware of the graduate training programme but not aware of any other; this is not surprising since the bank does not have development initiatives that are driven by the banks executive team and focused on black employees. This respondents were split on whether there should be a specific executive coaching intervention for black or whether there should be a general intervention for all races, based on merit. Although not by an overwhelming margin, there was greater support for a multiracial executive coaching intervention for the bank.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion of Results

6.1 Overview of results

The literature review in chapter 2 provided relevant theory and findings from which the five research questions in chapter 3 were derived, which in turn informed the content of the interview schedule included as appendix two. In chapter 5, a detailed analysis of the data collected during the interviews was undertaken. In this chapter, the writer purposes to link-up the three chapters mentioned above and to distil the findings by discussing the research questions asked in chapter 3.

A total sample of 15 black males (African, Indian and Coloured) was interviewed by the report writer at their work place. The respondents are all at management level according the organisation they work for, 14 of the respondents have already received or are studying towards a post graduate qualification. The report writer assumed that the respondents all have the necessary academic training to be able to operate at a senior level within their field of specialisation. The respondents come from a variety of academic backgrounds with many of them having studied B.Com Accounting.

6.2   Research question 1: The intervention

The question asked was: Can executive coaching be used as a viable tool to prepare and support black employees for senior management or executive positions?

The data in Table 5.3 shows an overwhelming support for the use of executive coaching as a developmental tool for developing and preparing individuals, in particular black managers, for senior or executive position within the organisation in question. All 15 participants (100%) expressed some degree of confidence that the intervention should work to the benefit of both the individual black manager and the employer. This finding is consistent with Feldman and Lankau (2005) who defined recipients of executive coaching as including managers who have been targeted for advancement to the executive level.

There was a strong sentiment that should executive coaching be adopted by the organisation as a development tool, then it should not be classified as an intervention for certain racial groups, but as a tool for all employees who meet the criteria that will be discussed under section 6.4. The racial composition of the participants in the coaching intervention should, however, be representative of the demographics of the population or the desired profile of future leadership of the organisation. These black individuals don't want to be given special passes to senior management but want to be given a fair opportunity and support to compete with all other potential leaders, irrespective of the race.

Van Jaarsveld (2000) argued that affirmative action grants a boarding pass for members of protected groups, blacks in this case, but it does not improve their organisational effectiveness. The data shows that the respondents felt that the higher you go in an organisation, the bigger the role played by interpersonal dynamics. They deemed coaching as necessary to help black individuals to break through limitations implicitly imposed by the background, history and environment. One respondent asked "how else do you think blacks can progress, unless you only want blacks who are connected and were never disadvantaged?".

Finally, the data shows that the respondents felt that transformation of senior level management needs to be treated as a business imperative; one respondent asked "How come the CEO holds business head accountable to the bottom line but does not do the same when it comes to developing and promoting blacks?". O'Shaughnessy (2001) described executive coaching as the route to liberating not only the full potential of the individual's career, but also the full potential of the organisation. .

In conclusion, the literature review and the data have shown that executive coaching can benefit both the individual and the company's bottom line. Thus, executive coaching could and should be used as a tool for the preparation and development of black managers in an investment bank for senior management and executive positions and responsibility.

6.3   Research question 2: The coach

The question asked was: What skill set and personality traits would you, as a coachee, consider in choosing an executive coach, what qualities should they posses?

It would not always be possible for an individual being coached through an employer organised intervention to pick a coach they are comfortable with, however, the findings in this section would be invaluable to the organisation when deciding whose services to contract and what factors to consider in putting together a panel of coaches.   Natale and Diamante (2005) refer to this process as "credibility assessment", where the background credentials and past success stories of the coach are being examined by either the individual being coached or the coach.

According to Sherman and Freas (2004), the most important qualifications of an executive coach are, perhaps, character and insight distilled as much from coach's experience as from formal training.   The richer and deeper the coach's experience, the more likely one is to have seen similar issues before, and one will remember how one helped the previous coachee (Bacon and Spear, 2003).   The data in Table 5.4 shows that the respondents regarded experience as a critical factor with all but one listing it as a requirement. The experience should be diverse and include some industry exposure and more importantly success stories. The respondents felt that the coach's success must be a known factor and not something that is a perception of the coach.

The second most important factor for the respondents (Table 5.4) was cultural awareness and appreciation. The main focus here is that the coach should have an appreciation of and respect the different cultures, backgrounds and situations of the different clients that they deal with. A respondent said the heart and not the skin colour must be right while another said the longevity of prominent and experienced blacks was affecting their availability as coaches and mentors. According to Philippe Rosinski in Lloyd (2005, p 133), "… when you integrate the crucial cultural dimensions into coaching you can unleash even more human potential to achieve meaningful objectives. You tap into the richness that lies in cultural differences".

Natale and Diamante (2005) proposed a 5 stage model for an executive coaching intervention and they called stage 3 the "likeability link". During this stage the coachee evaluates the coach's style, self confidence and personal behaviour. The data in Table 5.4 shows that 9 (60%) of the respondents and 7 (47%) of the respondents felt that personality and values respectively, are important factors in choosing a coach.

In order for the coachee to open up and trust the coach, the respondents needed to feel that the coach respects their beliefs, cultural background, religious affiliation and values. Rosinski in Lloyd (2005) argued that what is meaningful to someone is largely determined by their purpose and values, which are in turn influenced by culture. The data further shows that the coach

should be professional, display integrity, show respect, is objective and pragmatic. The same characteristics are outlined in literature by Bluckert (2005) when he lists three major factors that will determine the successfulness of a coaching relationship.

It is clear from the review of the literature and from the data analysed in chapter 5, that the 4 major factors that an individual or organisation wishing to contract the services of a coach should consider are:

- The experience of the coach both in business and in the field of coaching, backed by real life success stories

- The coach's exposure to different cultures, having worked with clients from various cultural and situational backgrounds

- The coach's personality and character which includes coaching style, self presentation and general personality traits and

- The coach's value system. This factor is broad and includes religion, family versus work balance and ethics.

6.4   Research question 3: The coachee

The question asked was: What calibre black managers (skill set and personality traits) should be considered for the executive coaching intervention, what qualities should they display or posses?

Coming to the coachee, the theory, as reviewed in section 2.4.4 identifies a number of key factors that need to be considered. Battley (2007) argues that the greater benefit from executive coaching will be derived by those who have potential and ambition. Shuit (2006) agrees that the trend is to use executive coaching as a tool for grooming top talent. Reeves (2006) confirms that the investment is generally made in people who are already high contributors and top performers in their current roles.

The data in Table 5.5 agrees with the literature that the coachee needs to already have strong and excellent technical skills before they can even be considered for coaching. The data shows that even though the respondents feel that some measures need to be taken to remove the ceiling for black employees, they do not want to be pushed into positions they are not skilled to perform in. A respondent went as far as saying he hates tokenism as much as he hated apartheid.

Secondly, the data in Table 5.5 shows that potential is the next frequently mentioned characteristic, with 9 (60%) of the respondents citing it. There was no consensus on how potential should be measured or identified, comments made included:

- The person must be interested in developing himself and others

- Should take initiative and proactively lead other, for example, should be the one who volunteers to train and orientate new comers to the organisation and

- The person must show, to a limited extend some leadership ability, perhaps must be mentoring others.

The next important factor according to the data in Table 5.5 is learning and development, which can be summarised as the coachee's ability, desire and willingness to learn about things that surround them and more importantly those that make them. "Even the most skilled and compatible coach can not help you if you don't go into the coaching arrangement willing to learn and change", Johnson (2007). He goes on to say that the coachee must expect some growing pains because learning from coaching requires taking risks, trying out new behaviours, and admitting to mistakes, all of which can be uncomfortable. The data shows that the respondents agree that the coachee must proactively take initiatives to address own developmental needs. Some other factors that are included under this heading include:

- Be willing to accept constructive criticism

- Be a good listener with a teachable spirit and be adaptable and

- Aptitude and keenness to learn

From the review of the literature and from the data analysed in chapter 5, the following 4 factors are important in evaluating whether an individual qualifies to participate in a developmental coaching programme:

- The candidate must be technically competent and have the necessary qualifications and have a history of performing at above average levels

- The candidate must display potential to take on more responsibility and to lead others

- Must have the aptitude, the capacity and the willingness to learn. Must be sober and humble to learn from his mistakes and weaknesses and

- The individual must be driven and ambitious, wanting to be the best at what he does

To conclude, "By taking an active role in defining your coaching goals, selecting the coach who can help you meet them, and opening yourself to learning from the experience, you enhance the odds that your coaching arrangement will generate value for yourself and for your firm." (Johnson, 2007).

6.5   Research question 4: Critical success factors

The question that was asked: What are the major factors that will determine the successfulness of a coaching relationship for a black candidate?

According to Bluckert (2005), the following five factors are critical for ensuring that any coaching interaction is successful:

- The coach should display respect, consideration and understanding for the complexities of the client's experiences;

- The coach should interact in an authentic and genuine fashion;

- The coach should be professional and courteous;

- Respect for the client as a person; and

- Accurate empathy.

The data in Table 5.6 lists the following as critical success factors for a coaching intervention:

- The intervention should be interactive, the respondents felt that they wanted to be part of the solution and not be told what the solution is. Recipients of a coaching intervention, as already noted in section 6.4, are driven and know what they expect out of the intervention.

- There needs to be a sense of mutual respect, the coach needs to respect the coachee as much as the coachee needs to respect the coach.

- Commitment by both parties to ensuring the successfulness of the coaching intervention and finally

- Open and honest communication. The respondents believed that ongoing honest feedback would serve as a motivator or as a wake up call for both parties. Honest communications will allow the three factors stated above

to be present, also to ensure that time is not wasted on issues that do not transform the coachee.

A big overlap can be seen between the findings derived from the data and literature analysis. There is no need for the factors to be rewritten as it is evident that the factors listed by Bluckert (2005) are the same as those derived from the data.

6.6   Research question 5: Evaluation of a successful intervention

What criteria should the coachee's organisation, as the sponsor, use in evaluating the success and usefulness of the coaching intervention?

When examining the data derived from the research as presented in Table 7.9, there appears to be support for both on the job evaluation and 360^0 feedback from those who interact with the coachee in their work environment. On the job observation, however, had the most support with all respondents in support of it. A review of literature presumes the outcome of executive coaching to be a change in behaviour (Feldman and Lankau, 2005) while Reeves (2006) lists a number of possible outcomes like improved confidence and assertiveness, improved interpersonal and enhanced use of emotional intelligence, among others.

Although there is overwhelming research support for allowing the coachee to evaluate the impact of executive coaching on their behaviour by giving them on the job cases or assignment, there is paucity of support for this in literature. It can be concluded from the literature there is no consensus regarding the measuring of the successfulness of an executive coaching intervention.

It is therefore concluded that in order to determine whether an executive coaching intervention yielded the desired results, the coachee should be observed by his line manager or by senior managers. Further, he must be given increased exposure to the situation that necessitated the intervention, for instance, if the intervention was commissioned to address the coachee's inability to network and build relationships then they should be given an active portfolios of clients to service and his performance be closely monitored.

Evaluating the outcome of executive coaching is as evasive for the coachee as it is for the commissioning company and for the coach. The research has shown that the perception shared by those interviewed is that both the coach and the coachee are likely to grade the intervention based on their perception of the other's input into the intervention, which introduces bias. This represents a challenging area for future research.

6.7   Conclusion

Van de Ven (2000) in Joo (2005) suggested a four step research process in conducting a theory research study:

- Diagnose the problem or situation as it exists in the real world

- Select a conceptual model and research the questions to deal with this problem or situation

- Build a theory and design research to examine the research question, and

- Conduct the research and analyse the findings to propose a solution.

The research report has, to this point, dealt with all the above points except the proposal of a solution, chapter 7 proposes a framework which is believed will benefit both individuals and organisations intending to use executive coaching as a developmental tool for black already in management position.

CHAPTER SEVEN

## Conclusion

7.1 Conclusion

The report, to this point has covered all aspects listed in the previous section except for the proposed solution which is covered in this 7.

Executive coaching has over the past decades gained acceptance as a tool for sharpening interpersonal skills and developing emotional intelligence. As the name says, its origin was intended for individuals who were already appointed into executive positions but lacked in their fulfilment of their duties.

This paper proposes that executive coaching can be used as a developmental tool for black male individuals who are either aspiring of have been identified to take up executive responsibilities. Further it proposes the positioning of both the coach and the coachee, with characteristics that are perceived as important for an individual to have in order to be considered and qualified for a successful intervention.

Complexities surrounding the measurement and/or quantification of the outcome of a coaching process were also highlighted in the study.

Figure 7.1: Proposed executive coaching framework
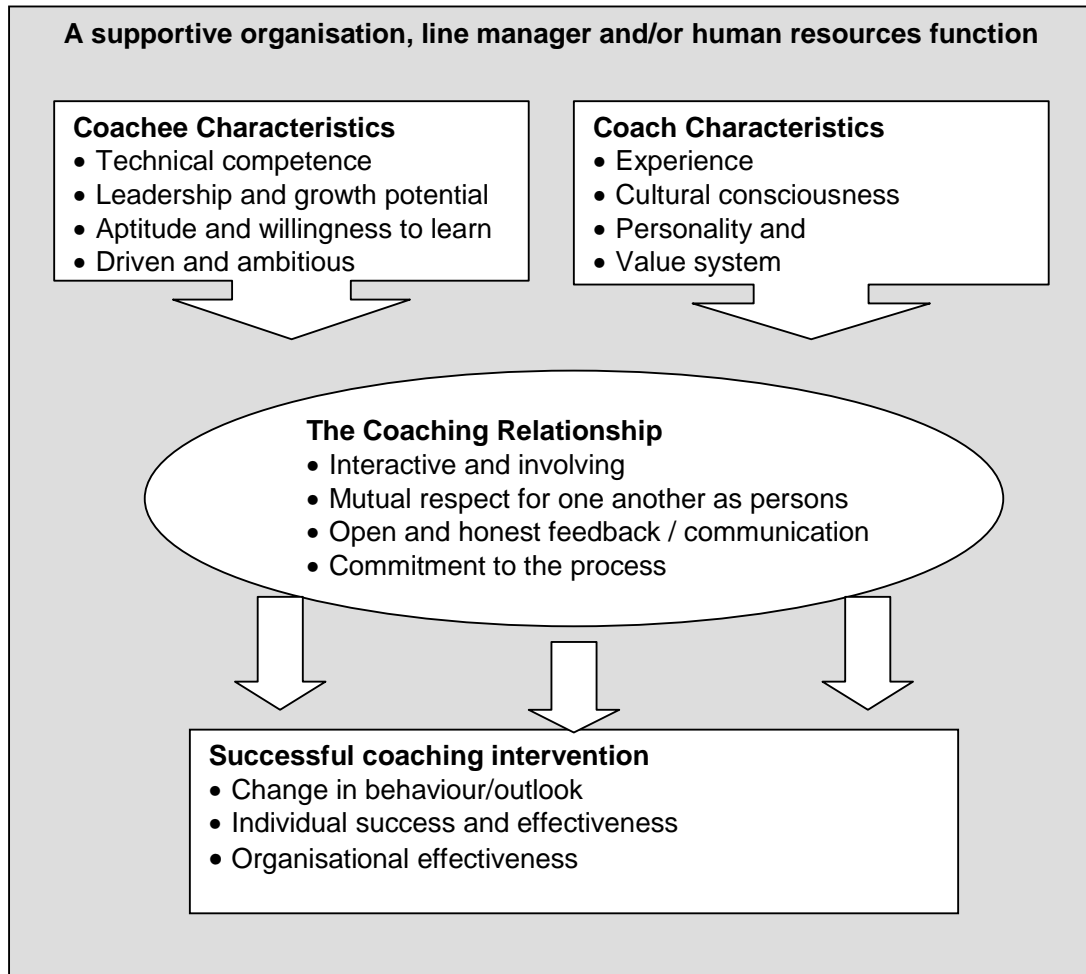
The conceptual framework above (Figure 7.1) summarised the findings of the study, the findings are not ground breaking however, but they do provide insight into the needs, perceptions and expectations of black aspirant mangers at the bank. It is therefore expected that the study should be of value to individuals wishing to become executives, it provides a mirror for aspirant individuals to evaluate their current position relative to the ideal coachee which we believe will allow for self introspection and awareness leading to better positioning.

Similarly, coaches being commissioned to engage with the individuals could gain insight into the expectations of the candidates. Also, undertaking some form of introspection in comparison with the contents on the report could help the coach position themselves as a potential service provider. For instance, if the coach was to prepare a profile, they would realise that it should not be inundated with qualification and be thin on relevant experience and success stories.

It is evident that the role of the organisation is perceived as an enabler and not an active participant in the intervention. This is a critical difference to the framework presented in chapter 2, figure 2.2. In the framework in figure 2.2, organisational support is deemed an input which is processed, the framework in figure 7.1 proposes that the organisation should simply allow the intervention to happen. The organisation should allow the coach access to employees who can shed more light on the coachee's situation, allow the coachee to spend time with the coach and pay the fees due to the coach. The organisation has the right to expect and demand positive results from the coaching intervention.

In order for the intervention to be successful, certain relational factors should be present. Both the coach and coachee have a responsibility to ensure that the environment is conducive for a successful intervention.

7.2 Recommendations

7.2.1 To black individuals aspiring to advance in their careers

This research study has shown that executive coaching is not intended as a tool for shaping poor performers and turning them into performers. Individuals intending to get the best out of executive coaching should already be at a point where their performance, zeal, drive and knowledge is above average with a proven keenness to learn and develop self and others.

It is therefore expected that the findings of this research, the perceptions of other driven and determined black managers will serve as a challenge and an opportunity for others to evaluate their positioning and readiness for such an intervention.

7.2.2 To coaches intending to provide interventions to blacks

Executive coaches intending to provide a service to black managers or executives need to make an extra effort to familiarise themselves with the different backgrounds and cultures of their clients. This is perceived as important by black individuals, who are not opposed to having coaches from different racial, cultural backgrounds. A sincere understanding and appreciation of the coachee's situation, an understanding of the organisational culture and motivation for implementing the intervention, and a history of success would differentiate the coach.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

- Research on the perceptions of practising executive coaches would be valuable. The respondents to the current study are not qualified as coaches and have, as such, based their perception on general knowledge. A study of perceptions of professional coaches will bring a valuable angle built upon extensive knowledge and experience of the merits of executive coaching as an intervention.

- The population of relevance for the study was limited to black males; who satisfied a certain criteria determined by the report writer. Further research is needed to include female employees. The study excluded females as the writer believed that females of all colour face different challenges to their male counterparts within the corporate world.

- The research has shown that the perception shared by those interviewed is that both the coach and the coachee are likely to grade the intervention based on their perception of the other's input into the intervention, which introduces bias. This represents a challenging area for future research.

- The findings of this study are not generalisable to other financial institutions; further research is needed to cover other Investment Banks in the South Africa and perhaps to be expanded to other industries.

- A comparative study of management development practices is required. The findings of this study show that executive coaching is a viable tool for advancing blacks into senior management/executive positions but does not compare the viability of executive coaching against other development tools like mentoring.

- Further research should be conducted into how the successfulness of an intervention is influenced by other factors not included in the framework. Some of the factors are included in chapter 5 but did not have enough support to be included in the framework.

- Finally, in order to statistically test the validity of the findings of this study, a quantitative study could be undertaken. The framework in figure 7.1 could be used to formulate research propositions and for those to be tested using valid statistical tests.

CHAPTER EIGHT

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CHAPTER NINE

Appendices

9.1   Appendix One: Invitation letter

Dear Colleague

Request for your participation in an MBA research study

My name is Thabang Motloung, Head of Financial Strategy within Absa Capital Finance. I am currently studying towards an MBA with GIBS and am busy with my research project hence this request.

My research topic is entitled:

> *"Executive coaching as a tool for advancing blacks into senior*
>
> *management levels"*

The study is qualitative and I intend to use interviews to collect the data. The interview should typically last between 30 and 45 minutes depending on the individual's interest in the topic and should not be more than an hour.

I intend to conduct the interviews during the two week period starting **Monday 10 September to Friday 21 September 2007**. The timing will have to be outside office hours, say

7h00 to 8h00

11h30 to 14h00 (any 45 minute lunch slot) or

After office hours from 17h00

Please kindly indicate to me your willingness to participate in the research and if so your availability and preference regarding timing.

Thanking you in anticipation

Thabang Motloung

(011) 350 7472

083 408 5117

Declaration:

The research is part of my personal study programme and has not been commissioned by Absa Capital. The findings will be presented to the bank on **an anonymous basis**, I think the study would be futile unless it can, to some extent, inform and influence the view and direction of this bank's development policies. It should be noted however that finding will not be binding to the firm in any way.

9.2   Appendix Two: Interview Schedule

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in the research study. I am an MBA student in GIBS and my topic is "***Executive coaching as a tool for advancing blacks into senior management levels***". The aim of this interview is to gather perceptions of black managers and to understand their collective view, if any. As already mentioned in the invitation letter, the interview will be treated with confidentiality and your name is not necessary. The results of the research can be made available to you should you require them.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION					
Date of Interview					
Gender	Male		Female		
Race	African	Coloured	Indian	Other	
Age	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	>40
Undergraduate degree					
Post Graduate qualification					
Current Position					
Years in current company					
Years in current job					
Total working experience					

Executive Coaching

Can executive coaching be used as a viable tool to prepare and support black employees for senior management or executive positions?
What calibre black managers (skill set and personality traits) should be considered for the executive coaching intervention, what qualities should they display or posses? Please give 5.
If you were to be nominated for a coaching intervention, what skill set and personality traits would you, as a coachee, consider in choosing an executive coach, what qualities should they posses? Please give 5.
In your opinion, what factors would enhance the successfulness of a coaching relationship for a black developing individual? Please give 3.
What criteria should the coachee's organisation, as the sponsor, use in evaluating the success and usefulness of the coaching intervention? Please give 2.