

Coach competencies to facilitate transformative learning: a multiple case study involving public-sector executives in South Africa

Gloria Mbokota  and Kerrin Myres 

University of Pretoria- Gordon Institute of Business Science, Sandton, South Africa

ABSTRACT

A significant amount of research has been conducted to understand what makes workplace coaching effective. Several factors, including coach competencies, have been found to contribute to coaching success. Extant literature, however, shows that there is still a knowledge gap in terms of which coach competencies lead to specific coaching outcomes. Some scholars have identified transformative learning (TL) as an outcome of coaching. However, few empirical studies have explored which coach competencies facilitate TL. We adopted a multiple case-study design, with a sample of five coaches and nine senior public-sector executives in South Africa. We conducted a longitudinal study over a period of six months, to observe and assess coach behaviours including how these might lead to TL outcomes. The findings isolate five core coach competencies, their related coach behaviours and the role played by each one in the TL process. These are: creating a safe environment for managing disorienting dilemmas, facilitating self-awareness, motivating and challenging the client, engaging with emotions and holding the client accountable. We propose a framework that can guide practicing coaches who work with leaders and managers, coach trainers and education institutions and HRD practitioners who engage coach services on how to facilitate transformative learning.

ARTICLE HISTORY


Received 13 July 2022
Accepted 26 May 2024

KEYWORDS

Workplace coaching;
executive coaching; coach
competencies;
transformative learning;
coach behaviour

Introduction

Workplace or professional coaching is widely regarded as a key contributor to learning and development outcomes for leaders, managers and employees in organisations (Athanasopoulou and Dopson 2018; Bozer and Jones 2018; Ladegard and Gjerde 2014). It can be defined as a one-on-one, tailored learning and development intervention which involves the forging of a collaborative, reflective, goal-focused relationship between an employee and an internal or external coaching practitioner who has no formal authority over the latter (Bozer and Jones 2018). Workplace coaching refers to any

CONTACT Gloria Mbokota  mbokotag@gibs.co.za

© 2024 Gordon Institute of Business Science- University of Pretoria. Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

form of professional coaching, such as executive, leadership and business coaching (Bozer and Jones 2018).

Over the past three decades, scholars have come to agree that coaching is an effective learning and development strategy (Bozer and Jones 2021) and that its benefits include: more meaningful work, improved individual performance, greater job satisfaction and a better work – life balance (Blackman, Moscardo, and Gray 2016; Bozer and Jones 2018; Jones, Woods, and Guillaume 2016).

Coaching has been found to be particularly beneficial in the context of leadership development as it improves managers' ability to drive change and to develop many of the affective and cognitive skills that leaders need to transform organisations (Bozer and Jones 2018; Sonesh et al. 2015). Given the complexities of today's global business environment, leaders are required to manage ambiguity, to think critically, to innovate and to lead teams in a collaborative manner (Anand et al. 2020). To this end, leaders need to reflect critically, not only on what they do, but also on how they work (Fisher-Yoshida and Yoshida 2022). Reflecting critically on how they do their work could result in leaders radically shifting their frame of reference to allow new meanings and perspectives to emerge (Fisher-Yoshida and Yoshida 2022; Ross 2020). This form of learning is referred to as transformative learning (TL) (Mezirow 2000). Coaching has been said to induce such learning (Corrie and Lawson 2017; Cox 2015; Terblanche 2021; Terblanche, Albertyn, and Collier-Peter 2018).

According to the literature, one of the main factors contributing to successful coaching outcomes is coach competencies (Bozer and Jones 2018). These refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO) of the coach (Blackman, Moscardo, and Gray 2016; Bozer and Jones 2018; Cidral, Berg, and Paulino 2021; Pandolfi 2020). Such competencies include the coach's qualifications, experience, knowledge of coaching psychology, understanding of the business environment and use of specific coaching approaches (Y.-L. Lai and Palmer 2019; Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh 2014; Maxwell 2017; Rekalde, Landeta, and Albizu 2015; Vandaveer et al. 2016). These competencies together underpin coach behaviour, which is an expression of how coaches facilitate coaching conversations (De Haan and Nilsson 2023).

Common coaching approaches that have evolved over the years include, the cognitive – behavioural, positive – psychological, result-based and neuro-linguistic programming approaches (Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh 2014). Interestingly, different coaching approaches have not produced significant differences in coaching outcomes (Jones, Woods, and Guillaume 2016; Y.-L. Lai and Palmer 2019), which suggests that coach competencies could account for observed differences in coachee outcomes (De Haan and Nilsson 2023; De Haan, Molyneux, and Nilsson 2020; Pandolfi 2020). However, it is not clear what processes and mechanisms facilitate effective learning (Bozer and Jones 2018; Fontes and Dello Russo 2021). The question can therefore be posed: which coach competencies account for specific outcomes, such as transformative learning?

Extant literature highlights a number of coach competencies that contribute to coaching effectiveness. These include building a relationship of trust, which is sometimes referred to as a working alliance (De Haan 2019; De Haan, Molyn, and Nilsson 2020); supporting the coachee through active listening and giving of feedback (Cidral, Berg, and Paulino 2021; Gan et al. 2021); acknowledging and managing coachee emotions; and challenging the coachee through questioning and holding them accountable (Blackman, Moscardo, and Gray 2016; Blumberg 2016; Bozer and Jones 2018; Y. L. Lai and McDowall 2014; Rekalde, Landeta, and Albizu 2015). While the identification of these competencies is a positive step, coaching scholars assert that more empirical research is needed to delineate the different competencies that produce different outcomes (Y.-L. Lai and Palmer 2019; Pandolfi 2020). In this regard, studies to date have provided insufficient evidence of which coach competencies deliver which coaching outcomes (De Haan, Molyn, and Nilsson 2020), and moreover which competencies could account for transformative learning.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate which coach competencies specifically contribute to transformative learning among executives. The research questions guiding this study were:

- (1) *What* are the coach competencies that contribute to transformative learning in an executive coaching context?
- (2) *How* do these coach competencies facilitate transformative learning in an executive coaching context?

In the ensuing sections, we begin by reviewing the literature on workplace coaching and transformative learning in the context of workplace coaching. We then present our findings and discuss six competency-related themes emerging from our study that help to drive various aspects of transformative learning. Finally, we discuss the implications of our study for theory and practice and conclude with some recommendations for further research.

Literature review

In the literature review, we explore the concept of workplace coaching as a human resource development tool, transformative learning in the context of workplace coaching, as well as key coaching competency models or taxonomies and their relevance to transformative learning.

Workplace coaching and its relevance to human resource development

Workplace coaching, one of the most recognised forms of human resource development, has seen exponential growth in the past two decades (Bozer and Jones 2021). In addition, coaching as a professional field has grown from being perceived as practitioner-focused, with most related research not making it into highly rated journals, to being recognised as a scholarly field which has produced more and more quality research (Athanasopoulou and Dopson 2018; Bozer and Jones 2021).

Among the reasons for the popularity of coaching are the positive outcomes it continues to produce, which include more meaningful work and improved individual performance, leading to greater job satisfaction and a better work – life balance, according to Blackman, Moscardo, and Gray (2016), Bozer and Jones (2018) and Jones, Woods, and Guillaume (2016). These studies are supported by recent field research that confirms that coaching increases psychological capital, job satisfaction and job performance (Fontes and Dello Russo 2021).

There has been an increasing amount of research conducted on the effectiveness of coaching as a human resource development intervention, including studies using rigorous, large-scale designs (Bozer and Jones 2021). However, a limited number of studies have, first, provided in-depth explanations of the processes and mechanisms that account for coaching effectiveness and, second, identified competencies that produce specific outcomes, like transformative learning (Bozer and Jones 2018; Fontes and Russo 2021). The dearth of explanations provided for the effectiveness of coaching is also attributed to a lack of theoretical rigour in coaching practice and research (Athanasopoulou and Dopson 2018; Jones, Woods, and Guillaume 2016).

A theoretical understanding of the coaching process and mechanisms, from both the coach's and coachee's perspectives, is therefore important (Athanasopoulou and Dopson 2018; Jones and Bozer 2018). In a study conducted by Pandolfi (2020), of the top three mechanisms said to contribute to coaching effectiveness, coach mechanisms were ranked as number one (at 32%), followed by coachee mechanisms (at 25%) and then coaching relationships (at 20%) (Pandolfi 2020). In our study, we therefore focused on coaching mechanisms and processes to understand which coach competencies account for transformative learning in a workplace coaching context.

Coaching and transformative learning

Transformative learning is 'the process of effecting change in a frame of reference' (Mezirow 1997, 5). A frame of reference comprises 'habits of mind' and 'points of view', which are entrenched ways of thinking and being that make up an individual's worldview. According to (Mezirow 1997), to change a person's worldview, a significant disruption or disturbance to that person's meaning perspective – called a *disorienting dilemma* – must occur. This is often triggered by a life-changing experience or learning intervention. This means that a learning intervention such as professional coaching could trigger such learning (Cox 2015; Fisher-Yoshida and Yoshida 2022; Terblanche 2021).

(Cox 2015) argues that when coachees join a coaching programme, they may already be experiencing a disorienting dilemma, while Christie et al. (2015) suggest that a learning programme (including workplace coaching) could itself facilitate a disorienting dilemma. Consequently, in our study we explored which coach competencies might help to trigger a disorienting dilemma in a coachee or, for those already experiencing a disorienting dilemma, which coach competencies might enable transformative learning to occur.

Transformative learning scholars argue that the coaching process allows coachees to reflect critically on their frame of reference (*critical reflection*) through the identification of the assumptions that shape their meaning-making process. They explore the validity of these assumptions, as well as examine their suitability for solving current challenges in

the workplace (Anand et al. 2020; Fisher-Yoshida and Yoshida 2022). Recent literature posits that the transformation process specifically occurs at three levels: the mind, the ego and the body (Ross 2020). At the level of the mind, the shifts would involve a revision of the way coachees think about themselves, their world, the future and the universe. At the ego level, the shifts would involve awareness of self and the ability to transition from socially authored ways of knowing or meaning making to self-authored ways of meaning making (Kegan 2009; Ross 2020). This then produces new awareness of self, others and the world, together with new expressions of emotion and somatic experiences, the latter being bodily expressions (Ross 2020).

Fontes and Russo, (2021b) used the taxonomy of change framework (Golembiewski, Billingsley, and Yeager 1976) to examine the effects of coaching at the ‘alpha’, ‘beta’ and ‘gamma’ levels of change. Their study confirmed that not only did alpha changes (*normal representation of change*) occur, but that both beta changes (*a recalibration of one’s assessment of reflection*) and gamma changes (*a complete redefinition of a construct that they might be dealing with*) occurred (Fontes and Russo 2021). Gamma changes denote a form of transformative learning, but what is not known is what mechanisms or coach competencies enable this form of learning to take place in the context of workplace coaching.

The last component of the transformative learning process is *rational dialogue* which involves discussing personally and socially held beliefs and assumptions with other people in a logical and objective manner (Mezirow 1997). An important consideration is the extent to which the coaching engagement provides opportunities for the coachee to engage in a rational dialogue, which leads to transformative learning outcomes.

The final consideration is the determination of whether or not transformative learning has really occurred. Hoggan (2016) summarises transformative learning outcomes as follows: (1) a change in a person’s worldview; (2) a significant shift in sense of self; (3) a change in epistemology; (4) a change in ontology; (5) a change in behaviour; and (6) improved individual ability. He argues that for real TL to occur, it must meet three criteria: (1) *depth*: the learning must produce a significant change in the person’s life; (2) *breadth*: the change must present itself in multiple contexts in the person’s life (e.g. work and private life); (3) *relative stability*: the change must be of a permanent nature (C. D. Hoggan 2016).

Recent studies showing that coaching enables an individual to reflect critically on their meaning perspectives (Anand et al. 2020; Fisher-Yoshida and Yoshida 2022) and to construct new meanings (Fontes and Russo 2021) largely confirm that transformative learning can be fostered through professional coaching.

Coaching competency frameworks and transformative learning

A competency is ‘a set of related but different sets of behaviour organized around an underlying construct’ (Boyatzis 2007, 5), such as a motive, a trait, a skill or an aspect of a body of knowledge, which results in effective and/or superior performance (Boyatzis 2007; Chouhan and Srivastava 2014). Competencies include the knowledge, attitudes and skills required to perform a function (Chouhan and Srivastava 2014). Campion et al. (2011), in turn, argue that a competency should have a descriptive title, be defined in behavioural terms and have a detailed description of the required proficiency levels, which must be measurable.

The goal of a competency model should be to develop effective measurement tools that help employees understand the behaviours they are expected to demonstrate (and why they are important) in order to predict performance in the workplace (Boyatzis 2007; Campion et al. 2011; Chouhan and Srivastava 2014).

Studies on coach competencies date back to the early 1990s when Hein (1990) identified six coach behaviours that contribute to the effectiveness of coaching outcomes. However, only two still qualify as coach behaviours: *providing direction* and *providing positive and negative feedback* (De Haan and Nilsson 2023). Noer (2005) later developed a coach behaviour inventory which measured three core behaviours: *supporting* (attending, enquiring, affirming, reflecting behaviours); *challenging* (confronting, reframing, shaping, empowering behaviours); and *assessing* (data-gathering, gap-analysis, goal setting and feedback behaviours). Chen, Ai, and You (2014) then remodelled Noer's inventory and applied it to manager coaches in a Chinese context. While these scholars confirmed Noer's (2005) findings, they observed gender and seniority differences in relation to coaches' supporting and challenging behaviours. Other scholars, such as Ellinger and Bostrom (1999), Ellinger et al. (2009), Hagen and Peterson (2014) developed similar taxonomies. Even though these taxonomies were designed specifically for managerial coaching contexts, the coach behaviours are similar and are therefore relevant for other forms of coaching.

Newson and Dent (2011), in measuring behaviours of coaches working in a global consulting firm, identified three clusters of behaviour that they argued contribute to the effectiveness of coaching outcomes: *generic professional coach activities*, *conversational goal setting and attainment activities*, and *more intimate relationship activities* (De Haan and Nilsson 2023). In contrast, De Haan, Culpin, and Curd (2011) identified a strong relationship between perceived coach behaviours and reported coachee effectiveness; however, there was no direct relationship between specific coach behaviours and outcomes.

The main limitation of these earlier studies was that they mostly used self-reported data and therefore could have suffered from same-source bias (De Haan and Nilsson 2023). Against this backdrop, a series of studies – which were conducted to assess coaching outcomes, using real interaction data from video recordings of actual coaching sessions – offered important insights.

An initial study, using 33 observed interactions, assessed affiliative and dominant coach behaviour and how this affected coaching outcomes (Ianiro, Schermuly, and Kauffeld 2013). In a follow-up study, Ianiro and Kauffeld (2014) assessed how coaches' verbal and non-verbal communication and moods affected coaching success in 48 different interactions. Ianiro, Lehmann-Willenbrock, and Kauffeld (2015) examined 30 coach – coachee interpersonal interactions and found that dominance on the side of the coach triggered dominance on the side of the coachees, which facilitated goal achievement. Subsequently, Will, Gessnitzer, and Kauffeld (2016) analysed 19 videos to assess the coach's empathetic behavioural effect on coaching outcomes. While the above-mentioned studies addressed the self-reporting limitation, they focused only on understanding the relationship aspects of coach behaviour, which is only one component of the coaching process.

Blumberg (2016) and Maxwell (2017) set out, in separate Delphi method studies, to identify coach competencies. While Blumberg (2016) identified eight core coach

behaviours, only half of them had to do with the actual behaviour of a coach in a coaching session, namely: *managing the relationship, building rapport and understanding, managing emotions, and focusing on the coachee*. Maxwell (2017), in contrast, categorised the knowledge components of the coach competencies as follows: *coaching knowledge and skills, knowledge of psychology, and business and leadership knowledge*. He found that knowledge of psychology was not seen to be a major contributor to coaching effectiveness; rather, coaching knowledge and skills as well as business and leadership knowledge and experience were regarded as more important competencies for successful workplace coaching. A limitation of these studies, however, was that they may have been biased, as data were collected from coaches and experts only.

De Haan and Nilsson (2023), in a much more comprehensive study, used Sloan and Watson (2001) counselling model to create a Coach Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ) which could be used to assess coach competencies. They tested it among executive coaches, managers and consultants in a variety of contexts, as determined by gender, age and job role. In addition to collecting data from multiple types of respondents, they took coachee perspectives into consideration.

Heron's model measures six components: (1) *prescribing*, which is concerned with giving direction, advice and recommendations to the coachee (but which is often discouraged in coaching); (2) *informing*, which involves providing information to a coachee when needed; (3) *supporting*, which involves paying attention to the coachee by welcoming them and offering support in the form of, for example, appreciation and praise; expressing confidence or agreement; or engaging in appropriate self-disclosure and sharing; (4) *exploring*, which entails helping the coachee to understand themselves and their problems and to find solutions, using skills such as active listening, summarising, paraphrasing, echoing and enquiring more deeply through open, coachee-led questioning; (5) *releasing*, which is concerned with helping the coachee to unblock, release or discharge emotions that are impeding their learning; and (6) *confronting*, which implies challenging the coachee's assumptions and stimulating awareness of their own behaviour, attitudes and beliefs. The coach uses confrontation (through questioning) to help the coachee gain a deeper appreciation of what appears (to the coach) to be important for the coachee's learning (De Haan and Nilsson 2023).

While De Haan and Nilsson's (2023) findings confirm some earlier studies, they argue that coaches have a broad range of interventions at their disposal during a coaching conversation, from doing nothing except listening and supporting the coachee, to offering some information and direction, to challenging the coachee by calling into question their thinking patterns and assumptions and inviting them to vigorously find solutions. However, there is still a gap when it comes to being able to measure the impact of particular coach behaviours on specific coaching outcomes (De Haan and Nilsson 2023).

In parallel to the various scholarly debates and the development of coach competency frameworks, professional coaching associations globally have developed their own coaching competency frameworks for the purpose of developing and evaluating coaching practices. The leading framework in this regard is that of the International Coaching Federation (ICF), with which most professional coaching bodies have aligned themselves. The ICF competency framework (ICF 2017) comprises 11 competencies that were recently grouped into four clusters: (1)

Setting the foundation, which addresses *Competency #1 (Meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards)* and *Competency #2 (Establishing the coaching agreement)*; (2) **Co-creating the relationship**, which addresses *Competency #3 (Establishing trust and intimacy with the coachee)* and *Competency #4 (Coaching presence)*; (3) **Communicating effectively**, which addresses *Competency #5 (Active listening)*, *Competency #6 (Powerful questioning)* and *Competency #7 (Direct communication)*; and (4) **Facilitating learning and results**, which addresses *Competency #8 (Creating awareness)* and *Competency #9 (Designing actions)* (Hamurcu 2018).

Seven competencies (#3 to #9) – which are geared towards facilitating learning and can be demonstrated, observed and measured in coaching conversations – have been empirically verified by several scholars (Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh 2014) and have continued to be confirmed in many studies. The ICF competencies that extend beyond the coaching conversation (ICF Competencies #1, #2, #10 and #11) are not seen to fit the definition of a competency (Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh 2014). These specific competencies are also aligned with the categories of the CBQ, as proposed by De Haan and Nilsson (2023). The findings from our study were therefore compared to ICF competencies #3 to #9 in examining which core behaviours and their related sub-behaviours foster transformative learning in the context of executive coaching. These are discussed below.

Competency #3: establishing trust and intimacy

Establishing trust and intimacy is considered the first core coach behaviour needed for effective coaching. Scholars use different concepts, such as building rapport or developing a strong working alliance between the coach and the coachee (De Haan, Molyn, and Nilsson 2020; Pandolfi 2020). However, studies have demonstrated that while rapport building may boost motivation and encourage a good working relationship and the sharing of information (Ianiro, Lehmann-Willenbrock, and Kauffeld 2015; Ianiro, Schermuly, and Kauffeld 2013), a working alliance alone has no direct impact on coaching outcomes (De Haan, Molyn, and Nilsson 2020). In our study, we considered the role of building rapport with a coachee in TL.

Competency #4: coaching presence

A working alliance is strongly linked to coaching presence. The competence of coaching presence is an ‘emotional competence’ which reflects the ability of the coach to manage their own emotions effectively and to ensure that the coachee experiences open, flexible and productive engagements (Hamurcu 2018). It encompasses helping the coachee to freely express their emotions, which may help to stimulate learning (De Haan and Nilsson 2023; Slabbert and Hoole 2021). This suggests that, in a coaching conversation, the coach should be able to recognise and engage appropriately with emotions to facilitate learning. Transformative learning literature acknowledges that learning is not only fostered through cognitive processes; it also involves emotions, as the two cannot be separated (Dirkx and Espinoza 2017; Green and Mälkki 2017). In our study, therefore, we explored how the coach’s emotional competence enables transformative learning.

Competency #5: active listening

The third coach behaviour that is said to contribute to effective coaching outcomes is active listening (Bozer and Jones 2018; Cidral, Berg, and Paulino 2021; Gan et al. 2021). This entails listening to the actual words spoken by the coachee and repeating them, as well as paraphrasing what the listener understood (Fischer-Lokou et al. 2016; Manzano et al. 2015). It also involves observing non-verbal gestures and emotions that accompany verbal language, processing the words that are heard, and then ‘interpreting’ and ‘making meaning’ of what the coachee said and giving them feedback (Fischer-Lokou et al. 2016; Manzano et al. 2015). Doing this allows the coach to put the spotlight on the coachee’s behaviour, thoughts and frame of mind and to give them feedback (Cidral, Berg, and Paulino 2021; Gan et al. 2021). This is a core skill that is closely related to Competency #8.

Competency #8: creating awareness

Creating awareness is a coach behaviour that involves gathering and evaluating multiple sources of information to enhance the coachee’s awareness (Hamurcu 2018). This process supplements active listening and entails giving feedback to the coachee on what they said as well as significant moments during the conversation. In this way, the coachee is made aware of what is and what is not working, thus enhancing the potential for learning and behavioural change (Cidral, Berg, and Paulino 2021; Gan et al. 2021; Y. L. Lai and McDowall 2014; Pandolfi 2020; Slabbert and Hoole 2021). While self-awareness is a form of learning, on its own it does not result in transformative learning (Kegan 2009). Therefore, in our study, we explored the role of active listening and the creation of awareness for the purpose of stimulating transformative learning.

Competency # 6: Powerful questioning

The fifth coach competence is asking questions. Asking questions allows the coachee to find solutions to their challenges. Questions could be both open and closed, including reflective or incisive questions (Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh 2014; Mosteo, Maltbia, and Marsick 2021). Reflective questions are non-rhetorical questions that probe individuals’ thinking and help reveal their deeper frame of mind (Romme and Van Seggelen-Damen 2015). These questions, in turn, help individuals to frame and reframe their meanings and worldview by encouraging them to engage in critical reflection, uncover assumptions and beliefs, and explore options (Cidral, Berg, and Paulino 2021; Gan et al. 2021; Pandolfi 2020; Slabbert and Hoole 2021; Terblanche 2021). Powerful questioning techniques (ICF 2017), such as reflective questioning, could prompt coachees to release their emotions and confront their frames of mind (De Haan and Nilsson 2023). In our study, we explored the role of powerful questions in critical reflection and how these can lead to transformative learning outcomes.

Competency# 7: direct communication

This competency should be seen in relation to the previous three competencies as it balances the ‘support’ activities of active listening and feedback with the ‘challenge’ activities of questioning and holding the coachee accountable, which are needed to facilitate learning and growth (Hamurcu 2018). In our study, direct communication did not appear to be a standalone competence as it was seen within the context of other

competencies. It is therefore difficult, because of its generic nature, to determine its own, independent contribution to transformative learning.

Competency #9: designing actions

This competence involves providing opportunities for continuous learning beyond the coaching sessions (Hamurcu 2018). When a coach encourages a coachee to apply what they have learnt from the sessions, it helps the coachee to internalise the learning and improves the likelihood of there being a sustainable change in behaviour. This process also entails holding the coachee accountable for their intended actions (Gan et al. 2021; Griffiths 2015; Slabbert and Hoole 2021; Terblanche 2021). Transformative learning requires the application and maintenance of the new behaviour in a different context (C. D. Hoggan 2016). Our study therefore assessed the extent to which assigning tasks to coachees and holding them accountable facilitated TL.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed in this section provides convincing arguments that there is a relationship between professional coaching and transformative learning and that there are specific elements, i.e. coach competencies, that could be responsible for the transformative learning components of the coaching outcomes. In view of this, our study centred on investigating which coach competencies contribute to transformative learning in an executive coaching context.

Design and method

We opted for a realist paradigm (Krauss 2005) for our study with a view to uncovering the contexts influencing both the coachee and the coach in the TL process. To this end, we adopted a qualitative strategy of inquiry, using a multiple case study approach (Yin 2018) where the case was defined as the coaching dyad, comprising the coach, the coachee and the coaching process. The multiple case study approach was used as it aligns with Yin's (2018) case study evaluation research design. Other scholars also recommend a multiple case study approach as it provides an opportunity for the researcher to develop in-depth insights for the purpose of doing cross-case comparisons and addressing the complexities presented by context (Langley et al. 2013).

Case selection

Theoretical sampling was used to select the cases for this study (Eisenhardt 2021). The criteria we used to select the coach participants were: possession of a credible coaching qualification, experience in coaching, an understanding of the business environment and a coaching philosophy that informed their approach (Blackman, Moscardo, and Gray 2016; Bozer and Jones 2018; Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh 2014). The selected coaches were also members of a professional coaching association in South Africa – Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA). An introductory email to prospective coach participants explained the purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary and would require a minimum of six months' commitment without compensation.

Five coaches volunteered and were selected to participate in the study (whose pseudonyms were Maryanne, Katie, Sarah, Ivey and Nancy). Four of the coaches were allocated two public-sector executives each, while one coach (Katie) was allocated three public-sector executives as she had capacity to take more, making a total of 11 coaching dyads that commenced the coaching process. The allocation of coachees to coaches was based on proximity. Since the coaches provided their services on a voluntary basis, we wanted to ensure that they would not incur substantial travel costs, as the coaching sessions would be face-to-face. In addition, the coaches were assigned a coach supervisor to support them throughout their coaching journey.

The coaches' qualifications and profiles are summarised in [Table 1](#). One of Nancy's coachees dropped out after session 2, while the videos of two sessions with her second coachee were corrupted. Consequently, these two coachee cases were excluded from the analysis. For the purpose of this study and our analyses, therefore, we report on the interactions between four coaches and their respective coachees – i.e. nine dyad cases in total.

Twelve executives from public-sector entities in South Africa were initially invited to participate and 11 enrolled on the programme as coachees. Of the 11 coachees who enrolled, nine completed the programme. Therefore, nine cases produced the data set on which the study was based. Variability in terms of gender, age, level of management and sector were taken into consideration in the selection of the coachee participants. Their profiles are summarised in [Table 2](#).

Table 1. Coach profiles.

Coach profiles	Maryanne	Katie	Sarah	Ivey
Professional qualifications	Diploma in health and wellness	Master's in clinical psychology	Honours in law	Masters in social science
Corporate background	Business owner for over 20 years	Worked in corporate as industrial psychologist, and organisational practitioner	Worked in corporate as a senior manager.	Worked in public sector for over 20 years as a manager and executive
Coaching qualifications	Accredited NLP master practitioner and neuro-semantic coach	Accredited narrative, neuro-semantic coach	Accredited results coach and neuro-semantic coach	Accredited NLP master practitioner and neuro-semantic coach
Coaching approaches	Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) and systemic coaching	Narrative, psychodynamic, person-centred, cognitive behavioural and NLP	Solution-focused /results coaching and NLP	Gestalt and NLP
Years of experience and hours as a coach	10 years and above More than 1 000 hours	5–10 years Average of 700 hours	1–3 years Below 500 hours	1–3 years Below 500 hours
Age group	Above 55	35–45	35–45	Above 55

Source: Data from enrolment forms.

Table 2. Coachee profiles.

Participant Pseudo names	Gender	Level of management	Years of experience as manager	Sector
Samuel	Male	Senior manager	11	Public finance
Jane	Female	Executive manager	17	Public finance
Ben	Male	CEO	20	Public health
Margareth	Female	Senior manager	11	Public health
Rob	Male	CEO	8	Regional hospital
Lynette	Female	Middle manager	5	Public finance
Maggie	Female	Executive manager	20+	Public finance
Marvin	Male	Senior manager	20+	Provincial health
Silvia	Female	Middle manager	8	Public education entity

Source: Data from enrolment forms.

The research context

When the coaching programme got under way, the prevailing narrative in the South African government was that ‘white monopoly capital’ was the primary cause of ‘black poverty’ and that economic policy and government expenditure should be reprioritised in favour of the poor and disadvantaged (Cabinet reshuffle 2018 <https://www.sahistory.org.za>). However, behind these noble intentions, many government plans were ill-conceived and poorly executed. Moreover, political affiliations were often given precedence over experience and capabilities (<https://www.sahistory.org.za>).

Three months before the start of the coaching programme, five ministers were fired from their posts and replaced with other incumbents (<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/cabinet-reshuffle-2017>). One of the affected ministries was the Ministry of Finance where four of the coachee participants worked. At the time, these participants were having to deal with the consequences of substantial budget cuts, which affected their relationships with colleagues. Three of the participants were budget analysts responsible for budget allocations for the ministry. The changes confronting them affected their work directly, which was put under the spotlight during the coaching conversations.

Furthermore, a year before the start of the coaching programme, the political head of Gauteng province (where this study took place) decided to move a large number of mentally ill patients to less-expensive facilities. However, many of these institutions were sub-standard and not licenced to offer the required level of care. As a result, 146 mentally ill patients died and over 1,000 were exposed to trauma (Makgoba 2016). Four of the executives participating in this study came from the health sector. Two were directly affected as they worked in institutions that were either responsible for the tragedy or were investigating events leading up to the tragedy. The other two were indirectly affected as they had to deal with the consequences of the tragic incident. The arbitration process was ongoing for the duration of the coaching programme.

Data collection

Research has shown that as few as three or four coaching sessions can make a notable difference (Sonesh et al. 2015). However, six sessions were decided on for this study to allow for possible coachee withdrawals arising from the volatile context in which they found themselves and/or from potential glitches in the video-recording process.

The coaching sessions, which averaged 90 minutes each, were conducted on a face-to-face basis at three- to four-week intervals over the six-month period. For triangulation purposes, three data-collection methods were used, namely direct observation via video recordings of the coaching sessions, post-coaching reflections (PCRs) in the form of diary entries after each coaching session where both the coach and the coachee reflected on the completed session, and in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher with both coaches and coachees after the completion of the coaching programme.

Researcher positionality

This study was conducted as part of the first author's PhD programme, while the second author was the supervisor of the study. To prevent bias, neither of the researchers participated in the coaching programme. The first author is also a practising executive coach, which influenced her decision not to participate in the coaching programme, but rather to play a project management role (and thereby avoid researcher bias). She conducted the interviews with the coaches and coachees upon completion of the coaching programme and also collected the diary entries, which assisted in the monitoring of the programme, including how the coachees were faring in their given context.

Direct observation via video recordings

A video camera was optimally positioned by a research assistant who was qualified to use it. A major benefit of using video recordings for data collection is that it captures 'interactional detail' in the coaching dyad (Derry et al. 2010). Another advantage is that it records the process of coaching, making it possible to observe the coachee's cognitive and emotional shifts over time (Derry et al. 2010). However, as a video can make both the coachee and the coach uncomfortable, the first session was not recorded. This allowed the coach and coachee to build rapport without any distraction. Sessions 2 to 5 were recorded. The last session was also not recorded as it was intended to be a closeout session focusing on the respective learning experiences of the coachee and coach.

A total of 36 video recordings were made and the verbal data were transcribed by a professional transcriber into text data for the purpose of analysis.

Post-coaching session reflections

After each coaching session, the coach and coachee were requested to complete a post-coaching reflection (PCR) – a type of diary providing real-time reflection which was tracked over time by the researchers. It enabled the participants to reflect on what was going on in their context and how and why things had changed or shifted for them (Balogun and Johnson 2004). The PCRs, which were collected via a Survey Monkey tool, provided the researchers with immediate feedback both on the learning experiences and on what was occurring in the coachee's or coach's context. All participants except one managed to complete the PCR, generating 17 PCRs in total.

In-depth interviews

At the conclusion of the coaching programme, separate in-depth interviews were conducted with each coachee – coach pair, using a semi-structured interview guide. The intention was to gather data on the coaching intervention as a whole and what each party had taken away in the form of specific learning points. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. A total of 11 audio recordings averaging 60 minutes were collected, resulting in 220 pages of transcribed text data used in the analysis. In addition, there were 64 data collection points.

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted in four phases, as described below, according to the method proposed by Saldaña (2013). Before the analysis, we ensured the quality of the data quality by cross-checking the video material against the interview transcripts and assigning pseudonyms to participants for the sake of anonymity. As the PCRs were captured electronically, no verification was required. All data sources (video, and interview transcripts as well as PCR) were then loaded onto the Atlas.ti software programme for integrated analysis.

Phase 1: first-level coding

- Generating first-order descriptive codes;
- Revising, renaming by eliminating duplicates and merging codes with similar meaning;
- Using thematic inductive saturation coding to bring the coding process to a close (Saunders et al. 2018), resulting in an initial code list of 350 primary codes;
- Reviewing the 350 codes to identify codes that related to coach behaviours, mechanisms or processes, resulting in 104 primary codes; and
- Viewing the videos again to observe the interaction between coachee and coach behaviours (including gestures and posture) while reading the transcripts to get a comprehensive picture of the coaching conversation and unfolding learning process.

Phase 2: second-level categorisation of codes

- Analysing the 104 primary codes to identify similar codes that could be placed in the same category, resulting in 29 categories of coach behaviours, mechanisms or processes.

Phase 3: within-case analysis

- Identifying the coach behaviours, mechanisms and processes used to facilitate learning;
- Identifying the role of each coach behaviour in the learning process;
- Delineating which of these behaviours aggregated to the same core competence; and
- Assessing which of these coach behaviours, mechanisms and processes accounted for transformative learning.

Phase 4: cross-case analysis and theme generation

- Analysing similarities and differences in meaning in the observed coach behaviours, mechanisms and processes across all cases;
- Producing an aggregated list of six themes describing core coach behaviours or competences and 40 sub-behaviours (see [Table 3](#));
- Comparing the generated list of 40 sub-behaviours with ICF competencies (see [Table 4](#)); and
- Generating themes and reporting on the findings.

Table 3. Coach competencies and behaviours.

Coach Competencies	Coach behaviours	Maryanne	Katie	Sarah	Ivey
<i>A: Creating a safe environment</i>	Ensures confidentiality	X	X	X	X
	Creates a safe space	X	X	X	X
	Builds a trusting relationship	X	X	X	X
	Showing respect towards the client	X	X	X	X
	Is fully present, without distractions	X	X	X	X
	Copies gestures/body language	X	X	X	X
	Uses verbal and non-verbal encouragers	X	X	X	X
<i>B: Active listening and giving of feedback</i>	Is flexible and accommodating of client's needs	X	X	X	X
	Invites awareness	X	X	X	X
	Tracks the client's use of language	X	X	X	X
	Tracks and comments on the client's non-verbal gestures	X	X	X	X
	Tracks the client's conversation and creates links during and between sessions	X	X	X	X
	Summarises key aspects of the conversation	X	X	X	X
	Gives feedback using the client's language	X	X	X	X
	Listens without being judgemental	X	X	X	X
	Validates and affirms the client's values, intentions, purpose, skills and other positive behaviours	X	X	X	X
	<i>C: Engaging and managing emotions</i>	Acknowledges the client's feelings and emotions	X	X	X
Manages extreme emotional outbursts			X		
Manages the client's mental and emotional states by shifting them to second observer position to induce a different state			X		
<i>D: Asking outcome-related questions</i>	Asks outcome-related/-focused questions		X		
	Asks clear questions		X		
	Encourages the client to explore options		X		
	Asks closed questions		X		
	Asks probing questions		X		
	Asks action-/application-related questions	X	X	X	X
	Asks meaning questions	X	X	X	X
	Asks intention-/purpose-related questions	X	X	X	X
<i>E: Asking reflective questions</i>	Asks meaningful questions	X	X	X	X
	Asks intention-/purpose-related questions	X	X	X	X
	Asks decision-related questions	X	X	X	X
	Asks permission-related questions		X	X	X
	Challenges assumptions, generalisations and distortions	X	X	X	X
	Challenges beliefs and values	X	X	X	X
	Frames the client to focus on the outcome	X	X	X	X
	Reframes in line with the outcome	X	X	X	X
<i>F: Holding the client accountable</i>	Uses metaphors to engage the client		X		
	Engages the client in practical experiences during the session		X		
	Assigns the client tasks at the end of a session	X	X	X	X
	Creates tasks together with the client	X	X	X	X
	Follows up on tasks allocated	X	X	X	X

Source: Video footage, transcripts of coaching conversations and post-coaching reflection.

Table 4. Comparison of coach competencies between ICF and findings from the study.

Competency Area	Coach Competency	Specific coach behaviours	to the role of coach behaviour in TL outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC # 1: A safe environment 	ICF#3: Establishing trust and intimacy. TLC #1 Flexibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance of confidentiality Ensuring a comfortable coaching space Being non-judgemental Being fully present by demonstrating acknowledgers verbal and non-verbal encouragers. Reading the context and responding to coachee needs as impacted by their context. Accommodating the needs of the client- flexibility with coaching outcomes, time scheduling, personal issues etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased opportunity for a trusting working relation Mitigating the effects of dis-orienting dilemma
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC # 2: Supporting the coachee 	ICF#5 Active listening ICF# 8: Creating awareness. TLC 2 # Giving feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens without being judgemental. Invites awareness of behaviour, values, beliefs and assumptions Tracks clients use language and non-verbal gestures. Summarises key aspects of the conversation and creates linkages within and between sessions. Validates and affirms client values, intentions, purpose, skills and other positive behaviours. Gives feedback using client's language, and frames identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates self-awareness of behaviour and frames of mind, and builds a foundation for learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC #3: Managing and engaging with emotions 	ICF#4: Coaching presence TLC #3: Engaging & Managing emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying emotions Acknowledging emotions Raising awareness of emotions Enabling client expressing emotions freely Embracing client emotions Asking questions about emotions Facilitate critical reflection and rational dialogue concerning emotions experienced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deepening critical reflection. Facilitating a shifting from negative to positive emotions to enable learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC #4: 	ICF#6 powerful questions TLC#4 Outcome questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal setting, clarity and probing questions Action and application related questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightens vision and creates motivation. Shift clients form negative to positive emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC#5: Challenging the coachee 	ICF#6 powerful questions TLC#5: Reflective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaning, intention, purpose, permission and decision questions Question that Challenge frames-values, beliefs, assumptions Framing and reframing questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shifting of frames and creation of new meaning perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TL #6: Accountability 	ICF#9: designing actions. TLC#6: Holding client accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question on actions steps needed as a result of coaching. Ensuring action steps are realistic, feasible, measurable and time bound. Checking on progress of tasks agreed on. Reflecting on learnings from session and from actions taken 	Sustainable change in behaviour

Establishing trustworthiness

The longitudinal nature of the study allowed for a prolonged engagement, which enhanced the data quality. This contributed to the credibility of the data-collection process (Grodal, Anteby, and Holm 2021; Pratt, Kaplan, and Whittington 2020). The number of data points (64) allowed extensive triangulation of the data, thus ensuring its quality and credibility, while also providing an opportunity for thick descriptions of detailed cases (Grodal, Anteby, and Holm 2021; Pratt, Kaplan, and Whittington 2020). Finally, an audit trail was created by generating a code book for all the first-order and second-order codes.

Findings

This section presents the findings from the study, based on six themes that emerged from the data analysis. These themes relate to the coach behaviours, mechanisms and processes that were identified in all four coaches throughout the observed coaching sessions. Each theme describes coach behaviours that partially or fully contributed to some aspects of TL (*disorienting dilemma*, *critical reflection* and/or *rational dialogue*). The themes are discussed below.

Creating a safe environment

The coachees came to the coaching sessions filled with frustration, fear, uncertainty and confusion which had been triggered by the politically volatile context in which they operated. The coaches therefore needed to ensure that the coaching environment was safe so as to encourage a trusting working relationship (De Haan, Molyneux, and Nilsson 2020). They did this by ‘ensuring confidentiality’. In their PCRs, both the coachees and coaches highlighted trust and confidentiality as key contributors to a safe environment in which they were willing to express themselves freely. *‘At the beginning was the whole issue around confidentiality because of the nature of work that I do, so I needed to feel that I was free to talk about that and know that the information would be treated as confidential as possible (Ben)’*.

Specific coach behaviours that facilitated this safe environment included ‘being fully present’ and accommodating the coachee by being ‘flexible’ vis-à-vis their needs. Coachees, in turn, welcomed the feeling of ‘safety’ and ‘their confidentiality being respected’. Another factor contributing to a sense of safety and the building of rapport was ‘being listened to without being judgemental’. (See Table 3, category A for details.)

The rapport was also the product of the environment in which the coaching took place, such as the coaching spaces, coaches’ copying/matching behaviours, the pacing of physiology and language, and the use of verbal and non-verbal encouragers. Creating a conducive and safe environment enabled coachees to manage the cognitive and emotional dissonances (*disorienting dilemmas*) that they either brought to the coaching sessions or that were triggered during the coaching process. This provided a foundation of trust, allowing coachees to open up and explore their issues.

Engaging in active listening and giving feedback

Among the active listening coach behaviours displayed were inviting awareness, tracking language use and non-verbal gestures, tracking coaching conversations, and validating the coachee. (See Table 3, category B.)

- **Inviting awareness:** Inviting (or raising) awareness occurs when the coach listens to the coachee, picks up noteworthy issues in the conversation and repeats (or paraphrases) these issues back to the coachee so that they become aware of a behaviour or personal characteristic (Fischer-Lokou et al. 2016), e.g. *'From what you are saying, it sounds like . . . (Ivey)'*; their thought patterns, e.g. *'It sounds like you just made a big decision there around how you show up at work, what you bring (Maryanne)'*; and their learning, e.g. *'It sounds like you have experienced a lot of wrongs going through the collage – what did you learn about yourself in that process (Katie)?'*
- **Tracking language use and non-verbal gestures:** Listening is also concerned with tracking the coachee's use of language and giving relevant feedback (Manzano et al. 2015). Sometimes the coachee used a word repeatedly or with some semantic emphasis, e.g. *'It's interesting that you use the word "stuck". I was wondering if you are aware that we have had this conversation in the last session (Sarah)'*. Furthermore, tracking involves observing the coachee's non-verbal gestures and commenting on them, e.g. *'I can see in the expression in your eyes (Ivey)'*.
- **Tracking coaching conversations:** Part of attentive listening involves tracking the coaching conversation and creating linkages during and between sessions, e.g. *'You have repeated several times that you know about this . . . so what do you want to do about it (Maryanne)?'*; *'Do you remember at the beginning of the session you spoke a lot about . . . ?'*
This helps the coachee to 'connect the dots', so to speak – to see logic and create linkages that they may previously have been unaware of. This sub-skill is often accompanied by a summary of key aspects of the conversation, e.g. *'So, I am hearing that you have your mind made up that if this all happens, you will leave the organisation (Katie)4?'*; *'What I am hearing is that it is important for you to have freedom to do your work and not be undermined (Maryanne)'*.
- **Validating the coachee:** The final sub-skill is validating or affirming the coachee's behaviour, values, intentions, purpose, skills and other positive attributes, e.g. *'I am quite impressed with your progress'*; *'You have done so much work, and you have achieved a lot (Maryanne)'*.

The coaches confirmed in their PCRs that all these listening sub-skills appeared to make the coachee more aware of their behaviour, thinking patterns and frame of mind, which in turn helped to build a stronger foundation for learning. The conclusion we can draw from these findings is that active listening and giving of feedback to coachees facilitate self-awareness. While this is not transformative on its own, it provides the basis for further openness to learning and exploration of frames of mind.

Engaging with and managing emotions

While coachees' emotions often ran high in coaching sessions, we observed how the coaches engaged with and managed these emotions to varying degrees. Engaging with emotions starts with acknowledging the coachee's feelings and emotions, e.g. *'I can understand how you feel'* or *'This is one of the most horrible things to happen to anyone (Katie)'*. This is similar to coaching presence (Hamurcu 2018). Yet to help the coachee deal with their emotions, the coach had to help them understand the origin of such emotions and what sensations they trigger, e.g. *'What is it that triggers the feeling of being undermined? What happens to you when you are feeling undermined – what happens physically? (Sarah)'*

Sometimes a coachee did not feel comfortable showing their emotions, prompting the coach to ask, *'Do you have permission to feel your emotions?'; 'Is this really how you feel or are you doing the best to deal with the situation (Sarah)?'* Katie was confronted by a series of emotional outbursts from one of her coachees, e.g. *'I give basically my life over to this organisation, I always put them first and now I see how they feel about me . . . and I really can't keep going for putting the organisation first, I've got to put myself first (Jane)'*. In response, the coach used different strategies to highlight the positive aspects of the situation, e.g. *'So, despite the pain you are having, you still have that sense of accountability of wanting to do things properly, wanting to contribute to the integrity for the department (Katie)'*. This helped the coachees to transition from negative to positive emotions.

This technique of not just acknowledging but also engaging with the coachee's emotions enabled the coachee to strengthen their *critical reflection* capabilities, understand the source of their emotions and identify the specific values, beliefs and/or assumptions that were driving these emotions. As one coachee noted, *'There are certain values that are fundamental to me and through my work it is important to me that I am able to "live" those values, e.g. adding value, upliftment of others, development (Samuel)'*. (For the list of these competency and sub-skills, see [Table 3](#), category C.)

These findings show that, by engaging with and managing emotions, the coach facilitates a deeper engagement on the part of the coachee as they are able to critically reflect on the source of their emotions and develop greater awareness of their frames. This creates a basis for further exploration.

Outcome-related questions

In this study, the coaches demonstrated that there was a sequential, incremental approach to asking questions, starting with questions that prompted the coachee to describe their envisaged outcome of the coaching sessions. These were followed by some questions that sought clarity of meaning and specific outcome measures, and other questions that urged critical reflection and challenged the coachee to confront their frame of mind. (See [Table 3](#), category D for details.)

- **Goal-/outcome-related questions:** In specifying coaching outcomes, it is important to probe, clarify and explore. These are first-level questions that encourage the coachee to talk about the programme content – what they want to get out of the coaching session and why. For example: *'What is the most important thing that you*

want to focus on in this session (Maryanne)?'; 'What do you want to get out of today's session (Ivey)?' In facilitating the setting of goals or outcomes, some of the most creative questions asked were: 'If you had a magic wand, what would your ideal future look like (Katie)?'; 'What is your highest intention for your work (Maryanne)?'

- **Meaning questions:** To take the conversation to the next level, a different set of questions had to be asked, relating to the meaning and importance of an outcome. For example: 'How important is it for you that you continue in your area of interest (Ivey)?' and 'How important is achieving team cohesion for you (Sarah)?' Moreover, the process of setting coaching outcomes requires clarifying questions such as: 'When you say you were not able to do that, what do you mean by that?'; 'I don't understand that, can you clarify (Maryanne)?'

The approach used in this initial part of the coaching conversation does two things: it creates a vision and it motivates the coachee. Despite the coachees' disorientation, meaningful goal setting mitigated their negative emotions and helped them to focus on positive outcomes.

Reflective questioning

Achieving the goals of a coaching conversation is not as easy as it may seem because coachees often create cognitive barriers that need to be understood and dismantled. It is the responsibility of the coach to shift the conversation to a different level by asking challenging questions which may be uncomfortable or met with resistance. These are known as *reflective questions* (Pandolfi 2020) which probe, challenge and/or confront a coachee's values, beliefs, assumptions, generalisations and distortions so that they can recognise possible constraints to the realisation of their goals. (See Table 3, category E for details.) For example: 'Somewhere you said you all have an understanding – how do you know you all have the same understanding (Ivey)?'; 'Is it what is going on at the moment or just you're thinking about it (Sarah)?'

Reflective questions also challenge *values and beliefs*. For example: 'What is your belief about your staff members? What is the basis of your belief (Sarah)?'; 'So, for you, knowing that you want to make a difference ... how is that working with your value system (Maryanne)?'

We observed the coach sometimes asking provocative questions, such as: 'How long are you just going to sit there and allow this to happen (Maryanne)?'; 'So, what is stopping you from breaking the culture of silence (Ivey)?'

- **Framing and reframing:** A reflective conversation has the potential to make a coachee reflect on several issues simultaneously, although this can be distracting. The coaches used *framing* to set boundaries so that the conversation with the coachee remained focused on the intended outcome or broader goal. *Reframing*, in turn, is the process of helping coachees think differently about an issue to help them move forward. For example: 'In hindsight, is there any other way you could think differently about the situation?'; 'How can you frame this differently, how can you go about making peace with this (Katie)?' Two of the coaches also indicated in their PCRs that framing was critical for keeping the coachee on track with their goals, especially when they were overcome by extreme emotion.

- **Decision questions:** It is important to ensure that the conversation does not simply end up with ideas, but that decisions are taken, and solutions are implemented. Decision questions included: ‘*What decision do you want to make around this situation?*’ ‘*What would you need to be able to make the decision (Maryanne)?*’

What these findings highlighted is that reflective questions facilitate *critical reflection* and *rational dialogue* which present opportunities for exploring new ideas. This leads to a shift in a coachee’s meaning perspectives and prepares them to act on what they have learnt. Examples of observed shifts were in Jane’s and Rob’s sense of leadership and personal identity, in Margareth’s and Samuel’s sense of self (personal power and value system), and in Maggie’s heightened sense of ontology and epistemology.

Holding the coachee accountable

Once decisions have been taken, the coachee needs to be held accountable for their actions to ensure that the set goals are achieved (Griffiths 2015). The coaches in this study demonstrated their competence in this regard by assigning one or more tasks at the end of a coaching session. (See Table 3, category F.) For example: ‘*I want you to do a vision board*’; ‘*Let’s see if we can create an action around that (Katie)*’. Equally important was following up on the assigned tasks at the beginning of the next session. For example: ‘*In our last session, you spoke about a workshop on team values; how is that coming along (Ivey)?*’; ‘*How are you applying this insight to the rest of your life (Maryanne)?*’ Holding the coachees accountable enabled them to integrate and internalise learning, while also taking action to ensure a change in behaviour. Sustained TL is reinforced through action.

From the above findings, we were able to identify six transformative learning competencies (TLCs) and 28 associated observable and measurable coach behaviours which play an important role in facilitating transformative learning in the workplace coaching context. We compared these with the selected ICF competencies and highlighted additional competencies for TL observed during the study. (See Table 4 for a detailed comparison.)

Discussion and implications for theory and practice

In this section, we present a model of how specific coach competencies could facilitate transformative learning, drawing on our analysis of the study’s findings. The proposed model illustrates a progressive and iterative process of applying coach competencies to arrive at transformative learning outcomes. The process begins by creating a safe environment to manage disorienting dilemmas. A parallel activity is providing support to the coachee through attentive listening, engaging with and managing their emotions, and giving them feedback on their behaviour, frames and emotions.

The next step in the process is guiding the coachee in setting goals or a vision for themselves as well as challenging them by using appropriate questioning techniques. This prompts them to explore new ways of being and doing and to take appropriate action. We present the framework as depicted in Figure 1 below and discuss the proposed coach behaviours and their different roles in transformative learning, while also drawing comparisons with the extant literature.

Coach competencies for TL

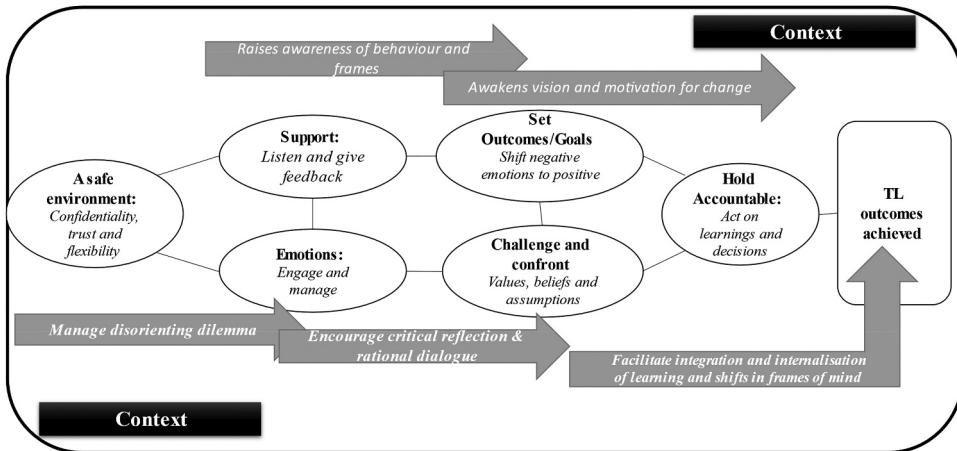


Figure 1. How coach competencies and behaviours foster transformative learning. Source: Author's own compilation.

TLC# 1: creating a safe environment assists in managing disorienting dilemmas

This study demonstrated that the coach's provision of a safe space, by ensuring confidentiality, understanding context and building trust, not only enhances trust and allows the coachee to freely express themselves (De Haan 2019; Ianiro, Schermuly, and Kauffeld 2013; Sonesh et al. 2015; Vandaveer et al. 2016) but also creates a conducive environment for managing disorienting dilemmas (Christie et al. 2015; Cox 2015). This competence aligns with ICF #3 (establishing trust and intimacy). While a disorienting dilemma is a prerequisite for transformative learning, learning does not occur if people are in a state of 'ontological insecurity', which is a state of cognitive and emotional disruption, confusion and overwhelmedness (Garland et al. 2015; Green and Mälkki 2017). Individuals need to be free of such a state if they are to engage in any form of critical reflection (Green and Mälkki 2017).

Leaders operate in a complex global environment and are often required to manage ambiguity and lead teams in a collaborative manner to encourage innovation (Anand et al. 2020). Such an environment can create disorienting dilemmas for executives. Therefore, coaches who work with executives must be well equipped with this competence to create a conducive environment for transformative learning to occur.

We therefore propose that the coach must create a safe environment to ensure that disorientating dilemmas are mitigated and transformative learning can occur.

TLC# 2: supporting the coachee through active listening and giving of feedback is a key mechanism of self-awareness

This study also demonstrated that supporting the coachee through active listening and the giving of feedback facilitates self-disclosure as well as awareness of their behaviour and frames of mind (De Haan and Nilsson 2023; Pandolfi 2020; Terblanche 2021;

Vandaveer et al. 2016), which in turn leads to informative learning (Kegan 2009). Informative learning on its own does not lead to transformative learning; rather, it stimulates critical reflection and rational dialogue which constitute the basis for learning (Kegan 2009). This is done by the coach raising awareness of the coachee's behaviour, values, beliefs and assumptions (Cidral, Berg, and Paulino 2021; Y. L. Lai and McDowall 2014), which enables the coachee to realise what is, and is no longer, working. This competence aligns with ICF #5 (active listening) and #6 (creating awareness).

We therefore propose that supporting the coachee through active listening and the provision of feedback mitigates disorientation and helps the coachee become aware of their behaviour and frames of mind

In practice, coaches who wish to facilitate transformative learning among their coachees must understand the necessary nuances when exhibiting this competence, including its various sub-skills. Therefore, coach training institutions need to explicitly focus on the relevant sub-skills when teaching coaching.

TLC # 3: engaging with and managing emotions deepen critical reflection

Transformative learning is both a cognitive and an emotional process of reflection (C. Hoggan, Mälkki, and Finnegan 2017; Mälkki and Green 2016). This study revealed that emotions are a critical part of the executive coaching process and that coaches need to be well equipped to deal with emotions (Cox 2015; Cox and Bachkirova 2007; Cremona 2010) as they are an authentic source of information (Cremona 2010). Asking questions about emotions helps the coachee to reflect at a deeper level and have a rational dialogue with these emotions (Mbokota 2019; Mbokota, Myres, and Stout-Rostron 2022). The coach also helps to clear emotional blockages that the coachee might be experiencing (De Haan and Nilsson 2023).

Moreover, the study highlighted that the coaching process helps to facilitate the transition from negative to positive emotions (Boyatzis 2007; Boyatzis and Jack 2018) and to reappraise or reframe negative events to pave the way for learning and development (Garland et al. 2015). This competence aligns with ICF #4 (coaching presence) and (as this study highlights) is crucial for learning.

We therefore propose that by engaging with and managing emotions, a coach helps the coachee to unblock their emotions and engage in deep critical reflection, which are critical to the transformative learning process.

TLC # 4: Outcome-related questions stimulate motivation

Since transformative learning involves a shift in someone's frame of reference (Mezirow 1997), challenging the coachee's meaning perspective is crucial. This is achieved through the coach asking the right questions (De Haan and Nilsson 2017; Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh 2014).

Outcome-related questions help the coachee to formulate coaching outcomes and to refocus on the goal or vision that has already been defined (Mbokota 2019). In this regard, asking 'what' and 'why' questions enables the coachee to draw on the brain's

positive emotional attractors (PEAs) which inspire hopes and dreams (Boyatzis and Jack 2018; Jack et al. 2013). The coach's prompting of PEAs activates those parts of the brain that are associated with visioning, positive thinking, motivation and stress regulation, thus allowing the coachee to transition easily towards positive emotions and enabling learning to occur. When an individual comes out of a disorienting situation, they need a vision to motivate and energise them (Boyatzis and Jack 2018).

We therefore propose that asking outcome-related questions in coaching helps the coachee to focus on a vision, experience positive emotions and feel sufficiently motivated for transformative learning to occur.

TLC # 5: Reflective questioning facilitates a shift in frames of mind

Being energised to move in a particular direction is not enough to ensure transformative learning on the part of the coachee; there also needs to be a shift in the coachee's meaning perspective. Reflective questions trigger critical reflection and rational dialogue by challenging, confronting and shifting the coachee's frame of mind or meaning perspective (De Haan and Nilsson 2017; Romme and Van Seggelen-Damen 2015; Terblanche 2021). In this study, the reflective questioning approach allowed the coach to guide the coachee in shifting both cognitively and emotionally, thereby allowing transformative learning to occur (Green and Mälkki 2017).

We therefore propose that asking reflective questions in coaching enables the coachee to shift their frame of mind or meaning perspective, thus enabling transformative learning to occur.

TLC #6: Holding the coachee accountable reinforces learning

For TL to facilitate a sustained change in behaviour, the learning must have depth and breadth and be applied in different contexts (C. D. Hoggan 2016). In the executive coaching context, the coachee must apply the learning well beyond the coaching sessions by internalising and integrating the learning into their day-to-day behaviour. This can be done by the coach holding the coachee accountable by checking progress on agreed tasks and encouraging the coachee to reflect on their learning (Griffiths 2015; Terblanche 2021; Terblanche, Albertyn, and Coller-Peter 2018). This process was facilitated in this study through the mechanism of post-coaching reflections but was also reinforced by the coaches during the individual sessions.

We therefore propose that holding the coachee accountable for the learning in the period following the coaching sessions reinforces and integrates the learning into the coachee's day-to-day behaviour.

Implications for theory and practice

Extant literature on coach competencies confirms that coach behaviour is responsible for the achievement of coaching outcomes (Cidral, Berg, and Paulino 2021; De Haan, Molyneux, and Nilsson 2020; De Haan and Nilsson 2023; Y.-L. Lai and Palmer 2019; Pandolfi 2020).

While there is evidence to this effect, it is not clear which coach competencies and related behaviour account for which coaching outcomes (De Haan and Nilsson 2017; Y.-L. Lai and Palmer 2019; Pandolfi 2020) and, more specifically, for transformative learning outcomes. This study therefore contributes to the expanding literature on coaching competency frameworks by identifying and highlighting specific coach competencies and their related behaviours that influence transformative learning outcomes. While this study was conducted in South Africa in the context of workplace coaching, it contributes to global scholarship by offering regional perspectives and insights on coach competencies for transformative learning which may be applicable to a wide variety of coaches and coaching genres.

At a theoretical level, the study extends Mezirow's theory of transformative learning into the executive coaching context. It also expands Mezirow's theory by highlighting the important role of emotions in TL (Green and Mälkki 2017) and the coach's ability to engage and manage emotions to enable the coachee to transition from negative to positive emotions, which in turn facilitates learning (Mbokota, Myres, and Stout-Rostron 2022).

At a practical level, the findings could be useful for practising coaches, coach training institutions and accreditation bodies as they supplement the Coach Behaviour Questionnaire proposed by De Haan and Nilsson (2017) and the ICF coach competencies used for the accreditation of coaches. In this way, the findings could help to enhance the work of human resource development managers who are tasked with the selection of workplace coaches. The findings also lend weight to some of the behaviours found in taxonomies for other types of coaches (Ellinger and Bostrom 1999).

Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

The limitations of the study mainly relate to its external validity or transferability (Brutus, Aguinis, and Wassmer 2013). First, a small theoretical sample was used. While the advantage of this was that it allowed for rigour and in-depth analysis, the disadvantage was that the findings may not be generalised (Brutus, Aguinis, and Wassmer 2013; Yin 2018). However, in the qualitative tradition, generalisability is not the intention. Second, while this study was longitudinal, the evidence of transformative learning was not verified by third parties (colleagues, supervisors or subordinates) in the selected cases.

Third, the sample was drawn from organisations in the public sector in South Africa and comprised individuals who were in senior management positions. The implication of this is that the results are not transferable to other public sub-sectors or the private and non-profit sectors, or beyond South Africa. The external validity limitation relates to the context of the research setting, with Johns (2017) asserting that context has a major impact on the nature of research findings. In this study, the research context at the time the fieldwork was conducted was influenced by extreme socio-political and economic turbulence. This directly impacted the organisational climate and, in turn, the executive coaches participating in the study. The implication of this is that the study's findings may not be transferable to non-turbulent environments or other contexts, such as other countries (that is, other than South Africa).

Fourth, all the coaches were of the same gender (female) and had been trained in one common approach (NLP), although two coaches employed a multitude of approaches. A more diverse group of coaches might have influenced the coaching process differently.

In terms of future research, we recommend, first, that the validity of the framework and the propositions developed be tested in other turbulent environments or contexts in Africa or elsewhere in the world; and, second, that the study also be conducted in non-turbulent settings and non-public-sector organisations with a more diverse set of coach and coachee participants in other countries besides South Africa (Brutus, Aguinis, and Wassmer 2013; Corley and Gioia 2011).

Conclusions

Given the lack of clarity in the literature on the coach competencies, mechanisms and processes and associated sub-skills that bring about transformative learning, this study set out to explore what coach competencies facilitate transformative learning and how such a process occurs, with specific reference to the foundations and triggers of transformative learning in the executive coaching process. Besides their value in embellishing the findings from other studies to date, the findings from this study contribute to debates on coach competency frameworks while also introducing the element of transformative learning. The findings should therefore be of interest to those in the field of human resource development, to professional coaches and other practising coaches, to coach training and education institutions, and to those interested in transformative learning.

The findings should also be of interest to human resource development managers who wish to identify executive coaches who possess an optimal blend of formal credentials and interpersonal skills and are therefore well placed to assist managers and leaders in organisations who are responsible for driving innovative change in a complex and volatile business environment.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Gloria Mbokota  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2104-489X>

Kerrin Myres  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4447-8818>

References

- Anand, T. S., S. V. Anand, M. Welch, V. J. Marsick, and A. Langer. 2020. "Overview of Transformative Learning II: Real-World Applications." *Reflective Practice* 21 (6): 744–758. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2020.1821945>.
- Athanasopoulou, A., and S. Dopson. 2018. "A Systematic Review of Executive Coaching Outcomes: Is it the Journey or the Destination That Matters the Most?" *The Leadership Quarterly* 29 (1): 70–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.11.004>.
- Balogun, J., and G. Johnson. 2004. "Organizational Restructuring and Middle Manager Sensemaking." *Academy of Management Journal* 47 (4): 523–549. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159600>.

- Blackman, A., G. Moscardo, and D. E. Gray. 2016. "Challenges for the Theory and Practice of Business Coaching: A Systematic Review of Empirical Evidence." *Human Resource Development Review* 15 (4): 459–486. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484316673177>.
- Blumberg, K. M. 2016. "Competencies of Outstanding Executive Coaches: A Grounded Theory Approach." PhD thesis. Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College.
- Boyatzis, R. E. 2007. "Developing Emotional Intelligence Through Coaching for Leadership, Professional and Occupational Excellence." *Educating People to Be Emotionally Intelligent* 155–168.
- Boyatzis, R. E., and A. I. Jack. 2018. "The Neuroscience of Coaching." *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 70 (1): 11–27. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000095>.
- Bozer, G., and R. Jones. 2021. "Introduction to the Special Issue on Advances in the Psychology of Workplace Coaching." *Applied Psychology* 70 (2): 411–419. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12305>.
- Bozer, G., and R. J. Jones. 2018. "Understanding the Factors That Determine Workplace Coaching Effectiveness: A Systematic Literature Review." *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 27 (3): 342–361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2018.1446946>.
- Brutus, S., H. Aguinis, and U. Wassmer. 2013. "Self-Reported Limitations and Future Directions in Scholarly Reports: Analysis and Recommendations." *Journal of Management* 39 (1): 48–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312455245>.
- Cabinet Reshuffle, 2018. "February 22. South African History Online." <https://www.sahistory.org.za>.
- Campion, M. A., A. A. Fink, B. J. Rugeberg, L. Carr, G. M. Phillips, and R. B. Odman. 2011. "Doing Competencies Well: Best Practices in Competency Modeling." *Personnel Psychology* 64 (1): 225–262. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2010.01207.x>.
- Chen, G., J. Ai, and Y. You. 2014. "Managerial Coaching Behaviours and Their Relations to Job Satisfaction, Life Satisfaction and Orientations to Happiness." *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies* 2 (3): 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jhrss.2014.23014>.
- Chouhan, V. S., and S. Srivastava. 2014. "Understanding Competencies and Competency Modelling – a Literature Survey." *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* 16 (1): 14–22. <https://doi.org/10.9790/487X-16111422>.
- Christie, M., M. Carey, A. Robertson, and P. Grainger. 2015. "Putting Transformative Learning Theory into Practice." *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 55 (1): 9–30.
- Cidral, W., C. H. Berg, and M. L. Paulino. 2021. "Determinants of Coaching Success: A Systematic Review." *International Journal of Productivity & Performance Management* (forthcoming). 72 (3): 753–771. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPPM-07-2020-0367>.
- Corley, K. G., and D. A. Gioia. 2011. "Building Theory About Theory Building: What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution?" *Academy of Management Review* 36 (1): 12–32. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2009.0486>.
- Corrie, I., and R. Lawson. 2017. "Transformative Executive Coaching: Considerations for an Expanding Field of Research." *Journal of Transformative Learning* 4 (1): 50–59.
- Cox, E. 2015. "Coaching and Adult Learning: Theory and Practice." *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* (148): 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20149>.
- Cox, E., and T. Bachkirova. 2007. "Coaching with Emotion: How Coaches Deal with Difficult Emotional Situations." *International Coaching Psychology Review* 2 (2): 178–189. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsicpr.2007.2.2.178>.
- Cremona, K. 2010. "Coaching and Emotions: An Exploration of How Coaches Engage and Think About Emotion." *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research & Practice* 3 (1): 46–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521880903580073>.
- De Haan, E. 2019. "A Systematic Review of Qualitative Studies in Workplace and Executive Coaching: The Emergence of a Body of Research." *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 71 (4): 227–248. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000144>.
- De Haan, E., V. Culpin, and J. Curd. 2011. "Executive Coaching in Practice: What Determines Helpfulness for Clients of Coaching?" *Personnel Review* 40 (1): 24–44. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00483481111095500>.

- De Haan, E., J. Moly, and V. O. Nilsson. 2020. "New Findings on the Effectiveness of the Coaching Relationship: Time to Think Differently About Active Ingredients?" *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 72 (3): 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000175>.
- De Haan, E., and V. O. Nilsson. 2023. "What Can We Know About the Effectiveness of Coaching? A Meta-Analysis Based Only on Randomized Controlled Trials." *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 22 (4): 641–661.
- Derry, S. J., R. D. Pea, B. Barron, R. A. Engle, F. Erickson, R. Goldman, R. Hall, et al. 2010. "Conducting Video Research in the Learning Sciences: Guidance on Selection, Analysis, Technology, and Ethics." *Journal of the Learning Sciences* 19 (1): 3–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508400903452884>.
- Dirkx, J., and B. Espinoza. 2017. "From Cognition to the Imaginal: Fostering Self-Understanding from and Through Emotions in Adult Learning." Adult Education Research Conference. <http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2017/papers/26>.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. 2021. "What Is the Eisenhardt Method, Really?" *Strategic Organization* 19 (1): 147–160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127020982866>.
- Ellinger, A. D., and R. P. Bostrom. 1999. "Managerial Coaching Behaviors in Learning Organizations." *Journal of Management Development* 18 (9): 752–771.
- Ellinger, A. D., A. E. Ellinger, R. G. Hamlin, and R. S. Beattie. 2009. "Achieving Improved Performance Through Managerial Coaching." *Handbook of Improving Performance in the Workplace* 1 (3): 275–298.
- Fischer-Lokou, J., L. Lamy, N. Guéguen, and A. Dubarry. 2016. "Effects of Active Listening, Reformulation, and Imitation on Mediator Success: Preliminary Results." *Psychological Reports* 118 (3): 994–1010. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00332941166646159>.
- Fisher-Yoshida, B., and R. Yoshida. 2022. "Transformative Learning and Its Relevance to Coaching." In *International Handbook of Evidence-Based Coaching: Theory, Research and Practice*, edited by Siegfried Greif, Heidi Moeller, Wolfgang Scholl, Jonathan Passmore and Felix Muller, 935–948. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Fontes, A., and S. Dello Russo. 2021. "An Experimental Field Study on the Effect of Coaching: The Mediating Role of Psychological Capital." *Applied Psychology* 70 (2): 459–488. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12260>.
- Fontes, A., and S. D. Russo. 2021. "What Changes with Coaching? Investigating Within-Person Changes in Reflection, the Predicting Role of Implicit Person Theory and the Effects on Perceived Utility of Coaching." *International Journal of Training and Development* 25 (3): 316–340.
- Gan, C. G., C. W. Chong, Y. Y. Yuen, W. M. Y. Teoh, and M. S. Rahman. 2021. "Executive Coaching Effectiveness: Towards Sustainable Business Excellence." *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence* 32 (13–14): 1405–1423. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14783363.2020.1724507>.
- Garland, E. L., N. Farb, P. Goldin, and B. L. Fredrickson. 2015. "Mindfulness Broadens Awareness and Builds Eudaimonic Meaning: A Process Model of Mindful Positive Emotion Regulation." *Psychological Inquiry* 26 (4): 293–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2015.1064294>.
- Golembiewski, R. T., K. Billingsley, and S. Yeager. 1976. "Measuring Change and Persistence in Human Affairs: Types of Change Generated by OD Designs." *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 12 (2): 133–157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002188637601200201>.
- Green, L. J., and K. Mälkki. 2017. "Relationship Conflict As a Disorienting Dilemma." *Journal of Transformative Learning* 4 (2): 69–83.
- Griffiths, K. 2015. "Personal Coaching: Reflection on a Model for Effective Learning." *Journal of Learning Design* 8 (3): 14–28. <https://doi.org/10.5204/jld.v8i3.251>.
- Grodal, S., M. Anteby, and A. L. Holm. 2021. "Achieving Rigor in Qualitative Analysis: The Role of Active Categorization in Theory Building." *Academy of Management Review* 46 (3): 591–612. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0482>.
- Hagen, M. S., and S. L. Peterson. 2014. "Coaching Scales: A Review of the Literature and Comparative Analysis." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 16 (2): 222–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422313520203>.

- Hamurcu, Ç. 2018. "Core Professional Coaching Competencies Scale." *Performance Improvement* 57 (9): 36–47. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.21806>.
- Hein, H. R. 1990. *Psychological Type, Coaching Activities and Coaching Effectiveness in Corporate and Middle Managers*. Doctoral diss. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, University of Bridgeport 50 (10–A), 3293.
- Hoggan, C. D. 2016. "Transformative Learning as a Metatheory: Definition, Criteria, and Typology." *Adult Education Quarterly* 66 (1): 57–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713615611216>.
- Hoggan, C., K. Mälkki, and F. Finnegan. 2017. "Developing the Theory of Perspective Transformation: Continuity, Intersubjectivity, and Emancipatory Praxis." *Adult Education Quarterly* 67 (1): 48–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713616674076>.
- Ianiro, P. M., and S. Kauffeld. 2014. "Take Care What You Bring with You: How coaches' Mood and Interpersonal Behavior Affect Coaching Success." *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 66 (3): 231–257. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000012>.
- Ianiro, P. M., N. Lehmann-Willenbrock, and S. Kauffeld. 2015. "Coaches and Clients in Action: A Sequential Analysis of Interpersonal Coach and Client Behavior." *Journal of Business and Psychology* 30 (3): 435–456. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-014-9374-5>.
- Ianiro, P. M., C. C. Schermuly, and S. Kauffeld. 2013. "Why Interpersonal Dominance and Affiliation Matter: An Interaction Analysis of the Coach-Client Relationship." *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research & Practice* 6 (1): 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2012.740489>.
- ICF (International Coaching Federation). 2017. *ICF Core Competencies*. <https://coachfederation.org/app/uploads/2017/12/CoreCompetencies.pdf>.
- Jack, A. I., R. E. Boyatzis, R. M. S. Khawaja, A. M. Passarelli, and R. L. Leckie. 2013. "Visioning in the Brain: An fMRI Study of Inspirational Coaching and Mentoring." *Social Neuroscience* 8 (4): 369–384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470919.2013.808259>.
- Johns, G. 2017. "Reflections on the 2016-Decade Award: Incorporating Context in Organizational Research." *Academy of Management Review* 42 (4): 577–595. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2017.0044>.
- Jones, R. J., S. A. Woods, and Y. R. F. Guillaume. 2016. "The Effectiveness of Workplace Coaching: A Meta-Analysis of Learning and Performance Outcomes from Coaching." *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 89 (2): 249–277. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12119>.
- Kegan, R. 2009. "What 'Form' Transforms? A Constructive-Developmental Approach to Transformative Learning." In *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists ... in Their Own Words*, edited by K. Illeris, 43–60. Philadelphia: Routledge.
- Krauss, S. E. 2005. "Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer." *The Qualitative Report* 10 (4): 758–770.
- Ladegard, G., and S. Gjerde. 2014. "Leadership Coaching, Leader Role-Efficacy, and Trust in Subordinates. A Mixed Methods Study Assessing Leadership Coaching as a Leadership Development Tool." *The Leadership Quarterly* 25 (4): 631–646. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2014.02.002>.
- Lai, Y. L., and A. McDowall. 2014. "A Systematic Review (SR) of Coaching Psychology: Focusing on the Attributes of Effective Coaching Psychologists." *International Coaching Psychology Review* 9 (2): 118–134. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsicpr.2014.9.2.118>.
- Lai, Y.-L., and S. Palmer. 2019. "Psychology in Executive Coaching: An Integrated Literature Review." *Journal of Work-Applied Management* 11 (2): 143–164. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JWAM-06-2019-0017>.
- Langley, A. N. N., C. Smallman, H. Tsoukas, and A. H. van de Ven. 2013. "Process Studies of Change in Organization and Management: Unveiling Temporality, Activity, and Flow." *Academy of Management Journal* 56 (1): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2013.4001>.
- Makgoba, M. W. 2016. *The Report into the Circumstances Surround the Deaths of Mentally Ill Patience: Gauteng Province*. <https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/Esidimeni%20full%20report.pdf>.

- Mälkki, K., and L. Green. 2016. "Ground, Warmth, and Light: Facilitating Conditions for Reflection and Transformative Dialogue." *Journal of Educational Issues* 2 (2): 169–183. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jei.v2i2.9947>.
- Maltbia, T. E., V. J. Marsick, and R. Ghosh. 2014. "Executive and Organizational Coaching: A Review of Insights Drawn from Literature to Inform HRD Practice." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 16 (2): 161–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422313520474>.
- Manzano, A., C. Swift, S. J. Closs, and M. Briggs. 2015. "Active Listening by Hospital Chaplaincy Volunteers: Benefits, Challenges and Good Practice." *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* 3 (2): 201–221. <https://doi.org/10.1558/hsc.v3i2.26065>.
- Maxwell, A. S. 2017. *Essential Executive Coaching Competencies for Enhancing Executive On-The-Job Performance: A Modified Delphi Study*. PhD diss., Walden University.
- Mbokota, G. 2019. *The Process of Transformative Learning in Executive Coaching: A Realist Evaluation*. PhD diss., University of Pretoria.
- Mbokota, G., K. Myres, and S. Stout-Rostron. 2022. "Exploring the Process of Transformative Learning in Executive Coaching." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 24 (2): 117–141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15234223221079026>.
- Mezirow, J. 1997. "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice." *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* 1997 (74): 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401>.
- Mezirow, J. 2000. *Learning As Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series. San Francisco: ERIC.
- Mosteo, L. P., T. E. Maltbia, and V. J. Marsick. 2021. "Coaching for Cultural Sensitivity: Content Analysis Applying Hofstede's Framework to a Select Set of the International Coach Federation's (ICF) Core Competencies." *International Coaching Psychology Review* 16 (2): 51. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsicpr.2021.16.2.51>.
- Newson, G., and E. Dent. 2011. "A Work Behaviour Analysis of Executive Coaching." *International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring* 9 (2): 1–22.
- Noer, D. 2005. "Behaviorally Based Coaching: A Cross-Cultural Case Study." *International Journal of Coaching in Organizations* 3 (1): 14–23.
- Pandolfi, C. 2020. "Active Ingredients in Executive Coaching: A Systematic Literature Review." *International Coaching Psychology Review* 15 (2): 6–30. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsicpr.2020.15.2.6>.
- Pratt, M. G., S. Kaplan, and R. Whittington. 2020. "Editorial Essay: The Tumult Over Transparency: Decoupling Transparency from Replication in Establishing Trustworthy Qualitative Research." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 65 (1): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839219887663>.
- Rekalde, I., J. Landeta, and E. Albizu. 2015. "Determining Factors in the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching as a Management Development Tool." *Management Decision* 53 (8): 1677–1697. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-12-2014-0666>.
- Romme, A. G. L., and I. C. M. Van Seggelen-Damen. 2015. "Taking Nothing for Granted in Management Education: A Systemic Perspective on the Role of Reflective Questioning." *Organization Management Journal* 12 (2): 76–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15416518.2014.1001056>.
- Ross, S. L. 2020. "A Concept Analysis of the Form That Trans-Forms As a Result of Transformation." *International Journal of Psychological Studies* 12 (2): 52.
- Saldaña, J. 2013. "APPENDIX A-A Glossary of Coding Methods." *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*: 261–268.
- Saunders, B., J. Sim, T. Kingstone, S. Baker, J. Waterfield, B. Bartlam, and C. Jinks. 2018. "Saturation in Qualitative Research: Exploring Its Conceptualization and Operationalization." *Quality & Quantity* 52 (4): 1893–1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>.
- Slabbert, B., and C. Hoole. 2021. "A Competency Framework for Coaches Working in Coaching Development Centres." *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 47 (1): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v47i0.1841>.
- Sloan, G., and H. Watson. 2001. "John Heron's Six-Category Intervention Analysis: Towards Understanding Interpersonal Relations and Progressing the Delivery of Clinical Supervision

- for Mental Health Nursing in the United Kingdom.” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 36 (2): 206–214.
- Sonesh, S. C., C. W. Coultas, S. L. Marlow, C. N. Lacerenza, D. Reyes, and E. Salas. 2015. “Coaching in the Wild: Identifying Factors That Lead to Success.” *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 67 (3): 189–217. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000042>.
- Terblanche, N. 2021. “Coaching Techniques for Sustained Individual Change During Career Transitions.” *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 32 (1): 11–33. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21405>.
- Terblanche, N., R. Albertyn, and V. Coller-Peter. 2018. “Using Transformative Transition Coaching to Support Leaders During Career Transitions.” *African Journal of Business Ethics* 12 (1): 60–77. <https://doi.org/10.15249/12-1-166>.
- Vandaveer, V. V., R. L. Lowman, K. Pearlman, and J. P. Brannick. 2016. “A Practice Analysis of Coaching Psychology: Toward a Foundational Competency Model.” *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 68 (2): 118–142. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000057>.
- Will, T., S. Gessnitzer, and S. Kauffeld. 2016. “You Think You Are an Empathic Coach? Maybe You Should Think Again. The Difference Between Perceptions of Empathy Vs. Empathic Behaviour After a Person-Centred Coaching Training.” *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research & Practice* 9 (1): 53–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2016.1143023>.
- Yin, R. K. 2018. *Case Study Research and Applications*. Vol. 6. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.