# How coaching conversations contribute to Organisational Development

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## Abstract

This thesis focuses on the coaching conversation.

This inquiry explores, through action research methodology, the author's own practice as a coach and produces a revised framework and model.

The study seeks to understand the potential of the coaching conversation to support organisational learning. It involves leaders and managers from the BBC who had taken up coaching as part of an organisational wide leadership development initiative. The focus of this inquiry was not the evaluation of coaching but rather an understanding of how coaching can help change the conversation in organisations. Using a methodology called Co-ordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), this inquiry begins to capture the complex nature and the richness of the coaching conversation process.

This improved understanding has led to the development of a model, a framework which positions coaching as an organisational development intervention. It draws from the organisational context and culture as well as the current challenges to inform the organisational coaching proposition. CMM methodology provides the means to explore and discover the individual, and collective, learning as result of coaching as well as the shifts in practice. This can then be used to inform subsequent coaching propositions.

Acknowledgements

To Wendy Briner you have been my shadow, my colleague, my critique and my friend on this journey.  For introducing me to CMM, I thank you.

To Professor Mike van Oudtshoorn you were the inspiration which started me on this journey.  You generous sharing of knowledge, your understanding and your encouragement has kept me inspired throughout.  Thank you.

To Dr Peter Critten, our conversations always stretched my thinking. I appreciated your timely challenges and your enthusiasm. You never lost faith in what I was trying to do.  Thank you

To friends and colleagues, there are too many to mention you all by name, you have supported me on this journey and kept me going when my energy was low. You know who you are, thank you.

To my participants, and in particular Mary, thank you for sharing your stories.

To the BBC for giving me permission to carry out my research and my to my colleagues in the coaching team, thank you.

# Contents

## Figure Descriptions

## Chart Descriptions

## Declaration

This thesis is dedicated to Garry, Mark and Shaun, who have supported me brilliantly throughout my journey on this professional doctorate.

I couldn't have done it without you.

Suggested Music to listen to as you read this thesis

Disc One

Sibelius: Symphony No 2 in D Alegretto ( ist movement)

Le Ounde Einaudi

Pochebel Cannon in D

Prokofiev – Dance of the Knights

Philip Glass - Mad Rush

Rachmaninov – Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Grieg Piano Concerto Adagio

Liszt: Un Sospiro

Ravel Bolero

Disc Two

Beethoven Symphany No 6 'Patoral – 1st Movement Allegro am non Troppo

Dvorak: Symphony No 9 New World 3rd movement Scerzo Motto Vivace

Satie Gymnopedies

Smetana Vlatavasa from Ma Vlast

**Introduction
Create the
Conversation Territory**

When I embarked on my professional doctorate I saw the journey as a means of connecting my practice as a coach to my research inquiry, my research acting as a vehicle to improve my coaching practice.   Whenever I begin a coaching programme with a coachee, I commence my work by co-creating the relationship and exploring the conversation territory.  My purpose in this introduction is to do exactly that, to create a relationship with you the reader and to explore the territory of my research.

My professional practice is as a coach.  I work one on one with individual coachees, facilitating learning in educational groups and with organisations helping them to leverage the benefits of coaching.  Coaching is a specific form of conversational process between coach and coachee and I am keen to explore how to unleash the potential of coaching. Alongside developing my professional practice as a coach, a key intention of my inquiry was to find a way of capturing the richness of the coaching conversation so that I could begin to understand the impact this particular interaction can have on the individual coachee and the wider system.  In writing this thesis, I have endeavoured to capture the nature of the conversation by adopting an informal style.  My aspiration is that my approach will allow you, the reader to engage in the narrative.

Throughout the four years of working on my professional doctorate, I have come to appreciate the messiness of inquiry.  My starting point was to build on my MSc research which looked the effectiveness of an internal model of coaching.  In my M.Prof/D.Prof Programme Plan, I identified three areas I was interested in exploring:
1. How can I develop a model for team coaching?
2. How can I develop a process to discover leaders' stories about their experience of coaching as part of the leadership programme, how they value what happened to them, what made the difference and how they

have become more effective in performing as a leader in their part of the BBC?

3. How can I create a community of accredited coaches, both internal and external?

I began work on all three areas but very soon realised that I had to let go of the first and third question and focus my inquiry on the second area in order to concentrate on the question two. Despite narrowing my focus, the emergent nature of my inquiry meant that it came to embrace so much more than I had first envisioned. Therefore, in exploring how I could unleash the potential of the coaching conversation, I have come to know who I am in these conversations and in so doing believe I have improved my own practice. Furthermore, through sharing my research I hope to offer the wider coaching community a methodology of inquiry into how coaching conversations generate learning in organisations.

Working towards my professional doctorate has been a journey, a journey I know will continue. My thesis is an account of this journey. I created a starting point for my journey which is where I embarked on this inquiry. Along the way I have stopped, taken a diversion or chosen a new route to arrive at what I had once thought of as my destination. I now feel it is more like a staging post, a place to rest, eat and sleep before I continue my journey.

The learning I have gained from this journey is immense; however some of my key areas of learning include the following:

- a greater understanding of self;
- an ontological perspective in my coaching practice which means I work with the whole person by focusing on three domains:

linguistic – focusing on the language, looking at the language of my client not through it

emotion – Working with the emotion in the story told and the story lived in

that moment

Somatic – working with the Self

- a greater emphasis in my coaching on language. Taking a social constructionist stance and noticing what is being co-created in the conversation and working with speech acts;

- an understanding of a methodology which helps me to access the richness of the coaching conversation;

- a model of coaching which supports organisational learning.

I have structured my thesis as follows:

Part I                    The Opening Sequence

Chapter One          My journey: Connections along the way

In order to ground my inquiry at its starting point, in this first chapter I reflect on my life experience,  I have developed my story on from the one I shared for my RAL5, although I have included some aspects of my experience again as I believe they are important to this inquiry.

Chapter Two          The BBC Story

My second-person inquiry is based on my work at the BBC. Therefore, in this chapter I offer you some background in order to help you understand the organisational context.

Chapter Three          My Montage of Theory and Literature

In this chapter I review the literature and the theory which have informed my inquiry.  In many ways it would have felt more congruent with the emergent nature of the inquiry to situate the literature and theory in the relevant sections of the text.  However, I chose to provide a montage as a sequence of connecting ideas which together support my inquiry.

Chapter Four          Framing my Inquiry

My chosen methodology combines well established ideas with something new. Here I wanted to introduce you to my methodology, to take some space to draw out my process.  This is just an introduction- some of the detail of application is embedded in the relevant sections.


Part II                The Story Unfolds


Chapter Five          What is my Practice – First-person Inquiry

I offer the outcome of my first-person inquiry, my reflections, my exploration of new learning and how I have embedded these into my practice as a professional coach.


Chapter Six           Living in Inquiry – Second-person Inquiry

This chapter provides an account of the first two cycles of research.  In particular I believe this chapter illustrates the emergent nature of my inquiry and how each cycle creates a new inquiry and in so doing evolves the research.


Chapter Seven        Discovery – Second-person inquiry

This chapter is key to my whole research and focuses entirely on the third cycle of research.


Chapter Eight        Giving voice to the data

This chapter gives voice to the coachee as I share with you the reader, their stories, their constructions and the meanings they are generating for themselves.


Part III                The final scenes


Chapter Nine         Sense Making

In this chapter, I begin to sketch out what I believe the many voices in this inquiry have helped me to discover.  I relate this back to my montage of theory and literature and also bring in a few new concepts to support my ideas.

Chapter Ten          Co-create

This is the penultimate chapter. I have returned to my participants to find out where their story is now and the extent to which they continue to expand on those coaching conversations.

Chapter Eleven              Co-evolve – Third Party Inquiry

What is my third-person inquiry, how have I begun to share this with the wider coaching community and how will I continue to develop my thinking? As I bring my inquiry to that staging post, I pause and take time in this chapter to offer my critical reflections from my journey

Finally, this has been a personal journey for me and the process of crafting my story; I have included myself in the narrative.  I have chosen a picture for each of the chapters, with the exception of chapter two. These are taken from my travels and with each picture I seek to capture the essence of a particular chapter.

There are two CDs at the front of this document, each contain some of my favourite music. As music has accompanied me on my journey, I thought you might enjoy listening to these as you read through the document.

And finally, I said that I wanted to give voice to the coachee, there is another CD at the back of this document which contains the interviews with Mary.

In the next chapter I will introduce you to my journey.

# Part One – The Opening Sequence

# Chapter One

# My journey:

# Connections along the way

## 1.0    Honouring my Experience

*"If I want to know **myself**, to gain insight into the meaning of my own life, then I too, must come to know my own story* ( McAdams (1993:11).  My intention in embarking upon my professional doctorate programme has been exactly this, to come to know my story and what it means to me. By discovering more about who I am, I hope to move forward in my thinking and my practice so I can successfully shift from practitioner to developer in the field of coaching.

Reg Revans (1978) had a fearsome regard for people's experience and how much it might teach us if only we would attend to it. With this in mind,  I embarked on my M.Prof / D.Prof journey by reflecting on the many experiences and influences that have helped to shape me into the person and practitioner I am today:  my family; friends;  colleagues; all those who have influenced me on my travels, and the formal and informal learning activities I have been a part of.

As I wrote in my programme plan and research proposal, "*the aim of my study is to learn more about myself as a practitioner, so that I may contribute to the development of coaching as a profession.*"  I explained that I was looking to the programme to "*pull together the threads of my learning thus far but to also offer me the vehicle by which I can advance my thinking and practice*". I stated that "*my programme was designed to help me make the intended shift from practitioner coach to a developer in the field of coaching*".

Within this section, I thus intend to draw on some of the key themes from my life story informing my work.  As I embark on this part of the journey, I am reminded by Nepo (2000:) that *"before fixing what you are looking at, check what you are looking through"*.

## 1.1    Learning to Connect

I grew up on the little Mediterranean island of Malta and attended the local Catholic girls´ grammar school. The experience turned out to be a real prize.

I remember my first morning so vividly. I recall my fear, my uncertainty about what would happen. I remember the noise of chatter was all around me and it was just noise as I was unable to understand any Maltese.   The language barrier turned out not to be an obstacle to communication. In those early days, my new friends and I created our own way of connecting using a clumsy combination of Maltese and English. The conversation we co-created gave birth to a way of being together which went across our cultural differences.  This was an early and powerful lesson in the complexities of communicating, of deciphering body language, which informs my practice years on. I learnt how to "talk" with my hands, increasing the energy of the exchange and bringing words to life.

Back in the UK I began my career in the travel industry; I married and had two sons choosing to take a break from work so I could spend lots of time with them in their early years. As I reflect back on that time as a young mother I am struck by just how much parenthood taught me.   Lewis et al (2001) discuss the power of simple human interaction between parent and child. They suggest that all too often in our busy society children find themselves with a range of "carers" to support the different stages of their growing up.  The authors also talk about a perceived need in our Western society to keep children occupied, which often means we as parents lose out on any  real connection with them.  I needed to learn how to create that connection with my own children.  Our conversations taught me so much.  I learnt not to live in my head but to engage in conversation. I witnessed the power of learning together through play and conversation. And I learnt to access the wisdom of a beginner's mind. Children's questions can be incredibly powerful, cutting straight to the heart of a matter.

I resumed my career with HBOS, securing a role in branch management and being part of organisational wide changes. Having completed my post graduate diploma in personnel management, I joined local government as an HR and Development Manager before moving to the BBC in 1996.

Although my early career choices tended to be based on what best suited the needs of the family, I saw this as a period of exploration and experimentation with a variety of roles, what Ibarra (2004:163) calls *"identity in transition"*. She describes how through the *"messy trial and error process"*, we are able to define the kind of work which we will find meaningful.

In retrospect, looking at these experiences, and those which came later, pulling together my personal story, I am better equipped to carve out an identity congruent with my inner self and to create my world. As Rosenwald et al (1992) says: *"personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone, (or oneself) about one's life: they are the means by which identities are fashioned"*. McAdams (1993:37) writes, *"through our personal myths, we help to create the world we live in"*. And Joseph Campbell in Nepo (2000:335) *"Our life experiences will have resonances with our innermost being, so that we will feel the rapture of being alive"*.

It was during my time at HBOS that I began what might loosely be described as coaching. Even in those early feedback conversations I could see the power of this one to one work in helping individuals work out what they needed or wanted to do next, in promoting a shift in their mental model or actions. When I joined the public sector, I continued to develop my skills in the coaching conversation.

At the BBC, I headed up an HR and Development function before moving into a consultancy role with the HR and OD team. In that role, I became part of the core coaching team as well as a lead coach for the service. For me, *"learning*

*by doing"* Reg Revans (1980) *gave* me the opportunity to continually refine my choice of work in order to develop a greater congruence between who I am and what I choose to do. Ibarra goes on to say, (ibid:163), *"Self creation is a life long journey. Only by our actions do we learn who we want to become, how best to travel, and what else will change to ease the way."*

When I joined the BBC I had the opportunity to introduce coaching as part of the senior journalist development programme, helping participants translate their learning back into their work. I moved from Regional Broadcasting to the Corporate Centre where I found myself involved in the creation of an internal model of coaching.

When I finally achieved my role as an organisational coach I realised I had found the elusive congruence I had been seeking. After nearly ten years at the BBC, I have refined some more; I now work as a professional coach and OD Consultant. I continue to explore, to experiment and further refine my practice in these areas. I continue to learn from those around me, my colleagues, my clients, my friends, my husband and my sons.

## 1.2   Connecting with Learning

Moving out of our comfort zones helps us grow and develop. As Ericson in Strozzi Heckler (1997:39) says: *"All graduations' in human development mean the abandonment of a familiar position….all growth….must come to terms with this fact".*

My first step on this journey was to study for a post graduate diploma in Personnel Management. Launched back in the world of academia, I remember being terrified. A year of so afterwards I continued my learning by studying for an

advanced certificate in employment law at the University of East Anglia whilst working in local government in my first HR manager role. I achieved my Masters level qualification with Birkbeck College, University of London in 2003. This was, by far, one of the most challenging pieces of learning I have experienced. I chose this particular course for a number of reasons. The first was that although it was an MSc in Organisational Behaviour, the syllabus was identical to the Masters in Occupational Psychology. Secondly, the philosophy of the programme was less concerned with the practical application and more focused on academic teachings and research which matched my stage of development. Thirdly, I was also able to complete my studies remotely.

The learning from the research module and completing my research project was a painful but valuable experience. The emphasis on the academic nature of research required me to develop a rigour to my approach. Whilst I found it a laborious learning process, I was left with a much better understanding of research design and methodology. The Masters programme really helped me to expand my knowledge and understanding of organisational psychology.

I joined the M.Prof programme with i-coach academy immediately after completing my Masters. I had enjoyed the research element of my Masters programme and I wanted to combine doctorate level research with professional learning. I worked towards the first half of the programme enjoying being part of a learning community which met in person. The transfer process from MSc to M.Prof meant I attended the MA second year programme. Those learning days provided an opportunity to work with some of the important thought leaders in the field and connect to fellow students on their journey. I was thrilled to be able to listen to Bruce Peltier bring his book "Psychology of Coaching" to life in series of presentations. It was a privilege to hear about the work of Laurie Thomas and Sheila Harri-Augustein from the theorists themselves, to work with Bob Lee, previously the President of the Centre for Creative Leadership in the US, on leadership and with Professor Mike van Oudtshoorn who never lost the ability to

stretch my thinking and challenge my theory in use.     Figure One below shows the design for my M.Prof/ D.Prof programme.

**Figure 1**
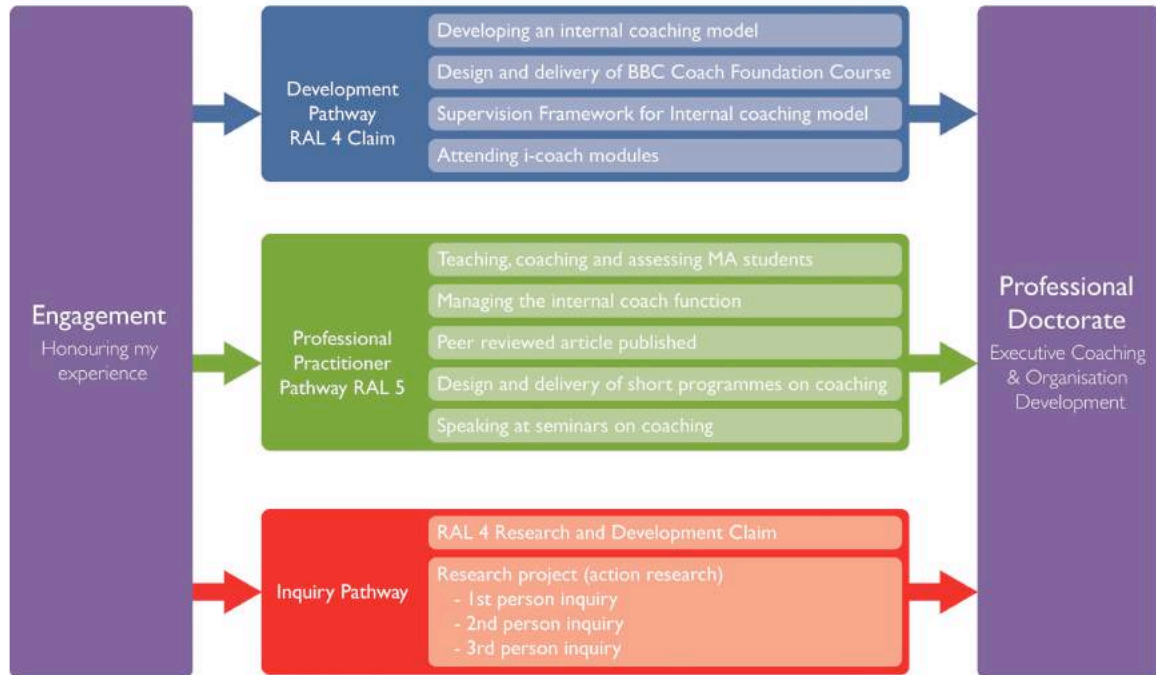


This first part of my programme also supported my development as an educator of others in the field of coaching.  I was working with some of the first year / post grad students.  It also allowed me to take a fresh look at who I was as a coach to find out more about my coaching and access my authentic self.

The final part of my programme, my Inquiry Pathway, is the research I share with you in this thesis.

## 1.3    Connecting to self

Writing about a crisis in learning, Julio Olalla (2004) draws our attention to a view of learning which shows it to be a formal activity that mainly happens between the ages of 5 and 18. Ollala (ibid) picks up the theme of life long learning and suggests that from an ontological perspective we need to engage in learning about all the dimensions of our being.  Schon (1983:68) advocates moving from technical education to learning through the application of practice, he goes on to say,  *"When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case"*

I chose the i-coach  M.Prof / D.Prof programme because of its philosophy around learning and the individual framework approach.  The learning was both personal and professional. Joseph Cambell (2003) says that when people truly want to learn, they receive a call. At that point, they have a choice either to listen to the call or deny the call forever. If you listen to the call and you want significant learning you will need to go to a different place, a deeper place where you may face your monsters, your shortcomings.  As you go through the learning process you will come back to the same place, but you will see with new eyes.  I took a look at myself and didn't always like what I saw and I took a look at who I was as a coach and began to make my practice more explicit.

During that first year, I found myself at the centre of my learning, a significant focus of my inquiry. At that time I came across an article by Judi Marshall (1999). In it she suggests the idea of  "living life as an inquiry" and says that this *"involves seeking to pay attention to the 'stories' I tell myself and the world and recognising that these are all constructions, influenced by my purposes and perspectives and by social discourses which shape meaning"*.  . This led me to ask myself the question, "what is my practice and is my practice my life?" I

brought this question to this research and in chapter 5, I will share with you my inquiry.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the BBC the organisational context for my inquiry.

# Chapter Two

# The BBC story

## 2.0    Working at the BBC

I joined the BBC when John Birt was director general. I spent nearly 10 years with the corporation, working first in regional broadcasting and then at the corporate centre.  During my time at the BBC, which I recall with fondness, I experienced a number of organisational change initiatives. I contributed significantly to the development of the BBC's model of internal model of coaching.

This chapter provides the context within which I have carried out my research.  I would like to point out that this represents my recollection and interpretation of the various events.  The story is told through my voice and not the official voice of the organisation.

## 2.1    How it all began

The BBC was founded in 1922. It began as a radio station broadcasting from a small studio near the Savoy Hotel in London.  Throughout its history it has attracted criticism and controversy and at the same time has demonstrated the heights to which broadcasting can aspire. (Born 2004) Today, 2007 it is a large, multi- disciplined organisation with around 23,000 employees. The BBC offers eight television channels, ten national radio stations, 50 local radio stations and a million pages of web content.  It has more than 400 sites in the UK alone.  Through the World Service, the BBC also offers public service broadcasting across the globe. Its international reputation is unsurpassed.

Committed **to educating, informing and entertaining** its audiences, the BBC enjoyed relative stability until the Nineties. When John Birt, the twelfth director general, joined the BBC, he found an out of date, cumbersome and unwieldy organisation.  Birt set out a path of radical change which would not only transform the BBC but impact on the face of broadcasting forever.  He introduced the idea of an internal market which led to a massive re-structuring programme.

Birt´s radical style was often seen as hasty and autocratic. Senior managers found themselves more accountable for setting objectives and managing performance and the increased pressure saw a number leave the organisation. Birt admits , *"I was certainly driven, better sometimes at identifying problems than applauding success, and at least for some of my colleagues I was over zealous"*. (ibid). Those who remained were open to support and help.

Tony Ryan, (Ryan, T., in West and Milan 2001), then head of executive development recognised the need to provide such help and support to managers.  Although a few senior managers had worked with a coach, coaching was a relatively new concept for the BBC. Ryan felt that the time was right to introduce coaching to the rest of the senior managers. He said that i*ndividual senior managers were "eager to harness coaching to help them handle increasingly complex and ambiguous tasks, and to increase their confidence in leading others"*.(ibid:157).

From 1998 to 2001, 70 senior leaders undertook coaching with an external coach. Ryan carried out two evaluation studies highlighting the benefits leaders perceived they were getting from coaching.  These included greater self awareness, greater self confidence, increased ability to communicate at all levels and improved leadership skills. Ryan adds," *Several claimed that they would not have survived in their position without the support of their coach"*, (ibid:164).The introduction of coaching to the BBC was deemed a success.

Although the demand for coaching at the next level of management was evident, Ryan could not justify the high cost of bringing in external coaches. Instead, he came up with the idea of developing an internal pool of coaches. Frisch (2001) talks about the emerging role of the internal coach, he says, *"Growing from the demand for flexible, targeted development and the acceptance of executive coaching emerges the role of the internal coach, a professional within an organisation, who as part of his or her job, coaches managers and executives"*.

Ryan decided to add fuel to the existing coaching fires burning in different parts of the BBC. He pulled together a small group of people, including myself, who were coaching in their part of the BBC to create an internal coaching service.

During a 12 month coaching pilot period, my colleagues and I coached two or three managers each. I also moved from the regions to join the consultancy team at the corporate centre. Our review highlighted the need for the following:

- An explicit link between the coaching programme and the business agenda;
- A re-designed application form to include a nomination process to be completed by either the line manager, HR Partner or Development Executive;
- A initial conversation between the coach and the nominator to discuss the coaching objectives, which would then be included in the application form;
- The introduction of different programmes for different levels of manager.

In May 2001, the internal coaching service was officially launched. By the end of that year, 56 BBC managers and team leaders had received coaching. Ryan's idea of creating an internal model had been realised. But changes were about to happen which would have a huge impact on coaching in the BBC.

## 2.2    Making it Happen

When Birt left in 2000, the BBC was strategically well positioned but morale was low and the predominant management style was still command and control. The new director general, Greg Dyke, spent around six months getting to know the BBC while Birt was still at the helm, visiting as many parts of the BBC as he could. He found a highly complex organisation with too many layers, a costly internal market and unnecessary bureaucracy. This was about to change.

In April 2000, Dyke launched "One BBC", with the aim of making the BBC *"the most creative organisation in the world",* creating a flatter organisation, breaking down the silos and promoting greater collaboration.

Although a Mori poll taken in October 2001 reported that the BBC was performing well, it revealed that the younger audience was moving away and that those from ethnic minorities felt the BBC was not for them. There was a widespread perception that the BBC was *"stuffy, arrogant and out of touch"*.

To help the BBC get closer to the audiences and serve them better, it needed to improve creativity, make staff feel more valued and to build trust and collaboration throughout the organisation. Dyke wanted to change the culture at the root level and launched the "Making it Happen" initiative with the ambitious goal of turning the BBC into the most creative organisation within five years.

Dyke was keen that this change programme be led and managed by internal consultants with minimum support from the external world. He appointed talented programme maker, Susan Spindler, to head up the programme, with Dr Mee-Yan Chung-Judge on hand to help her and her team think through how to manage such a major transformation initiative. Cheung-Judge said, *" I had worked in and around different bits of the BBC for about six years and had grown to love the organisation, I also knew it was one of the most stubborn systems to shift"* (2006).

Seven big changes themes were identified including:
- Inspiring creativity everywhere
- Valuing BBC people – being more open and harnessing everyone's energy
- Lead more, manage well - More effectively and inspiringly led

Dyke wanted each theme to be led by a BBC leader who was respected and an iconic figure in the corporation. And each theme leader would bring together a group of people representative of the wider BBC. The "Making it Happen"

programme began with an event for the top 400 managers. "Leading the Way", which aimed to galvanise all senior leaders behind the change agenda. If this change initiative was to be successful unlike others before it, it needed to actively involve thousands of the diverse and sceptical staff in order to counter the BBC's change phobia.

The solution came in the form of the chosen change methodology, Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Cheung-Judge explained, *"using appreciative inquiry as the main approach to tap into the fantastic strengths of the organisation, mobilising its own energy to change the undesirable bits of the BBC"* (ibid). In keeping with the BBC's desire to use internal expertise, Cheung-Judge trained 400 internal change leaders in the AI process.  I was fortunate enough to be one of these.  It was my first experience of AI and like many of my colleagues I had reservations about how the organisation would receive such a counter-cultural approach. Cheung-Judge also trained a number of us from the HR and OD community in facilitation skills and group dynamics.  Cheung-Judge saw the HR and OD population as her *"natural allies"*(ibid), well placed to lead and embed the cultural changes.  I also attended an OD development programme called "OD Live and Kicking". This was an important piece of learning for me as it took the concept of change and placed into an OD context.  I began to see the value of leveraging organisational wide learning.

Spindler acknowledged that the BBC was change weary and she was mindful that the majority of BBC staff were journalists, trained to be sceptical and questioning, AI would challenge their mental model as well as the prevailing BBC culture.  Therefore it was decided to work with the organisation's own system, its defensiveness and level of readiness to move forward. This meant working with the Discovery phase of AI only.  However, Cheung-Judge´s faith that the Discovery phase would create such an interest in the AI approach that the rest of the phases would follow proved to be well founded.

The whole process took just over a year with each next phase beginning every three or four months.  During that time BBC staff were involved in all or some of

the conversations. Figure 2 below details the different activities under each of the five phases. *(See appendix one, phases in appreciative inquiry)*.

Figure 2. Making it Happen – One BBC

| February 2002 | March 2002 | April-May 2002 | June-September 2002 | August 2002 | September-November 2002 | November 2002 | December 2002-February 2003 | May 2003 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Greg launched "Making it Happen" | Mee Yan runs AI taster sessions for theme leaders and other stakeholders | Pilots were run as four x one day sessions Discovery phase of AI pilot approved 400 Internal consultants were trained in AI | Just Imagine sessions were run ( 10,000 staff attended over a period of four months) | Data form Just imagine was cut. Proposal for Dream phase – taster session approved | Making Sense: 5000 staff reviewed ideas from Just Imagine sessions and began "dreaming" about future projects | All data was cut and given back to divisional teams | Using the data Divisional Plans: Each division developed their strategy to implement the culture plan BBC Plan: a BBC wide strategic agenda based on the seven key themes – 45 proposals generated | Big conversation 17,000 staff linked from across the divisions and geographic regions to vote on their priorities |

**Seven Themes**
- Inspiring creativity
- Connecting with audiences
- Valuing people
- We Are the BBC (Values)
- Great spaces
- Lead more, Manage well
- Just do it (deal with internal bureaucracy)

Preliminary ideas

Interview protocol to generate possible ideas

Multiple clusters of Just Imagine ideas

Making Sense data, dreams, and initial design

BBC Vision Plan 17 Division Plans

Big conversation Virtual Meeting

Maintaining integrity with data and stories across phases

| Definition | Discovery | Dream | Design | Destiny |

Adapted from Mee Yan Cheung Judge 2006

By May 2003, the recommendations coming out of "Making it Happen" including the development of leadership capability across the BBC were communicated to staff. *(See appendix Two BBC Making it Happen Work-Streams)* It was at this time that the Today Programme's broadcast of Andrew Gilligan's report which would eventually see the demise of the Dyke.

## 2.3   Great Leadership

It was the biggest message to come out of "Making it Happen". The need for great leadership was described as the "critical fuel" that would guarantee success or failure of the other Making it Happen initiatives.

Staff recognised that there were some great leaders in the BBC but they wanted more. When staff members were asked to analyse those moments when they felt they had been well-led, they used words like, *"trust"*, *"respect"*, *"feedback"*, "motivational" and *"visionary"*.  And when asked to "just imagine" what great leadership would look like at the BBC, they said:

- *"Encourage us in the pursuit of excellence"*
- *"Good communication, direction, ability, priority"*
- *"More trust in ability, more delegation"*
- *Coaching, mentoring for managers as well as staff"*
- *Visibility, trust with support – identifying management talent"*

A leadership strategy, seen as critical to the BBC's existence, was put forward which would comprise a major training programme, improved coaching and mentoring across the corporation, succession planning, 360 feedback and improved recruitment practices.

The idea was to create one core leadership programme which would be more cost effective, more focused on the BBC values and meet the desire for a BBC-wide learning experience.  The programme would take a diagonal slice of leaders, 1500 per annum, through a six month blended learning training programme.  The expectation was that leaders would bring their learning back to the work-place and this would create the necessary momentum for massive culture change within the BBC.

The BBC leadership programme was designed in partnership with Ashridge Business School and Ashridge Consulting. This programme had BBC driven content and was delivered in a specially created BBC space. The aim of the programme was informed by the 3 C model for leadership (see figure 3 below) by Pedlar et al (2002:5). It sought to help individual leaders discover and develop their approach to leadership by thinking about the context for leadership, their own leadership characteristics and the challenges they each faced as leaders.

**Figure 3**



The BBC's leadership programme was launched in 2003 just at the time the dossier on the Hutton inquiry was published.

Never before had the BBC delivered such an integrated and dynamic approach to leadership that would connect managers from different business divisions and across all levels. Dyke was beginning to see his "one BBC".   Figure 4 (overleaf) shows the structure of this blended learning design.

**Figure 4**

## BBC Leadership Programme Structure

**6 Alumni**
- External Organisations
- Networking Events
- Further Coaching/Co-coaching
- Masterclasses

**1 Programme Preparation**
**Before the start of the Programme**
- Line manager conversation
- Agree Objectives

**2 360 degree feedback**
- Tool and process for helping managers to understand how other people see their performance and impact
* Senior Leaders also experience Coaching session 1

Learning Support:
Online learning
Action Learning – 4 facilitated sessions
Coaching
Mentoring
Radar
Divisional Days
Learning lunches

**5 'Leading in the BBC' Module**
- 1 day residential module at Ashridge
- Explore how to respond to leadership challenges
- Further development opportunities

**3 'Leadership in Context' Module**
- 1 day residential module at Ashridge
- Large, diverse community of BBC leaders
- Explore and clarify what being a leader in the BBC means
- An introduction to important leadership concepts

**4 'Leadership Skills' Module**
Personal leadership skills, characteristics and practice
Team and Established Leaders:
2-3 day residential module at Ashridge
Senior Leaders: 1 day workshop – choice of 4 options

## 2.4    Promoting self managed learning

The leadership programme formed part of the wider organisational development change initiative coming out of "Making it Happen" – Lead more, manage well. It aimed to encourage leaders to take responsibility for their learning. To support them in their learning, leadership coaching was offered to senior and established leader participants. Leadership coaching was seen as the glue which would bind together the learning from the workshops to action back in the work-place. With 13 programmes a year and around 60 leadership programme participants eligible to apply for coaching, coaching was delivered on massive scale.

I should point out that by the end of 2001, the internal service had only12 internal coaches with seven coachees having completed a coaching programme with another 49 going through.  As the coaching service entered 2002, our plans to

grow the service included coach training; a set of standards, guidelines and competencies for coaches; a marketing strategy to raise awareness of the internal service, and bi-monthly meetings to support the coaches. We re-launched the coaching service with separate coaching streams for the different levels of managers / leaders. The "BBC Coach Foundation Course" was developed with what was then the Industrial Society. By January 2003, 12 new coaches had graduated from the course. Now we had 24 internal coaches, with four of us still operating as the core group.

It was at this time that I was completing my research for my Masters dissertation. Using the Kilburg Model of Coaching Effectiveness (2001) I looked at our internal model of coaching. My research supported its overall effectiveness but also highlighted some areas of difference. My research was peer reviewed and published in 2005.

## 2.5    The impact of "Making it Happen" on coaching in the BBC

Coaching was to be an integral part of the leadership programme design and I was asked by the head of OD, Lorraine Bateman to lead a comprehensive review of coaching and mentoring across the BBC. I was well placed to do this. I worked as a consultant with the corporate consultancy team, I was also a member of the core coach group as well as being a lead coach and I had just completed my research into the effectiveness of the internal model.

At that time, the BBC's internal service had 31 internal coaches working with managers and leaders across the corporation. Whilst a more detailed description of this piece of work can be found in my RAL claim, for the purpose of this inquiry it is worth noting the key outcomes:

Coaching was repositioned to emphasise the business and organisational context within which coaches operate. All of the marketing material made explicit that coaching was facilitating the development of individuals in order to

enhance the organisational performance. Business awareness was built into the competency framework.

- The number of coach foundation courses was increased from two to four courses a year. The process for the selection and assessment of applicants to join the coaching service was improved to include, a competency based application form, an initial assessment run by the BBC Assessment & Development Services and a final interview. The addition of a reference from the applicant's line manager commenting on the individual's suitability to train and be fielded as a BBC Coach was also introduced.

- The competency framework was revised which made explicit the behaviours associated with working as an internal coach and being an agent of change. The new framework also provided a development path for the coach. The role of providing supervision and mentoring to trainee coaches and less experienced coaches became more clearly defined

- A clear statement outlining the coaching service's approach to supervision was created. A multiple model of supervision combining one to one case supervision with group learning activities in order to ensure a level of professional competence is maintained as well as provides coaches with continuous development.

- A set of principles and guidelines for the engagement of external coaches was agreed. This created the same standards to any external coach working in the organisation as applied to our internal coaches were applied

This piece of work moved the internal coaching service from a cottage industry activity to a professional coaching model.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the theory and literature which has informed my study.

Phenomenology

Ontology

Complexity thinking

Learning

Coaching

Leadership assumptions

Organisation Development

Social Constructionism

**Chapter Three**

**A Montage of Theory and Literature**

## 3.0    Introduction

I have found that having a framework which clearly articulates what informs my coaching to be extremely helpful. I understand that a theoretical framework is there to hold together the variables of interest and the direction of the relationships between them.  Yet what I had was an eclectic mix of information with no cohesive structure.

I wanted to find a way of bringing together the different theoretical perspectives in a way which would create a solid foundation for my inquiry. Help came from Denzin & Lincoln (2005:4) who provided a visual image.  They say, *"The qualitative researcher may be described using multiple and gendered images…….the researcher in turn, may be seen as a **bricoleur**, as a maker of quilts, or as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images into montages"* (ibid). I was attracted to creating a montage of theory and literature, maybe because I tend to see the world through a visual lens, or as described in NLP terms, *"the preferred representational system"*. Connor & Lages (2004:51) say that if you have a visual preference, you *"… pay attention to what you see………… you may be interested in drawing, interior design, fashion, the visual arts, television and film"*.  The image of a montage brought my framework to life as a rich colourful tapestry of connecting ideas.

Creating a montage has allowed me to bring contrasting theories and ideas together in a meaningful way.  *"In texts based on the metaphors of montage…..many different things are going on at the same time – different voices, different perspectives, points of view, angles of vision"* (Denzin & Lincoln:5). Therefore what follows is a montage of blended theory and literature, framed by the lens through which I as researcher see the world. Figure 8 on page 29 is my montage.

I have adopted an appreciative rather than critical approach to my selection in order to embrace the richness of the different perspectives. I wish to acknowledge the exploratory nature of my inquiry and my desire to allow the relevance of the different perspectives to emerge in response to the inquiry. I should also point out that this chapter elaborates on most of the ideas in my montage. Three of these, action research, co-ordinated management of meaning and appreciative inquiry, will be explored in the next chapter.

## 3.1    Phenomenology and Ontology

The word "paradigm" comes from Greek philosophy and refers to a "model", an "analogy" or a "poetic metaphor". Guba (1990:17) describes a paradigm simply as "*a basic set of beliefs that guides action*". Hussey and Hussey (1997:47) add "*your basic beliefs about the world will be reflected in the way you design your research, how you collect and analyse your data and even the way you write your theses*". My choice of paradigm needed to be congruent with who I am and my beliefs about the world. It is the lens through which I see the world as a coach, OD consultant and as a researcher.

I believe that working from a phenomenological paradigm empowered me to focus on the subjective rather than the objective. I wanted to feel integral to the research process and firmly aligned with the culture and personal dynamics of my coaching activity. Hussey and Hussey (1997:52) describe the phenomenological approach as *"concerned with understanding human behaviour from the participant's own frame of reference………this qualitative approach stresses the subjective aspects of human activity by focusing on the meaning rather than the measurement of social phenomena"*. Phenomenology is about bringing the researcher into the inquiry, being part of the inquiry, living the inquiry. It is a complex system of ideas which come from the works of philosophers like Heidegger, whose work in language also underpins ontology.

Ontology is also derived from a Greek word meaning, "being". It is concerned with what exists, what the reality is. According to Sieler (2003), the Oxford Companion Dictionary to Philosophy defines Ontology as…."*the science of being in general, embracing such issues as the nature of existence and the structure of reality*". Therefore, looking at ontology through a phenomenological lens, I believe that the nature of reality is as it is seen through the participant's eyes, something they have constructed for themselves. The research, Bateson (1972:314) argues, "*Is bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which regardless of ultimate truth of falsity – become partially self validating*". I recognise this in my inquiry. I began to notice the emerging congruence between who I am as a coach, what informs my work and what is emerging from this inquiry. The pictures in my montage are beginning to connect.

The discipline of ontology was the product of the integration of the fields of philosophy and biology with anthropology, sociology and quantum physics. Humberto Maturana's (1992) research into the notion of perception led him to develop the idea of "the Observer". He suggested that all of us are "observers" and so we see the world differently according to the observer that we are. Bohm (1996) suggests that "*the observer gathers; it selects and gathers the relevant information and organises it into some meaning and picture*". Maturana suggested (1992) that it is the interactions between the neurons of our nervous system which determine the observer that we are. This does not mean that who we are is fixed. He believed that the nervous system is a living system which can adapt and change thereby enabling us to develop different ways of observing. The theory of a living system was born and as we will see later this idea grows and matures.

Language also constructs the observer that we are; it creates the reality that we see and the development of a shared understanding with others. Sieler (2005)

says that human beings are linguistic beings; we live in language, both externally in conversation and internally in our heads. The conversation in our heads often leads us to interpretations which may not be helpful for us.  In becoming a different observer we can see things we have never seen before which opens up possibilities for us. Fernando Flores (ibid) picked up on Maturana's work and integrated it with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and John Searle's theory of Speech Acts to create a new understanding of language and communication. This is where philosophy blends with biology.  The work of Maturana overlaps with that of philosophers.  During the 20th century philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Austin and John Searle termed the idea "the linguistic turn" which suggested that:

1.  language is a form of human action;
2.  language is an instrument for getting things done;
3.  language produces effects on participants and therefore impacts on what is reality for them;
4.  there are a number of fundamental ways that humans continually use language to produce effects and generate reality, which are referred to as Speech Acts.

Seiler (2003) tells us" *language can be seen as an active process that generates what constitutes reality for humans, and when change occurs in the use of language, a different world becomes available to the observer"*. Furthermore, the philosophy of existentialism proposes that as human beings we seek to create meaning to our lives.  Spinelli et al (2006) add, *"we are 'meaning making' beings, we are disturbed by the lack – or loss – of meaning, and seek to avoid or deny anything that challenges our meaning"*.  Stelter (2007) also suggests that *"the realities and new narratives are formed by the coachee together with their coach through their conversation and co-create meaning"*.  This is an important blend both for me as an ontological coach and for me in this inquiry.  I will develop the use of language further in the section on Social Constructionism.

I coach from an ontological stance and I have been impressed with just how powerful it is. In chapter 5 I will expand on this, but for now I will simply say there is real congruence between who I am as a coach and how this informs my research work.

## 3.2    Social Constructionism

Social constructionism states that there is no objective "truth".  It is through our interactions that we create different realities for ourselves and new ways of being. The theory offers a lens through which to make sense of the very different meanings people give to situations.  This blends with the idea of existentialism and ontology.

Burr (2003) says, " …*used ontologically, the term social constructionism refers to the way particular phenomena, our perceptions and experiences, are brought into existence because of the language that we share"*.  This is an important point. I am concerned with learning in context and the conversations which support that learning.   Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1994) add that social constructionism (sometimes called constructivism) is an alternative paradigm in which the inquiry aim is, "*understanding and reconstructions of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming toward consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve"*. Constructionism portrays the social world as multiple constructed realities which vary according to the values and beliefs of the observer.

The difficulty in working with this perspective is that subscribers to social constructionism describe the approach quite differently.  In an attempt to understand this perspective, I took the work of Vivian Burr (2003:2). Confirming

that there is no one single definition Burr (ibid:2) suggests the different writers are linked together by what she terms a *"family resemblance….same family, different characteristics"*. Burr suggests that there are four key assumptions which are fundamental to social constructionism:

- *A critical stance toward taken for- granted-knowledge*
  Taking a critical stance about how we observe the world and recognising the observer we are.
- *Historical and cultural specificity;*
  Understanding where we come from and how that influences who we are.
- *Knowledge sustained by social process;*
  People construct their reality together in their every-day lives.
- *Knowledge and social action go together.*
  Our constructions of the world serve to guide us as to what is acceptable and unacceptable to do.

Social Constructionism argues that the social world has multiple constructed realities which we make sense of through conversation, creating shared meaning. Joworski (1996) says," *As I considered the importance of language and how human beings interact with the world it struck me that in many ways the development of language was like a discovery of fire – it was such an incredible primordial force. I had always thought that we used language to describe the world – now I was seeing that this is not the case. To the contrary, it is though our language that we create the world because it is nothing until we describe it. And when we describe it we create distinctions that govern our actions. To put it another way, we do not describe the world we see, but we see the world we describe".*

3.2.1   Social Constuctionism and Self
I have realised just how much conversation has helped me to connect and make sense of my world, throughout my life. More fundamentally, the process of

dialogue has helped me understand who I am, my beliefs, my values and even my personality. Burr (2003) says, "*we are accustomed to thinking of ourselves as having a certain kind of personality, as holding beliefs and opinions and making choices and that these originated in our own minds – we are their 'author'*".

From a social constuctionist perspective understanding ourselves is about understanding our own identity. There are multiple threads to our identity and we are in constant conversation co-constructing a new reality for ourselves which is appropriate for a particular time in a particular place. Burr (2003) says,"*For each of us then, a multitude of discourses is constantly at work constructing and producing our identity*".

### 3.2.2    Social constructionism and relating to others

A key aspect of social constructionism is meaningful language. McNamee & Gergen (1999: xi) say *"meaningful language is generated within the processes of relationship"*. They suggest that by creating different forms of relationship and promoting what they term *"relational responsibility"* we can create a conversation of meaning making.  Gergen et al (2003) also highlight this *"meaning in relationship"* by challenging the traditional view that meaning is something which starts in our individual minds.  Social meaning making is co-created with others and its shape or flavour may depend on the context.

### 3.2.3    Social Constructionism and the Wider System

Weick (1995) believed that life is a continuing conversation that we join, make sense of and then leave.  "Sense-making in Organisations", (ibid: 17) has seven properties, the first of which is *"Grounded in Identity Construction"*. Weick acknowledges the need for the individual (or sense-maker ibid: 17) to make sense of self. Weick says" *How can I know what I think unless I see what I say?"*. However, he also recognises that this requires some interaction.  The "Social" property in this hierarchy suggests that the wider system, for example, an organisation, is a "network" which through a common language and interaction

creates a shared meaning and understanding. Weick promotes the idea that organisations are involved in actively making sense through conversation.

Wenger (1998) promoted the idea of "communities of practice" where people come together to share practice and learn. Three dimensions characterise a community as shown in figure 8 below.

**Figure 6**
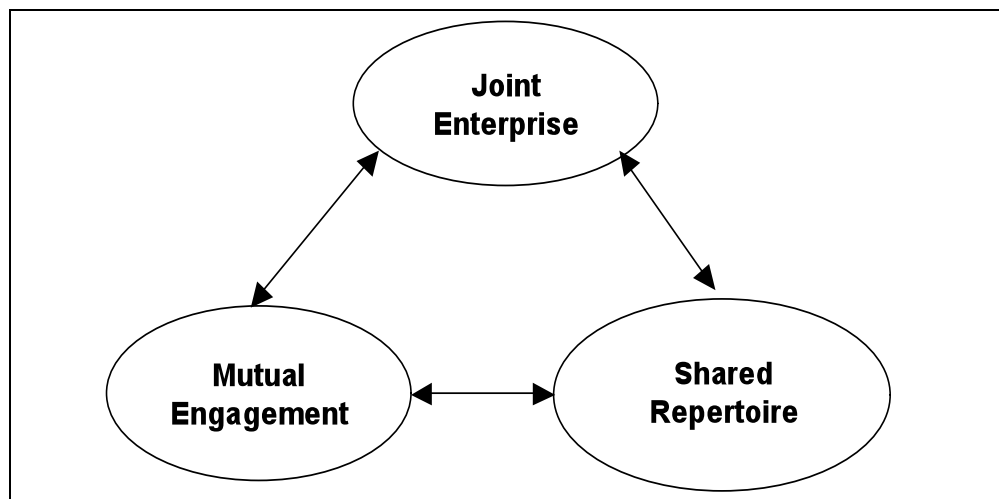


Wenger points to the importance of language in this process and how through conversation and participation, communities of practice can support meaning making and identity. Shaw (2002:5) also says that engaging, sustaining and transforming the patterning of our conversation *"simultaneously enables and constrains our movement into the future"*.

## 3.3 Organisational Development

I want to take a moment to include the discipline of Organisational Development, specifically as a back-drop to my assumptions about organisational learning and its link with coaching.

Organisation Development (OD) is "*a planned process of change in an organisation's culture through utilisation of behavioural science technologies, research and theory*" (Burke 1994:12). *(See Appendix three – Characteristics of Organisation Development)* Burke (1994:200) proposes that the primary levers for implementing large scale organisational change are "*culture, values, key leadership acts providing vision and a clear sense of direction) and management and executive programmes*".

In the OD Practitioner, Minahan (2006) discusses the position of coaching and OD and writes "*the evolution of coaching has been a major asset to OD*". He tracks the history of coaching as an OD intervention. When coaching is part of a wider OD initiative, it is likely to support organisational learning and change. However, when coaching is offered as a stand alone activity, it is unlikely to be an OD intervention. I believe this to be a useful distinction that coaching in of itself is not an OD initiative, but it can help to leverage wider OD when it is part of wider strategic aims. Scott et al (2006) also add, "*Coaching only one person in an organisation is unlikely to have any system influence; the best organisation coaching occurs as part of a system- wide change effort*".

I see OD through an emergent lens and in the next section I draw on the theoretical perspectives and literature which support this view.

## 3.4    Complexity Theory

I first became interested in the science of complexity when I began my MSc. Margaret Wheatley's book Leadership and New Science had a powerful impact on me. I believe that complexity theory provides us with a new way of thinking and a new way of working in a business environment that is fast paced and

constantly changing. It recognises that organisations are complex systems, with an in-built unpredictability which can adapt, self organise and grow.

Complexity scientists state that this theory has its roots firmly in the natural world, and therefore shares a connection with the biological origins of ontology, another link in my montage. Back in the 17th century Newton and Descartes believed that truth could be objectively observed, measured and explained. The Newtonian paradigm implied that we can think of the organisation as a machine and all we have to do is separate out all the parts and work out how they interact. Within this era of scientific farming, the Agricultural revolution and the Industrial Revolution, this mechanical model worked. This line of thinking continued to inform 20th century theorists such as Fayol and Taylor who developed a management philosophy that focused on "command and control", as a better way to manage these "machines."

Complexity theory builds on the study of chaos. Levy (1994) writes, "*Chaos theory has the potential to contribute valuable insights into the nature of complex systems in the business world*". The natural scientists working at the Santa Fe Institute researching chaos and complexity provide us with a definition, which although it is not universally accepted, is a good starting point. Santa Fe Group (1996) *"Complexity refers to the condition of the universe which is integrated and yet too rich and varied for us to understand in simple common mechanistic or linear ways. We can understand many parts of the universe in these ways but the larger and more intricately related phenomena can only be understood by principles and patterns – not in detail. Complexity deals with the nature of emergence, innovation and adaptation."*

Complexity theory has grabbed the attention of a number of leading academics as the structure most suited to the workplace in the 21st century. Griffin, Shaw & Stacey (1998) review the work of the Santa Fe natural scientists. Of particular interest is the work of Holland who uses an analogy of the central

nervous system to explain complex adaptive systems. Holland proposed that the interactions of the neurones will determine the behaviour of the system. This aligns somewhat with Maturana's "living system theory" as seen in my montage earlier.

The social scientist perspective comes from Shotter (1993). He goes further than Holland saying it is not just the interactions but the "everyday conversations" that influence the organisation. Griffen et al (1998), promote the notion of the paradoxical dynamics of stability and instability at the 'edge of chaos', and identify, as Shotter (1993) did, the potential of ordinary everyday conversational practices for self organising and knowledge creation.

Tsoukas & Hatch (2001), examine the use of the *"narrative mode of thinking"* to explore and gain a deeper understanding of complexity. They say that by focusing on people's experience, telling the story, relating the event, we can get a richer appreciation of the context of complexity science. Wheatley (1999) advocates engaging in the moment so that we can enable the future to emerge. She says, "*we need fewer descriptions of tasks and instead learn how to facilitate process. We need to become savvy about how to foster relationships, how to nurture growth and development. All of us need to become better at listening, conversing, respecting one another's uniqueness because these are essential for strong relationships*. We are beginning to recognise organisations as whole systems, constructing them as *"learning organisations"* or as *"organic"* and noticing that people exhibit *"self organising capacity"*.

This echoes my belief. I think the coaching conversation has a significant part to play in supporting on-going learning in organisations.

## 3.5 Learning

I thought it would be useful to start with a look at the difference between learning and training. Often the two terms are used interchangeably but in fact they mean very different things. This important distinction has become clearer to me throughout this research. Goldstein et al (2202:1) define training as, "*the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, concepts, or attitudes that result in improved performance in another environment*". Whereas learning, Knowles (2005) reminds us, has an abundance of definitions depending on the theorists underpinning stance. For me, coming from an ontological perspective, I draw my learning definition from Olalla (2004:103); he says, "there *are many ways to define this term;*

*a    From the perspective of **behaviour**, grounded in the more external, individual criteria of action, **to learn is to engage in practices that will allow us to do something, to take action that we were not able to take before.***

*b    From a **social** perspective, grounded in a collective external criterion of action, **to learn is to engage in practices that will allow us to interact with others in ways we were unable to before**.*

*c    From a **personal** perspective – our interpretations, emotions, soul and spirit, grounded in individual criteria of who we want to become – **to learn is to alter the observer we have been.** It is the creation of a new relationship with the world or a new way to be part of it.*

*d    From a **cultura**l perspective grounded in a collective, internal criterion, **to learn is to develop a new common worldview** and new shared set of interpretations*".

### 3.5.1 Learning Organisation

In our uncertain, fluid environment, where change is the norm, organisations that are adaptive, flexible and able to respond to change will, as Senge (1990) says,

"excel".  Senge (ibid) goes on to say that organisations need to access people's capacity to learn and create an integrated approach to learning and development, aligning learning activities to the strategic direction of the business.   Senge's (ibid) learning organisations model defines organisations as places in which "…*people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together* (ibid). He identifies five learning disciplines:

1.  Personal Mastery
2.  Mental Models
3.  Shared Vision
4.  Team Learning
5.  Systems thinking

Senge (ibid) draws heavily on the work of David Bohm (1996) and argues that when dialogue is put alongside systems thinking it creates an organisational discourse that is more suited to working with complexity and deep rooted structural issues.   I am drawn here to the work of Stacey (2001) who points to learning being something which is continually created through active communication of human beings.  He draws my attention to the difference between explicit knowledge (things that we know which are easily explainable from one person to another) and tacit knowledge (an individual's mental models which lay beneath the level of self awareness).  Bringing that tacit knowledge to consciousness, making it explicit requires dialogue or conversation.  The sharing through conversation enables people to learn.  Shaw (2002:5) also states," *we have much practical knowledge and skill relating to the everyday art of 'going on together', knowledge that we create and use from within the conduct of our communicative activity*".  Senge (1990:10) adds, "*The discipline of team learning starts with 'dialogue'. The capacity of members to suspend assumptions and enter into genuine 'thinking together'*"

Senge (1994) emphasises that learning also needs to *"enhance a capacity to create"*. One of the three skills and capabilities which characterise a learning organisation is *"Reflection and Conversation"* (Senge et al 1994:18). This characteristic is concerned with developing *"real"* conversation as well as the ability to reflect on our thinking and patterns of behaviour. Senge (1990:14) goes on to say, "*Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. We become able to re-create ourselves"* This is important not just in organisational learning but in individual learning too.

### 3.5.2   Individual Learning

There is a growing demand from individuals for a greater involvement in and more choice about their development. Whitmore (2002) observes that" *we are entering a new age in training interventions where people are encouraged to develop themselves"*.  Sloman (2002) echoes this view and offers a new paradigm for training professions, *"one based around managing learner centred interventions"*. I would argue that coaching is a learner-centred intervention and as such is suited to organisations which strongly encourage individuals to take ownership and responsibility for their development.

David Kolb (1984:38) defines adult learning as, *"the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience."* Of particular interest for me here is the idea of learning through experience and reflection.   Shaw (2002:9) talks about the process of reflection and says "we *can learn to design with increasing self-consciousness the patterns that it will be useful to find ourselves in next time we pause to reflect"*. The work of Thomas and Harri-Augustein (1991) on the self organised learner suggests a "re-wind" to help the learner develop a habit of observing and reflecting on their learning.  I have found this process of

"re-winding" a conversation and reflecting has enabled me to assess my own learning.

Thomas et al (1991) developed the idea of *"self organised learning",* which sees the learner at the centre of learning by giving them responsibility for identifying the learning and managing the learning process. Harri-Augustein et al (1995:153) offer this definition of self organised learning; *"The conversational construction, reconstruction and exchange of personally significant, relevant and viable meanings with purposefulness and controlled awareness. The patterns of meanings we construct are the basis of all our actions".* This links with Kelly's (1995:39) work, Personal Construct Psychology, which suggests it is the learner who decides the direction of the learning which has personal meaning. Kelly (ibid: 42) introduced the idea of the *"personal scientist"* indicating that the learner is free to select their own paradigm of learning. Harri-Augustein et al (1991) see the methodology of learning as a conversation and the opportunity to self organise provides the framework for developing an individual process of learning. Self organised learning is concerned with:

- how the learner can achieve empowerment through taking responsibility for their learning
- how they adapt or replace any negative personal learning myths, creating opportunities to challenge underlying values......deconstructing and re-building patterns of beliefs and values
- the learner being able to assess their own learning.....referencing own thoughts feelings and standards.

For me this theoretical perspective on learning makes the link between learning and conversation. Moreover, I would suggest that the coach is the facilitator of that learning conversation and as such will accompany the learner to help them make explicit their process of learning.

Argyris (1991) introduced the idea of single and double loop learning. Single loop learning is concerned with the skills and knowledge people need to know to move into action.  Double loop learning is about reflecting on our mental model, how are we thinking and how are we feeling.

Hargrove (2003), also suggests a further loop, triple loop learning, which is about how we are being and offers the model in figure 9 overleaf.  Talbert (2001) argues that triple loop learning is the product of years of self observation and reflection, however, Hargrove (2003) suggests that coaching is particularly well placed to support this process. Senge (1990) adds that both double and triple loop learning support the characteristics of a learning organisation.

**Figure 7**



Source: Hargrove,2003
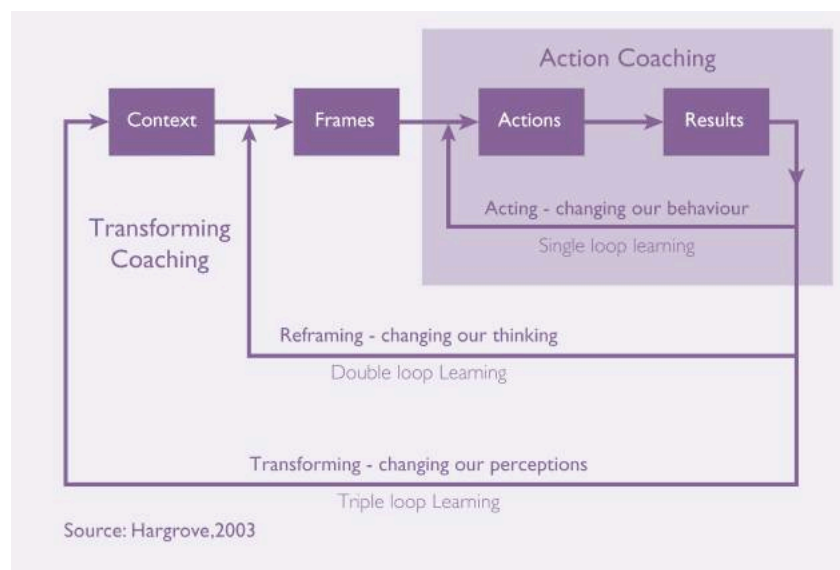
So far I have discussed models which suggest learning from the past to inform the future, Senge et al (2005) proposed a model to learn from the future.  I have included this as I believe that this may contribute to our understanding of what happens in a coaching conversation and it also picks up on the double and triple loop learning ideas previously discussed.

For a number of years, the four authors (Peter Senge, C Otto Schamer, Joseph Joworski and Betty Sue Flowers) sought to understand how deep

transformational change really happens.  It was Scharmer (2007) who developed what he described as the "theory U". Brian Arthur of the Santa Fe Institute shared his thoughts about learning with Schamer and Jaworski talked about learning as a deeper way of knowing.  Arthur identified three steps:

1.  Observe, observe, observe
2.  Retreat and Reflect
3.  Act in an instant

Scharmer (2007: 31) knew Arthur was onto something significant and for the next few years he worked with his colleagues (Senge et al 2005) to discover the "U model".  See Figure 8, below:

Downloading..... patterns of the past

VOJ

suspending

Seeing with fresh eyes

VOC

redirecting

Sensing from the field

VOF

letting-go

Access Your...

Open Mind

Open Heart

Open Will

Presencing connecting to Source

Performing: ..... achieve results through practices, infrastructures

embodying

Prototyping: co-create strategic microcosms

enacting

Crystallizing vision and intention

letting-come

Who is my Self? What is my Work?

Scharmer argues that this is a model for both organisational learning and individual learning. It is not a process to be applied but a conceptual framework to inform a way of being with learning. It is about connecting with the now and what wants to emerge.  In a coaching conversation, the coach supports the

coachee to look at the presenting issue with fresh eyes and from the field. The coachee is encouraged to suspend judgement, cynicism and fear to allow new ideas, new learning to emerge. The coachee then moves into action, to build on small steps, knowing it is acceptable to make mistakes. I believe the "U theory" is about taking a journey to deepen our sense of where we are. It aligns with the complexity ideas of emergent learning.

Thus far I have given space to the underpinning theory and literature supporting this research. What follows is a set of images from coaching literature which inform my inquiry.

## 3.6    Coaching

As I begin to write this section, I look back at my MSc thesis and the literature review. In it I said, "*In 1992, Popper and Lipshitz wrote 'coaching is a much discussed topic on which little has been written at a theoretical level'*". I believe that this has changed, particularly in the past four years, with more empirical research carried out and published. Back in 2001, Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson presented a literature review on coaching in which they suggest that coaching articles tend to fall into six main themes; standards, purpose, techniques, comparison of coaching with other interventions, the coachees themselves and coach credentials.

Since then Grant, (2003) has provided a bibliography of the published peer reviewed literature on coaching beginning in the 1930s through to 2003. My own review of the literature seems to suggest a widening of the subject area to include; coaching from a  particular psychological or philosophical perspective (Joseph, Spinelli, Duchame);  studies into the outcome of coaching (Wasylyshyn, Leedham, O'Neil); coaching supervision (Hawkins, Hay); coaching culture (Clutterbuck, Megginson), and coaching case studies (Schnell, Talbot-Landon, Lincoln).  There are a number of articles which call for more research into

coaching. Bennett (2006) discusses coaching related research and offers a list of potential research topics for would-be researchers to draw from.   Grant, Kilburg and Lowman believe that if coaching is to become a profession, then there is a need for more positivist scientific-practitioner based research.  That said, Lowman (2005) also acknowledges the value of qualitative / narrative research but urges caution as these approaches can lead to *"unfounded assumptions, advocacy on the basis of argument, and a mutual admiration society".*  This is a useful reminder as my intention is for my research to contribute to the professional knowledge of the wider coaching community. I now turn my attention to the body of literature which I believe informs my inquiry

### 3.6.1   What is coaching?

The definitions of coaching vary widely but an article by Witherspoon and White (1996) offers an interesting starting point. The authors define the word "*coach*" from the English Dictionary as being "*a particular kind of carriage*". They go on to say that the "*root meaning of the verb **to coach** is to convey a valued person from where they were to where they want to be*"  Witherspoon et al (ibid) go on to describe four types of coaching:

- Skills coaching;
- Performance coaching;
- Development coaching;
- Executive coaching.

West and Milan (2001) reduce these four categories of coaching to three; Skills coaching, performance coaching and development coaching. Peltier (2110:xv) however, says there are just two: management coaching and executive coaching. Management coaching is "*a set of day to day skills exercised by managers", while executive coaching he describes as "one on one services to top leaders in an organisation on the principle that positive changes will be leveraged to filter down and enhance the entire organisation".*

Whitmore (2002) suggests, *"coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them"*. I believe that coaching is about the conversation, about what emerges between individuals in their interactions with each other and what they each notice about what is happening.  The coaching conversation is a process of inquiry, a dialogue which enables exploration and discovery.  As Stober (2006) says, *"coaching is above all about human growth and development"*.  My personal definition of coaching states that *"coaching is a learning conversation; a shared inquiry to facilitate a client's learning and unlearning. The coach supports the client to expand their way of being; helping them to make sense of what is and to discover what is meaningful for them. Coaching helps the client to access new possibilities for themselves"* (Aquilina 2005).  But how does the conversation happen?

### 3.6.2   A framework for the coaching conversation

West and Milan (2001) suggest that coaches tend to practice from the perspective of one of three schools of psychology: psychoanalytic, cognitive behavioural or humanistic. Certainly, coaching skills, such as *"active listening and empathy, self awareness, process observation, giving and getting feedback….reframing",* are all derived from psychology (Peltier 2001:xx) However, other schools such as philosophy, psychotherapy, counselling  and organisational theory also inform different styles of coaching.  I am not going to explore all these approaches; there are a number of books available, such as Hudson (1999), Passmore (2006) and Stober et al (2006).  Instead I am simply going to focus on two approaches: GROW and Solutions Focused Brief Therapy. Both these approaches inform the way the coaches in this inquiry work.

### 3.6.2.1 G.R.O.W

The GROW model was created from the work of Timothy Galwey (Downey 2003:10).  Galwey was a tennis couch who became curious about why really good tennis players were not reaching their potential.  He wondered what was

getting in the way and how he could help them to match their performance to their potential.  Galwey began to notice how the internal thought processes were having an impact on performance as well as external factors such as the environment. He called these internal and external factors interferences and came up with this:

**Potential** minus **interference** equals **performance**

Galwey realised that if he could reduce the interference, this would enable the individual to become more focused on what they were seeking to achieve and therefore create a closer connection between performance and potential.  He began to ask questions that helped the individual increase their awareness about what they were seeking to do.  In this way, Galwey was supporting the person to generate data for themselves, to notice and correct the action to achieve the desired outcome.  Galwey was suggesting a different approach to teaching in sport, a coaching approach.  GROW was born.

Sir John Whitmore (2002) and Graham Alexander took Galwey's ideas and introduced the GROW model, popularising it by taking it into organisations.

In essence, GROW is a performance coaching model.  In fact, Whitmore (ibid: 32) identifies two key principles, "building awareness and responsibility", saying that both are crucial to performance coaching.

Coaching for Whitmore (2002) also draws on the work of the Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli who developed the discipline of psycho-synthesis. Building on humanistic psychology, psycho-synthesis is concerned with bringing meaning and purpose into our lives.  The coach supports the coachee to reframe their life as a developmental journey and to see issues in a positive light which will inform the actions going forward.   Whitmore (ibid), believes this approach allows coachees to begin to find their own inner leadership.

**Figure 9**



The GROW Model

• Agree topic for discussion
• Agree specific objective of session
• Set long-term aim if appropriate

GOAL

• Commit to action
• Identify possible obstacles
• Make steps specific & define timing
• Agree support

WRAP-UP

REALITY

OPTIONS

• Cover the full range of options
• Invite suggestions from the coachee
• Offer suggestions carefully
• Ensure choices are made

• Invite self-assessment
• Offer specific examples of feedback
• Avoid or check assumptions
• Discard irrelevant history

### 3.6.2.2    Solutions Focused Brief Therapy

The Solution Focused approach, on the other hand, is less concerned with the presenting issue and more interested in the coachee and their desired outcome. Back in 1986, a group of therapists in Milwaukee, led by Steve do Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg developed a very different approach to problem solving. They became interested in brief therapy work being developed in Palo Alto, California.  This work looked at problem patterns, revealing how often the solutions simply maintained the problem rather than solving it.  De Shazer identified that even in chronic problem behaviour, there were times when the problem was less acute or absent altogether.  At the same time, the group in Milwaukee also began to study client's responses during therapy sessions. They started to notice greater success when they focused the work on the person and their hopes for the future rather than the problem.

The result of these two ideas was the development of a therapy, solutions focused brief therapy.  The essence of this approach is contained in the following principles:

- Working with the person rather than the problem;
- Looking for resources rather than deficits;
- Exploring possible and  preferred futures;
- Exploring what is already contributing to those possible futures;
- Treating clients (or in this case coachees) as the experts in all aspects of their lives.

The solution focused approach tends to be "content free", in other words, unlike GROW; there is little or no exploration of the issue.  Instead the conversation is a process of collaborating and co-operating to co-construct a solution that meets the individual's needs. The focus is on encouraging the coachee to think in a solutions oriented way to achieve positive change.

Solution focused can be seen as a collection of tools and techniques. However, there are a number of models which can be used to frame the coaching conversation, the most popular of which is OSKAR (Jackson et al 2002).

Solutions focused brief therapy helps the coachee to build future possibilities and uses the language of the conversation to explore ideas and identify how to move forward in practice.

### 3.6.2   The coaching conversation

In looking at coaching and two different approaches to the conversation, I now want to re-connect with the idea that coaching is a learning conversation, where through the conversation, the coach and coachee co- create a new reality which has meaning for the learner.

In a document by Megginson & Cox (adapted from a draft chapter in Garvey et al forthcoming), they comment on how coaching is characterised as an opportunity for dialogue. They go on to say, *"As a means of learning from dialogue, the coaching and mentoring interaction is, it could be argued, second to none"*. Stelter (2007) similarly suggests that coaching is a learning and development conversation. Laske (2007) adds that the process of the coaching conversation, coming from a developmental paradigm, supports the coachee in their meaning making. Stelter (2007) argues that if coaching is not supporting the coachee in the process of "meaning making" then the coaching conversation becomes *"a superficial conversation"*.

It is in the space provided by the coaching conversation that the coachee is allowed to reflect on their own experiences in relation to the context they find themselves in and to others in a social situation (Stelter 2007).
Cavanagh (in Stober 2006:338) describes the conversation as a dynamic process and highlights its reflective nature through his "three reflective spaces model". These three spaces are:

1. The internal conversation within the coachee
2. The shared space created between coach and coachee
3. The space within the coach – where the coach's internal dialogue happens.

Cavanagh (ibid) draws on Stacey's complex adaptive systems (2000) to explain the emergent nature of the coaching conversation. He (ibid: 337) says" *the coaching engagement is an organisation that emerges from the complex interaction of the coach and client – it is a co-created conversation"*.

See figure 10 overleaf.

**Figure 10**

The three Reflective Spaces
A dynamic Model of the Coaching Conversation
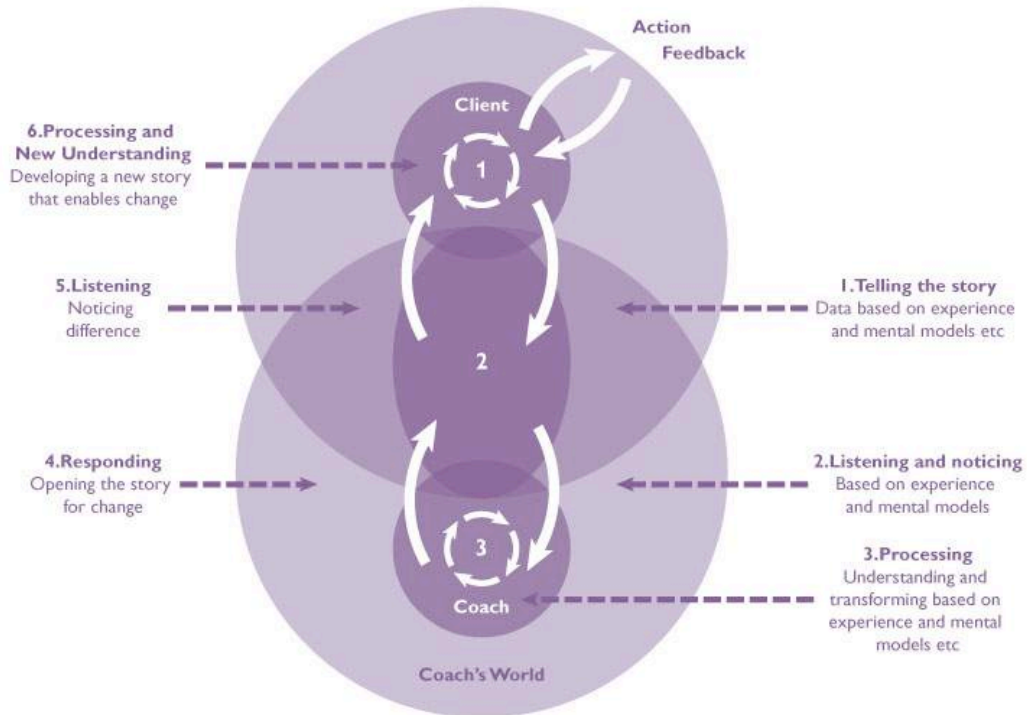


Cavanagh (ibid) seems to pointing to the complex dance of the coaching conversation not just in the shared space but in what is going on for both the coach and coachee outside of that space. Stelter (2007) picks up this last point. He identifies how the coach needs to pay attention to their internal dialogue and emphasises the need for education and supervision for coaches.   In thinking about the coachee, Stelter (ibid) goes further than Cavanagh, suggesting that despite coaching being a one on one intervention, the coachee will also interact with others outside of the coaching.  Therefore, meaning is also developed beyond the coaching conversation with the coach; it is developed through and with the interaction of others, which he calls social meaning making.  Stelter (ibid) says, "*we co-create a specific life or work practice with the people involved in specific contexts. These contexts produce a practice that*

*comes into play in co-action or joint action with the participants that are part of a certain community of practice".*

The idea of a community of practice was the inspiration for a peer coaching initiative developed by Hosmer (2006). He looked at how coaching could be cascaded through peer relationships by re-creating the coach – coachee experience outside of the coaching relationship. Hosmer (ibid) developed a model which he calls "*Cascading Coaching*". Although in the early stages of evolution, Hosmar (ibid) is noticing a shift in the culture as a result of peer coaching. He believes that as the peer coaches begin to use the same thought provoking questions they have experienced as coachees, they will begin to change the kinds of conversation taking place.

Finally, I want to draw attention to the idea of the "internal coach". Frisch (2001) defines internal coaching as a "*developmental intervention supported by the organisation and provided by someone trained to work as a coach*" and who "*is trusted to shape and deliver a programme yielding individual professional growth.*" (ibid). Frisch says that internal coaching is a sign of a learning organisation (Senge, 1994). Both Frisch (2001) and Hosmer (2006) highlight the catalytic effect targeted coaching can have on organisational learning.

## 3.7    Leadership

I wondered how best to represent this vast subject area of leadership. I offer a short introduction to the ideas around leadership but then focus on my own assumptions about leadership.

### 3.7.1   Introduction

Bennis and Nanus (1985) state that "the *definition of leadership depends on context; but broadly it is about influencing the behaviour of others. Contrast*

*between leadership and management; leaders set the purpose and vision of the organisation, while managers implement it".*

Studies into leadership have sought to identify those factors that make certain individuals particularly effective as leaders. The leadership trait approach is predicated on a general acceptance that what will differentiate a leader from a non leader are their enduring personal characteristics or traits. Therefore trait theory would argue that leaders are born.

The research which followed looked into the behaviours which might differentiate effective from non effective leaders. The numerous studies in this area seem to emphasise four styles:

1. Concern for task – "task orientated" or "product orientated"
2. Concern for people – " people orientated" or "employee centred"
3. Directive leadership – "authoritarian" or "autocratic"
4. Participative – "democratic".

The influence of situational factors on leadership behaviour is the focus for other leadership theorists. They argue that different situations require different kinds of leadership. Contingency theory (Fiedler 1967) is strongly supported by empirical research.

Transformational leadership models emphasise the role of the "transforming leader". This is someone who defines an organisation's vision and then communicates this vision in a way that motivates and inspires people to achieve more than they ever thought they could.

More recently interest has centred on relationships between leaders and followers, with some writers stressing the need to study *"followership"*. This period

also saw the growth of attention on the difference between management and leadership (Kotter 1990).

### 3.7.2   What informs my view of leadership?

Leadership thinking has moved through a number of phases; from the management and control of task, to the management of relationship and behaviour.  Added to which, if we see the organisation as a living system and take on board the ideas of the learning organisation (Senge 1994), then leadership is concerned with the management of knowledge and thought.  De Pre (2004) suggests that leadership is an art. He expands on this saying that, *"the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two the leader must become a servant and a debtor"*.

Ralph Stacey (2002) suggests that leaders today need to navigate an organisational environment where there is high uncertainty and diversity of views. Leaders need to manage performance and create structure and control whilst at the same time create the conditions for innovation and risk taking. Figure 11 below illustrates this tension.

**Figure 11**



The leadership paradox

Far from agreement

**Extra-ordinary Management**
- Creates conditions which foster innovation and renewal
- increase flow of information
- challenges habits and assumptions
- fosters connectivity
- promotes diversity
- reduces power differentials

**Ordinary Management**
- creates minimalist structure
- effective procedures to support core business processes
- effective 'performance management
- manages the money

Near to agreement

Near to certainty          Based on the work Ralph Stacey, adapted by Bill Critchley          Far from certainty

Being an authentic leader is an important aspect for me and draws on many of the emergent properties discussed earlier. Authentic leadership is about being genuine to oneself and to others and being able to acknowledge one´s own vulnerability. Authentic leadership requires the leader to hold ambiguity whilst articulating a vision for the future and a sense of what is possible.

Senge (1994) points to leadership being not just an individual activity but a collective effort. He says *"leadership is the collective capacity to create something useful"*. Pedler et al (2004), suggest that *"leadership is about recognising and responding to the CHALLENGES facing us in our organisations and communities"*. They offer a model of leadership which has three domains: Characteristics; Context; and Challenge. (see figure 3 page 25). They suggest that the responsibility for leaderships sits with the individual but in and through the relationship with others. The idea of connection we have seen as a thread in my montage comes into vision again.

Visualising a connection between this 3 C Model of Leadership and Senge's (1994) idea of mastery in a Learning Organisation, Pedler et al promote the idea of leadership practices. They say, *"practice is a doing word, it is what you or I do as a leader. Because it is what I do, it is also a key part of who I am……I **am** my practice"*. And it is through practice that the leader connects to the wider community (ibid: 10).

## 3.8    On the Cutting Room Floor

In this chapter I have shared with you my montage of theory and literature. My choice of film was to emphasise the movement of the different images as they flow in and out from each other.

In creating my montage, I have edited out other pictures which have some relevance but are not core to my inquiry.  I have chosen to focus on what is informing my work and this inquiry so I could maintain the richness of what each image has to offer.  This is at the expense of letting go of theory and literature which through a different researcher's lens is equally if not more valid than my own choices.

In the next chapter I will expand on my research paradigm and offer my research methodology. I have chosen to situate my inquiry in action research and will introduce this in the next chapter together with appreciative inquiry and co-ordinated management of meaning both of which support my inquiry.

## Chapter Four

## Framing my Inquiry

## 4.0    Introduction

When I embarked on my professional doctorate I saw the journey as a means of connecting my practice as a coach to my research inquiry and my research acting as a vehicle to improve my coaching practice.

I have always been curious about how individuals, teams and organisational communities learn through tailored interventions and informal networks. As I reflected on how my coaching work was developing and how it continues to develop, I realised that I am increasingly drawn to the work I do as an Orgnisational Development Consultant as well as my one to one work with coachees. The combination of organisational demand for coaching and my own desire to expand my portfolio has led me to question my own practice. Is the way I operate across all aspects of my work congruent with my coaching philosophy or do I simply hold the coaching stance in that one to one setting?

I believe that coaching is about learning so that they are able to make choices, grow and achieve their desired potential.  As I considered how I wanted to develop my practice in the coaching field, I recognised that the research element of my doctorate programme would help me to discover my own voice, my own personal authority in this new emerging discipline.

I had been noticing how the coaching conversation is a process of inquiry. Moreover, it is a co created conversation through which the coachee can explore and identify what is meaningful for them.  The coachee´s interactions with the coach and others in subsequent conversations outside the coaching session, allow for new possibilities to emerge. I was keen to find a way of capturing the richness of the coaching conversation and understand the impact of this type of conversation on the individual coachee within the wider system.

Some of the questions that were emerging for me, at that time, included:

- How do I help others learn and develop?
- How do I help other coaches learn through reflective conversation?
- How can I contribute effectively to the development of coaching as a profession?
- How can coaching help change the conversation in organisations?

In holding these and other questions for myself, it occurred to me that if I learn to be more present, to stay awake to what is going on around me I may be able to answer some of those questions. I was looking for a research methodology that would allow me to think about my practice in the context of organisational learning.

## 4.1    Living theory of Action Research

I was introduced to the work of Judi Marshall (1999) by a colleague.  In her article," *living life as inquiry (1999),* Marshall describes how she applies the "*notions of inquiry*" (ibid) through all her life spaces.  Marshall (1999) suggests that as researchers we should adopt this self reflective approach not just in our work but also in other areas of life, *"living continually in process, adjusting, seeing what emerges, bringing things into question"* (ibid). This article spoke to me; it seemed to bring together those two strands of inquiry, thinking about my own practice and my practice in the context of organisational learning.

I have chosen to locate my research within the living theory of action research. As it is practitioner research it aligns with my own research purpose, to learn in practice and from practice.   The process of action research allows me to work

on real issues in the work-place, researching the questions as they emerge. The emphasis of action research is on continuous iteration over time. That said, it is not merely a process of inquiry but it is a methodology which encourages the inquirer to share their findings with the outside world. This is an important aspect for me if I am going to discover my own voice, my own personal authority in this new emerging discipline.

I did also consider a case study approach. I had used this methodology in my MSc and whilst it would fit with the exploratory nature of my research and allow me to take advantage of situations as they occur, I did not feel it would give me the flexibility to broaden out the research beyond the BBC. The soft systems approach focused on the system, testing through to solution. In a similar way to action research it offered me a method by which to study the "soft" human activity within a system. The emphasis in soft systems is on analysing the problem, seeking possible solutions, comparing the outcome to an ideal. The focus here is on the "what" and I was keen to focus on the "how". I was drawn to living systems theory and the concept of emergence. Emergence arises between individuals in their interactions and in what they notice about what is happening in that space between them. Given my social constructionist underpinning, "living systems theory" seemed to be congruent with who I am as a researcher and my inquiry.

It was Jack Whitehead (2006:32) who coined the term living theory. He said "……*practice was a form of real-life theorising. As we practise, we observe what we do and reflect on it. We make sense of what we are doing through researching it. We gather data and generate evidence to support our claims that we know what we are doing and why we are doing it (our theories of practice) and we test these knowledge claims for their validity through the critical feedback of others. These theories are our living theories"*. Whitehead (ibid:44) goes on to say that the process of researching how to improve what we do as practitioners allows us develop our living theory.

In my mind, Whitehead (2006) was pointing to an authentic research process which works with questions and concerns from an ontological stance of being and who I am. This aligns with Hargrove (2003: 43) who says, "*a coach is something that you 'be'*" and goes on to say "*all we have is who we 'are', and this in turn shapes what we do. Being is sometimes thought of as something intangible, abstract or even ineffable, but it is actually quite real*"*(ibid:45)*. I believe action research to be "*a form of practitioner research that can be used to help you improve your practice in many different types of workplaces*" (McNiff et al 2003:7). As Reason et al (2001:2) point out, the aim of action research is to "*…..produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in everyday conduct of their lives*".  Mcniff et al (ibid) remind me that it is not enough for action research to be merely an investigation into self. In order for my inquiry to be a valid research piece, I need to identify a set of criteria against which to judge my work.

The aforementioned authors also suggest the role of a "critical friend", someone with whom to discuss and critique the data. "*The responsibility of a critical friend is to be both a friend and critic.  As a friend, you are supportive and available to listen to the practitioner's account of their research.  As a critic, your work is to offer thoughtful responses to the account, raising points that perhaps the practitioner had not thought about*". (Whitehead 2006:103). I asked a colleague Wendy Briner, an independent consultant to take on this role of "*critical friend*". She and I would be working together on some aspects of my inquiry and so would understand the subject matter but was also sufficiently detached to challenge my thinking.  I prefer to think of her as a "shadow researcher ",(Warner Burke 1982), someone who is a sounding board, an advisor, a confidant and coach. Irrespective of the title, Wendy role modelled this responsibility brilliantly.

4.2     Action Reflective Cycle

There are a number of different approaches in the literature, I realised early on that my challenge was to find the one which works for me and my research aims and purpose.  In the next few paragraphs I will outline just some of those approaches before offering the approach I chose to take.

Action research is concerned with, "*inquiring behaviour and democratic dialogue",* (Reason 2001). By its very nature, therefore, the process of action research is both, *"active and reflective"* (ibid). Reason goes on to say, "*As methods of action inquiry, practitioners would emphasise that these constructions of reality become manifest not just through the "mind" but through reflective action of persons and communities"* (Reason 1994: 133*)*. Ladkin (2003) suggests that the notion of a cycle of action and reflection is the "*cornerstone of most action research processes".*

Kurt Lewin, widely considered the founder of action research, developed the "action research cycle".  His approach involves a spiral of steps, "each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action"(bid).

McNiff (2002) suggests a possible cycle of research which I have summarised below:

1.  Identify and area of practice to be investigated;
2.  Imagine a way forward;
3.  Try it out and take stock of what happens;
4.  Review and evaluate;
5.  Change practice in light of what we have discovered

Whitehead, (in Mcniff et al 2002:59) says that the research inquiry should begin from a self reflective period which highlights the in congruency between one's actions and values. Whitehead (ibid) suggests the following cycle of inquiry:

- I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in my practice;
- I imagine a solution to that concern;
- I act in the direction of the imagined solution;
- I modify my practice, plans and ideas in the light of the evaluation.

Ladkin (2003) suggests that this cycle provide a framework for the research but it can only be a framework because action research is not a linear process. Rowan in Reason et al (2001) grounds his research cycle in the humanistic school. He suggests we begin with where we are, this he describes as *"being"*. Then there is some sort of a *"disturbance"*, either a problem to be solved or an opportunity to take advantage of. We move into the *"thinking"* phase when we gather information, survey the literature, engage with others and through this determine what our research question is. We then start to invent our *"project"* a plan of action which may change as the research develops. In *"encounter"* we get into the field of research before standing back to make sense of what we have found. When we arrive at something we then *"communicate"* to others. Rowan's (2001) action research cycle captures the movement between being and the encounter and action.

In considering the different approaches I went back to McNiff (2002) and used a slightly adapted version of that approach. See figure 12 overleaf. My area of concern was "how can coaching help change conversations in organisations?" and as I will explain in the following chapters each cycle of research tends to become a series of different inquiries- as one question is resolved, another surfaces. Also, what emerges is often unexpected and not in tune with any pre-determined views. This was certainly my experience. My inquiry was not a

rounded cycle. Instead it felt more like a series of random lines lacking connection. Then suddenly, a connection would emerge and launch another cycle of research.

**Figure 12**



4.3    Process of Action Research

Action research works at the individual, group and wider system levels. Reason & McArdle, (http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/index.html), link action research with organisation development, saying that both " *involve an interplay between 'me' ( my own experience and behaviour), 'us' (our immediate peers) and 'them' ( the wider organisation) and encourage attention to be paid simultaneously to all three perspectives".*  This link is important as through the process of my inquiry, I became increasingly aware of that interplay between 'who' I am as a coach and what informs my practice with my learning in the wider organisation system, an important aspect as an OD practitioner and a coach.

Reason (2001) labels these levels as three broad strategies for action research practice:

- First person inquiry – the researcher's ability to *"foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act choicefully, and to assess effects in the outside world while acting" (ibid);*

- Second person inquiry – this addresses "*our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern"* (ibid). It is concerned with improving practice in ourselves and others in the community of practice;

- Third person inquiry – this *"aims to create a wider community of inquiry."*(ibid). This cycle of inquiry may operate in the wider organisation or outside with a professional body.

My first person inquiry focused on my practice as a coach and as an OD practitioner. In chapter one, I offered some background to my journey. In the following chapter, I offer the outcome of my 1st person inquiry:

- My evolved practice as a coach
- My development as an OD practitioner

In chapters 7 and 8, I offer the three cycles of my second person inquiry. Here I discuss how I took my concern, the focus of my inquiry into an organisation, the BBC. Chapter two provided some context to the organisational setting, its background, its purpose, its culture and its challenges.

I have included a research schedule in Appendix Three

In chapter eleven, I offer the beginnings of a third person inquiry, how I am taking my inquiry out into the wider community.

Figure 13 overleaf summarises the three different cycles.

**Figure 13 First, Second and Third Person Inquiry**
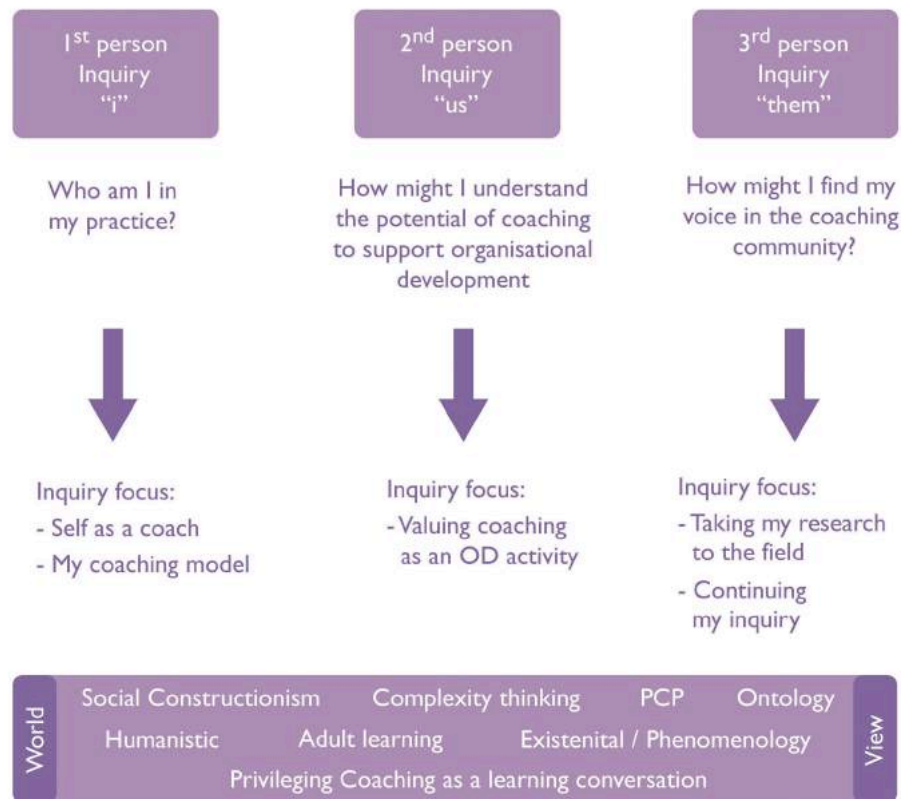


## 4.4    Data Collection and Analysis

Bradbury (2001) poses the question, "*how basic organisational behaviour principles, that are those of participation and good conversation, could create an architecture from within which practices in support of sustainable development would emerge*".  As I consider Hilary Bradbury's (ibid) question I recognised the challenges I faced in collecting the data and analysing it. Moreover, whilst I had been able to see connections between my first, second and third level inquiries, from the perspective of the underpinning theory and literature with data collection and analysis, the connections were less apparent. It seemed to me that collecting the data and finding a way to understand what was emerging required a more eclectic approach given that I wanted to honour

both the first person and second person inquiry in my methodology. I was relieved to read in Hussey et al (1997) that it is possible to use mixed methodologies, that "….*it is not unusual in business research to take a mixture of approaches, particularly in the methods of collecting and analysing data"*. The authors highlight the importance of articulating how you draw the material together and make sense of it.  This is a helpful reminder to me,  not to be too restrictive in my choice of approaches but to ensure that they are coherent with each other and the aims of the research.

4.4.1 First person inquiry

The aim of my first person inquiry is not only to explore and improve my professional practice and to consider who am **I** asking the question?

I returned to Judi Marshall (1991), my inspiration for thinking about how to live in inquiry in all our life spaces.  In a later article, Marshall (2001:433) suggests that inquiry requires discipline and the development of practices.  She says, "*each person's inquiry approach will be distinctive, disciplines cannot be cloned or copied. Rather each person must identify and craft his own qualities and practice".*  Marshall (ibid:433) puts forward the notion of *"inner and outer arcs of attention".*  By referring to the *"inner arc"*, Marshall (ibid) draws my attention to noticing myself, what I perceive, what is meaningful for me, how I say things and the patterns I notice in me.  On the other hand, the *"outer arc"* is about *"reaching outside myself"* which means engaging, exploring and testing with others.  The inner and the outer arc of attention work together generating a self reflective practice for learning.  This concept of inner and outer arc of attention made a significant impact on my journaling, and while I cannot claim to be anything more than a beginner in this practice, the increased richness of data was apparent.   Marshall (2001:434), goes on to say that the art of reflecting in and after the action should become *"a way of life, a form of inquiring into(professional) practice".*   Experiencing the dance of moving between action

and reflection seems to keep the practice of reflective inquiry alive and generative.  In Chapter five I will offer the outcomes of this inquiry.

4.4.2 Second Person Inquiry

Ladkin (2003) suggests that second person inquiry focuses on an issue of "*common concern or interest*".  My concern was how coaching can help change conversations in organisations. As language is an important aspect of coaching, this became my starting point. In my programme plan I had considered both discourse analysis and narrative analysis. I rejected both. Discourse analysis focuses on the construction of the language and although it fitted well with my social constructionist paradigm, I felt I would lose the richness of the data. On the other hand, narrative analysis is based on the premise that we construct a certain order in the way we tell our story. Reissman (1993) suggests that narratives "*open up the forms of telling about experience, not simply the content to which the language refers*" This particular approach would align with the participant organisation, the BBC, as programme makers are likely to respond well to being asked to tell their story.  However, as story tellers, it was possible that both the participants and I would become caught by the content which would move me away from my purpose of my inquiry. I also believed there was more to this than just the story. For example, what meaning was unfolding for the coachee in the conversation?

I also looked at content analysis, but rejected it on two counts, the first because it tends to be rooted in a positivistic paradigm and I felt it would reduce the richness of the data into a series of codes.  I discovered Co-ordinated Management of Meaning through a conversation with a colleague and on further exploration felt that it might well suit my needs.  In the next section, I offer an overview of this approach and why I chose to use Co-ordinated Management of Meaning in my research.  I will explain how I used it in chapter 7.

4.4.2.1    Co-ordinated  Management of Meaning

Barnett Pearce and Cronen (2004) developed the theory of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory which argues that persons-in-conversation construct their own social realities. Its focus is on the interaction between and among the communicators. Barnett Pearce ( 2004) says, *"Communication is about meaning…we live in lives filled with meanings and one of our life challenges is to manage those meanings so that we make our social worlds coherent and live within them with honour and respect……managing those meanings is never done in isolation……we are co-ordinating the way we manage our meanings with other people"*.

CMM attempts to describe the patterns of communication, explain how they are constructed in order to intervene to create "better" ones.  It is therefore emphasising the process of the conversation rather than the products of the conversation.  In other words, what is talked about and how it is talked about is an ongoing dance, a flow. CMM allows us to come away form the idea that a conversation is a transactional process and highlights the ongoing nature of the conversation. This is particularly relevant to my inquiry as I was curious about the conversations that happen within the coaching but also those conversations in-between the coaching sessions as well as beyond.  CMM seemed to honour what I believed was the generative process of coaching.  Barnett Pearce (2004) adds, *"the most human of human characteristics is that we are involved in patterns of communication with each other ……….we use language; we live in constant patterns of call-and-response; we perceive within frames and context"*.

CMM also acknowledges the influence of context. Bateson (1972) says there is *"no meaning without context"* and this had particular relevance to my inquiry. The coaching activity I was exploring was situated in the context of an organisational strategy, which required its leaders to develop new and different ways of leading. Leaders were making sense of their leadership role and applying their learning n the context of the BBC.

I was also struck by the parallel with action research.  Barnet Pearce (2004) describes CMM as a *"practical theory"* which as such aligns well with the philosophy of action research, developing theory from practice.   Furthermore, CMM draws on a number of theoretical perspectives, some of which are part of my own montage of theory and literature, for example social constructionism. Barnett Pearce (2004) also uses the idea of a *"bricolage"* to pull together the different influences for CMM.  For me, the coherence between my own "montage" and Barnett Pearce's "bricolage" brought into focus the strong fit of this approach with my inquiry.

Finally, CMM also directs our attention to the stories that we tell that make our lives meaningful. The construction of meaning is an inherent part of what it means to be human, and the *'story'* is the primary form of this process. CMM suggests that we tell stories about many things, including our own individual and collective identity and the world around us. However, Barnett Pearce (2004) does not suggest that the story is just mere facts; rather he directs the attention to look beyond the stories themselves to continue to see what is being created. To look at the pattern which is emerging and ask, 'how is it made' and 'how might we remake it differently'. This was an important dimension of CMM for me as I believe that coaching supports an outcome which is meaningful for the coachee and I wanted to include that aspect in my research.

The limitations of CMM include the number of terms it uses which can make understanding the theory quite difficult. Very often these different terms describe the same concept but just in different ways.

Researchers with a more scientific paradigm may see CMM as vague and woolly, this is because, its explanation is not straightforward and the terms often change with the theorists thinking.   It does not focus on what **exactly** is crucial in

the communication interaction, there is no hypothesis that is testable and it only focuses in on the "now" and not on how the theory might affect future events.

That said, I believe CMM offers a useful theory for examining communication interactions and how the conversation constructs our world. I will expand on my application of CMM in chapter Eight as I believe that in its application it is more accessible.

4.4.2.2.        Appreciative Inquiry

Alongside CMM, I chose Appreciative Inquiry as an underlay for my inquiry. AI is also located in social constructionism.

AI is both a philosophy and a process. Developed by David Cooperrider, AI seeks out the best of "what is" to help ignite the collective imagination of "what might be". The aim is to generate new knowledge which expands the "realm of the possible". Cooperider (in Watkins 2001) describes AI as "….*the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilisation of inquiry through the crafting of the "unconditional positive question" often involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of people."*

AI adopts a strengths based approach, by appreciating the best of what is, envisioning what might be, dialoguing what should be and innovating what will be. It sees organisations as a possibility to be realised and a mystery to be embraced rather than a problem to be solved. This concept is particularly relevant for my inquiry because I chose to begin from idea that coaching was seen as a beneficial activity in the BBC. This came from previous internal studies and my own MSc research, all of which endorsed coaching as being of value. Moreover, I was not interested in evaluating whether coaching worked but rather what was its value in changing the conversation. Magruder -Watkins et al

2001define AI as *"a collaborative and highly participative, system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the "life-giving forces" that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic and organisational terms. It is a journey during which profound knowledge of a human system at its moments of wonder is uncovered and used to co-construct the best and highest future of that system."*

My final thought on AI is the link offered by Reed (2007) between AI and action research and social constuctionism. Reed (ibid) suggests that AI and action research are often used together when exploring the process of change. Similarly, AI links in with social constructionism and CMM in exploring the meaning.

### 4.4.3 Third Person Inquiry

I return to action research and the third-person inquiry. Reason (ibid) describes third-person research/practice as *"attempts to create conditions which awaken and support the inquiring qualities of first and second-person research practice in a wider community"*. However, he (ibid) acknowledges that whilst first and second level inquiry processes are reasonably well established, third-person inquiry remains a challenge. As I complete this thesis, I recognise that I too have found this challenging. However, I have begun to take my research out to a wider audience, formally presenting my work and discussing it informally in small and large groups. I have used the feedback from those sessions to continue my inquiry. I will discuss third person inquiry in chapter Eleven.

## 4.5    How will I know my research is legitimate and valid?

As I read through the literature on action research I picked up familiar terms of validity, reliability and judgement.  Madill et al (2000) contend that the

contextual constructionism approach states that *"all knowledge is local, provisional and situation dependent"*. In which case, the concepts of objectivity and reliability do not offer an appropriate set of criteria for this type of study. Instead, the contextual perspective contends that results will vary according to the context in which the data has been collected and analysed (Madill et *al.,* 2000)**.**

That said, I am seeking to generate my own theory of practice which I hope will contribute to the development of coaching as a discipline. In considering my criteria I turn again to the text by McNiff et al (2003) in which they reference an article by Pam Lomax (1994b). In this article, Lomax (ibid) encourages researchers to negotiate their own criteria and in so doing to take account of the following:

- The quality of the researchers learning;
- A description of the process adopted by the researcher which illustrates the improvement in practice;
- The expression of criteria in terms of the individuals values;
- The researcher's ability to demonstrate an originality and creativity in their thinking as well as how the literature has supported their learning.

Whitehead et al ( 2006:98) talk about establishing legitimacy and validity.  The former is to do with *"getting other people to accept the validity of your claim"*. This sits in the third-person inquiry and although activity here is limited, I will draw on my work with the wider community to illustrate legitimacy.  Validity is about *"showing the authenticity of the evidence base, explaining the standards used and demonstrating reasonableness of the claim"* (ibid:98)  Whitehead et al (ibid:103) offers a further distinction, that validity can be personal, social and institutional.  Personal validation is about self-evaluation, social validation draws on my work with Wendy, my critical friend and my wider circle of colleagues and groups. Reviewing my work against the Middlesex University's academic criteria will offer institutional validity.

Finally, I want to link back to an earlier comment about action research and living theory which I see as an authentic inquiry process.  Drawing on the work of Habermas ( in Whitehead et al 2006), he offers four basic ways in which all participants in this process should speak to each other:

- Comprehensibly: a form of language continuously understood by all
- Truthfully: all recognising these as  true accounts and not fabrications
- Sincere:   all parties can trust what the other says
- Appropriately for the context:  while recognising the unspoken cultural norms in which their discourses are embedded.

These ways have also informed my ethical stance.

4.5.1    Ethical Considerations

Before embarking on my research I considered carefully the ICF Code of Conduct, the ethical statement from the European Mentoring and Coaching Council and looked at the  guidance from Hussey et al (1997).

Drawing on the advice in *Hussey* et al (ibid) I attended to the following:

- The participant organisation(s)

  I gained agreement through Nigel Paine, Head of Training and Development at the BBC to conduct my research within the BBC.

- Confidentiality

  I consider this to be an important issue both in my practice as a coach and equally as a researcher.  I wanted to create a safe space for participants to tell their story and to feel able to withdraw at any time.

- Informed consent

  I adhered to section 7 of the ICF code of conduct which states, *"My research will be carried out with the necessary approval or consent from those involved, and with an approach that will reasonably protect participants from any potential harm"*. Therefore, I agreed a research contract with all my participants which covered:

  - The purpose of the research
  - How the information would be collected
  - What would happen to the information
  - Statement on confidentiality
  - Opportunity to withdraw at any time

- Dignity

  I maintained boundary management throughout as laid out in the code of ethics, EMCC. I was conscious of the multiple roles I had during the research, that of employee at the BBC, an internal coach at the BBC, a lead coach at the BBC responsible for developing coaching across the corporation and a researcher. I needed to be constantly awake to my own biases as they could influence the outcome. I engaged the support of my critical friend, who was outside of the BBC, to help me to retain those boundaries. I worked with my research supervisors to ensure I did not take advantage of my multiple roles.

- Publications

  At the time of writing this thesis I have not written up my research findings for publication.

4.6     Conclusion

As I bring this chapter and Part one of my thesis to a close, I want to offer a reminder of what I have covered.  In this chapter, I have discussed the

methodology for my research.  In chapter's one and two, I have shared the background to my inquiry and in chapter three the underpinning theoretical frames and literature.   I now want to move into Part 2 of this thesis "The Story Unfolds". In the next chapter I will share with you the outcome from my first-person inquiry, my practice.

# Part Two – The Story Unfolds
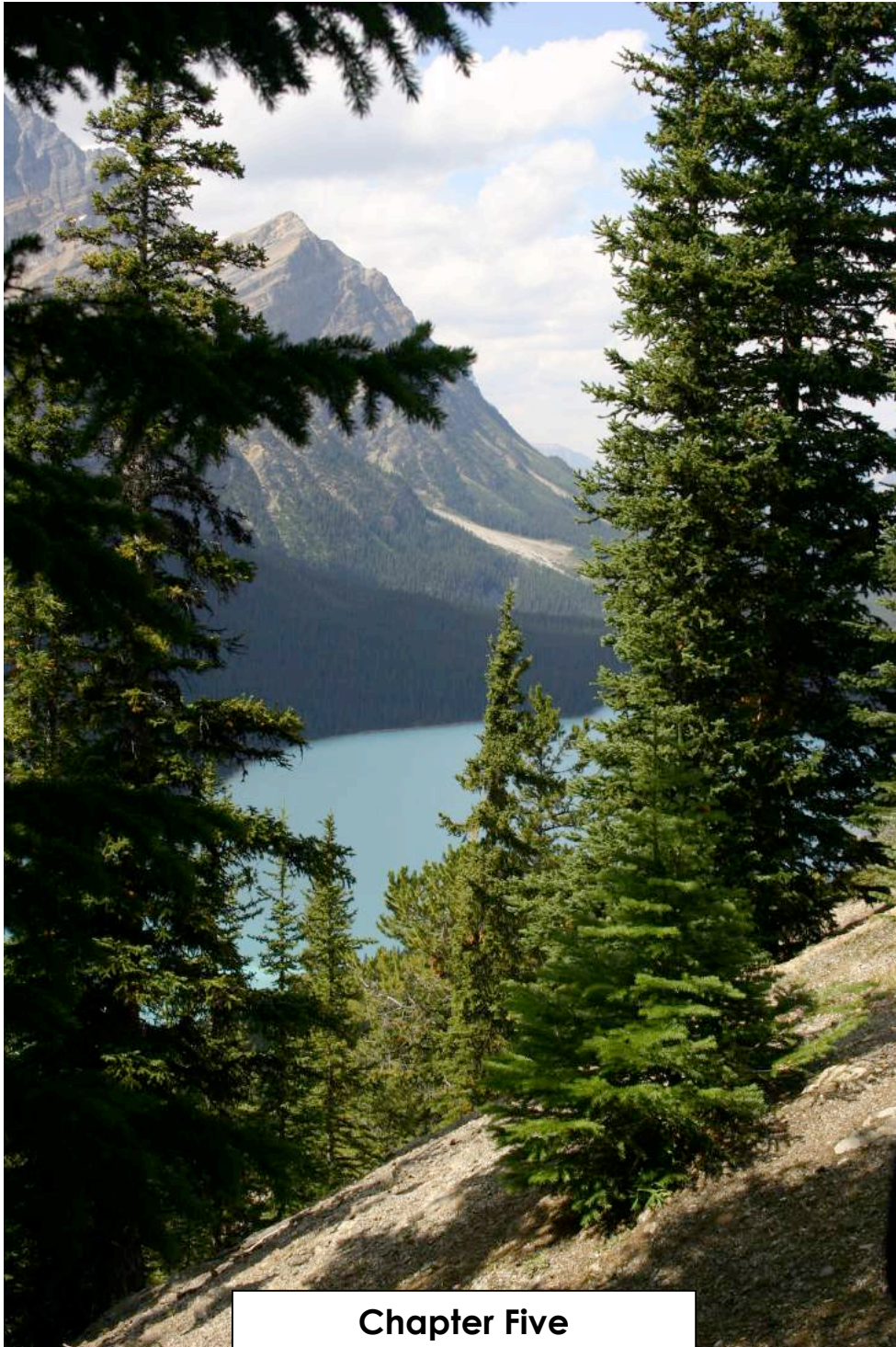
**Chapter Five**

**What is my Practice?**

**First Person Inquiry**

## 5.0    Introduction

In this next chapter, I am going to discuss the outcomes of my first person inquiry. As stated in the previous chapter, I recognised that the research element of my doctorate programme would help me to discover my own voice, my own authority in the discipline of coaching.  Action research places the researcher at the centre and in first person inquiry provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my practice as a coach and an OD consultant.

## 5.1    For the sake of what?

Leider (in Strozzi-Heckler 2003) asks the question, "for the sake of what….."(ibid:9) and proposes we consider our purpose in life? Leider (ibid:10) compares purpose to a path and reminds that there are many paths we can take in our life. Purpose is not just given to us, according to Leider (ibid:11) who says we get purpose *"by choosing to have it…… by embodying it. A sense of purpose comes from within."* Our purpose provides a guide to the choice of paths we take.

As I embarked on this journey of inquiry, the question, "for the sake of what…", was particularly poignant for me.  I had ideas about leaving the corporate world and setting myself up as an independent coach and consultant.  For more than 20 years I had been part of organisation life, I had gained a rich stream of experience and I had learnt so much about the world of business.  At the BBC, I was conscious of just how much my identity, was tied up in the branding of the organisation.   The BBC is one of the world's best known and strongest brands. This meant that irrespective of who I was or what I did, as soon as I mentioned I worked with the BBC, I was noticed.  So as I began to think about leaving behind my BBC identity, I knew that I had to also discover my own voice, my own authority in the field of coaching.

My purpose at the outset of this inquiry was to explore my practice. However, what began as an inquiry into how to improve my effectiveness as a coach, consultant and educator rapidly developed into a cycle of real discovery or as Torbert puts it, *"our moment-to-moment experience of ourselves."* I believe this has enabled me to bring my practice much closer to who I am. I want to acknowledge my style of learning, I am a diverger. (Kolb 1984) Divergence emphasises a way of learning that focuses predominantly inwards, learning from specific experiences with a preference to observe rather than to take action. Through the *"inner and outer arcs of attention"*, (Marshall 2001) I integrated my reflection process into my own combination of first person inquiry activities thereby ensuring I access the learning in all my life spaces (ibid). My process included:

- Participating in specific learning events
  This is not only about the participation but also how I take the learning and apply it to my practice;
- Working with whole person
  Learning to integrate somatic distinctions into my work. Somatics, from the Greek language refers to the living body in its wholeness, body, mind and spirit. So working with the body not as a collection of physical parts but as a domain for action, mood, learning, co-ordination and dignity. I needed to build practices to support my own work and the work I did with my clients;
- Conversations with trusted colleagues and critical friends
  Throughout this inquiry, I have engaged in conversations, each of which has supported my learning;
- Reading
  My reading has opened up so many avenues in my learning, in chapter 3 I have tried to capture a few
- Journaling and reflective writing
  An ongoing daily practice which has proved to be invaluable

- Feedback

  This has become a constant inquiry and part of the way I work

- Working with music and images

  I see in pictures so I have created diagrams and images to represent my thinking, some of which are included in this thesis. Music helps me to connect to myself and is also an expression of who I am.

What I have noticed in the process of my inquiry, is how inquiry has become part of who I am, as Marshall (ibid) describes it, *"living in inquiry"*. For me, this is living in curiosity, with questions not answers, being able to hold the question and being comfortable with not knowing. In this way, I see how I can remain open to learning, awake to possibility and able to make mistakes simply as an experiment for learning.

Therefore, my first person inquiry has help me raise my own self awareness about who I am in my practice. I have chosen to focus on my practice as a coach but who I am as a coach informs who I am who I am when as an OD consultant. I will begin by looking at the theme of transition and the learning event which helped me let go of my BBC identity and move into new beginnings (Bridges 2004).

## 5.2   My practice as a coach

A seminar in the City of London was my first introduction with i-coach academy, Prof Mike van Oudtshoorn, asked us to consider three questions:

1. What is my coaching for? ( And what is  not for?)
2. What does the process look like, what happens? (and therefore what does not happen?)

3.  What is my model? What sort of people can I work best with and who are the people I really should not work with?

These questions made me reflect on my practice as a coach. As Prof van Oudtshoorn talked about the  i-coach framework, (see figure 14 below) the platform on which to build a coaching practice, I was instantly drawn in. I could see the power of such an approach to coaching, it was unique and in my view ahead of any other thinking around coaching.

**Figure 14**



## Coaching Framework (architecture)

| Input | Thru-put | Output |
|---|---|---|
| **(Why?)** | **(How?)** | **(What for / purpose?)** |
| Informs | Tools | Results |
| Theory | Models | Objectives |
| Philosophy | Processes | Outputs |
| Values | Techniques | Get - what |
| Understanding | Mechanics | Know - there |
| Underpinning | Systems | Measurement |
| Experience | | What changed |
| Constructs | | |

i·coachacademy
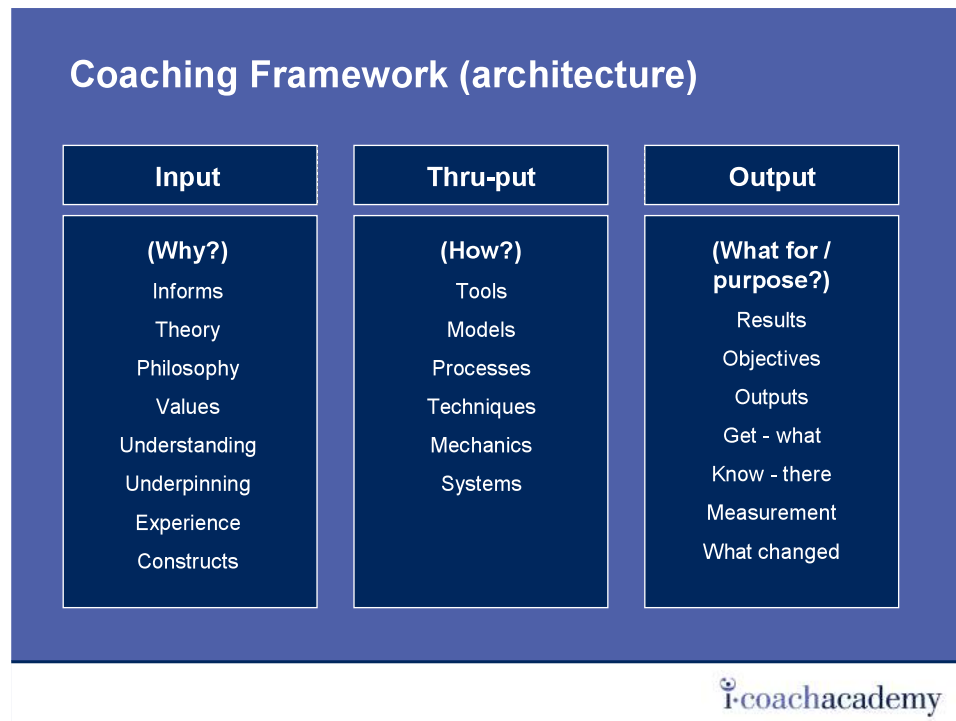
As I began my M.Prof/ D.Prof  I wanted to put my coaching under the microscope and to experiment with my emerging process model.   The process of reflecting on my practice and drawing together the threads which inform who I am as a coach meant constant self reflection and feedback form clients. Whilst a more detailed account of this part of my journey can be found in my RAL five, the next paragraph offers a short summary by way of context.

As an internal coach at the BBC and a lead coach supervising the coaching practice of other internal coaches, I had plenty of material to draw from.  The resultant model (see figure 15 below) was an initial attempt to describe my coaching at that time.  I was strongly influenced by Rogers' person centred approach and this informed the first step in my process, the creation of a mutual relationship.  I held the belief that coaching was about getting the client to an outcome, helping them to achieve their goal.   At the same time, I wanted to honour the space coaching offered a client to stop and reflect on what was going on for them.

**Figure 15 – First coaching model**
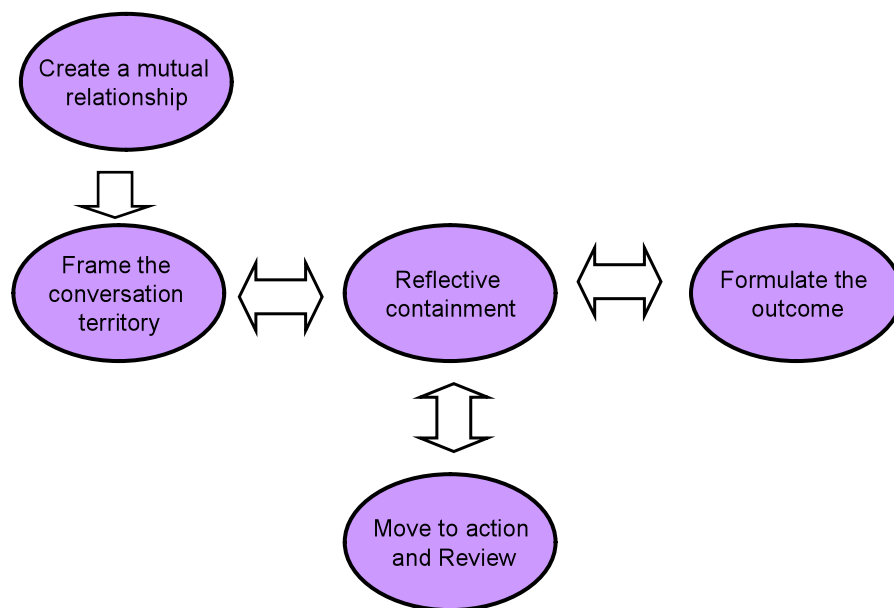


As part of my transition from MSc to M.Prof, I attended the Master's learning modules, (three x four day modules) and was exposed to different theories and philosophies.  I had the opportunity to work alongside faculty supporting students in their professional development journey as well as continuing to develop my own learning.  During this time I continued to manage the BBC's internal coaching service and in that role was able to apply this learning to supervision

sessions with BBC coaches and bring new perspectives to the BBC Coach Foundation Course.  Alongside my BBC work I was able to take a first step into the outside world, speaking at seminars on the coaching work at the BBC, writing a peer reviewed article on internal coaching and supporting a colleague to develop a coaching culture in her organisation.  I progressed through the M.Prof/D.Prof programme and my coaching model and framework continued to evolve. I expanded my process model to incorporate some of my new learning from the programme. Figure 16 below shows how my model developed on from that original model. In acknowledging the influence of existential philosophy and adult learning whilst still holding to the ideas of person centred, I shifted the emphasis of my approach from outcome to space for inquiry and exploration.

**Figure 16**
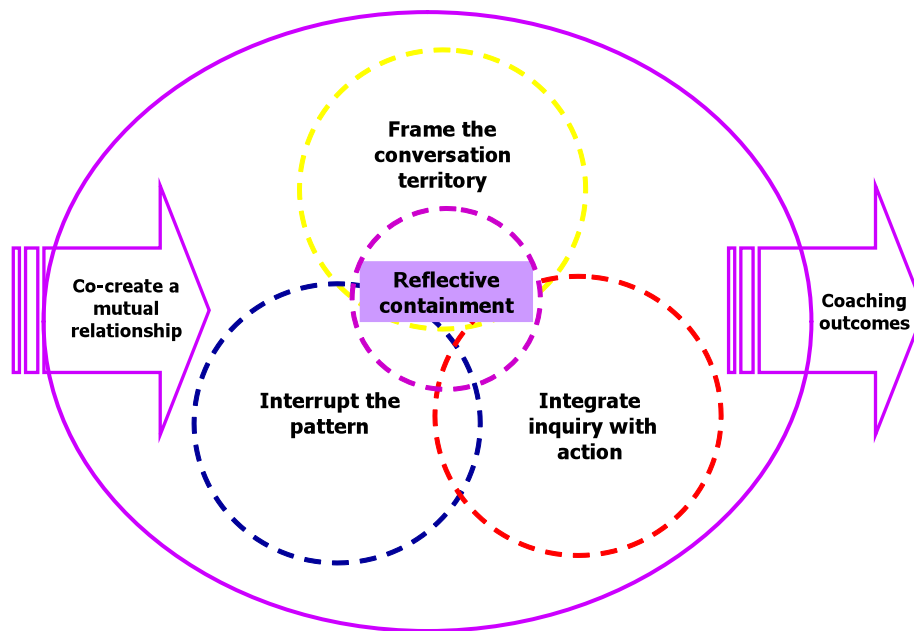


## 5.2.1   Ontological Coaching

As I reflected on my practice as part of this research, I realised that my coaching model was exactly that, a model. It still felt like a step by step process and did

not adequately reflect the emergent quality of my coaching.  One of the key influences on moving my coaching practice forward was my introduction to the ontological approach to coaching.  In the next three sections, I have drawn out some of the key aspects of ontological coaching and have identified how this learning has impacted on my practice as a coach and how it influences my role as an OD consultant and as a researcher.

5.2.1.1 Linguistic Domain

I was introduced to the idea of that we are all observers in the world and as such I will see the world through a unique view.  The observer in us is constructed by language which creates the reality we see. This draws heavily on the ideas of social constructionism and the work of Searle (1969) on speech acts.

The ontological perspective holds that if we understand and practice these speech acts we can begin to reflect on how our language informs our action.  In that understanding we open up new possibilities for ourselves.  As the Chalmers Brothers (2005) state, " *The recursive nature of our language allows us to engage in reflective action……And the results of this reflective action often lead to new public conversations, new private conversations, new commitments, new co-ordination of action, new results."*  In my coaching, I noticed how I begun to pay more attention to the language used and what was being constructed in the conversation.

Julio Olalla, an ontological coach and thought leader in this field, believes that a good conversation is an exchange 'in the eyes' when both parties change together.  This led me to ask myself the question, "*how do I create meaningful conversations?*"  I began to look at the area of trust. Had I taken the concept Rogers person centred too literally?  How might I re-look at how I build and maintain a coaching relationship?  This question led me to take a look at trust. Trust lives around three dimensions;  sincerity, competence and reliability. *"How was I building these into my coaching model in the co-creation of the*

*relationship?"* Moreover, *"how was I maintaining the trust?".* This seemed to be a fundamental question in my work as a coach.

The speech acts includes the area of "assessments" and looks at how as humans we hold assessments of ourselves as if they are assertions, something that is true. When someone in authority makes a judgement, we learn to be that assessment. Many of the coachees I have worked with live their lives through the assessments others have made of them; "not good enough", "not clever enough" or "not articulate enough". The ontological approach to coaching enables me to work with a coachee to access a different reality for themselves, to ground those assessments by naming the story which supports the assessment and then building a practice which will support me to create a different way of being.

## 5.2.1.2 Emotional Domain

Ontological coaching also works in the emotional domain. Maturana (1992) emphasised the role of emotions and physiology and Sieler (2005;9) suggests that our moods and emotions *"colour how the world is for us and predispose us to behave in a certain way".* Emotions are the source of wisdom which is often distorted by our own personal paranoia. Taking a look at our emotions, rather than suppressing them, moves us into the uncomfortable zone. It is a learning edge which if we choose to journey through the layers of defensiveness allows us to connect and be with others. Moods and emotions are emphasised in the ontological approach as they open up or close down what is possible. In this way the emotional realm is the driver or inhibitor of action. One could say that developing emotional wisdom is key to our being. In coaching, I now work on being able to enter the same emotional space as my client, to create the appropriate emotional context for the conversation. In my work as an OD consultant, I work emotions in the group, it has allowed me to work with conflict and anxiety by holding the space more effectively for learning.

5.2.1.3 Somatic Domain

The final domain in the ontological perspective is the somatic domain.  This is concerned with the body we are, not the physical body we have.   The "body we are" carries the history which shaped us, our emotions and our spirituality. So according to Strozzi-Heckler (2003) a somatic coach seeks to support their coachee to produce a self that embodies pragmatic wisdom, grounded compassion and skilful action.  Whilst this aspect of my learning has taken me right outside my comfort zone I have been constantly surprised at the impact bringing in this domain has with my clients.

I now work with coachees in the outer domain which is concerned with a coachee's posture, how they hold themselves as a person and with the inner domain for example, how we breathe.  I now support coachees to bring their somatic domain into their awareness. One coachee reflected back to me, "*you asked where I felt it in my body, my hands were sweating, my throat was closed, heart rate pumping and jaw was tight. You noticed that when I was telling the story my sentences went short, how I probably didn't say much, just like earlier, the fear closed my throat and I didn't speak as authentically me, instead there was constriction and censorship*". At the end of the conversation the coachee said, "*again you asked where in my body I felt it, anchoring it..My throat had opened and I was expanding my heart chakra, breathing deeper into my stomach*".

I declare myself even more of a learner in this domain than the other two but even as a beginner I continue to be amazed at the power of working somatically.  I have also brought body-work to my students, working with them to connect to the body as a way of getting out of their heads but also to help learn more about themselves and how they show up as a coach. In my consulting work I am bringing more of the ontological perspective into my work.

5.2.2    Revisions to my coaching model

I have made the ontological perspective a core underpinning of my coaching work. This means that I now work with my coachee's sense of being and how they interact with their wider system. I am clearer about my world view.  In addition to the ontological perspective, I have retained Humanistic psychology which informs the development of the coaching relationship and continue to draw on Adult Learning theory, Social Constructionism, Complexity as well as some themes from Personal Construct Psychology and Existential Philosophy.

My purpose for coaching draws on what I bring to the work. I work, in the main, with senior leaders/ executives in organisations to help them make sense of professional, organisational and/ or personal transitions. I support my coachees to develop a more constructive reality for themselves, helping them to understand and develop a more effective way of being in their world. Figure 17 illustrates my coaching model as it is today.

**Figure 17**
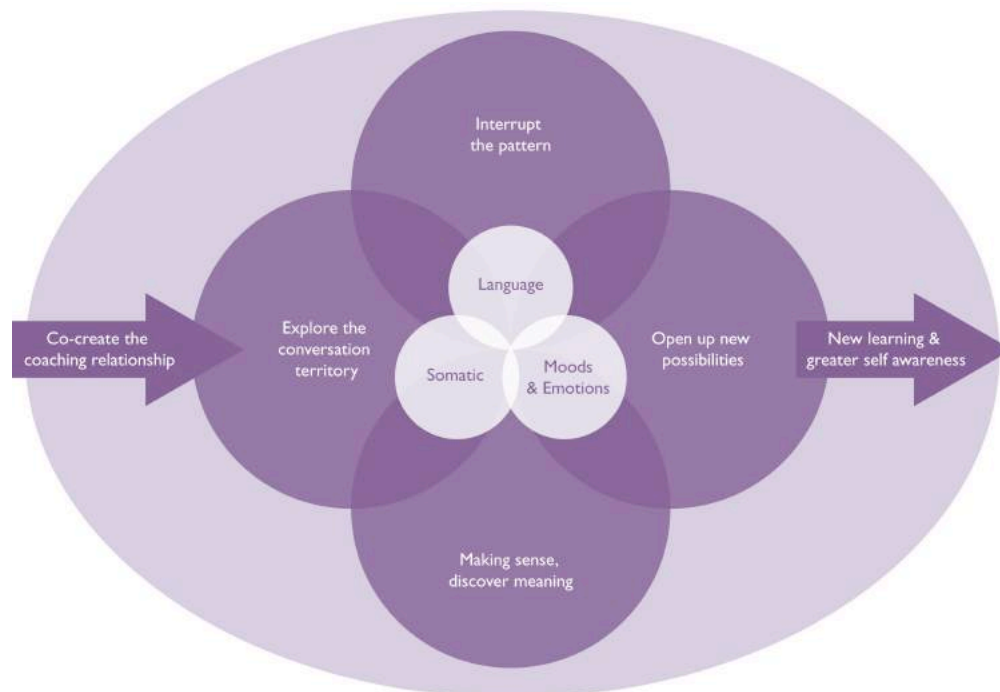
My approach aims to support my work with clients in an individualised way whilst still offering a structure to support the conversation space. The shaded colours symbolise the porous nature of each of the phases. This is important as, I believe that coaching is not a linear or circular process, but rather a dynamic set of phases which interact with each other in a way that is meaningful for the client.

## 5.3    In conclusion

I believe that by living in inquiry ( Marshall 2001), my knowing has grown, I remain curious and so my learning continues. My original coaching model has evolved to a process that feels congruent to who I am as a coach. I am clearer about my world-view and notice how this informs my work as an OD Consultant and has greatly influenced my methodology in this research. This first person inquiry has allowed me to answer the question, *"is the way I operate across all aspects of my work congruent with my coaching philosophy or do I simply hold the coaching stance in that one to one setting?"*

The schedules of research overlapped, in other words, my inquiry into my practice happened alongside my research at the BBC. I began to notice the synergy between who I am as a practitioner and who I am as a researcher. Moreover, what I was learning from my research at the BBC was also informing my own practice as a coach. Therefore, I believe that I do now hold a congruent approach across all aspects of my practice, as a coach, consultant and researcher. This will become evident in the following chapters.

The learning has often been painful and I have learnt to live in the presence of questions and so my inquiry will continue. Learning in practice means continued one to one supervision, observed coaching, group supervision and accessing learning activities which will continue me on my path. In the next chapter, I will turn my attention to the second person inquiry.

# Chapter Six

# Living in Inquiry

# Second Person Inquiry

## 6.0    Introduction

In this chapter, I intend to focus on the first and second cycle of my second person inquiry.  I outlined in chapter two how the BBC developed a leadership development programme with Ashridge, to offer leaders a collective opportunity to discover and develop their approach to leadership.  The learning design was a blended solution and included coaching for the senior and established leaders.  Ian Heyward, Centre of Excellence leader for leadership asked me to join the core design group for the programme, taking the lead on coaching.

I realised this was going to be a huge undertaking.  Of around 7500 BBC leaders, about two thirds would be eligible to apply for coaching.  The internal coaching service provided a good starting point.  However, integrating coaching into the wider organisational development strategy was, in my mind, a very different proposition.  Thus far, coaching had been used solely to support individuals in developing the skills they needed to perform in their area of the business.

I welcomed this challenge I had a blank sheet of paper on which to create something new.  I was curious to understand how coaching could help change the conversations in organisations; if a critical mass of leaders were engaging in a programme of coaching with a coach, how might this shift the culture of leadership in the BBC.  I had more questions than answers. This was the starting point for my second person inquiry.

There were three cycles of inquiry, see figure 18 overleaf.

**Figure 18 Second Person Inquiry**



**First Cycle**
Imagine how coaching can support a strategy

What is the coaching proposition

Review whats working/ whats not

Refine proposition

**Second Cycle**
Imagine ideas around evaluation

How can I understand what's different in practice

Feedback questionnaire, online questionnaire

Review and take stock. What is the data telling us? How useful is it?

**Third Cycle**
Imagine a methodology which will help me look at what is being created in the coaching conversation.

Try out a different approach, CMM

What stories are emerging? How are leaders constructing leadership

How does this inform a model

In this chapter, I will focus on the first two cycles.  I will discuss the third cycle in chapter Seven.

## 6.1    Imagine the Coaching Proposition
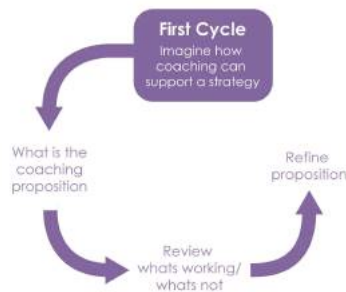


- *Making explicit what the coaching is for*

- *Developing the coaching proposition*

- *Engaging the coaches*

- *Engaging the coachees*

Although the BBC's internal coaching service was growing, it would not have the capacity to meet the potential demand for coaching.   Just as the leadership programme was being designed and delivered in partnership with Ashridge, so could the coaching proposition.  Wendy Briner, an associate with Ashridge Education and I would work together on establishing a joint coaching offering, BBC and Ashridge.

What was particularly interesting to us was that we were nearly completely left to our own devices to create 'this coaching thing'.  The rest of the core team was completely absorbed in the design for the learning modules and occasionally looked to Wendy and me to re-assure them that we would be able to meet the demand for coaching.  The core team's mental model was that coaching was simply an "add on activity" and their concern was focused entirely on the metrics. They could not conceive of any need for design or how we could leverage coaching conversations to support the learning.  Nether were they curious about the potential this coaching programme to change changing the conversation in the organisation. This was such a different starting point to my

own. Thankfully, Wendy was of the same mindset as me and as we were both "NP's" in MBTI[1] terms, we revelled in our freedom.  (Appendix Five offers a schedule and process map of this cycle of research.)

We first needed to define the coaching proposition. Bill Critchley, a senior [1]consultant at Ashridge Consulting and a member of the Leadership Programme core design team helped us to consider the aim of the programme. It was to support leaders to discover and develop an individual approach to leadership which could work in the context of the BBC.  Coaching was to be the spark that would fire the learning from the programme into action and help the leader make sense of his or her learning experience. Coaching would offer time for the leader to reflect and think through what to do, why to do it and how to make a difference.

As we considered the role coaching would play, we also considered Dyke´s aim for programme *(to make leaders the most creative they could be so that the BBC could become the most creative organisation in the world*).  We mapped out a coaching proposition, picking up the themes of self as a leader, who am I as a leader and a leader of others in the context of developing the business and creating a vision for the future.   The first consultation process involved me sharing the proposition with a number of the internal coaches.  There was a degree of anxiety about making the coaching proposition explicit as the coaches felt it took away the right of the coachee to set the coaching agenda.  There was a sense that the proposition restricted the coaches´ freedom to work on anything and everything.  I believed that by articulating what this coaching was for, the purpose of this intervention provided a framework which helped coaches to have that inclusive conversation with leaders.  Making the coaching proposition explicit ensured the focus of the coaching was on leadership and developing leadership capability across the BBC.

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[1] MBTI, Myers Briggs Type Indicator Personality Type

The coaching proposition.

**Figure 19**
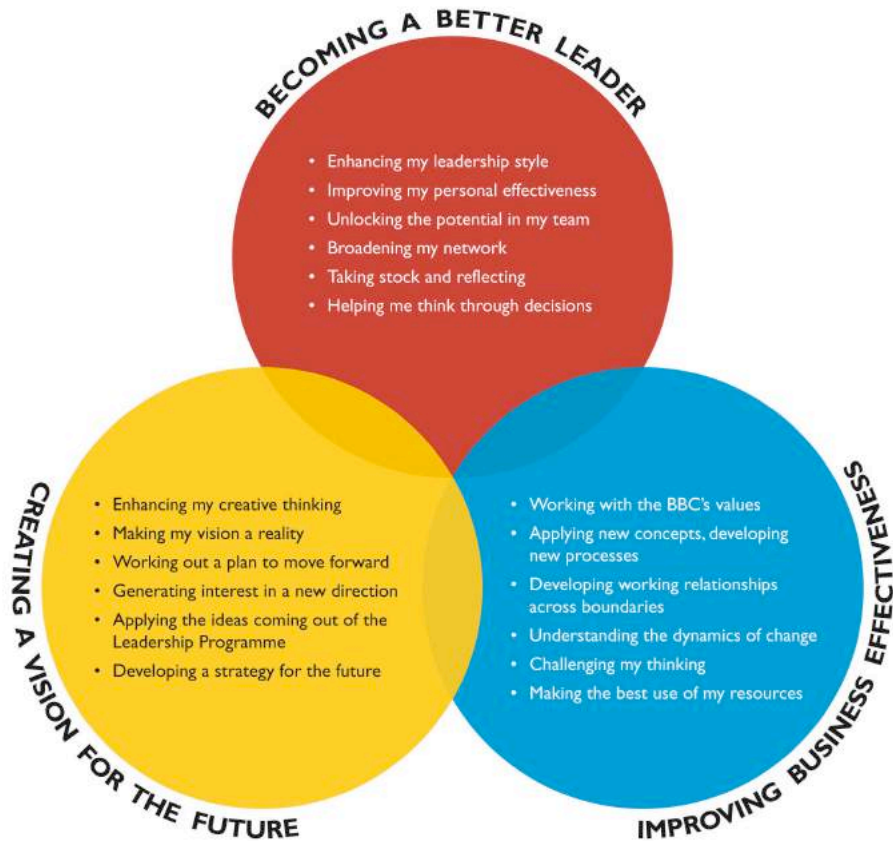


Through a number of discussions I secured agreement on the proposition. Coaching would help leaders create a new awareness for themselves, understand their role as a leader in the BBC and access new ways of thinking. Briner states, *"leadership coaching conversations centre on generating viable, specific alternative solutions or possibilities that an individual leader constructs from his/ her unique experiences and capabilities"* (2003). Later on in my research I discovered just how important it was to make explicit the purpose of the coaching.

### 6.1.1   Creating a network of coaches

Pulling together the proposition for leadership coaching was just the first part of the process.  This was a massive programme, never before attempted in one organisation.   We needed to devise a system that would cope with the enormity of this project; 13 programmes a year with up to 60 applicants for coaching starting every four weeks at irregular and sometimes overlapping dates.  I realised that this was not just about creating a large pool of coaches, we needed to create an infrastructure that would support a network of coaches to work on this programme. Coaches would be drawn from the BBC and Ashridge and I wanted to create a shared understanding between them all irrespective of their origins. They needed to understand the business objectives, how the programme would support those objectives and the role of coaching in the programme. Of course, we would all need to work in partnership and with that realisation a new faculty for coaching was born.

When Wendy and I met to talk about how we could create a network of coaches, it became apparent that we were dealing with three different coaching groups, two from Ashridge and one from the BBC.  Each group had its own coaching philosophy and method of supervision.  Although there were variations amongst individuals, in the main the BBC used John Whitmore's GROW and the two groups at Ashridge tended to work from solution focused approach. This discovery reinforced the coaching proposition as despite differences in approach, the purpose of coaching was clear.

Creating a single network of coaches involved a number of conversations and presentations with coaches from both sides of the partnership.  It was apparent that with such a large scale operation, neither Wendy nor I would be able to support each of the coaches.  We created six network groups, each with a lead coach from both Ashridge and the BBC.  The lead coach partnership for each group would oversee the allocation process and make sure that the coaches were supported as they worked with a particular cohort of participants.

I believed that this initiative offered us a fantastic opportunity to create a learning network for coaches, or as described by Wenger (1998), a community of practice. While the three different groups of coaches had their own supervision practices, we could come together in some sort of shared learning activity. This was an opportunity for Ashridge coaches to learn more about the BBC and understand the changes going on. For the BBC coaches, this was an opportunity to work with coaches who operated in different organisations, in different sectors who could offer different perspectives.

I was surprised to learn that not everyone shared my enthusiasm about this approach. Many questioned the value of bringing the different teams of coaches together, "what will I learn?" and "I already have my supervision" were among the comments. There was an anxiety on both sides about sharing individual coaching practice, the vulnerability of this within a peer group of coaches. For me this highlighted some of the real difficulties with establishing a community of practice. I had naively thought that everyone would see this as a great development opportunity. However, our persistence paid off and we created half yearly shared learning group sessions. (Appendix Seven- Shared Learning Group Agenda).

I felt there was another important reason to develop these sessions; to surface key themes from the coaching which could inform the design process and wider BBC learning agenda.

### 6.1.1   Engaging the coaches

Our network of coaches had been born. Although we had involved many of them in the development of the proposition and the creation of the network, it was also important to engage them with the programme.   I worked with Wendy and the other members of the core group to create a workshop for all coaches to attend. The aim was to ensure they understood the programmes objectives,

how it supported the BBC's agenda as well as the concepts and models taught on the programme.

What I first saw as an information sharing process was, in fact, much more. I came to realise that in the process of sharing the information, coaches connected to the programme and to the wider development agenda.  It seemed as if the coaches were starting to move from an individual lens to a wider system lens.

There were a few leaders who were already working with an external coach. These coaches were invited in and taken through the same process of engagement.

6.1.3 Engaging the coachees

Of course, there is another person in the coaching relationship, the coachee.  It was important to help potential coachees understand what coaching is; to help them think through how they might use their time with a coach and what they might expect from the process.  It was not enough merely to include coaching in the list of available options.

 Therefore, the coaching proposition was talked about at the 360 feedback session, at the large group event and on each of the pathway work-shops. It was at those work-shops that participants also had the opportunity to sample coaching themselves. They learnt about the GROW model, some of the coaching skills and practised using these in a conversation with a colleague.  I believe this approach helped to remove some of the mystery around 'this thing called coaching'.

6.1.4 Review and refine

The stage was set, the processes were in place, coaches had been briefed, potential applicants had been made aware of the coaching proposition, we

now had to sit and wait for those applications to come in.  Many at the BBC pessimistically believed that "senior" leaders would not opt for the coaching option, foreseeing obstacles such as lack of time, unwillingness to work with an internal coach or already working with a coach.   Yet, the take-up figures showed a very different picture.  On average 75% of senior leaders took up coaching. Furthermore, initial feedback endorsed coaching as a valuable activity.

I learnt so much from those early programmes. I would like to draw attention to a number of areas of learning for me.  While I understood the importance of engaging both coaches and coachees, I had not realised just how significant this really was.  As each programme rolled out, the briefing sessions for coaches improved. I noticed how when coaches really understood the aims and purpose of the intervention and their part in it, they operated from an integrated perspective. Engaging with potential coachees also improved.  The core design group became a valuable forum to check in with tutors who worked on the work-shops to ask them what support they needed from the coaching team.  We discussed how best to talk about the coaching option and how we could make it an easy process for leaders to apply.  We created briefing sheets with frequently asked questions and we linked the timing of this to learning sessions on GROW.

This whole experience led me to consider how I might develop a process to discover leaders' stories about their experience of coaching as part of the leadership programme.   I embarked on my second cycle of inquiry, ideas around evaluation.

## 6.2    Imagine ideas around evaluation
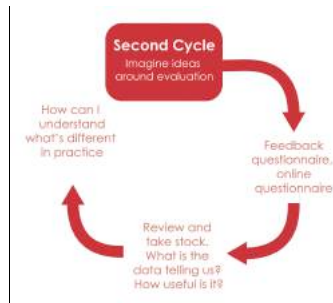
- *Focus on evaluation*

- *Experimenting with my approach*

- *But…………… a sense of failure*

As I reflect on this cycle of my inquiry, I realise how much it taught me about my role as a researcher, particularly a researcher employed and working in the organisation.  The tension between the needs of the organisation and my own ambitions as a researcher was there but not evident to me at the time. (Appendix eight offers a schedule and process map of this cycle of research.)

My first attempt at evaluation sought to answer the question, what is the impact of this coaching? I felt this to be a poisoned chalice as there were so many variables to take account of. For example, how do we define impact, is this about performance and how can we isolate what is attributable to coaching? The literature is not encouraging either. There are very few outcome studies on coaching.  In 1997, Olivero, Bane & Kopelman carried out a study looking at how coaching could help translate training into behaviour change.  In research by Wasylynshyn (2003), 56% of coachees reported changes in personal behaviour, 43% in enhanced leadership effectiveness and 40% in ability to develop stronger relationships. Smither et al (2003) carried out research comparing 360 degree feedback before and after coaching.  However, they found it difficult to reconcile not only the amount of data generated by this approach but also the difference in the perceptions of self and others.

### 6.2.1   A messy process

The newly formed lead coach group seemed to be the ideal place to share initial thoughts about evaluation.  Armed with a draft questionnaire I joined the meeting.  The session turned out to be disappointing in terms of helping me to

really shape the evaluation process, but it provided great learning about my process when "living in inquiry". There were mixed voices in the group. For some, evaluation of coaching should simply be part of the overall leadership programme evaluation- after all it was an integrated programme so why should we separate coaching out? I suppose I should have expected that response given how I had talked about coaching being an integrated intervention. However, I did feel that in coaching terms we were breaking new ground and it was worthy of its own exploration.

There were other voices who did say *"let's look at coaching separately"*, but there was a difference of view around purpose. Some felt that this was an opportunity to look at the quality of coaches' work. Others wanted to use this as way of justifying the value- add of coaching to the board. Another voice urged me to think about really proving the worth of coaching by looking at the number of leadership promotions. Instead of gaining greater clarity around this I left the meeting feeling even more confused. I realised that in holding so many questions myself, I had not given a clear frame to the group. I had simply amplified my own confusion in the group.

I adopted a different approach with my next meeting, Katharine Everett, the BBC Director of Change. She was interested in understanding how we leverage best value from the coaching activity from an organisational change perspective. This time I laid out the evaluation territory, identifying the limitations and the possible opportunities. The conversation was much more focused. At the end we had come up with the idea of linking the data to the building public value criteria as outlined in the public document. The fog had at last begun to clear….. at least that is what I thought.

6.2.2   First wave of evaluation inquiry

I set about finalising the questionnaire with Wendy so we could send it out to the first four programme participants.  (See Appendix Nine). We repeated the process with programmes 5-8.

I used template analysis to analyse the data.  I will not expand on this approach as it is not particularly relevant to the rest of my inquiry.  However, suffice to say that the researcher produces a list of codes; this becomes the template and represents the key themes of the research.  Template analysis is seen as a highly flexible way to produce an interpretation of text (King 2000) and would allow us to analyse the data against the "building public value" criteria as suggested by Katharine.  Wendy and I shared the task of going through the questionnaires and we used the table to ensure consistency in our analysis.  We would go through the script several times highlighting the sections of text to reflect the different code, then repeating the exercise and coding to sub codes.

6.2.3   A sense of failure

A milestone had been reached and despite all the early confusion we at last had something to report, (Appendix seven). The process had been laborious and time consuming but we had collected data and analysed it.

We were able to show that coaching was indeed a valued activity. Leaders were reporting that they felt more confident, that the coaching was helping them to shift their mental model of leadership to one of facilitation rather than control.  They were clear about what they were getting into with coaching and it required them to work and put effort into the activity.  It was all looking very positive, and yet I felt disappointed, I did not feel we had really shown anything new.  We had gathered personal evaluations from coachees who told us that they value coaching and see it as a positive activity.  Milan et al (2001) make the point that personal evaluations are usually positive regardless of whether the clients are satisfied with the overall outcome.

Despite all the effort, the response of the core design group was that the sample size was too small, we only had a response rate of 22% from participants on programmes 1 -4 and 13 % from programmes 5 to 8.  They wanted to see statistical data from a larger proportion of participants.  This request focused my attention on meeting the needs of the organisation and so I looked to an online questionnaire as a way of reaching more participants.

## 6.3    An online questionnaire

Wendy had helped me work out that the online questionnaire might offer data against the coaching proposition.  It would help to understand if the purpose for this coaching intervention was being played out in the coaching activity.

I had mapped the design of the questionnaire to the coaching proposition, see figure 19 page 98, so that it would be possible to pull data which showed the applicability of coaching to individual, team and business challenges.  I also wanted to understand whether respondents were doing anything differently as a result of the coaching and what they would want to use coaching for should they be offered it again.  I have selected the findings which I believe to be most relevant to my overall research.

### 6.3.1   Meet "Perceptor"

The online questionnaire went to all 515 leaders who had worked with a coach and completed their four sessions during the survey period 2005 – 2006. (167 senior leaders and 348 established leaders).  It was suggested to me that In order to get a representative sample of the whole population, ie all of those who have taken up coaching since the start of the programme, we would need 301 responses. To get a representative sample of the group we surveyed, we would need 217. In the end we had 229 responses, which was 16% of the whole population and 44% of the sample population.

The data from the on-line questionnaire was analysed through the software package, "perceptor". It looked at each of the responses to the individual questions and reported the findings against each one. Respondents were asked to rate each question against the criteria below:

- Not applicable
- Applicable but not successful
- Moderately successful
- Largely successful
- Completely successful

### 6.3.2   What the data told me

The data produced from the on-line questionnaire provided the comprehensive report the Core Design Team were looking for. I have not included the full report, but rather have focused on what I believe to be the key findings in relation to my inquiry.

In looking at the applicability of coaching to the different challenges leaders face, from an individual perspective, it was interesting to see that:

- 48% (45% senior leaders and 47% established leaders) reported that their experience of coaching increased their confidence as a leader.
- 36% (40% senior leaders and 35% established leaders) reported that their experience of coaching helped them to lead better in uncertainty

To see 40% of senior leaders reporting working with their coach to help support them in leading through uncertainty is remarkable, particularly given the apprehension at the beginning of the programme that senior leaders would not have time for coaching. Comments from senior leaders included, *"Very helpful, helping me plan for the value for money changes"* and *"The focus helped move*

*me on with my own thinking about options during a restructure of the Division O I am working in".* Also, *"I feel the coaching has helped me to understand change and deal with uncertainty, I now realise that you don't have to have all the answers to be able to support your team and manage forward."*

Given the organisation's agenda to develop a culture which manages performance more effectively, it was particularly interesting to note that 50% of established and 40% of senior leaders reported that coaching had been largely successful in helping them to manage individual performance. A further 25% indicated that coaching had been moderately successful in this area too.

When asked about how coaching helped leaders manage upwards, there were comments such as " *my coach helped me realise the importance of managing upwards – something I had failed fully appreciate before"* and " *Managing upwards is harder at time of change – but particularly so in the BBC*". Notably, 47% of senior leaders as opposed to 38% of established leaders reported coaching to be largely successful in this area.

Looking at the wider business challenges, 51% reported that coaching had been largely or completely successful in helping them to develop strategies for the future.  The chart overleaf summarises those key areas just discussed.

**Chart 1**

### Extent to which Challenges were *Largely* or *Completely* Successfully Resolved Using Coaching
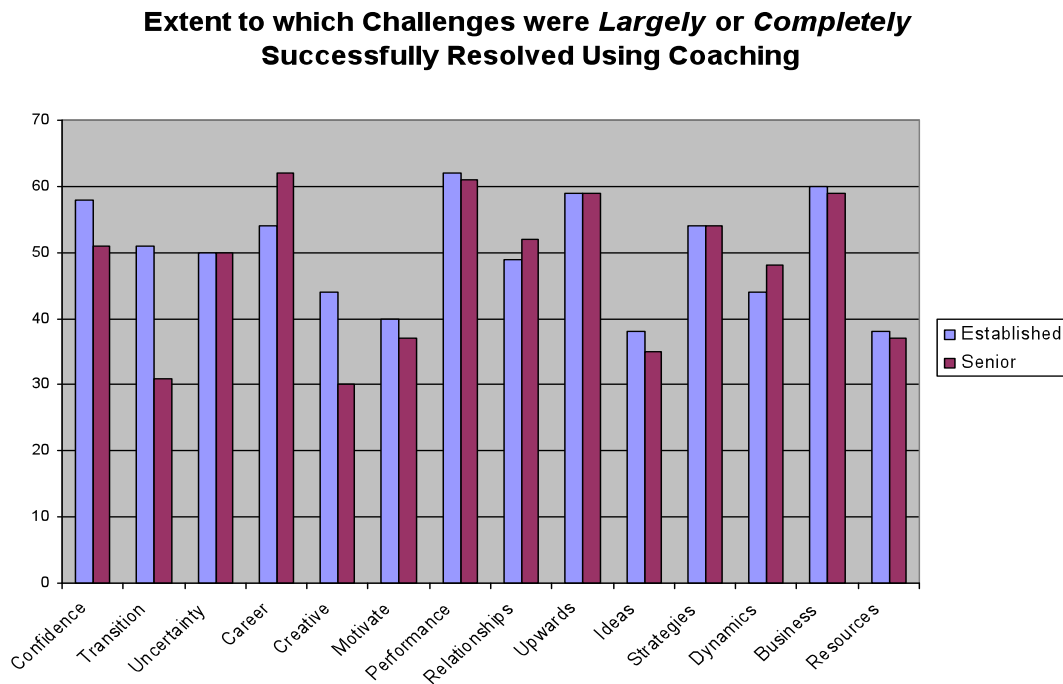


Coaching was positioned as the spark that would fire the learning from the programme into action. Some 44% of respondents said that coaching was moderately successful in helping them to apply the learning, with only 4% saying it was completely successful.

Where coaching was perceived to be less applicable to the challenges they faced, 29% reported that it enabled them to effectively transition into a leadership position more effectively. Some 22% of respondents did not see coaching as applicable to developing creativity in their work and 27% did not see how coaching could help them manage their team during uncertainty. By far this biggest response was in terms of how coaching could help leaders manage their resources, 28% said coaching was not applicable. The chart overleaf summarises the less successful areas.

**Chart 2**

### Percentage Respondents who had No Success from Coaching in the Following Challenges
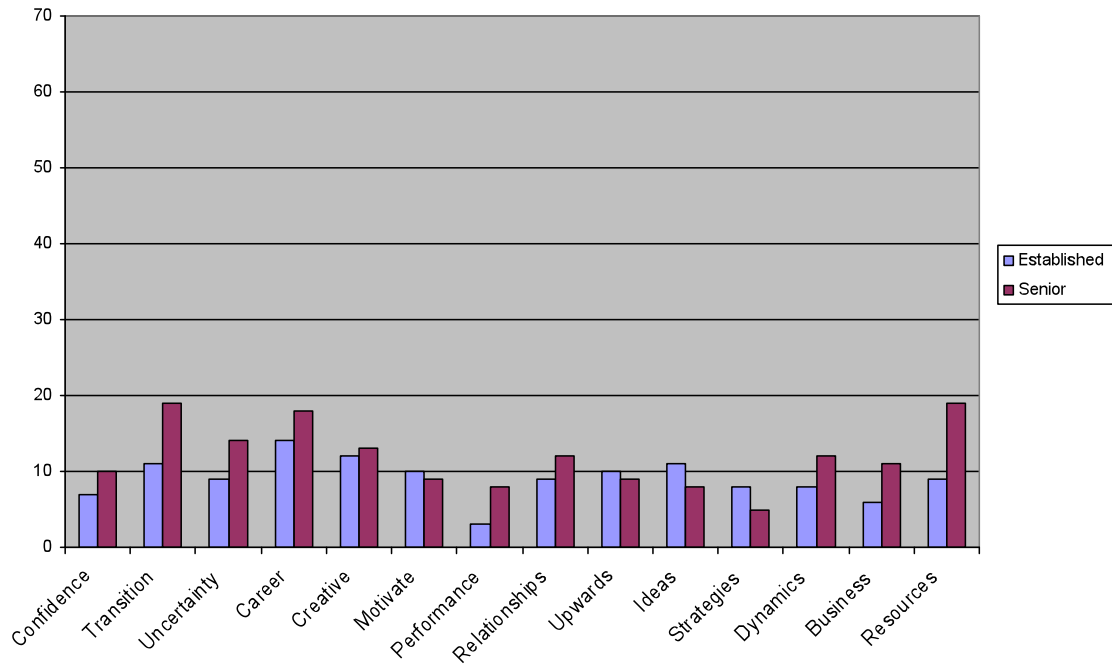


The purpose of the leadership programme was to shift leadership behaviours, coaching aimed to support that. The on-line survey came back with an overwhelming endorsement that in one way or another, the coaching supported leaders to do something different. 90% of established leaders and 85% of senior leaders endorsed the contribution of coaching. See chart 3 overleaf.

**Chart 3**

### As a result of your leadership coaching, are you doing anything differently as a leader?



n=226                                                                98.7%
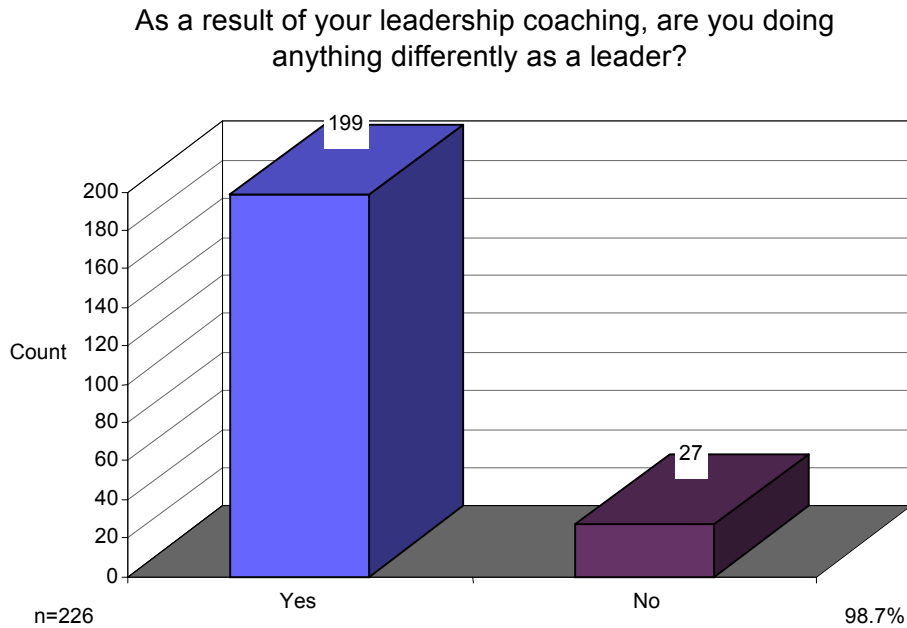
In exploring this result further, I was able to pull out the key areas of change. It is clear that this preceptor questionnaire backs up the earlier research which identified an increase of confidence as a significant outcome from coaching. What is even more interesting is the number of senior leaders who identified confidence together with increased self awareness alongside managing their team as the significant areas for them. Contrastingly, the established leaders reported using a coaching style alongside confidence as the key changes in their behaviour. See chart 4 overleaf.

**Chart 4**

## Most Significant Changes to Behaviour
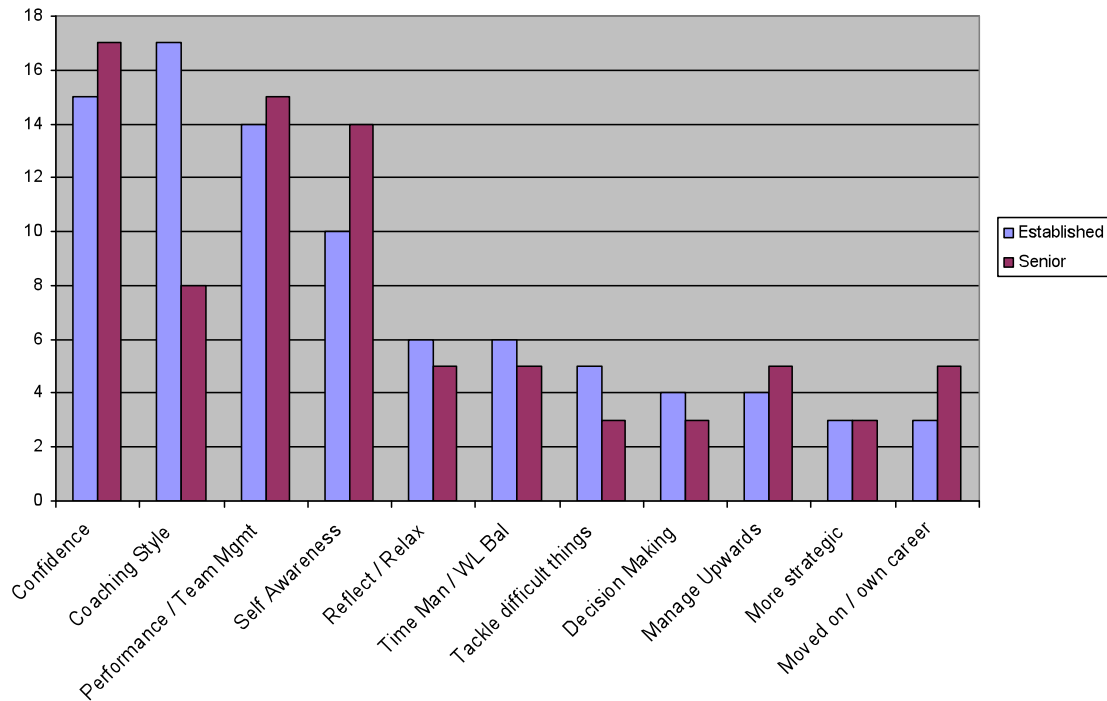


Some of the comments respondents added included,

- *Realising how adaptable my leadership style needs to be and that I needed to utilise a more aggressive style sparingly in certain circumstances, particularly in managing upwards*

- *I have gained the confidence to voice my opinion to my managers if I feel I have a valid point to make. I no longer fear the consequences of disagreeing with my bosses and I have learnt that I must not make assumptions*

- *Addressing performance issues more openly and in a discursive manner to arrive at mutually acceptable measurable methods to improve/change performance.*

When respondents were asked if they would work with a coach again, 91% said that they would. They identified that they would be most interested in working on their leadership style, alongside confidence and managing poor performance, see the chart below.

**Chart 5**
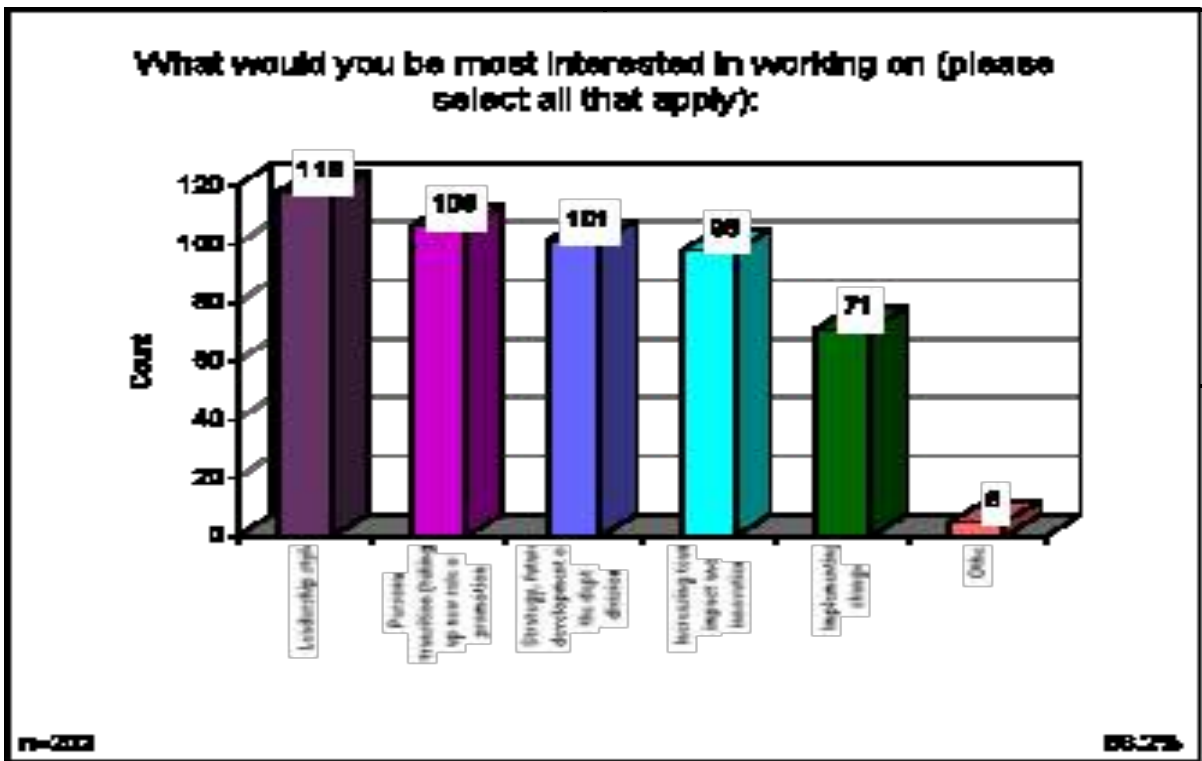


One final interesting finding was the response to the question: "Of the session available to you, how many did you take up?" Interestingly 74% of senior leaders took up all of the sessions available to them, as opposed to 64% of established leaders. This is a significant finding as it challenges the assumptions of the core design group who said that senior leaders were unlikely to take up coaching.

6.4     Useful information but…..

The on-line questionnaire firmly endorsed the coaching proposition by identifying the leadership challenges coaching best supported.  Whilst it endorses the comment made by Fillery-Travis et al (2006) that coaching does work, I believe it goes a little further than that in offering evidence from a reasonably well articulated framework of practice.  Fillery-Travis suggests that *"when we ask, Does Coaching work?, we must first identify where within the framework of practice the coaching is actually placed……only then can we identify if the evidence is available to answer the question as posed"*.   I would argue that the purpose for coaching was clearly articulated in the coaching proposition.  All of the coaches, irrespective of whether they were internal coaches, coaches from Ashridge or independent executive coaches, had a shared understanding of purpose.  Coachees received the same number of hours coaching over a similar timescale.

However, it is also fair to say that many of the items identified by the coachees are similar to those that often surface from this type of research.  In point of fact, Tony Ryan's own early research on coaching in the BBC acknowledged outcomes such as greater self awareness, greater self confidence, increased ability to communicate at all levels and improved leadership skills. The Association of Coaching report (March 2006) on the value of coaching cited both increased confidence and increased self awareness, as did a study by Leedham (2005).

I was left with a sense of failure. I had met the needs of the organisation, but I had not answered my own question, "how can coaching help change conversations in organisations?".

# Chapter Seven

## Discovery

## 2nd Person Inquiry

7.0    Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the third cycle of my second person inquiry.  My experience of working through the different action research cycles was how this was an emergent process.  Each cycle helped me to find a way through a concern and left me with new questions.  It was in this place of inquiry that I found myself at the end of my second cycle of research.  The data generated by the on-line questionnaire had endorsed the coaching proposition and had satisfied the needs of the organisation. I still felt something was missing. I believed we had a great opportunity to understand how coaching conversations could change the conversation in an organisation.   I had integrated this coaching activity into a wider OD strategy. The coaching was being accessed by so many leaders across the organisation. For me we were not getting at the heart of what could be leveraged through a coaching programme such as this one.  The discovery of Co-ordinated Management of Meaning opened up new possibilities in my research.

7.1    Imagine – what do I really want to understand?



- *Qualitative*

- *Honouring the coachees voice*

- *CMM*

- *Discovery*

It was a coaching conversation with Wendy, my "*critical friend"* that helped me dig myself out from the stuck place I now found myself in. The conversation was a long one over the telephone. Wendy helped me work through what it was I really wanted to understand and she helped me unpack this sense I had of this coaching being able to help change conversations in an organisation.  At the end of the conversation, I had shifted my stance from evaluating coaching to

valuing coaching as an OD activity.  Dropping that single letter "e" was to prove critical to my whole research.  Having shifted my mind-set away from evaluation, released my thinking and new possibilities began to emerge. Most importantly is allowed Co-ordinated Management of Meaning to come into focus.  (Appendix Twelve offers a schedule and process map of this cycle of research)

### 7.1.1    Creating a new  inquiry

I entered into this 3rd cycle of inquiry with the lessons learnt previously.  I was more aware of the design process and the choice of participants in the research. I also made sure I worked closely with my "critical friend" as she ensured the quality of my process by challenging my thinking throughout.  I also needed to draw on the support of colleagues in this process. This will become clearer as I explain the process.

### 7.1.1.1 Create the interview Protocol

The data collected in the second cycle of inquiry (chapter six) very firmly reported that coaching was a positive learning activity.  I wanted to build on this and so adopted a generative approach, based on my understanding of appreciative inquiry. To discover the best of what is in the coaching conversation as well as what is being created was important for me. It was the coachee's voice I was keen to hear, their own stories of the coaching so I could understand how coaching was supporting their learning. This led to the design of what I call an interview protocol.   Building on the coaching proposition, designing questions that would help the coachee articulate their story.   The protocol focused on the coaching conversation and what was happening in the process of the conversation rather than in evaluating whether or not the coaching worked.

I shared my draft interview protocol with Wendy before asking two colleagues from the internal coaching community to take part in a pilot interview.  In this way, I was able to refine the protocol so that I could be sure as I could be that it would surface the information I was seeking.  I also included a script at the

beginning of the protocol to ensure I adhered to the ethical guidelines I has set down for this research. See Appendix Ten, interview protocol.

7.1.1.2 Selection of participants

I wanted to make sure that I had a reasonable number of interviews from which to draw the information. The total number of participants taking up coaching during 2005 – 2006 was 515.  I chose to work with 10% of those which meant 51 interviews.  In the end I collected 50 interviews.

I wanted the sample to be randomly selected but to reflect the take-up of coaching across the BBC.  It needed to be representative of the percentage take-up per division and the percentage of senior and established leaders in that division.  I also wanted the sample to reflect the coaching and the split between Ashridge and the BBC coaches. Furthermore, I wanted the full list of participants to remain anonymous.  I was so aligned with coaching in the BBC I wanted to detach myself from this part of the process as much as I could to ensure the validity of the sample.

Jane Saunders, a BBC colleague, agreed to create a database of participants, ensuring we had that representative sample.  The chart overleaf shows the percentage sample from each division and the percentage of the overall total of participants. It was not an exact representation; Jane needed to adjust it in order to get the overall number to account for people being away, too busy or just not wanting to take part.  Each participant was contacted and invited to consider whether they would like to participate in this research.  The e mail sent out the purpose of the research, how the information was being collected, that we would be taping and transcribing the session and what happens with the information.

**Chart 6**

**Divisions**



**Divisions**
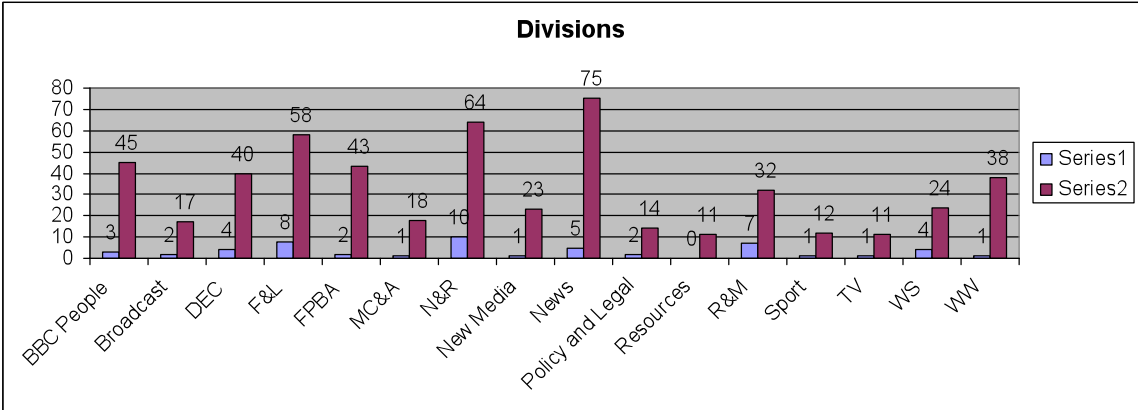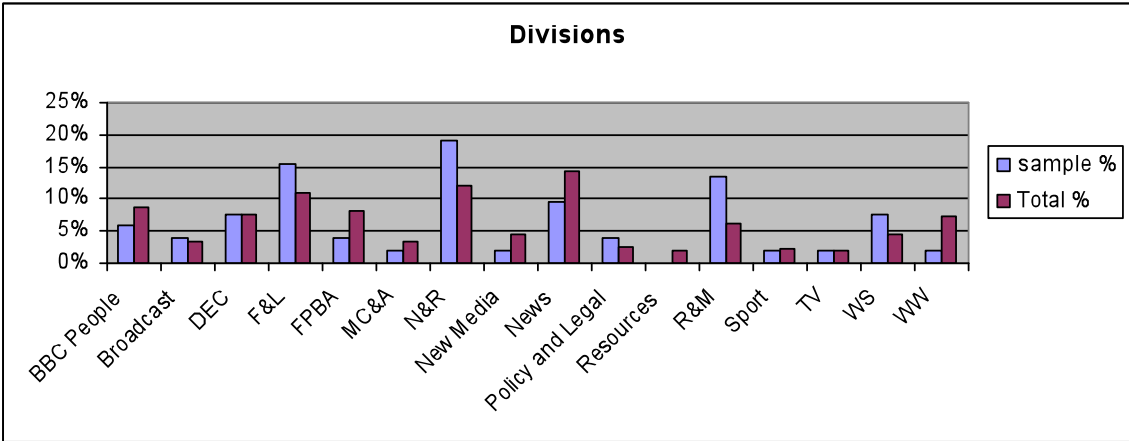


## 7.1.1.3 Leaders' Stories

All of the interviews were taped on a mini-disc and subsequently transcribed by independent transcribers'. I carried out the majority of interviews myself, assisted by a few colleagues including Wendy. As well as making sure all the 50 interviews happened, involving others in the interview process had the added advantage of forcing me to make explicit the interview process. The four of us met before we began the interviews to talk through the process and to make sure we were had a shared understanding of the process.

Interviews took place between January 2006 and April 2006. All interviews were taped, but once they had been transcribed, the tapes were wiped clean with one exception. With permission I have retained one voice tape.

7.2      Co-ordinated Management of Meaning

In Chapter Four I offered a brief overview of Co-ordinated management of Meaning, (Barnett Pearce 2004). In the next few sections, I will show how I adapted CMM for the purpose of my research and how I used it to analyse and interpret my data.

Although I did not realise it at the beginning, Co-ordinated Management of Meaning or CMM (ibid) despite its limitations as discussed in chapter 4 provided a methodology which would prove to be the cornerstone of my research. That said, Barnett Pearce (ibid) uses multiple definitions and different models in the application of his theory and whilst staying true to the philosophy of CMM, I worked with Wendy to create a way of using the theory that would fit my inquiry.

7.2.1   Conversations in context
Barnett Pearce (ibid) offers the concept of episodes, he says that this is a way of "*punctuating"* the communication event or events into a unit which has a beginning, middle and end.  In this instance I took each coaching programme as an episode, in other words the four coaching sessions each leader had represented one episode.  I did this because I was interested in the conversation happening in the coaching sessions and subsequent conversations and sense making happening outside of the coaching.

CMM (ibid) goes on to say that the episode of communication happens in context which widens the conversation pattern to include not just those

participating in the episode of communication but others relevant to the story as well as the cultural setting.   In my research I was exploring a coaching activity which was integrated into the context of an organisational strategy and in the context of existing leadership behaviours.  I therefore acknowledge that learning happens not just in the coaching conversation but outside of the conversation in subsequent action and subsequent conversations with others.  Barnett Pearce´s (ibid) description of this is the *"hierarchy model, a model of embedded contexts"*.  This is not a hierarchy in terms of a ranking, but simply a way of expressing the multiple contexts within a conversation which may give meaning.  By breaking down the contexts it allows us to begin to notice how the different contexts speak into the conversation. This provided me with a useful way to think about what was being co-constructed within the conversation and how the coachee then constructed conversation and / or action with others.

In determining different contexts relevant to my inquiry I drew directly form Barnett Pearce (2004). He begins with the episode of communication, the speech act, moving out to local culture, other participants and organisation.  In my research I returned to the coaching proposition, what was the coaching for and adapted the labels accordingly. I started with how people come to the coaching, what were their ideas about how to use coaching, the coaching conversation over the four sessions, their role as a leader, self, with others and organisationally and the culture.  More specifically,

- Expectations of coaching
- Coaching episode ( 4 sessions)
- Coaching Relationship
- Kind of conversation
- Episodes of different action
- Making sense of my leadership approach
- BBC Leadership Culture

• Leadership programme

I felt it was important to offer a definition for each of the labels to ensure shared understanding when working with the interview scripts. Appendix Eleven

### 7.2.2 Serpentine Model ( adapted)

Looking at the different CMM models I felt the Serpentine Model (2004) offered the most appropriate approach for my research. Barnet Pearce's Serpentine Model (ibid) as illustrated in Figure 20 overleaf, suggests a way of mapping a conversation between two people. It is worth remembering that CMM is concerned with looking "at" the conversation and not looking "through" it. In other words, CMM focuses on the interaction between those in conversation within their context. It is the meaning generated by the interaction which was of interest to me.

In the Serpentine model, Barnet Pearce (ibid) looks at the interaction between Bill and Elaine. Their conversation is illustrated with a wavy line. The line "starts" within the social world of Bill who moves into conversation with Elaine. Elaine comes to the conversation from her social world; both Bill and Elaine will each have their own interpretation of the conversation and the meaning it generates as messages are sent and received. The arrows seek to identify the contexts in which the action or change occurred.

**Figure 20 ( taken from** *www.pearceassociates.com)*



Bill's social world:

Elaine's social world:

The Serpentine Model (Abstract)
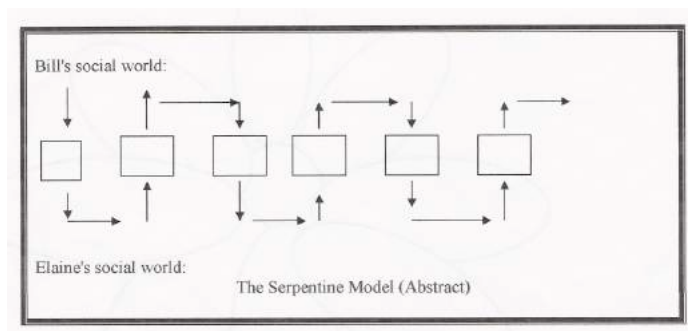
In my study, I wanted to honour the coachees voice and explore the meaning they made of their coaching interaction.  I was not interested in the voice of the coach.  I also wanted to include conversations outside of the coaching which had the potential to generate meaning for the coachee.  Barnet Pearce's Serpentine Model (ibid) seemed most relevant to my research.  I believed that the interview scripts of the leader's stories were packed with more meaning than might be first apparent from simply reading the text.  Moreover, it seemed to offer a way of explicitly linking, what Barnet Pearce (ibid) terms as "the story lived" with the "story told".  In other words, I could see the potential of this to map the conversations in the coaching session, *"story told"* and the subsequent *"story lived"*, the action, or further conversations, with others.

I adapted this model so that it became a means of translating the conversation stories into a snake- like pattern showing the process of the conversation and their action through and outside of the conversation.  In this way I could begin to access the richness of the coachees journey by paying attention to the meaning they were making for themselves in their conversations through their stories.

### 7.2.3   Privileging the coachee's voice

Combining the idea about hierarchy of contexts / meaning with the serpentine model, meant that I could begin to extract the different episodes of learning from the interview scripts.  Conversation consists primarily of speech acts (Searle 1969), a theory which describes the intention of speech act is to make contact with the receiver and as a result the receiver alters their behaviour in some way. So in its simplest form, the speaker, or in this case the coach, asks a question and the receiver, in this case the coachee, responds in some way. The meaning the receiver makes of that conversation is defined by its placement within a sequence of events, what happened before, the current state or expectation and what came afterwards, in other words behaving differently, doing something different of being different.  In this research, I called the tracking of

this learning from the original story a "shift".  In order to help me draw out these shifts from the leaders' stories, I created what I have called the "shift sheet". This allowed me to map the shifts that were embedded in the leaders' stories.

This visual interpretation also allowed me to see the interplay between coaching session and practice.  Wendy and I came to see the "serpentine" as the winding connection through the conversation.   Figure 21 below is an example of a shift sheet.

**Figure 21**



CMM – framework
Script Number

Shift label
From ( starting point)

to ( end point)

Leadership Programme

BBC Leadership Culture

Impact/ value to business performance

Making sense of my leadership approach

Episodes of different actions

Kind of Conversation

Expectations

Coaching Episode

Coaching relationship

Aquilina 2006
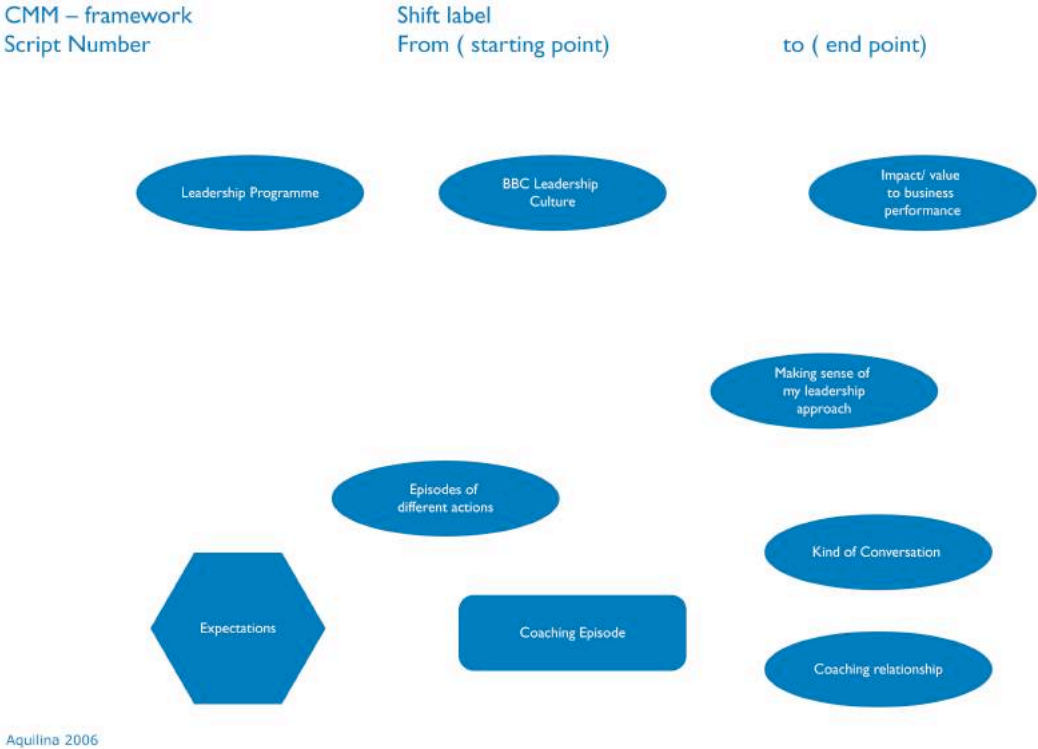
As I stated in an earlier paragraph, I wanted to honour the coachees voice and therefore when I mapped the shifts I retained the coachees words throughout. I did not want to dilute the richness of the story.

The words at the top of the sheet, "shift label", refer to type of shift being mapped.  It identifies the starting point of the shift as well as the end point. Again

I used the coachees words,  so for example;

- From what I do as a manager / coach to asking more collaboratively and trusting self and others by doing what I believe in
- From doing things right to not bogged down able to let go
- From trying to make sense of what was going on in the BBC to I made sense of confusion able to set direction for the team, now more business efficient

To start with and to ensure the validity of interpretation, Wendy and I each took away the first five scripts and quite separately began to pull out the shifts from each story.   This we did by reading the scripts several times over, understanding the story and the stories within the story and the learning. We cross checked our findings and refined the approach.  Our review of those first five scripts unearthed an additional layer in this process.  The shift sheets contained what Wendy described as "native shifts", these are individual shifts. So in one leader's story there may be three individual shifts or "native shifts" and in another Whilst I did not want to dilute the richness of what was in each of the stories, I was also mindful of finding a way to ensure we had data which was manageable.  I realised we needed to create a shift map which would capture the story in one serpentine and be able to retain the interactivity between the shifts.

Figure 22 overleaf is an example of shift sheet which has two native or individual shifts.

Script number

The shift within the story has a starting and an end point

Shapes – the different hierarchies of meaning (CMM)

Written text is the leaders own words

First shift starts here (blue line)

Second shift begins with coaching episode (black line)
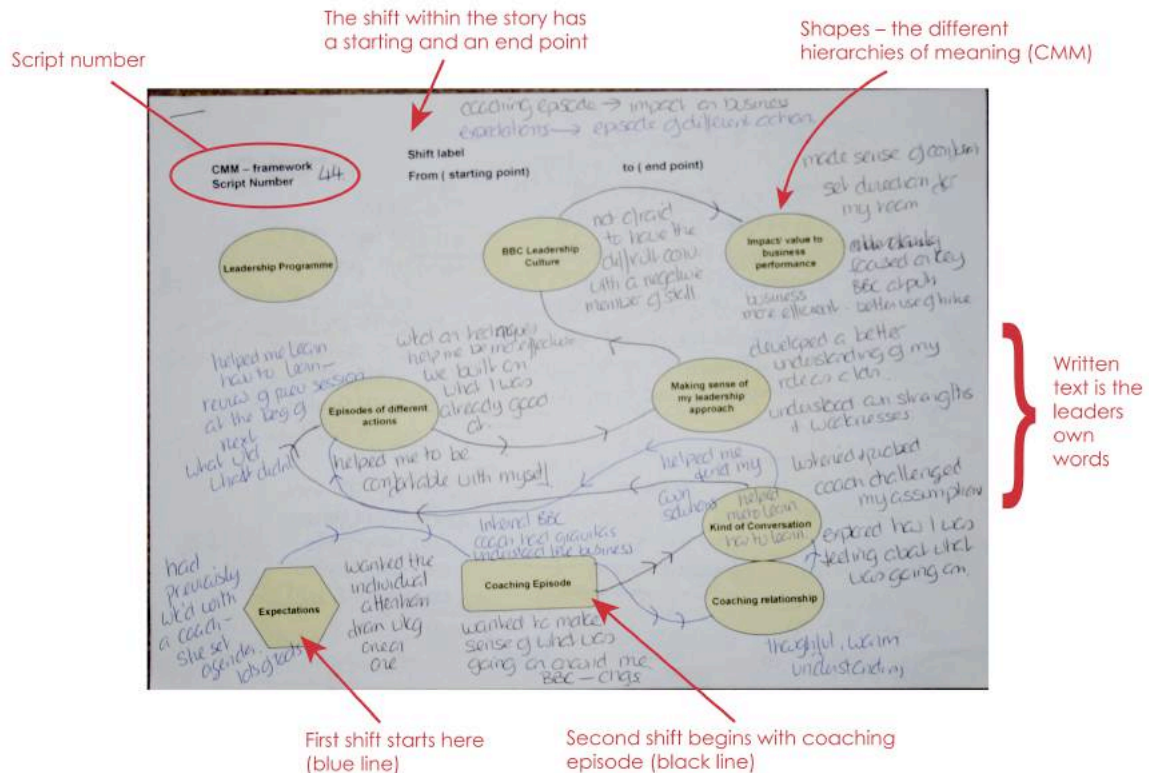
I had 50 stories where were integrated narratives of different conversations, going through each of them and mapping out the shifts was a fascinating process.  Sharing those shifts with a colleague Wendy and using our own conversation to make sense to the data allowed us to engage with the material in a way that made me feel that the analysis was as robust as we could make it.

Returning to CMM for a moment, Barnett Pearce (ibid) makes the point that "*researchers usually privilege one/ some of them* (the conversations*) over others*".  He goes on to describe how the choice of what to privilege is determined by the research paradigm and says, " *some conversations in the research act might be call 'shy' and others 'bold' and we might look at the researcher's skills in bringing out what otherwise might be hidden*".   I was struck by the words, "*bringing out what was hidden*" this was yet another important aspect of my research. I had chosen to privilege; give my focus of attention t, honour the coachee´s voices.

From my lens of a phenomenological perspective, I wanted to engage with the coachees story of the conversation through their experience of it. From my social constructionist stance, I wanted to look at the pattern of the interaction through the coachee's lens, to explore the meanings being co-constructed in the coaching conversation and outside.

Therefore I was "privileging" the coachee's voices within the context of leadership, building on the wider conversations which started with Making it Happen (chapter two) and in the context of the current organisational challenges.  So in reading the interview scripts I also needed to pay attention to the question, *"what was the leader privileging in this episode of coaching?"*  In other words identifying what the coachee was placing significant emphasis on or importance on, where was their focus?

The final step in this process was to create a single serpentine story map.  This meant comparing the native shifts with what the coachee had privileged and then using this to inform the coachee' single serpentine story map.  In order to be as robust as possible with the interpretation, I worked alongside Wendy.  The outcome was a visual representation which captured the learning in practice and from practice in one serpentine whilst still retaining the richness of the individual or native shifts and the interactivity between the shifts.   Figure 23 overleaf captures this process.

For a summary of this third cycle of inquiry process see Appendix twelve.

### 7.2.4   Reflexive rewind

In chapter three, I talked about how 20th century philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Austin and John Searle termed the idea "the linguistic turn",   This picks up on the idea that language is fateful.  Barnett Pearce (2004) suggests that the stories we tell "prefigure" or constitute the lives we lead and by re-authoring that story we can bring about change.  CMM focuses on the specific acts which allow re-authoring to happen.  Barnett Pearce (ibid) goes on to identify what he calls *"reflexive effects",* which refers to the ability of the individual *"to notice the actions and reactions of self and others, in relation to oneself, and use these observations to guide and co-ordinate*

*continuing dialogue and future action".* I was also struck by the work of Thomas and Harri-Augustein who suggest a "re-wind" to help learners develop a habit of observing and reflecting on their learning. There seemed to be an opportunity here to bring the two elements, reflexive and rewind together thus creating a reflexive rewind.

I was very conscious that my material was the coachees story and so as part of honouring their voice I went back to a sample of participants and checked out the interpretation with them. As I shared the interpretation, I asked them to engage with what I was saying, to help me understand if the interpretation resonated with them. It was re-assuring to hear that all agreed with the interpretation of their particular story. The process of the reflexive rewind in itself proved to be a way of encouraging coachees to reconnect with their recent experiences through the coaching, to observe the learning, to make it explicit for themselves in order to guide future action.

### 7.2.5   Creating a database

I wanted to be able to use the data to see what was happening across all of the participant's stories so I could understand the shifts in relation to the organisational agenda. Although the database did dilute the richness of the data, it proved to be useful in drawing out findings from an organisational perspective. I have included an extract in appendix thirteen.

### 7.3   In conclusion

Using CMM had been a voyage of discovery. It was, in every sense of the word, an emergent process which allowed me to arrive at a place with some really interesting data on the value of coaching. In Part Three, I will begin to look at the data and draw out my findings form this third cycle on inquiry in relation to my research question.

**Part Three**

**The Final Scenes**

# Chapter Eight

# Giving Voice to the Data

## 8.0    Introduction

In this chapter, I will share the findings and analysis from my third cycle of my second-person inquiry.   I aim to let the data speak, not to add my own inferences or sense making which may detract from the richness of the data.  I will share this in chapter nine.

## 8.1    What was being privileged by the coachees

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, I "privileged" the coachee's voices within the context of leadership, building on the wider conversations which started with Making it Happen (chapter two) and in the context of the current organisational challenges.

As part of our work together analysing the data, Wendy and I also looked at the different shifts labels and how they related back to the three circles.  We found that the focus was primarily around making sense of leadership either for oneself or in relation to others.  Unsurprisingly, many of the shifts described what happened in the process of the coaching conversation and how this helped co-construct new ways of being a leader.

Figure 24 overleaf tries to capture the embedded nature of the stories.

**Figure 24**



Coaching Episode 4 Leadership coaching conversations

Who am I as a leader?

How do I relate to others?

Organisational wider system

50 stories - narratives of the conversation and practice
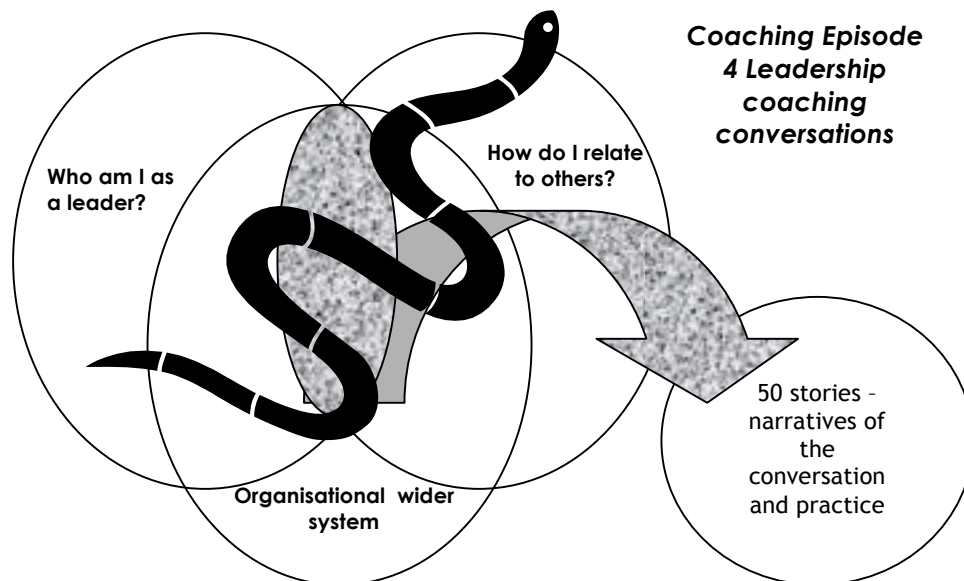
Furthermore, what surfaced within each of the leader's stories, were what coachees focused their attention on, what they had privileged in the conversation.

We had collected the phrases leader's had used in their stories which seem to tell us what they were privileging on the shift sheet (see figure 23 page 128).  In order to get a real picture of what was being privileged I transferred each of those phrases onto an individual post –it note. This allowed Wendy and me to look across all the data to see what was being privileged, what do the coachees most talk about and / or most value. (see figure 25 overleaf), We concluded that the key themes were:

- Developing confidence as a leader
- Making sense of leadership, reframing, re-positioning, building on what you have and doing it a bit differently

- The coaching conversation – how the coaching is constructed, your agenda, questions, listening, finding your own answers and jointly constructing the coaching territory
- Personal Journey – making sense of 'where I am now', thinking about 'where I go from here'
- Time to think – step out of daily activity, focus on self.

**Figure 25**



Of the 50, two reported negative experiences of coaching. From their stories they seemed to privilege the idea that coaching was about solving problems.

Neither of these coachees had problems or issues they wanted to work on, feeling they therefore they did not see the need coaching. One did not value talking about oneself and did not want to be psycho-analysed. They also privileged their scepticism around coaching.  This raises another question, are some coachees uncoachable?

## 8.2     The coachee´s voices

The way I want to illustrate the shifts is through the voices of the coachees.  I have 50 stories but I wish to showcase just five. I have included the serpentine story map for each of the five.  As discussed in chapter seven, the serpentine story map was only my interpretation until I checked it out with the individuals themselves.  So I re-connected with a sample of five leaders and it is their five stories you are about to read.  They all confirmed that their individual serpentine story map was an accurate representation of their story.

First of all I would like to introduce Mary who has kindly given permission for me to use her story.  (There is also a CD with her interview at the back of this document). I will go into some detail with Mary's story which I hope will serve to illustrate the methodology, with the other four I will simply offer the story map with some narrative.

### 8.2.1    Meet Mary

Mary is now a senior leader. At the time of this coaching she was an established leader working in a cross divisional role at the BBC. Mary came to coaching because, as she says *"I was incredibly aware, due to my previous experience of the huge benefits of coaching".*  She had been through a very difficult personal time and as a result had lost her confidence and this is where we begin:

1st shift

Mary had constructed her reality around, *"I can do some things but I lack confidence".* Mary discussed the key priorities with her coach, one of which was how to have difficult conversations.   Mary worked with her coach on why she reacts in a certain way, what makes her defensive.  Mary rehearsed ways in which she might say things differently or how she might come across as less defensive.  She also had the opportunity to apply for a more senior role and so rehearsed how to be different in the interview. Between sessions Mary would try and say things differently and discovered that in her interaction with others she started to get positive feedback.  Her confidence began to increase.  She began to speak out on issues and was able to put forward an argument effectively.  Mary started to feel confident as a leader and to know who she was as a leader.

2nd shift

Mary also realised that if she was going to progress to a more senior role in the organisation, she needed to be able to articulate a wider perspective.  Through the coaching conversation, Mary constructed a way of putting in her own ideas, of aligning these with business priorities and to no longer be afraid to tackle difficult people issues.  Mary noticed that she could leverage her own impact by choosing to contribute to the issues which really matter.

3rd Shift

Mary came to coaching knowing that coaching was beneficial.  She understood that the coachee does the work, the coach will often challenging questions, will listen and summarise back. Mary believes that this conversation process tends to stay in your head because you find the answer yourself and you remember how you did that.  Coaching and coaching self is a useful way of working things out.

Mary reflected, *"I just wouldn't underestimate the value that coaching can have…… it takes you to the first step towards thinking"* .

Mary privileged the process of coaching, she said, *"with the right person and techniques you can work things out for yourself".*

Figure 26 below is Mary's Serpentine Story Map which is a summary bringing together what is privileged by the coachee and the individual or native shifts.

**Figure 26**



Mary's coaching story
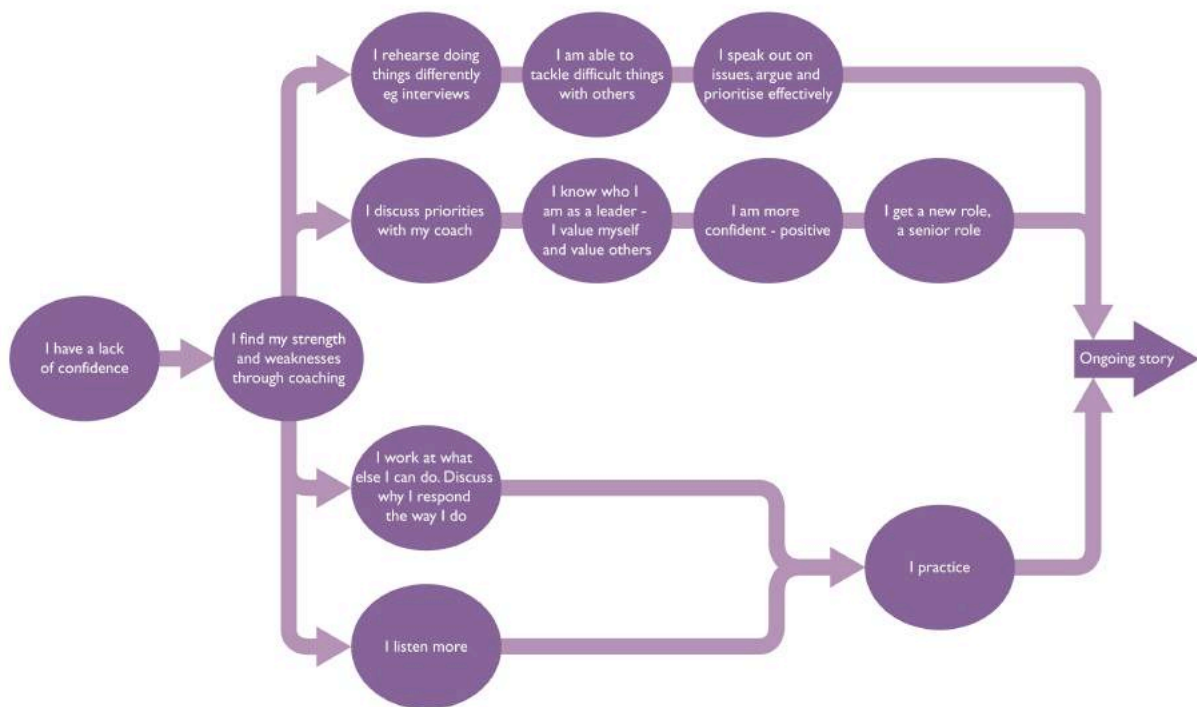
### 8.2.2 The internal coach

The coachee was also a coach herself and found her coach's style so different to her own that she felt confused in the process. However, she came to appreciate the different approach as it gave her the space to explore her own

feelings about being a leader.  The coachee had constructed her style of leadership as one which "sorts out a problem". The conversation with her coach helped her to re-construct her model of leadership to one which is more creative and more daring.  By re-framing her model of leadership, she began to see how she could relate differently to members of the senior team and add value in a more proactive way.  Figure 27 is the internal coach´s Serpentine Story Map

**Figure 27**

Internal Coach story
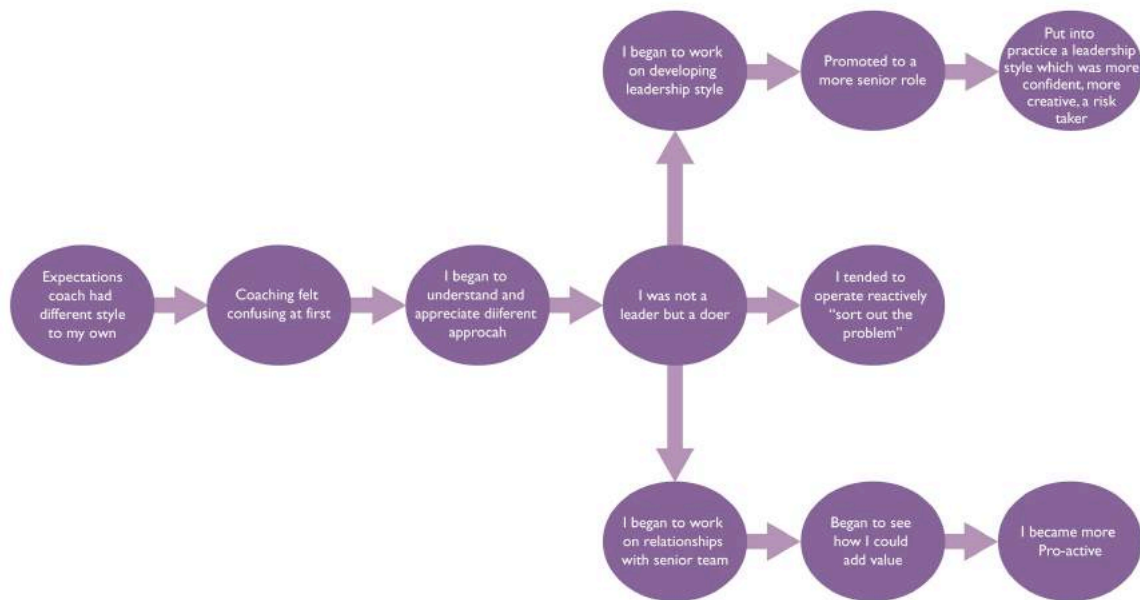


The internal coach privileged the opportunity to step back and think about how to work differently.  And in the end she valued the different approach of her coach as it moved her outside of her comfort zone.

### 8.2.3  Senior manager 1

The first of the three senior managers I have included in this chapter came to coaching with nothing specific to talk about, they simply wanted the experience of coaching.  However, as the coach invited the coachee to explore her world-view, it surfaced angst and hurt that was remaining from a difficult and very public situation.  It had seriously damaged how she thought about herself as a leader. Through the conversation the senior manager was able to co create a different reality about herself and who she was as a leader.  She worked on developing a new leadership style which was not about "pleasing others". The coaching conversation helped her to learn to reflect more and she still accesses those coaching conversations as a way of sustaining a different way of being a leader.  Figure 28, is the senior manager 1´s Serpentine Story Map.

**Figure 28**



Story - Senior Manager 1
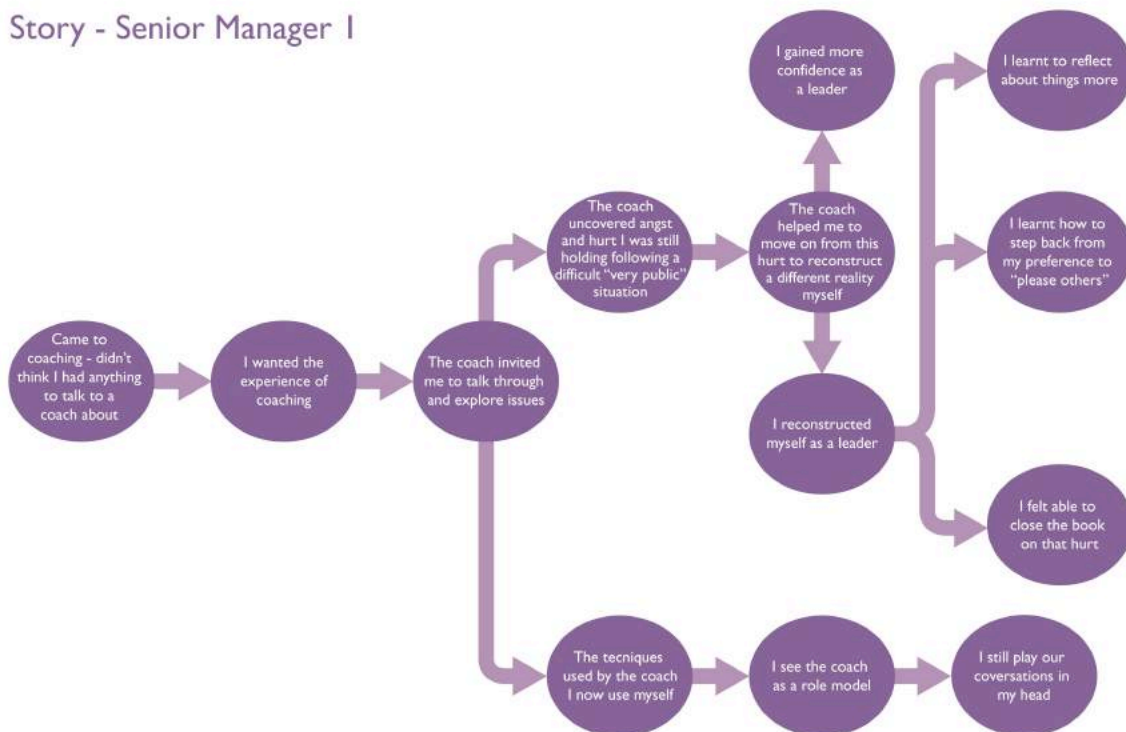
This senior manager privileged developing confidence. She valued the time and the space to talk through issues with someone she did not know and to have that quiet reflective space.

### 8.2.4  Senior Manager 2

The second senior manager had just completed 18 months of personal development activity.  He understood coaching and he wanted to use the coaching session to continue to work on how to develop his career.  The coach used coaching techniques to help this senior manager think through what really was at the heart of his issue.  This allowed him to work on how to reconnect with his human side and be more relaxed.  As a result, he now believes that he communicates more with his team, is engaged more fully with grass roots programming and is far more accessible.

This senior manager privileged the opportunity to work with a free agenda which allowed him to work on who he is and who he is as a leader.  He repeatedly spoke about this idea of a free agenda as it allowed the coachee to engage with the coaching process.  A coached has to want coaching.

Figure 29 (overleaf) is senior manager 2´s Serpentine Story Map.

**Figure 29**



Story - Senior Manager 2
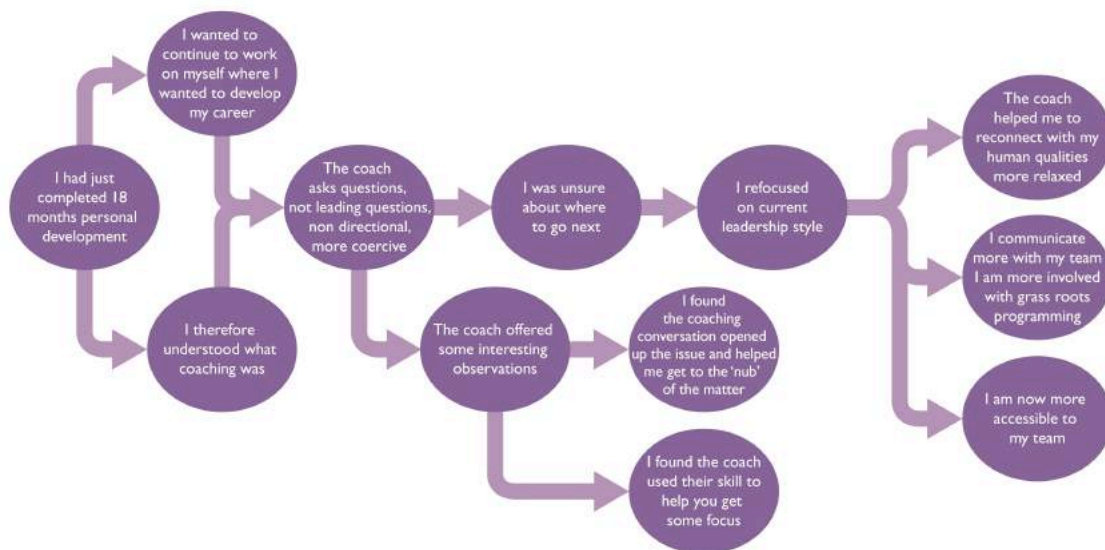
## 8.2.5   Senior Manager 3

Finally, the third senior manager, who although she came to coaching with some scepticism about who she would be working with,  was delighted with her coach and as a result decided to make best use of the opportunity.  She did not have any real issues but just wanted the space.

That space opened up the territory for the conversation. With so much change happening in the BBC, this senior manager felt she needed to be strong for others and that she could not show her own anxiety.  The coach provided a safe space which allowed the coachee to b e vulnerable. Together they co-created a different reality, one where she could delegate more and ask for help when she needed it.  She developed a less controlling style and adopted a more relaxed way of being.

Figure 30  is senior manager 3 Serpentine Story Map

**Figure 30**



Story - Senior Manager 3
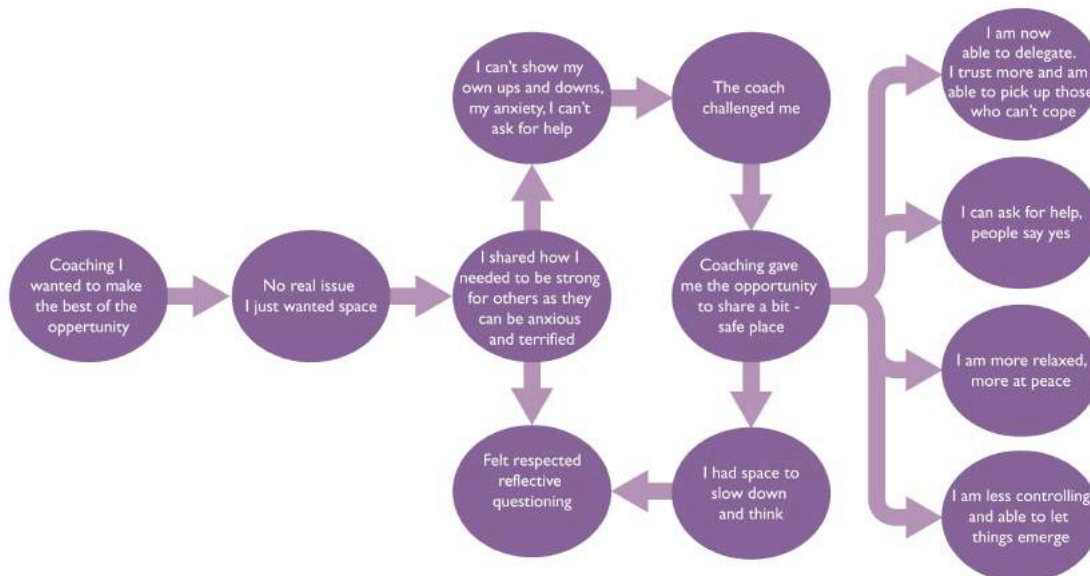
This senior manager already believed in the value of coaching. But she needed to be with the right coach, an external coach to the organisation.  This coachee also privileged the space coaching offered her, the opportunity to slow down and think about herself.  This allowed her to make sense of what is going on in wider organisational context and how it impacts on her.

## 8.3     Leadership contribution

As part of the interview protocol, coachees were asked to think about their leadership contribution before and after the coaching on a scale of 1 -10 where 10 is contributing all I can as a leader and 1 is not contributing at all. With a few exceptions, all coachees felt they had had a shift in their contribution, some by as little as .5 and others by as much as 3. The chart overleaf captures that data.

**Chart 7**
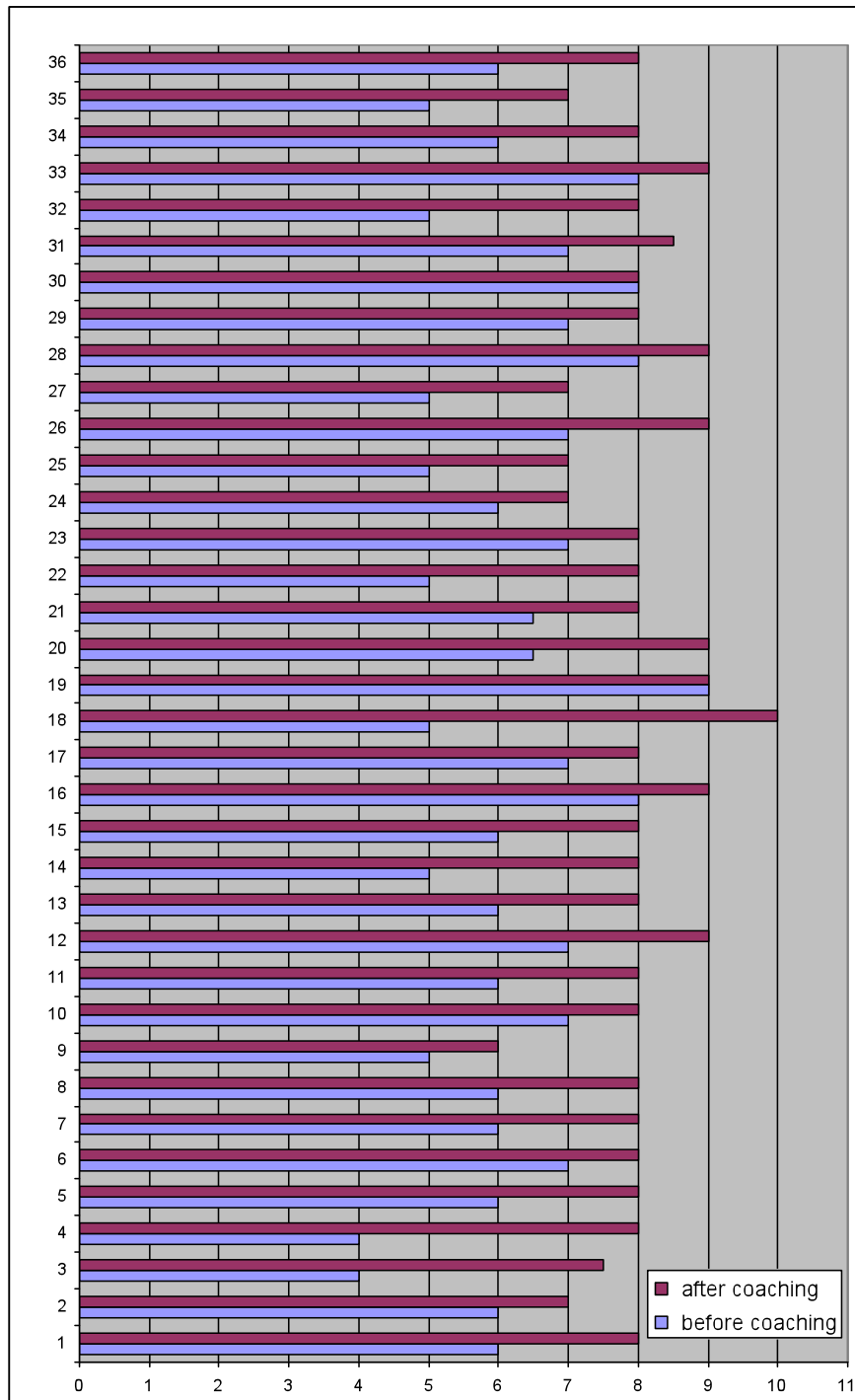
8.4     Nature of the coaching conversation

The words of the different coachees have drawn our attention to the process, the interaction, the content and what had been co-created either in the coaching or outside.  In some cases the emphasis has been on re-framing or constructing a different reality about leadership, in others it has been simply about adding to existing strengths or re-connecting to them.  Through CMM, I have been able to gain a richer understanding of the stories and the multi layered shifts which are occurring in or as a result of the coaching conversation.

I believe that through the coaching coachees are co-creating an outward and increasing spiral of shift in thinking and acting which is more likely to build sustained change.  So what is the impact on organisational learning? In the next chapter, I will build on what has emerged here.

# Chapter Nine

# Making Sense

## 9.0    Introduction

Rowan (Reason 2001:118) states that, *"at a certain point the involvement has to stop. We have to stand back and assess where we have got to, and bring all the results together, and Make Sense of them"*.  This is my aim in this chapter.

Throughout my research I have worked closely with my "*critical friend*" Wendy, other colleagues from the coaching field, my supervisors and, of course the participants themselves.  The quality of these interactions has helped me in every aspect of my inquiry and particularly in this phase of sense-making.

In this inquiry, I have placed significant value on the coachee's voice. As I discussed in chapter three, I have also privileged coaching as a learning conversation where the coach is the facilitator of that conversation (Stelter 2007) enabling the coachee to reconstruct and construct whatever is meaningful for them ( Harri-Augustein et al 1991).  I have focused on what is being co-constructed through the coaching conversation and have been able to look at exactly that through the methodology of CMM. The idea of an outward and increasing spiral of shift in thinking, a shift in practice, a shift in being seems to point to more sustained learning and therefore more sustained change.

Having shared the findings from this inquiry, I will now return to the privileged voices of the coachees, examining what the shifts in practice truly reveal about the coaching conversation.  I conclude this chapter with a proposed model as way of thinking about coaching to support learning in context.  However, I begin by sharing some of the questions I reflected on this stage of my inquiry.

## 9.1    More questions than answers

The purpose of this coaching was to support leadership development; to help leaders think about: "who I am as a leader", "how I relate to others as a leader" and "how I lead in the wider organisation".  My research looked at how coaching can help change conversations in organisations. I wanted to understand the significance of such a large number of leaders working with coach and to make sense of the contribution their individual shifts in practice had on leadership in the BBC.  As I attempted to capture my muddled thinking visually, I returned to my flip chart and drew what I sensed was happening.  See figure 31 below.

**Figure 31**
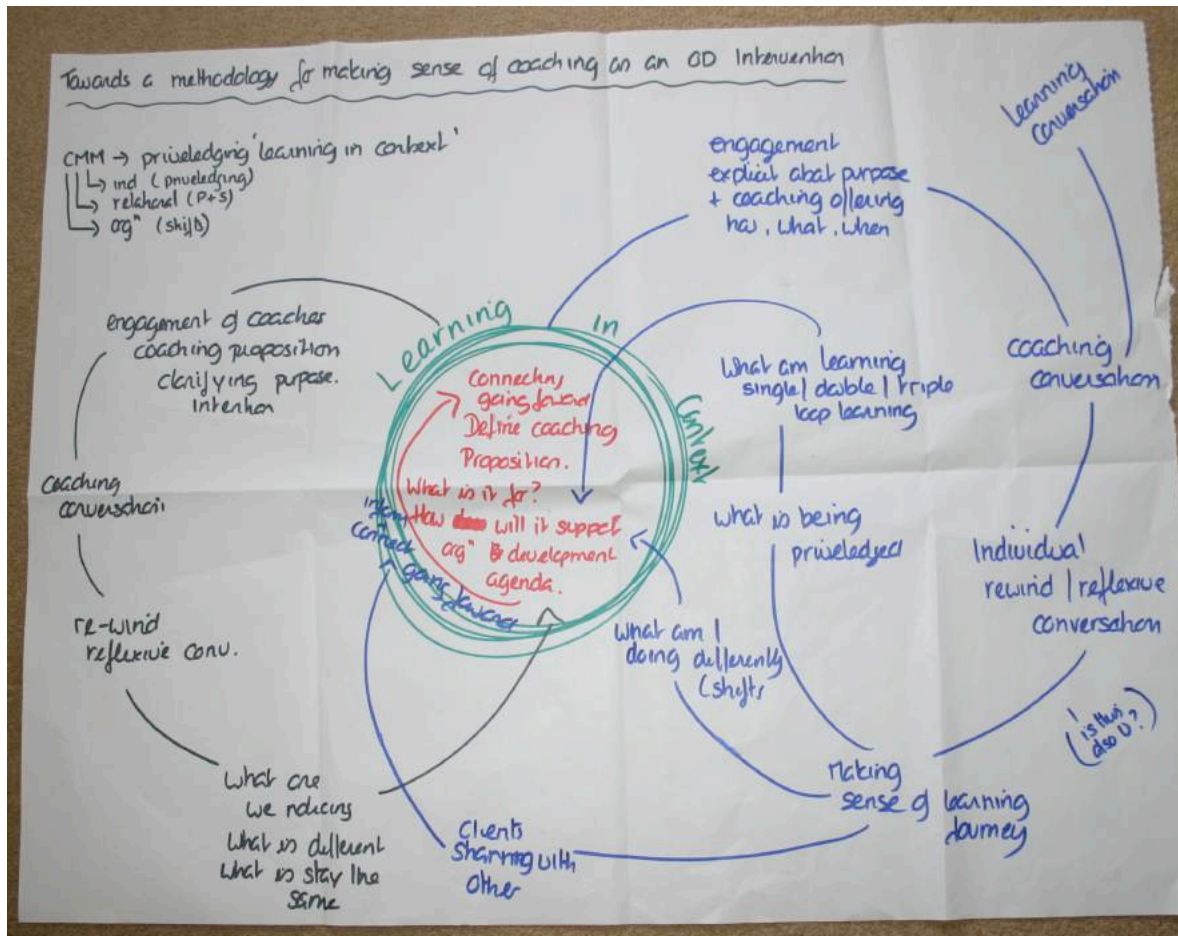
I was struck by the sense of movement emerging from the image. There seemed to be two intertwined threads: the individual stories and their shifts in practice, and the coaching proposition, how it was framed and the framework of practice for coaches.  The two seemed to dance together creating a momentum for learning and change.  I discussed these ideas with Wendy; we were both grabbed by the energy of this, excited at the possibilities and interested in the connections.

From an earlier chapter I said that CMM is concerned with looking **at** the patterns of communication and taking those patterns and seeing the consequences they have for the coachee and others.  This inquiry has revealed different patterns of communication.  The consequences of those patterns have produced to a lesser or greater degree, different leadership actions. Leaders have identified how they are creating new or revised realities for themselves. The data suggests that the coachees have "privileged" who they are as a leader, re-constructing in a personally meaningful way (Harri-Augustein et al ibid), and that they have expanded their conversational repertoire by embracing a coaching style of leadership.

Still, I am curious to know what this conversation has created. If there is this individual movement, shifts in practice, what might be the collective shift of the organisation? If a critical mass of leaders at the BBC now has new ways of acting as leaders, how might the organisation build on this? What are the organisational stories circulating about the leadership behaviours being constructed?  In making sense of this inquiry, I offer Figure 32 overleaf.

**Figure 32**



Unleashing the potential of the coaching conversation

* Thomas / Augustein
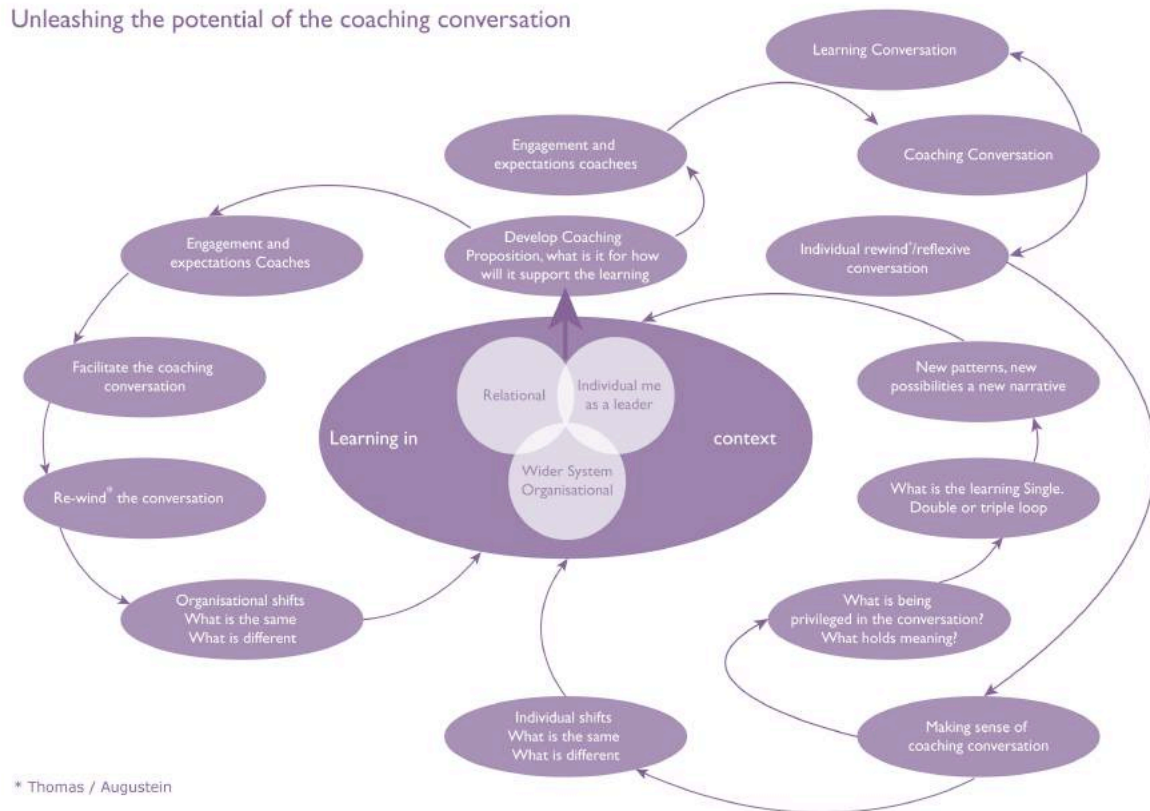
It is created from that original flip chart ( figure 31). I have called it "unleashing the potential of the coaching conversation". It looks chaotic but it is an attempt to capture the emergent nature of this learning.  From chaos and complexity comes knowing.

## 9.2    Meaning in Context

CMM suggests there are multiple layers of contexts.  Barnet Pearce (2004) built on the work of Bateson et al (1967). They refer to communication occurring at two levels simultaneously, the content of the conversation and the relationship itself, with the relationship the context for the content. This is not a hierarchy in

terms of a ranking, but simply a way of expressing the multiple contexts within a conversation which may give meaning.

This meaning making process at multiple levels of context provides a structure through which we can determine the learning. The meaning of the different patterns is defined by its placement in a sequence of events. This means that the episode of communication, in this instance the four coaching sessions, is in the context of what came before and after the coaching, resulting in behaving differently, doing things differently and being different.

The concept of the relationship providing the context for the content is also particularly relevant here.  A number of the coachees´ stories spoke about the coaching relationship and the space for conversation.  There was reference to the coach creating a "*safe space", "space to think"* and "*being supportive"*. They talked about the coach being "engaged and focused", that they "listened" and "allowed me to be vulnerable".   Many spoke about how the coach challenged their assumptions and mental models, helping them to access a different perspective.  There was agreement about how the coaching helped to focus on specific issues, gave space to think and discover how to do things differently. The words "helped me make sense of…." , were often present in the text.

Another important level of meaning in the stories concerns "self".  The majority of the stories demonstrate how the re-constructions have emerged through the co-creation of something which is meaningful for the coachee.  The obvious example is building confidence, Mary, describes coaching as "*saving my life"* , pointing to how re-building her confidence is personally significant, relevant and viable. This picks up on van Oudsthoorn's definition for coaching: *"Reflective conversations for the construction and reconstruction of personally significant, relevant and viable meaning through negotiation and exchange."* Other examples include, *"understood self and now can understand others, "I learnt to*

*let go and develop a more relaxed me", " I moved from self doubt to confidence", "the coaching was personally profound, I built self belief*,"

CMM identifies the *"logical force*" (2004) which asks, *"what should I do in this specific context?"* suggesting that the context will dictate that we act in a certain way.  Of interest to this inquiry are contextual and pre-figurative configurations of the logical force.

Contextual refers to the context which requires action, in this inquiry, what the coachee wants to be different.  What element of their practice are they looking to shift?  From the wider BBC context, what the coaching is for and what it seeks to change- in this instance, a shift in leadership behaviours.

I introduced the term prefigurative in the last chapter. This refers to the connection between antecedent acts and the action we are interested in. From the coachees´ perspective, the leadership programme and translating that learning into practice to become the most creative organisation in the word.

## 9.3    What is the nature of the learning?

I have already stated how I have "privileged" coaching as a learning conversation. The diagram 37b, suggest a momentum of learning through multiple coaching conversations.  Furthermore, the idea that what is co-constructed in the conversation continues to develop and evolve beyond the conversation is evidenced through the ongoing coachee's story in chapter nine. Therefore I am curious as to the nature of the learning in these conversations.  I have taken my lead from theorists, Argyris (1991), Senge (1990) and Hargrove (2003) who we met in chapter three. They offer similar definitions about single, double and triple loop learning.  They see single loop learning as being concerned with the skills to do the task, double loop learning is to do with

learning about self and triple loop learning as learning to learn. In the context of this inquiry, I would translate the model as follows:

- Single loop learning –  a "fix-it" focus conversation
- Double loop learning – a conversation which co-creates a different construction of what a leader does
- Triple loop learning – the kinds of conversations which create learning within the leader that not only enables them to do things differently but also means they can access that learning for themselves, developing the ability to self-coach.

Would the shifts in practice I discussed in the last chapter relate to the different learning loops? And if so, what might they tell me about the conversations?

### 9.3.1   Single loop learning

It would be easy to make the assumption that single loop learning shifts were of less importance.  We are all programmed with what Bradford et al (2005) describe as "*theories-in-use*". In single loop learning the coachee looks at their "*theories-in-use*" and how they inform their own level of competence in order to improve their performance.  This is a difficult process. Single loop learning could be described as ordinary shifts but it is in fact very valuable and from the coachee's perspective, makes a difference.  Working from an appreciative perspective, coachees tended to build on existing strengths as leaders thereby increasing their leadership contribution.  The shifts in this category were typically to do with:

- Managing upwards more effectively
- Learning to prioritise
- Shifting preference from offering advice to listening and interacting with people more
- Working differently, become more able to deliver on commitments
- Introducing regular feedback sessions

My intention is not to dismiss single loop learning but in the context of my inquiry into how coaching supports organisational learning, double and triple loop learning are more valuable, as can be seen below.

### 9.3.2 Double loop learning

This challenges coachees to look at their values and beliefs. It's aimed at the underlying assumptions about their theories-in-use. Double loop learning requires the coachee to consider re-constructing their mental models. Bradford et al (2005) suggest that this tends to attract defensiveness. However, Senge(1994) sees double loop learning as the means by which continuous learning in organisations occurs.

The shift patterns identified a number of examples of coachees re-framing their mental model of leadership. Mary spoke about moving from defensive, negatively aggressive to a leader who is open, able to share and delegate as well as handling the difficult conversation. Another example was a coachee who presented as someone who felt out of control as a leader and who through the coaching began to re-construct his or her model of leadership and valuing empowering others. Developing a more collaborative leadership style helped them become more visible to the team. They were able to create an environment where it was safe to make mistakes and learn. Exploring their leadership style, the coachee learnt the value of listening, not stepping in and making judgements. In constructing a different leadership style, they described how they were now better equipped to handle difficult conversations. One final story is that of the leader searching for techniques to help them overcome how uncomfortable they felt with senior leaders. The coaching supported them in constructing a different mental model of those relationships and ways of moving beyond self doubt to having the confidence to disagree.

In the double loop learning examples, coachees are re-constructing their idea of leadership and through the conversation creating a different way of acting. Hargrove (2003:94) says that double loop learning in coaching is about," *"shifting the particular perspectives, beliefs and assumptions…re-framing the mindset."* If this multiple coaching activity is beginning to deconstruct coachees´ mental models of leadership and is supporting them in reconstructing a new idea of leadership, then the organisation´s leadership mind-set is likely to shift too.

9.3.3   Triple Loop Learning

Triple loop learning is all about being. Sieler (2005) describes it as second order learning, and is about paying attention to who we are. Hargove (2003) suggests it´s all about asking how we need to be different.  I have argued that coaching is about learning in context.  The Pedler et al (2004) model of leadership development suggests that the way you construct your role as a leader depends on who you are, the organisational context and the challenges you face. Revans would add that it is also about learning how you learn, being able to connect back to the learning to self coach.

In her story, senior manager one talked about how the way she worked with her coach is replayed in her head when she faces a new or different situation. Another example is the coachee presenting with a leadership style that was controlling, restrictive and restraining. Here the double loop learning was about letting go to develop a more relaxed, less controlling style.  This she did, creating a more effective relationship with her team and manager.  In addition, she took that learning and applied it to her dealings with external agencies and how  she negotiates through difficult and complex issues.  In this way the learning was transferred to a different conversation in a different context.

A leader who came to coaching struggling to lead the change agenda, worked with their coach to develop a more holistic style of leadership which included a coaching style of leadership.  They realised from their own journey that change

happens at the individual level and so they had some different conversations with individual staff members to embed the change.  Furthermore, the coachee recognised how as a leader they needed to step back and look at the wider perspective and by doing that it would help the change be more effective.

A leader having wider horizons for self and others is also the theme of my last story. This coachee shifted from being a very controlling leader who needed to do everything themselves to being able to delegate and manage multiple projects, recognising how they can be a different leader and therefore contribute differently to the wider organisation.

The above examples would seem to illustrate that whilst these coaching conversations create learning at all three levels, I believe, it is the double and triple loop learning that contribute to sustained learning. Moreover, if that learning is multiplied, as in this case with several leaders, then is it possible to assume that coaching is an organisational development intervention?

## 9.4    Reflexive re-wind

In the previous chapter I introduced my idea of a reflexive rewind.  It is Barnett Pearce (2004) who identifies *"reflexive effects"* which refer to the ability of the individual, in this case, the coachee *"to notice the actions and reactions of self and others, in relation to oneself, and use these observations to guide and co-ordinate continuing dialogue and future action"*.  Barnet Pearce (ibid) goes on to say that reflexive practice is what brings around change.  The assumption here is that language is fateful.  Relating this back to this inquiry, the stories told by the coachees constitute how leadership is being done in the BBC.

Moreover, Thomas and Harri-Augustein (1991), writing about the self organised learner, suggest a "re-wind" to help the learner develop a habit of observing and reflecting on their learning. Schon (1983) also advocated reflective practice

as a way of learning. Cavanagh (in Stober 2006) has a coaching model based on three cycles of reflecting.

Bringing together these two ideas together for the purpose of this study allowed me to help the coachee make the learning explicit (re-wind) and to observe the process to inform their action going forward (reflexive effects).   By tapping into the reflexive rewind on a regular basis, I believe it will indicate the direction of learning and change and help an organisation consider what might be the next act they need to engage in to continue the learning.

In the process of interviewing 50 participants in this inquiry, the different stories from the reflexive rewind offer a valuable indication of where leadership is at the BBC.  The question is how to use the coaching conversation to continue the learning.

## 9.5    An emerging model

I began this inquiry asking how to unleash the power of the coaching conversation. As I sit with my inquiry, and being present to what is emerging, it is pointing me to a way of integrating the coaching conversation into organisational learning. The BBC has offered a valuable opportunity to explore what coaching conversations can really offer.

I am positioning coaching in the social constructionist paradigm, and working with the assumption that we create our reality through conversation. The coaching conversation is a vehicle through which to co-create meaningful re-constructions (Stelter 2007).  Senge's (1994) learning organisation suggests creating conversation to help make sense ( Schamer et al 2006) of what is going on around us and to work out a way forward.  Stacey's model of leadership (2002) also points to the need to evoke conversation as way of making sense of what is uncertain and unknown.  CMM provides a methodology to access the

patterns of conversation and draw out the shifts in practice to understand, in this instance, leadership behaviours.

How to pull this altogether?  Through this inquiry, a number of key themes have surfaced for me which come together to create a model.  The first is the creation of a coaching proposition which clearly identifies what the coaching is for.  For coaching to support learning in context it needs to be situated in the context, culture and challenges of the organisation.   By context I mean, what is the organisation for, what's its purpose and what is the environment it operates in? It is also important to consider the culture of the organisation, how things happen within this, how things are done.  Finally, what are the challenges facing the organisation, what are they seeking to achieve?  This inquiry has reinforced the proposition that coaching should focus on self, self in relation to others and self in relation to the wider context. The framework of practice also needs to include an engagement process for coaches and coachees so there is a shared understanding.

As I began to think about a model which would provide a visual image of this, I went through a series of iterations, conversations with Wendy and colleagues to help me.  I drew from the words of Stelter (2007) who said, *"we co-create a specific life or work practice with the people involved in specific contexts. These contexts produce a practice that comes into play in co-action or joint action with the participants that are part of a certain community practice"*. In what I am proposing, the coach is working with the coachee in context and the coachee is learning through practice and in practice in co-action with others relevant to his or her story.

I have attempted to illustrate the coaching conversation framed within an organisational learning context in figure 33 overleaf.

**Figure 33**
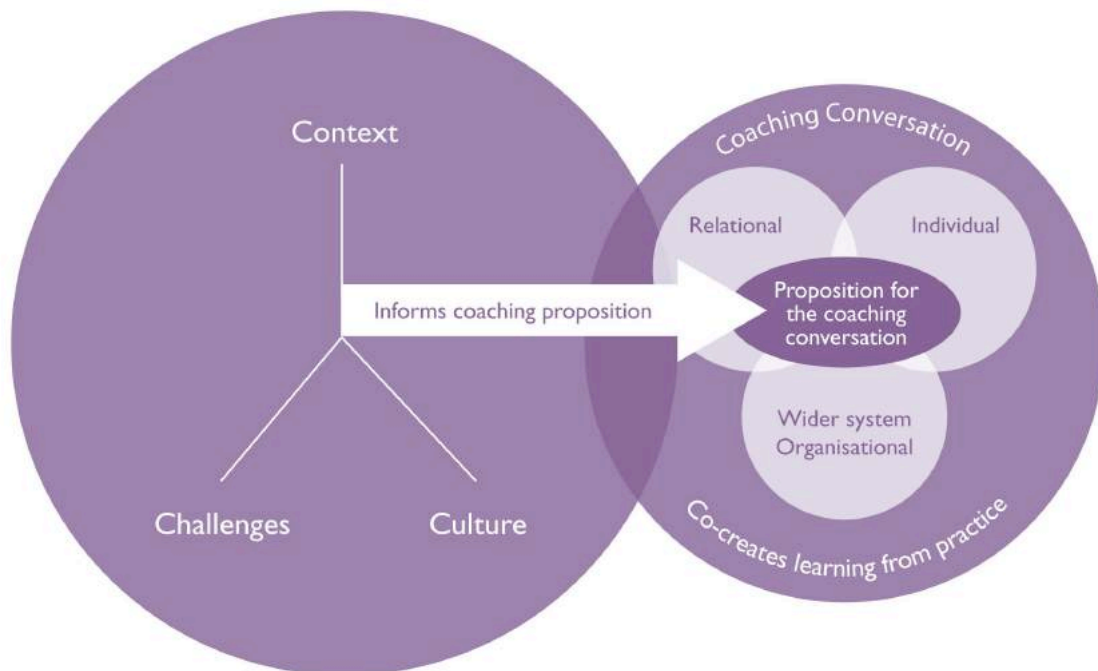


CMM has helped me to understand the power of these conversations and how by understanding the patterns of conversation I can access the shifts in practice. Through the reflexive rewind and the methodology of CMM an organisation can begin to understand what has shifted.  As this is an organisational wide activity with the leadership community, it would be reasonable to assume that the shifts I have seen emerge from this research are indicative of a wider shift pattern taking place across the organisation.  However, this is not a linear process because the organisation is also shifting, its challenges are changing, the context may change and there may be other learning activities taking place which are also supporting learning and change. Noticing where the organisation is, what are the conversations that are happening in the organisation informs how and where best to next intervene.

Looking at this through an organisational development lens, this research is showing what is changing in the organisation through the different conversations

taking place now?   Just as each leader had his (or her) own story, this sample of 50 stories, taken as a whole, offers some insight into the organisational story.  It is through the reflexive rewind that an organisation can take a look and see what is happening.  Figure 34, below attempts to illustrate this movement.

**Figure 34**
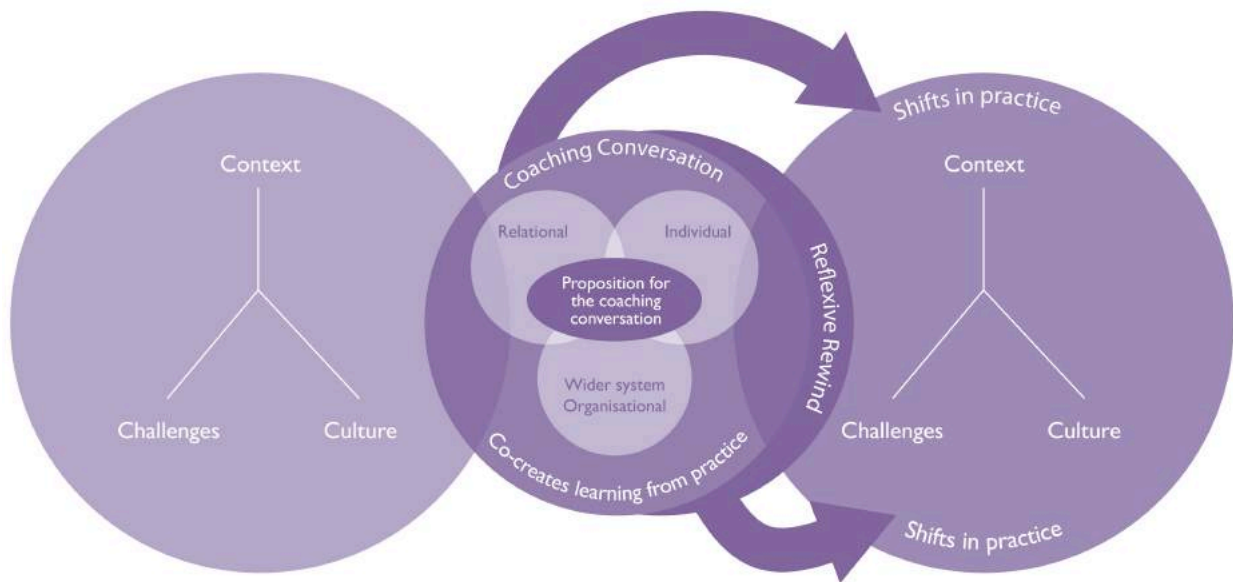


From an OD perspective, the coaching proposition set out the organisational coaching agenda.  This coaching programme had the involvement of so many leaders in individual and collective conversations.  These leaders have demonstrated their learning in and from practice.  So my hypothesis is that If a critical mass of leaders learn to have different conversations and develop a different leadership practice then it is reasonable to assume that the organisational development will shift. CMM (Barnet Pearce 2004) describes the "pre-figurative" force as the connection between the antecedent acts and

actions we are interested in.  What is co-constructed in the coaching conversation creates the action or the shifts in practice.

In the next chapter I will return to the BBC and explore the ongoing story for the five participants we met in chapter eight.
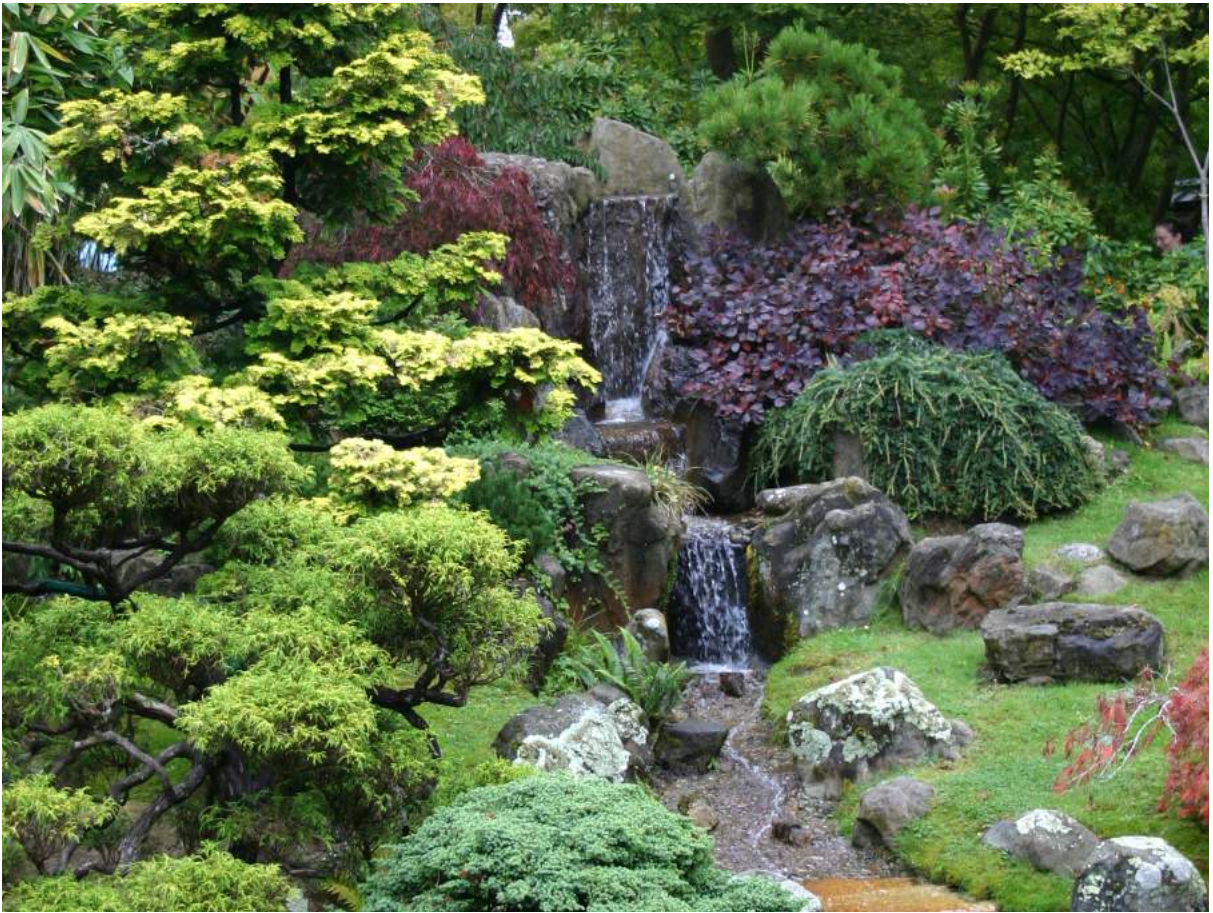
# Chapter Ten

# Co-create

## 10.0   Introduction

In this chapter, I return to five of my participants in my 2nd person inquiry (3rd cycle of research) to find out how their story had developed.  I have called this chapter Co-create as their stories continue to inform my thinking and they also serve to provide some validation of the ideas I am putting forward.

## 10.1    Ongoing Story

In chapter 7 we met Mary. Eighteen months on from our original interview, she and I sat down to reflect on the coaching and how it is still supporting her learning. (See Appendix Fourteen). As with the previous interview protocol, I shared this one with Wendy and she and I made some changes. Then I ran a pilot interview which allowed me to refine it some more.  I went through the same process, using CMM to draw out the individual shifts, what was being privileged and combining that data to create the serpentine story map. (See Appendix Twelve, Third cycle of Inquiry – research process and timeline)

### 10.1.1  Mary's ongoing story

We left Mary having attained that promotion, becoming a senior manager. Reconnecting to the coaching, Mary talked about how the coach listened and asked the kinds of questions that allowed her to find her own answers. Mary found this a valuable process, she said, *"the thing about these sessions is they build your confidence".* From the previous conversation, we know that building her confidence as a leader was the main focus of the coaching.  I asked her to think about what particular aspects of that coaching conversation had stayed with her, she said, *"all sorts of aspects……..a difficult personality for me or a question that is about how I am managing things about my style of leadership, I now know just to instinctively stop and think before I go there".*  This picks up on Mary's defensive style of leadership which she had worked on in the coaching.

She goes on to say, "*before I probably would have reacted quire negatively and aggressively defensive, now I am so much better at just saying to myself stop*".

I checked my interpretation of her story with Mary and she said it made *"perfect sense"*.  She went on to say that, "*I find myself asking the same kinds of questions of myself that I know if I'd been in a coaching session, my coach would be asking of me"*. Going forward, Mary talked about being in a challenging role, one which requires her to manage difficult people, and difficult situations.  She prepares for any conversation beforehand and replays her learning from the coaching to support her thinking.  Mary also pointed out that the shifts in practice did not always happen immediately after the coaching, she said that it has taken quite a few months to embed the learning sometimes up to 12 months.  That learning is truly in her consciousness, she says, "*I know and I can see the results"*

In terms of her leadership style, Mary described it as more confident, leading with a lighter touch, much less fear about her ability and contributing much more.  Mary offered an example of this, *"I've got a couple of people who don't report to me but who are within my pastoral care and within the office environment that we work in and we've just recently moved them and in preparation for moving, I wanted to talk to them. I wanted to give everyone the space that they wanted, and these particular people wanted to shut themselves in an office, within our office, and I just thought that would be so unhealthy, and not good for everybody, and not good for them, and so actually what I did was I gave them the office and then spent the next month very gently and very quietly suggesting ways to them within which it might be better for them. If perhaps they choose not to move in there.  Whereas if , if you'd asked me 2 years ago how I would of handled that I'd of either given them the office and just lived with the consequences, or I'd have said your not having that, I would have been completely unable to manage the process of saying all of that"*.

In thinking about her leadership style, Mary talked about how its about who you are as a person, this meant shifting from an unconfident, quite defensive, aggressive leader with hunched up body language, a white knuckles person to someone who is much more relaxed, much more open and therefore much more able to tackle really difficult questions when they come along.  Mary talked about the benefits to the organisation of such a shift in her leadership style.

Hearing Mary reflect on her coaching, I am struck by the longevity of this coaching conversation, how it still informs what she is currently constructing in her work-life.   It is also interesting to note the time needed to embed new learning so it is truly in the consciousness.  A recording of this second interview is on the CD at the back of this document. Figure 35 below shows the serpentine map of Mary's ongoing story following on from figure 26 on page 137.

**Figure 35**



Mary's ongoing story
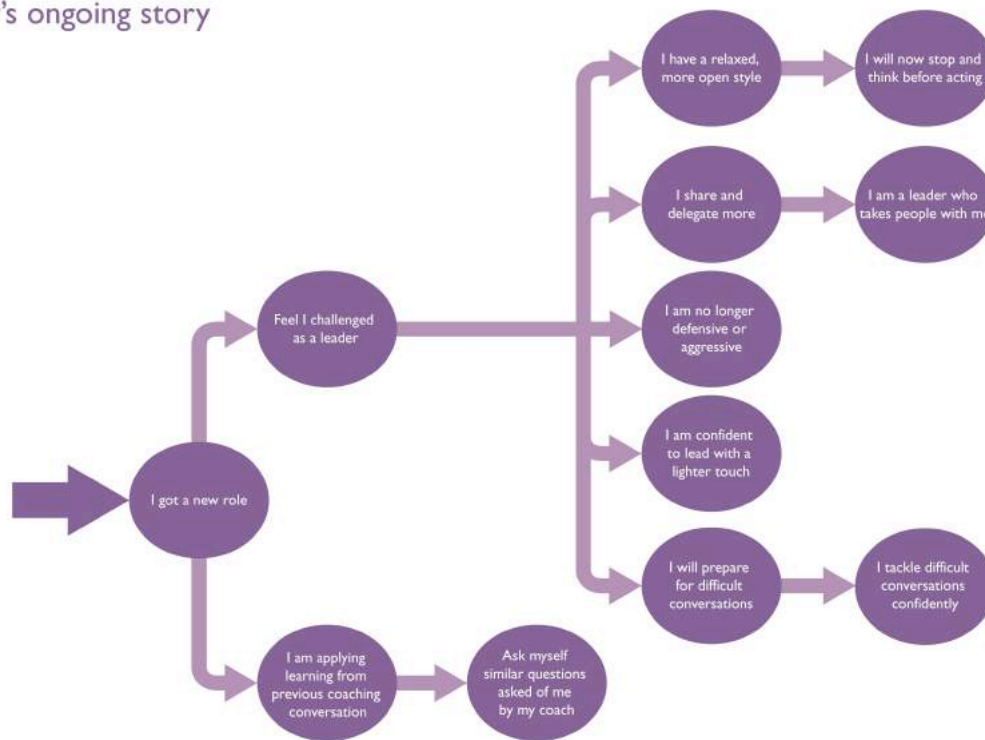
But this is just one story; let me share another voice with you and as in chapter eight I offer more of a summary.

### 10.1.2  The internal coach ongoing story

Our internal coach had struggled with her coach but over time had come to appreciate the way he worked with her.  As we retuned to that conversation, almost immediately the internal coach recalled how uncomfortable she was with her coach and this time said how she found it intimidating.

Figure 36 is the internal coach ongoing story from figure 27 on page 138.

**Figure 38**



Internal coach - Ongoing story
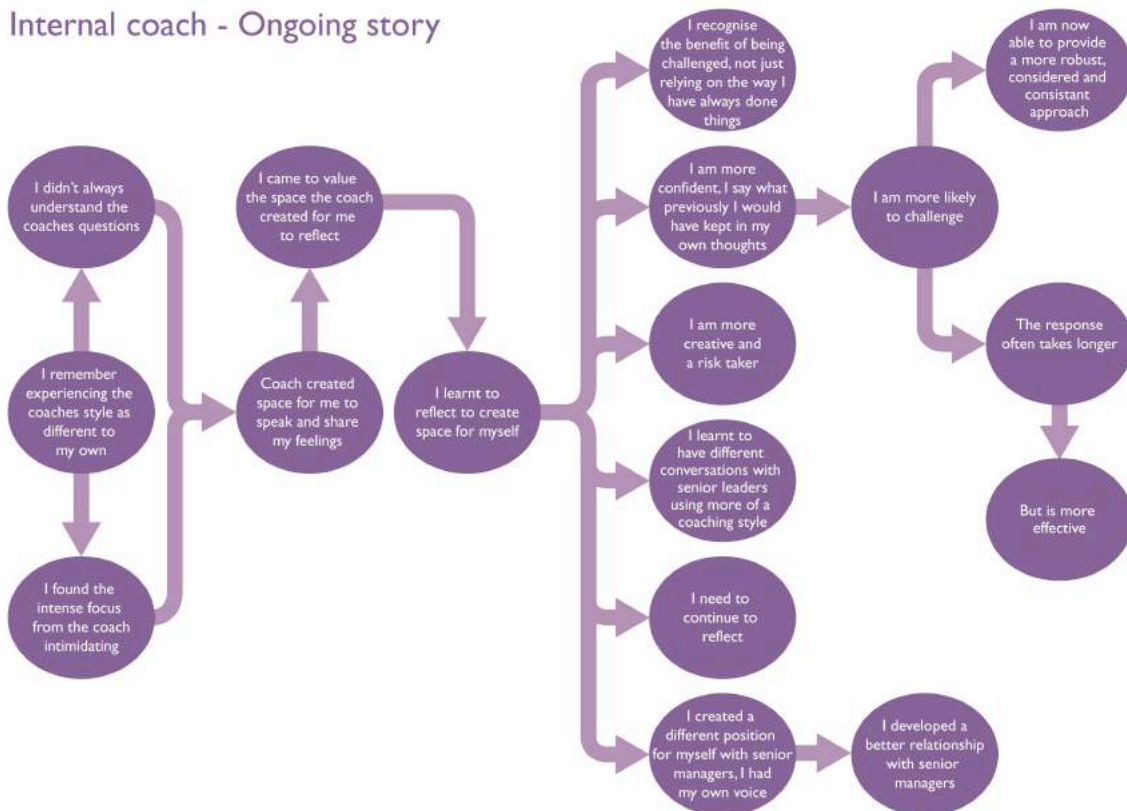
She acknowledged how she had come to value the space the coach created for her in the coaching and that this allowed her to develop the skills to refelct. Since the coaching, this coachee has developed her conversational repertoire and now uses different kinds of conversations with different senior managers including a coaching style. She notices how she is now less likely to simply react but will challenge and as a result of her challenge is able to provide a more robust and considered response. She still draws on her ability to reflect.

10.1.3  Senior Manger I ongoing story

This senior manager came to coaching with no set agenda, but through the conversation the coach and coachee began to work on her confidence as a leader. Her level of self awareness came through very strongly. She describes herself now as an authentic leader. Figure 37 senior manager 1 ongoing story from figure 28 page 139.

**Figure 37**



Senior Manager I - Ongoing story
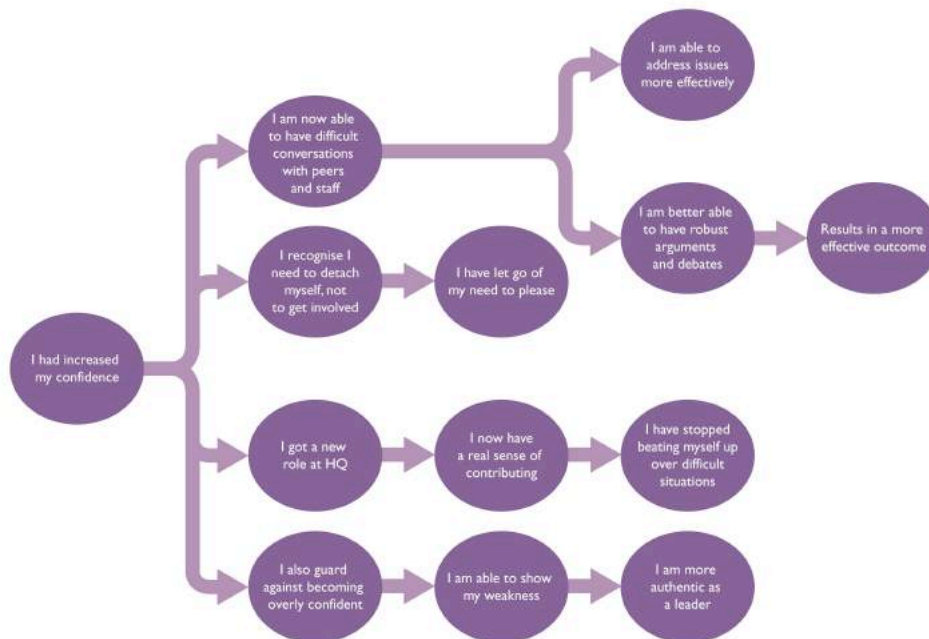
10.1.4  Senior Manager 2 ongoing story

Senior leader 2 had just completed 18 months of personal development when he came to coaching. Through the coaching he extended his leadership repertoire.  Today he is still able to vary his leadership style, but notices just how more inclusive he style is and how it allows him takes people with him.  He talked about opening up more with staff and feeling more confident to discuss issues with his senior team.  In this way he takes on board their views and their ideas rather than just simply telling them what he thinks they should do.  Figure 38, senior manager 2 ongoing story from figure 29 page141.

**Figure 38**



Ongoing Story - Senior Manager 2
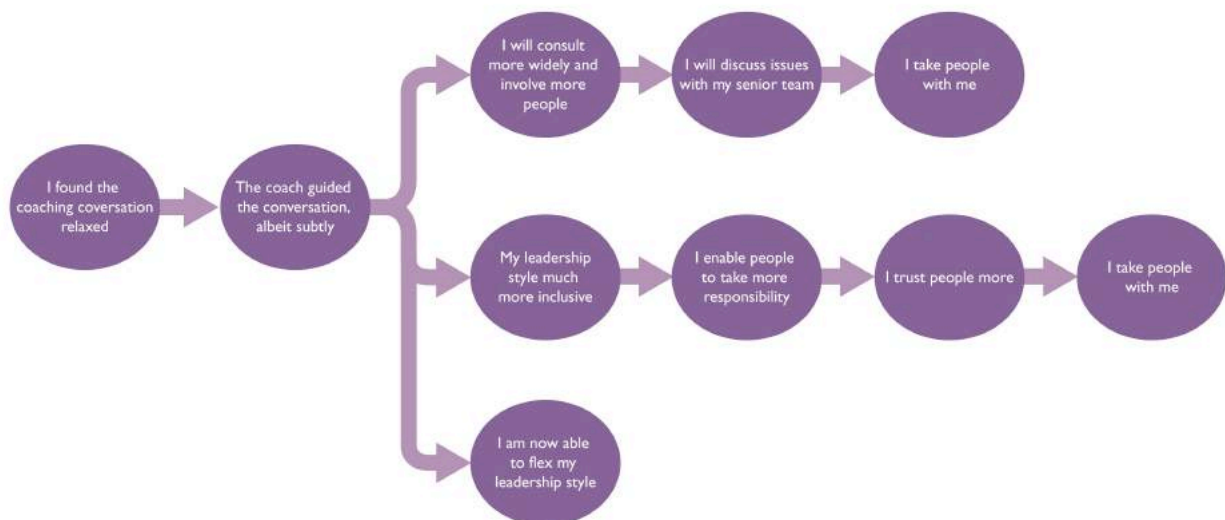
10.1.5  Senior Manager 3 ongoing story

When we left this senior manager's story, she had decided to stay in the organisation and work with the changes rather than walk away from them. Eighteen months later she talked about how she continued to construct a more relaxed leadership style and described herself as being much bolder now.  She

has used feedback extensively both asking for it herself and offering to give it. Her mental model around feedback has shifted to something she now thinks of as a "gift".

Senior Manager 3 not only stayed in the organisation, but took control of her destiny and applied and got a promotion.  Figure 39 senior manager  3 on-going story from figure 30 page 142.

**Figure 39**

Ongoing Story - Senior Manager 3

As a result of the coaching I am more relaxed → I am less controlling more able to delegate → taking control of my own destiny → I now have choices → I took control of my destiny and applied for a promotion → I stayed in the organisation and was promoted

I am bolder → I now ask for feedback regularly → I give more feedback to others

## 10.2   Expanding the model

Returning to five of the original participants has shown me just how the patterns of action created in those early conversations continue to spiral outwards sustaining the learning.   The on-going story demonstrates how the conversation outside of the coaching episode continues.

The positive nature of the stories is still evident which reminds me of the work of Fredrickson (2003). She suggests that *"positive emotions broaden people's modes of thinking and action, which over time builds their enduring personal and social resources"*.  Cooperider (2000) based appreciative inquiry on the idea that

positive image equals positive action.  Solution focus (Jackson et al 2004) emphasises the time when things were going well and advocates change beginning with one step at a time. Fredrickson (2003) goes on to argue that if this positive emotion is accessed it can reverberate through the organisation.

Picking up on Fredrickson's ideas (ibid) and looking at this through Organisational Development lens, it is the involvement of so many leaders in individual but collective conversations that creates the shift and changes the organisational conversation.  Shaw (2002) working from a complexity view of OD suggests that *"the conversations that recreate these habitual patterns also have the potential for evolving novel forms of practice"*. Therefore if the collective shifts from the different coaching conversations are creating new and different conversations in the organisation.  This aligns with the ideas of Senge (1990:14) about a learning organisation. He suggests the need for organisations to engage in *"'generative learning' which is learning that enhances our capacity to create"*.

I believe this inquiry is beginning to show how coaching can help change conversations in organisations. Figure 40 (overleaf) attempts to capture the generative nature of this learning intervention.

**Figure 40**
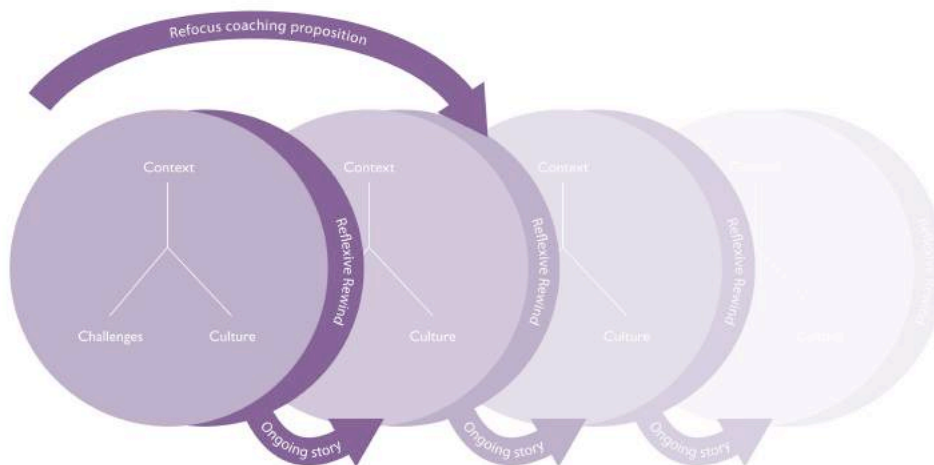


## 10.3   Ongoing story – The BBC

The BBC provided me with a great opportunity for this inquiry and for that I am grateful.

As for the BBC itself, this initiative ran for nearly four years, surviving three director-generals, the Hutton enquiry and charter review. "Making it Happen" had set out to change the BBC and some changes were beginning to happen. Leaders were stepping up to the role of leadership, BBC values had become embedded in the organisation and the BBC had learnt to play to its strength as a communicator.  However, some things remained the same; the BBC is still a formidable bureaucracy adept at capturing, colonizing and neutralising reform and it maintains an endemic love of complexity.

Looking back Birt came to the BBC to build a more accountable organisation; his focus was to develop a performance culture. It was Ryan who set up the initial

framework to develop an internal model of coaching.  The organisational expectations of this coaching were about supporting leaders to enhance their performance, further their leadership, management or business skills.  As Argyris (1991) would describe it, this was a single loop learning approach which remained until this initiative where coaching was positioned as an OD intervention.

Dyke wanted to change the culture of the BBC and the Making it Happen process was about connecting people from across the organisation, to think about what was going well and how to do things even better.  However, time ran out for Dyke, his premature departure from the BBC allowed the prevailing culture to re-surface.  In the end "Making it Happen" slid away behind the scenes and was replaced by yet another change initiative, followed by another. Organisational development is no longer a function at the BBC. The change agenda is top down, a marked contrast to the building from experience approach and the default of "lets fix it" has re-gained its norm position.

My research tells me that the BBC culture was changing; different conversations were happening and leadership behaviours were shifting.  My report, (see appendix fifteen, the executive summary), coincided with yet another organisational change programme.  The BBC was locked into a restructuring programme which would impact the very heart of the Corporation, BBC News. As a result it was not in a position to capitalise on this research, to continue to ride the dance of change created by the coaching conversations. However, its coaching ethos remains and the coaching service continues to support leaders in the work-place.  For example, a new initiative, developed by Tamsin Slyce, provides coaching to leaders in their first 100 days in a new role. Coaching is supporting the restructuring programme with short sharp one to one telephone coaching conversations to help members of staff with specific change related issues that they need immediate help with.  Coaching is here to stay at the BBC.

**Chapter Eleven**

**Co-evolve**

**Third Person Inquiry**

## 11.0   Introduction

As I come to the end of my thesis, I would like this final chapter to reflect the process of my learning and how I intend to continue my inquiry.

In chapter four, I introduced third person inquiry and quoted Reason (ibid) who describes third-person research/practice as *"attempts to create conditions which awaken and support the inquiring qualities of first and second-person research practice in a wider community"*.  As I complete this thesis, I have only just begun to engage in this third level, to put the theory into practice.

In attempting to draw this to a close, I sense how easy it would be to simply widen my inquiry to continue and not to draw a line.  However, it is time to rest a while at this staging post and draw the document to an end.

## 11.1   Third person inquiry

I cannot claim extensive inquiry practice in third person inquiry.  Torbert (2001) makes the point that first, second and third person inquiries are all linked as they mutually generate and reinforce each other.  I am conscious of the importance of this inquiry in my research.

To date I have shared my inquiry with colleagues from the coaching community at an Association of Professional Coaches and Supervisors' event, in Cape Town at a coaching conference and with an Association of Coaching group locally.  I found real value in making my ideas explicit to an audience who have not been involved in the research process. The first useful aspect of this was the feedback I got in the moment, the reaction of those hearing it for the first time, their

response to the model, all of which continues to inform my inquiry by challenging my thinking and open up new threads. The other aspect is in the process of articulating the inquiry, in the process of presenting it, I found myself refining, changing and shifting, albeit subtly, my ideas. At these events I focused on the outcomes from my second person inquiry. In October 2007 I presented at the European Mentoring and Coaching Council conference in Stockholm, Sweden where the focus was more on the methodology. I invited participants' to "play" with CMM.

11.1.1 Taking it to the field

I am excited that two organisations have agreed to test the model with their coaching work. The first, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), has created a management development programme of which coaching is a part of the blended learning design. The organisation is interested in how coaching will support the learning and change the conversation in the organisation. The RCN UK is a professional organisation for Nursing. It represents nurses, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies in the UK. The RCN represents over 380,000 members and has 850 staff based across the UK. The Management Development programme has just launched, with the first set of interviews due to take place in the autumn.

The second organisation is the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) who is delivering coaching and action learning to schools for the new 14 – 19 initiative. Wendy Briner, who has been so involved in my inquiry, is now going to take this approach and use it to find out how coaching and action learning are both supporting the changes in leadership behaviour needed in this particular sector of education.

As an OD consultant, this research will support my work with organisations in helping them leverage the power of coaching to support learning. As an

educator, I will bring my way of "being" a coach to my work with students and will share my ideas with them.

Other aspirations include sharing my ideas through publishing them in article/book form. I have been commissioned to write an article for Coaching at Work magazine and plan to publish in other journals and to collaborate on a book.

## 11.2   End of the beginning

As I reflect on the closure to this thesis, I realise that I have opened up the inquiry rather than brought it to a close. There are many more questions to explore and many strands of research to pursue.  For example, I would like to hear the voice of the coach as well as exploring the interaction between coach and coachee.

I approached this inquiry from an emergent perspective. This has meant that I have followed the data and my inquiry process as it has unfolded.   I felt like I was in a serious of loops going back and forth in a spiral.  My inquiry has strengthened my belief that action research is not a linear or even circular process; rather it is this series of movements which help you towards a place where it is possible to make sense.   This may make the inquiry complex and chaotic, but such is the nature of conversation and interaction. In many ways I feel I have been travelling through "U" ( Scharmer 2007).

## 11.3 My contribution to the field of coaching

I began this doctorate journey wanting to discover my own voice, my personal authority in the field. I believe my journey and this research has given me just that.

11.3.1  First person inquiry

Marshall (2001) offers the notion of inquiry as a life process, of *"respecting how inquiring is the core to my being"*. This resonates with me, as during the last four years, I have come to realise the importance of staying in inquiry, to notice and listen instead of feeling the need to continually fill the space with answers.  This is what Scharmer ( 2007) is pointing to in his "U" theory, this sense of letting go of habitual patterns, our internal voice  and self doubt, embracing what is trying to emerge.

More specifically the impact of this journey on my practice is:
- Elaborated my own coaching practice ( language, emotion and Somatic) and revised my coaching model
- A greater awareness of what the coachee privileges in the coaching conversation
- A validation of the constructive consequences of the coaching conversation
- I am clearer about what my coaching is for and how the conversation can support double and triple loop learning
- Being awake to what is meaningful for the client and the different possibilities they may construct for themselves
- Being curious with coachees and clients about what they know and value.

11.3.2  Second person inquiry

As I reflect on the journey travelled in my second person inquiry, I notice the many twists and turns along the way and the occasional hurdle I needed to jump over. I can see the connection between my first and second person inquiry, working on self enabled me to engage fully with others in my second

person inquiry.  I came to really appreciate and value the power and importance of relationships on my journey.

Organisations are organic, social entities and their conversations are indicative of their culture. Coaching is uniquely placed to support leaders to learn in context, in and through practice and to expand their conversation repertoire. Organisations can take much from this research in helping them to think about how to embrace coaching as an organisational development initiative.

I believe CMM is fundamental to my work.  In adapting the ideas, although still staying true to its philosophy, I believe I can offer a methodology which will provide access to the richness of the conversation and help those who use it to understand the interaction between language and action. CMM reflects the complex nature of the coaching conversation.

More specifically the contribution of my work to the field of coaching includes:
- An awareness of the importance of creating a coaching proposition and a framework of practice to support coaching as an organisational development intervention.
- A methodology in CMM which can track the learning that happens in coaching conversations
- A way of understanding how learning happens in practice and from practice – the different speech acts and episodes of learning which get repeated
-  A way of capturing this outward and increasing spiral of shift in thinking and acting
- The reflexive re-wind, tapping into the learning to make it explicit so as to inform the ongoing individual and collective organisational story

11.3.3  Threads of this inquiry

I believe chapters five, seven, eight and nine represent the core of my inquiry. My inquiry has many threads which hold my tapestry together. My research paradigm is phenomenology and I have positioned the participant's voice as the heart of my inquiry. I have worked through my own lens, my own frame of reference which begins with my belief that the coaching conversation is a learning conversation which through the ontological domains of language, emotion and body helps the coachee to construct new possibilities for him or herself that have meaning and purpose. The ideas of social constructionism underpin my coaching and my view of the coaching conversation. I hold an emergent view of organisations and leadership and this translates in my coaching to holding the space and work in the moment with the coachee. This also links to the work of Carl Rogers (1961) and his person centred approach.

11.4   Is this work of value?

Whitehead et al (2006) remind me of the need to think about whether my inquiry and my work is well done. This in part will be answered as I engage more fully in the third person inqiry. However, I feel it is important for me to honour the authenticity of my work and I wish to go back to the work cited in chapter four page 79 by Habermas in Whitehead (2006).

1   Is the work comprehensible; is it in a form of language that is continuously understood? As I stated in my introduction, my inquiry centres around conversation, a particular type of conversation and so in my writing up I have tried to use an informal style. In this way I believe my work is readily accessible.

2   Is this a true account? As far as I am able I have provided a true account of my work.

3   Is it completed with sincerity? I believe I have honoured the voices and contributions of others and been clear about how they have informed my own.

4   Is it appropriate for the context? Coaching is an emerging discipline, there is still so much for us to learn.  There is an increasing demand from organisations to be able to leverage the benefits of coaching. Therefore I believe this is an inquiry of our time for our time.  Moreover, throughout this document I have tried to highlight how the work meets the level 5 criteria for the doctorate programme.

## 11.5   Living in inquiry

I began this inquiry with an aim to know myself and my practice, I have learnt to live in inquiry and maintain the discipline of reflecting repeatedly, both inner and outer arcs (Marshall 2001).  I have begun to find my voice, I have connected to a new identity and I will continue to live in inquiry, to be curious and content in not knowing.  Julio Ollala said to me, *"Life is bigger than our explanations of it. To be in touch with life go beyond your explanations"*, this is my life practice.

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# Appendices

| | |
|---|---|
| Appendix One | Phases in Appreciative Inquiry |
| Appendix Two | BBC Making it Happen Work-Streams |
| Appendix Thee | Characteristics of Organisational Development |
| Appendix Four | Research Schedule |
| Appendix Five | First Cycle of Inquiry – research process & timeline |
| Appendix Six | First evaluation questionnaire |
| Appendix Seven | Shared Learning Groups BBC and Ashridge |
| Appendix Eight timeline | Second Cycle of Inquiry – research process & |
| Appendix Nine | First Evaluation Report |
| Appendix Ten | Interview Protocol |
| Appendix Eleven | Hierarchy of contexts / meaning |
| Appendix Twelve | Third Cycle of Inquiry – research process & timeline |
| Appendix Thirteen | Extract from database |
| Appendix Fourteen | Ongoing story interview protocol |
| Appendix Fifteen | Executive Summary BBC report |

## Appreciative Inquiry

The five key principles of Appreciative Inquiry (taken from Magruder -Watkins et al 2001)

1. Social constructionism
   language is the essential tool for creating our reality.  We create meaning through our dialogue together which can sow the seed for future action.
2. Anticipatory
   There is a relationship between what we anticipate and what we find, so if we create a positive image it will lead to positive action.
3. Positive
   The momentum for change requires large amounts of positivity with use of positive language energising people.
4. Poetic
   The story of the system is constantly being co-authored and as such is open to multiple interpretations.
5. Simultaneous
   Inquiry and change are simultaneous. The process of inquiry sows the seeds of change. Moreover, the questions will set the stage for what will be discovered. Therefore, the questions asked are fateful.


The 5 D Model


1. A **Definition** phase during which the goals, including the framing of the question and the inquiry protocol, the participation strategy, and the project management structure are developed.

2. A **Discovery** phase during which members from the system develop an in depth understanding of (a) the life-giving properties that are present in those exceptional moments when the organisation is performing optimally in human, economic, and organisational terms, and (b) the structure, dynamics, and other associated conditions that allow those life giving properties to flourish.

3. A **Dream** phase during which system members create shared images of what their organisation would look, be, feel and function like if those exceptional moments and the life giving properties in the system becomethe norm rather than the exception.

4. A **Design** phase during which system members agree on the principles that should guide changes in the organisational socio-technical architecture and develop the details of whatever changes are thought to be needed, based on previously articulated guiding principles.

5. A **Destiny** phase, sometimes called the delivery phase, during which the organisation evolves into the preferred future image created during the dream phase using the work done in the design phase.

## BBC Making it Happen – Work Streams

| One BBC | Great Leadership | Audience-inspired culture | Most creative output | Spaces | People |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Roll out of values | Leadership program | Re-invent audience research | Inspire! | Bus workshops | IMPACT |
| Pan-BBC awards | 360 feedback | Audience advocates | Creative hit squad pilots | Upgrade audience facilities | Instant reward |
| IC working party | Mentoring and coaching | Big Brainstorm | Watering holes | Pattern book | Flexi-leave |
| Knowledge management | Recruitment | Feedback feasibility study | | Canteen pilot | Flexi-working |
| | Succession planning | | | Housekeeping pilot | Childcare |
| | | | | Signage review | Business support (JDI toolkit) |
| | | | | Funding and LST | Business support (online systems) Email |

## Organisational Development

Rothwell et al (1995:7) identify some of the key aspects of Organisational Development:

1. *OD is not a "quick fix", it takes a long term, planned approach to change and is aligned to the business strategy;*

2. *As a change methodology, it seeks support from top management or the board;*

3. *OD focuses on developing people's ideas, beliefs and behaviours through a range of interventions; coaching is just one of OD interventions;*

4. *Employee participation is fundamental to the OD process; employees take part in "diagnosing problems, considering solutions, selecting a solution, identifying change objectives, implementing planned change and evaluating the results"*

5. *Anyone who is affected by the change programme has the opportunity to contribute. A study by Van Eynde et al (1992) said that OD gives employees a say in "facilitating the ownership of the change process and outcomes, promoting a culture of collaboration and promoting inquiry and continuous learning".*

Research Schedule

| Inquiry Pathway | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Relevant Events** | **Background context** |
| Sept 2005 | Programme Planning Presentation | |
| **1st person Inquiry** | | |
| Oct 2005 | Developing my practice through continuous reflection | Managing the internal coaching service at the BBC<br>Lead Coach / consultant developing coaching for the leadership prog |
| Nov 2005 | Attend Windsor Leadership Trust Programme | 50% reduction of staff in professional services |
| Dec 2005 | Attend Margaret Wheatley's workshop on complexity | |
| June 2006 | Left my staff status at the BBC to set up my own practice as an independent coach and OD consultant. Working back at the BBC as a freelancer | |
| June 2006 | Attended Shambhala authentic leadership conference | Programme Director for the i-coach post graduate programme |
| Oct 2006 | Explore working from an ontological perspective both in my practice as a coach, educator and consultant | New student cohort starts their i-coach programme |
| Dec 2006 | Presencing workshop – Otto Scharmer | |
| August 2007 | Re-define framework and model | |
| **2nd Person Inquiry** | | |
| **First Cycle of Inquiry** | Create a network of coaches to support the Leadership Programme<br>Develop the coaching proposition<br>Engagement with coaches and coachees | Coaches drawn from the growing internal service, Ashridge business school, Ashridge consulting and other external providers |
| **Second cycle of inqury** | I begin to think about evaluating the coaching offering | Greg Dyke had left the BBC, New Director General – emphasis on the external relationship with the audience and building public value. |
| Nov 2005 | evaluation for programmes 1 – 4 and presented to core design group | 50% reduction of staff in professional services |
| Dec 2005 | Second set of evaluation for programmes 5 – 8 presented to core design group | |
| January 2006 | On-line questionnaire sent out to 551 sample coachees<br>Report based on the findings from the on-line questionnaire to BBC | |
| **Third cycle of inquiry** | One to one Interviews with 50 coachees | |
| February 2006 | Adapt CMM and the serpentine model | |
| 2006 | Analysing leaders stories using CMM – connecting back with a sample of the participants to check interpretation | |
| June 2007 | Return to five of the participants – whats their on-going story? | |
| Oct 2007 | Submit draft thesis | |

**Imagine how coaching can support a strategy**
(leadership development to support the BBC to be the most creative organisation in the world)

**1a. Develop coaching propostion**
to support strategic leadership agenda

**1b.Create a network of coaches**

**1d.Engagement with coachees**
- coaching proposition
- awareness of what coaching is and what it does

**1c. Engagement with coaches**
- the coaching proposition
- strategic leadership agenda

**1e.Coaching episode**
4 sessions

**1f. Response feedback**
uptake high coachees rated coaching "most useful activity"

**2nd Cycle of inquiry**

First cycle of Inquiry
Imagine how coaching can support a strategy

| No | Timeline | Definition |
|----|----------|------------|
| 1a | 2004 | Develop the coaching proposition: <br>• a process of inquiry with the Core Design Team for the Leadership programme – what was the purpose of the coaching <br>• a process of inquiry with coaches from the BBC and Ashridge, sharing the proposition ( 3 circles) pg x fig x |
| 1b | 2004 | Create a network of coaches <br>• six cohorts of coaches each with a lead coach, one from the BBC and one from Ashridge <br>• devise a process to match coach with potential coachees <br>• shared learning group created <br> professional supervision <br> surface what coaches were noticing about leadership in the BBC |
| 1c | 2004 | Engagement with coaches <br>• align the coaches with the coaching proposition <br>• help them to understand the strategic leadership agenda <br>• Process for roll-out |
| 1d | 2004 | Engagement with coachees <br>• Devise market stall for inquiry session at Large Group Event ( Leadership Programme) <br>• Input on the coaching proposition at the 360 feedback session and pathway workshops <br>• Opportunity for leaders to "try out" a coaching conversation |
| 1e | 2004 onwards | The coaching episode – four sessions of coaching |
| 1f | 2004 onwards | Tracked the take-up of coaching per cohort <br> Tracked what leaders' were saying about the coaching activity. |

**BBC** | leadership programme
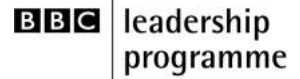
**Leadership Coaching**

Introduction

As part of the BBC Leadership Programme you have been working with a Leadership Coach. We are interested in what you are finding useful in the whole programme and how you think coaching has contributed to your leadership activities with your team in your part of the BBC.  This information will go directly back to the coach as feedback to them. The forms will also be reviewed to track the effectiveness of coaching. In this case confidentiality will be maintained with no individual's named.

Name ..................................................................................................................................................................................

Coach: ...............................................................................................................................................................................

Date: ..................................................................................................................................................................................

**Your leadership journey**

1. Since you have been on this 6 month leadership journey, how would you say you are expanding what you do as a leader?  What are you doing differently as a leader that you are most pleased with?  Please give illustrations as specifically as you can.

.......................................................................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................................................................

**Your Leadership Coaching**

2. What were you hoping for from your four sessions of leadership coaching?

.......................................................................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................................................................

3. How did the sessions meet your expectations?

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gained much more than I expected | Gained more than I expected | I gained what I expected | Gained a little of what I expected | Did not meet my expectations |

4.  How would you describe to another participant on the leadership programme how you found working with a coach?

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

5.  What did your coach do that you found particularly helpful?

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

6.  How will you continue to develop further your leadership in practise, with your team in your part of the BBC?

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

    ..........................................................................................................................................................................

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

Leadership Coaching Shared Learning Groups - Joint sessions BBC and Ashridge

Purpose

1.  Formative – to develop approaches to coaching within the context of the leadership programme.  Coaches will also be able to ask questions on business updates (to be e mailed before attending group)
2.  Normative - to bring together BBC and Ashridge coaches to work as one coaching resource. So to exchange practice dealing with ethical issues, development, self-management, quality control and monitoring issues.  Also to provide feedback on emerging leadership themes to the core design group.
3.  Restorative – to offer support and a safe space to review coaching practice.

The Process

The BBC and Ashridge continue with their own supervision processes running in parallel. Groups A,B and C  joint meetings in Feb and Oct: groups D, E and F in June and Dec.

These meetings to be co-run by the Ashridge and BBC Lead Coaches for the group, lasting  about 2.5 hours and divided into two parts:

1)  information sharing
2)  shared learning.

Part One: Information Sharing  (1.5hrs)

a) Themes to feedback to Core Design Group

The core design group want us to capture what is going on in the organisation, how leadership is developing and ways in which the culture is changing.  The lead coach will need to identify 2 positive and 2 negative themes from the comments placed on the talking wall. (see agenda in appendix one) Then complete the form in appendix two and give to Jane Saunders after the shared learning event.

b) Concerns and suggestions about the coaching process

Working in pairs, share how the coaching process is going, issues and questions arising.   (general housekeeping) The lead coach to collect key issues from the whole group and feed back to Jane Saunders. All comments will be reviewed by Wendy and Henry.

c) Update on business developments in the BBC

An update will be e mailed to all coaches every quarter in advance of the shared learning groups with Ashridge. This will contain changes to content of Leadership Programme and recent corporate initiatives eg Feedback and Development. Those attending the shared learning groups will be able to ask any questions about the business update.

Part 2: Shared Learning (1 hr)

A flexible structure enabling focus on development of coaching skills and experience.

Facilitator to ask group how want to use the time.

e.g. Reflect on practice?   Share success?   Problem Solving?   Advice/ Guidance?

**1.** Process

- Ask individuals to give brief outline of any issues they would like to discuss
- Identify how many issues/topics for discussion and allocate equitable share of time.
- Remind group to use open questions, clarifying and summarising where poss.
- Facilitator will be less engaged in questioning as the primary role is listening and summarising. Also, making sure everyone has a chance to be heard.
- Summarise at key points for the group, give time-checks and ensure conversation moves forward.

At the end of the session, it is the joint responsibility of the lead coaches to complete the forms appendix 2 and return these to Jane Saunders.

Appendix one

| Leadership Programme Shared Learning Group |
| :---: |
| SUGGESTED AGENDA FORMAT |

Date                    Time                Venue

Purpose
- To gather emerging leadership themes and practices to feed into future programmes, possible projects and tackling the leadership development process
- For BBC & Ashridge coaches to develop our skills and approaches and compare experiences of coaching in the context of the Leadership Programme

Part One

| 0930 | Welcome & Talking Wall – "From the coaching I am doing, what am I noticing about how leadership is developing in the BBC" |
| --- | --- |
| 0945 | Intros    Then in mixed pairs – identify what is going well with the coaching process and what is going less well (10 mins) (Other facilitator puts talking wall post-its into themes) |
| 1015 | Facilitator gathers concerns and suggestions about the process of coaching |
| 1030 | Other facilitator then feeds back organisational themes from the talking wall |
| 1045 | Any questions on update on business developments and corporate initiatives |

Part Two

| 11.00 | Shared Learning groups            Facilitator to ask group how want to use time  e.g. Reflect on practice?         Share success Problem Solving?   Advice/ Guidance? |
| --- | --- |
| 12.00 | Close |

Appendix two
Feedback from Joint Shared Learning Groups

| Lead Coach | | Date |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Coaches present | BBC: | Ashridge: |

From our coaching, what are we noticing about how leadership is developing in the BBC

| Positive | Negative |
|---|---|
| [bullet point summaries, explaining points of view shared by most attendees] | |
| | |

Feedback and suggestions about the leadership coaching intervention itself

| |
|---|
| |

Imagine ideas about evaluation

2a. Feedback questionaire based on BBC strategy 'Building Public Value'

2b. Limited response

Key themes

2c. Online questionaire based on coaching proposition

2d. Analysed through perceptor software

2e. Comparison between intention for the coaching and what played out

2f. Endorsed the proposition but didn't tell me what was the result in practice

3rd Cycle of inquiry
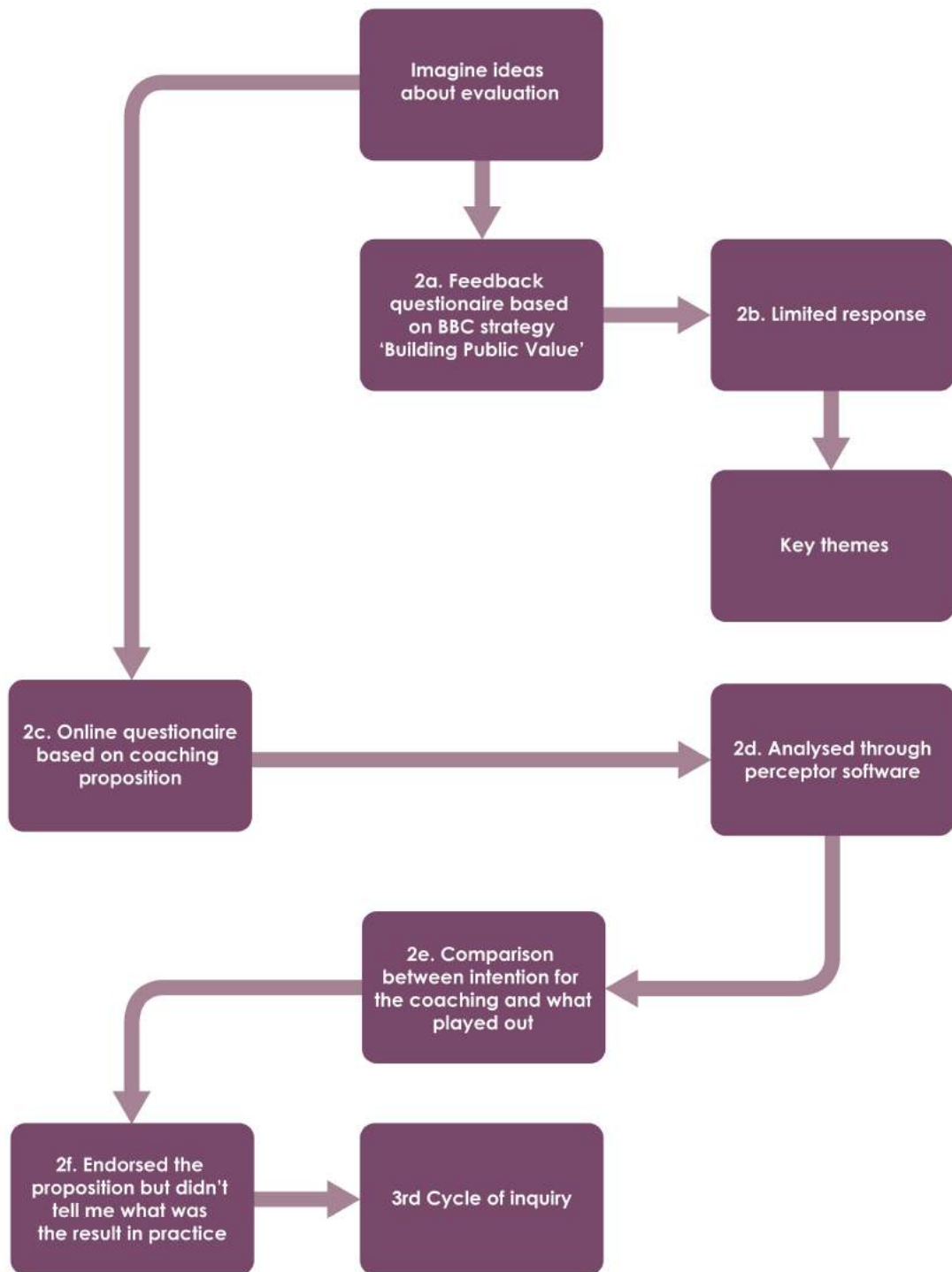
Second cycle of Inquiry
Imagine ideas about evaluation

| No | Timeline | Definition |
|----|----------|------------|
| 2a | 2005 | Created a feedback questionnaire based on the current BBC strategy, "Building Public Value |
| 2b | 2005 | Used Template Analysis to analyse responses from the questionnaire<br>Surfaced key themes<br>Limited response |
| 2c | 2006 | On-line questionnaire created based on the coaching proposition ( 3 circles) pag x fig x<br>Sent to 515 leaders who had completed their coaching between 2005 and 2006 ( sample population)<br>229 leaders returned their questionnaire 44% of the sample population |
| 2d | 2006 | Analysed through "Perceptor" software |
| 2e | 2006 | Reviewed results<br>The question being answered, was the intention for coaching being played out in what people were using it for? |
| 2f | 2006 | Results of on-line survey endorsed the proposition and that coaching was seen as valuable |

**BBC**

**BBC LEADERSHIP COACHING IMPACT ( based on Building Public Value definitions)**
**Key Findings**

**1.** **Individual and Citizen Value**

- Leaders are more confident in themselves as leaders

- Leaders are using a more coaching style of leadership, rather than command and control, indicating a shift in their mental models of leadership

- Scant evidence to indicate that leaders are thinking or acting more strategically.

**2.** **Reach and Share**

- Uptake of coaching is 75% for programmes 1 to 8

- Satisfaction ratings show that 92% gained what they expected from coaching. The message is getting around about what coaching is and more people are gaining what they expected, whereas previously more people were surprised by the outcomes of coaching.

**3.** **Coaching Relationship**

- People are clear what they are getting into with coaching. It is hard work and they need to put effort in this one-to-one activity

- Coaching uniquely focuses on action in the leaders' everyday world and provides regular follow up.

**The Impact of BBC Leadership Coaching**

**Leadership Programmes 5 to 8 (plus Programmes 1 to 4 in Appendix)**

**1.      Introduction**

This paper presents an analysis of the data gathered from participants on the BBC Leadership Programmes 5 to 8 which adds to feedback on the impact of coaching in programmes 1 to 4.

Leadership coaching is part of the Leadership Programme, an organisation development initiative which aims to develop the organisation's leadership capability.  It is important to gain feedback on the impact coaching is having on the programmes' participants on their leadership journey.  The approach taken is appreciative and contributes to the Leadership Programme evaluation framework as well as the MiH evaluation framework.

**2.      The feedback framework**

Interpreting the Building Public Value criteria we are intending to track feedback on the impact of coaching in the following qualitative and quantitative ways:

-       Reach and Share - of those eligible for coaching what percentage of leaders are taking up coaching

-       Satisfaction rating through quantitative data collected through the feedback form

-       Individual Value and Citizen Value through Qualitative data collected  through the feedback form

-       Understanding the kinds of conversations the clients find productive through qualitative data collected through the feedback form.

-       Qualitative data gathered through the coaches' shared learning groups which highlights themes surfacing in coaching sessions

-       Interviews with selected leaders to trace the longer term impacts of their leadership journey including coaching

-       Information from the staff survey

**3.      Reach and Share**

The graph below shows the percentage uptake of coaching across the senior and established pathways.

Programmes 5 - 8

| Take up of coaching | Total | Senior | Established |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Clients | 233 | 75 | 158 |
| Total Participants | 312 | 118 | 194 |
| Take up | 75% | 64% | 81% |

Programmes 1 – 4

| Take up of coaching | Total | Senior | Established |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Clients | 180 | 44 | 136 |
| Total Participants | 253 | 76 | 177 |
| Take up | 71% | 58% | 77% |

4.      **Satisfaction rating**

There is a key question which asks participants to rate how the coaching met their expectations.  This is an indication of the benefit this coaching is bringing to individuals.

How did the sessions meet your expectations?

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gained much more than I expected | Gained more than I expected | I gained what I expected | Gained a little of what I expected | Did not meet my expectations |

We propose changing will change scale to be consistent with the Leadership Programme's on line format:

- Gained more than I expected
- I gained what I expected
- Did not meet my expectation

**Programmes 5 -8**
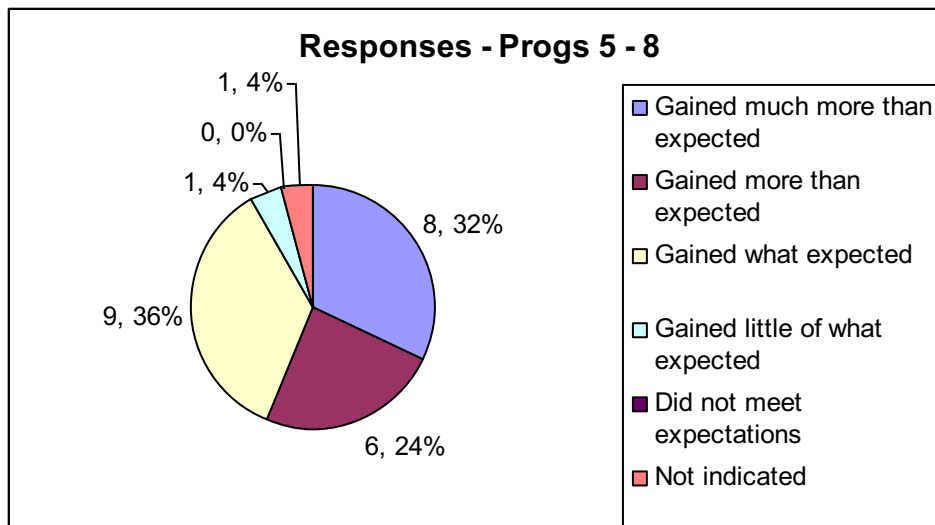


**Return rate**

| Returned | 25 |
|---|---|
| Total Clients | 200 |
| Response Rate | 13% |

**Programmes I – 4**

## LP Coaching Evaluation

**n = 54**

1; 2%

0; 0%

0; 0%

6; 11%

19; 35%

28; 52%

Legend:
- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1
- Not indicated

**Return rate**

| | |
|---|---|
| Returned | 40 |
| Total Clients | 180 |
| Response Rate | 22% |

### 4.      Qualitative data

### 4.1      Citizen value

How has working with a coach helped the leader to develop and what impact has this had on the way they operate in back in the business?  Has there been a shift in the individual's mental model of leadership?

**Self Awareness**

One of the strongest messages to emerge from this set of feedback forms is the development of greater self-awareness.  In a recent article in the Harvard Business Review (2005), Peter Drucker writes" success in the knowledge economy comes to those who know themselves – their strengths, their values, and how they best perform".

**These quotes illustrate the sort of self-awareness that is reported.**

*"I am also actively seeking more feedback than I used to and also giving more"*
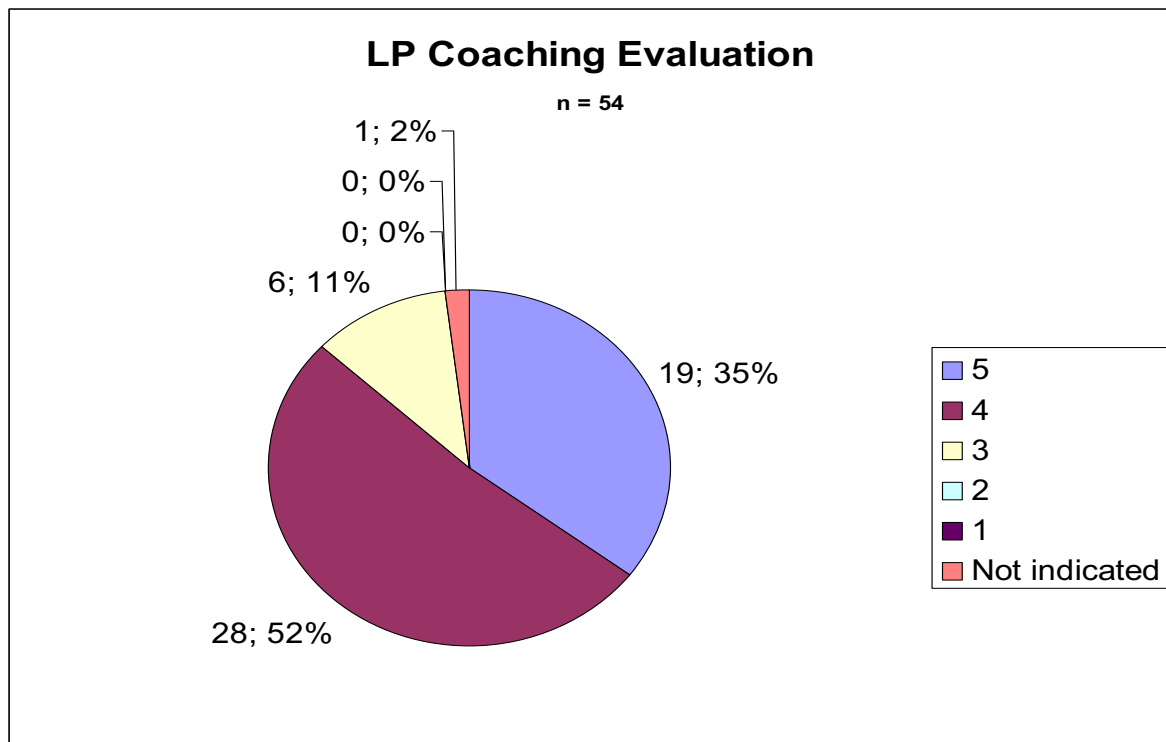
*"I am checking with my team more often how they feel about my leadership style and ensuring that I make changes where it would be useful……….I have had some frank and stinging criticisms of my style!!"*

*"I have ignored the real need to be creative myself – that is not selfish it's ok – in fact it is good to because it helps me understand what drives them as well as myself"*

*"Looking at my own needs a bit more closely than I have before"*

*"Try to mirror what I have learnt in my own interactions with the staff reporting to me"*

*"To continue to be more open and inclusive going forward; I will seek regular feedback from colleagues to ensure this continues"*

*"I have opened up a more honest and open relationship with my team.  Even if I don't like what I hear that has to be better that what I have always done"*

*"I am much more aware of my personal strengths and weaknesses – and how my style and behaviour impacts on others"*


**Confidence**

The responses echo the findings from programmes 1-4, that our leaders continue to grow in confidence, *"generally I feel more confident to meet with our customers", one of the main things to change is my confidence in my own abilities", confidence to lead the team", "more prepared to tackle difficult issues, e.g. poor performance".*  See appendix


**Towards a Coaching Culture**

Equally significant is that the feedback seems to be indicating a shift in the style of leadership our leaders are adopting in the workplace.  Many of the respondents talked about how they have changed the way they work with their teams from a command and tell approach to a coaching approach.  Caplin (2003) analysed a number of organisations who have moved or are moving to a coaching culture and identified seven behaviours which seem to be present:

- Learning is critical to individual and organisational success
- Leaders employ a coaching style with peers and subordinates
- Decision making is devolved
- Managers believe in creating a learning environment
- Peers coach one another – share knowledge, helping to raise each others professionalism
- Having a coach is viewed positively by the organisations

The feedback from programmes five to eight seems to be indicating even more strongly than before that the BBC is moving towards a coaching culture.

*"I am listening more, asking more questions about how my staff are feeling rather than assuming what they are feeling"*

*"Empowering the team to reach their own decisions"*

*"Allowing others to develop and implement plans without trying to control it all myself"*

*"I am better at delegating tasks, which enables me to spend more time working the team and listening to them and their ideas.  As a direct result of this, I believe my team feels empowered to take decisions and take on responsibility"*

*"Allowed me to explore how I have operated as a managers in the past and helped me find techniques to adopt alternative approaches………..be more open to the views of others and to appreciate the creative benefits of a more collaborative approach"*

*"I will continue to use coaching, both for individuals in my team and for the team collectively"*

*"Able to recognise that all staff are individuals and have to be treated differently, even on the same issues, e.g. tough talking to one, grooming another".*

**Shifting Mental Models of Leadership**

The respondents also cited examples of how they had changed their mental models of leadership.

*"I will continue to extend my thinking, so that I can continue to deal with issue creatively"*

*"I have taken on more responsibility for external thinking and, by looking at the different leadership models, used techniques to broaden the scope and contact of my business area"*

*"I am slowly building a good network of outsourcing contacts and attended summits"*

*"I've moved from a task based approach to one which concentrates more on strategic goals"*

*"coaching has allowed me to explore how I have operated as a manager in the past and given me techniques to adopt alternative approaches and the appreciation of the benefits of doing so"*

### 4.2    Individual Value

The respondents used words like *"motivating" "energising"* and *"liberating"* to describe the value they gained from this intervention.  More particularly; on respondent commented, *"the Ashridge course is excellent, but you can't beat talking about real life situations on a one to one basis.  The advantage of having a coach is that the issues are followed up on a regular basis and can set action points and goal posts against these issues".*

Many respondents talked about how working with a coach offered them a *"reflective space"*, *"a safe environment"* and *"a confidential sounding board"* , a place where they could *"work through matters of concern".*

### 4.3    What did the client find distinctive about coaching?

The BBC takes its definition of coaching from Myles Downey who says **"coaching is the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another"** The feedback seems to support this definition:

*"It was an effective means to think out load with someone who having no vested interest in my department, was able to facilitate my working through a troubled relationship with my boss – something I really needed to work on as it was undermining my performance. The coach didn't tell me what to do but helped me to explore different avenues, different tactics I might try".*

Other respondents described the coaching conversation as one which is future focused, a conversation which helps you reframe your thinking pattern and one which pushes you to find your own solutions.  This is achieved by the coach asking open questions, asking perceptive questions, listening, reflecting back and challenging,.  One respondent sums this all up by saying:

*"The coach is a facilitator who holds the mirror up to you and encourages you to work through the issues yourself, whilst being challenged along the way".*

Many note that coaching is a new experience to them which they have to workout how to use effectively and value.

*"you have to be prepared to do some hard work"*

*"Very thought provoking.  Each session was intellectually stimulating and quite demanding, I found it useful to make notes and review them afterwards to maximise the benefit"*

*"you have to be prepared to put the effort in to thinking about what you want"*

*"the more you put in the more you will get out"*

*"It was a real two way process".*

### 5.    Shared Learning Groups

The coaches from Ashridge and the BBC are organised into six supervision groups.  These groups meet twice a year for supervision and reflect on what coaches are noticing about leadership in the BBC.

**Emerging themes**

- Increased confidence in own leadership style

- Building relationships at all levels

- Greater self awareness of own impact and others' differences

**AND**

- Feeling of personal uncertainty

- Moving 'back' towards less open leadership style and therefore more cynicism about leadership at the top

- An awareness of a bigger need to lead people through uncertainty and question marks about how to do this

**Appendix**

**Leadership Coaching - Qualitative Data (Programmes 1 – 4)**

**Citizen value:**  Many of the respondents talked about having an increased level of confidence and how this enables then to tackle difficult issues which previously they may have ignored:

*"I am now more confident in making decisions"*

*"gave me confidence and let me be honest about what I expect from my team and what they can expect from me"*

*"I am much more confident in my style as a leader"*

*"I feel more confident about taking on these problems and pulling the team together to share problems and help find answers"*

Others talked about how the coaching had helped increase their self-awareness and as a result given them an improved understanding of team dynamics.  There was a general recognition of the importance of engaging with the team before embarking on any change.  This engaging with staff also highlighted how productive adopting a coaching style can be:

*"coaching rather than telling" "using coaching techniques more frequently with my team, i.e. when presented with a problem by an individual to help them find the answer for themselves rather than giving them the answer"*

*"using coaching techniques with my team"*

*"I am using coaching in my one to one meetings with staff, particularly focusing on open questions and placing the onus on the individual rather than myself to come up with their own solutions and conclusions"*

**Reflective Space**

It was evident from the responses that real value was placed on being given the opportunity to reflect on issues.  This was linked to feeling that they are able to  arrive at a more productive or appropriate solution.  Phrases like, *"protected space, a bit of time out, an opportunity to explore and time to take a deep breath"* were routinely found in the text.  There were some who did comment on the luxury of having time allocated to you to work with a coach, but even so, all agreed it was extremely worthwhile.

*"to take time and reflect extremely beneficial"*

*"enables you to think about issues in a different way"*

**Individual Value**

The respondents used words like *"powerful" "productive"* and *"challenging"*  to describe the value they gained from this intervention.  More particularly; *"it helped me to diagnose the issues to articulate the key challenges, to prioritise where I needed to put my attention and to come up with a realistic action plan to move me towards a new way of working"* .and  *"for me having a coach has been one  the defining actions from the programme".*

Furthermore there was a recognition of how working with a coach was by no means the easy option in the programme,;

*"worth every minute provided you are prepared to be open and honest with your coach and to discuss real issues that affect you and those around you"*

*"Like a good session at the mind gym, hard work but very refreshing.*

**Characteristics of coaching**

The clients used a variety to phrases to describe leadership coaching:

*"the coach acts a sounding board"*

*"important to have a clear objective"*

*"listened carefully and challenged my assumptions"*

*"the coach helps to widen your thinking"*

*"my coach was very good at picking up on themes that I wasn't aware of and in offering suggestions as to how to be more effective in what I was planning."*

Many note that coaching is a new experience to them which they have to workout how to use effectively and value.

**Going forward**

Beyond the coaching, how would clients continue to learn and develop as leaders?  Many talked about how they would try to adopt a coaching style in the workplace, for example in activities like appraisal discussions or "one to one" sessions. There were a number of respondents who now want to train as an internal leadership coach whilst there were others wanted to become a mentor.  In both instances the respondents talked about wanting to give something back to the BBC.

## COACHING IN THE BBC's LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME
## VALUATION PROTOCOL

### Guidelines for Interviewers

The purpose of this valuation process is to discover leaders' stories about their experience of coaching as part of the leadership programme, how they value what happened to them, what made the difference and how they have become more effective in performing as a leader in their part of the BBC. This research is part of Eunice Aquilina's doctorate research.

**Basic Guidelines**

**Interviews will be taped and transcribed**

- But confidential i.e. without attribution

- Analysed for different types of stories – genre

- Analysed as narratives to appreciate how coaching conversation is beneficial

Interviews will take 40 minutes.

The findings from this research will be written up as part of Eunice Aquilina's doctorate thesis. In addition a short report of the main findings and themes will be distributed to BBC Change team. This research may also be shared with the wider coaching community outside of the BBC.

As a participant, your name or reference which is likely to identify you will not be part of the transcription or report or doctorate thesis. If by chance a name or a reference is made during the interview, will be removed and not linked to any specific comment.

The tapes will be wiped clear once they have been transcribed.

Interviewees have the right to withdraw from the process at any time during the interview.

Interviewees will have taken part in programmes since its launch and have been selected at random as they completed their Leadership Programme on-line evaluation.

The interview has three parts:

- Expectations of the client

- The coaching experience

- Business benefits

Any questions?

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.

1.    **Expectations of the Client**

- What previous experience of coaching have you had?  At work, sports, mentor – other (i.e. what ideas do you have about what coaching is)? If none, what were you expecting?

- What encouraged you to take up the offer of coaching as part of the Leadership programme?

- What were you expecting of the coach?

- What were you expecting of the coaching sessions?

2.    **The Coaching Experience**

- How would you describe your experience of the two / four / six coaching sessions?  What happened?

- What was the conversation like?

- What did the coach do that helped you make good use of the sessions?

- What did you find particularly useful or valuable?

- What do you now know that will help you identify coaching opportunities (for yourself/others) in the future?

**Benefits – business Impact**

- Thinking about your part of the BBC how would you rate your leadership contribution before you started coaching? On a scale of 1 – 10 where 1 = no noticeable leadership contribution to 10 = contributing all you could expect as a leader

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

- What takes you to this level of contribution?  and what else?

- Since you have completed coaching thinking about this part of the BBC now what is you leadership contribution?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

- What takes you to this level now?

- Describe the differences you have been able to make to your style of leadership? (*if the interviewee struggles to come up with an answer -  prompt with:  to your work, as a leader, with your team, peers*)

- What part, if any, do you think coaching might have had?

- Describe the impact these differences are having on how your performance as a leader is viewed by others?

- (If applicable) How do you believe the business has benefited from the changes in your leadership performance?

If you had to **summarise** the impact coaching has had on you as a leader what would you say in one headline?

Informally ask if they have any questions or anything they would like to add that has not been covered.

# Hierarchies of Context/Meaning (CMM)

| Context | Definition |
|---|---|
| Expectations | What the client was expecting before the coaching |
| Coaching Episode | The coachee's overall description of the coaching activity including their own summary piece at the end of the script |
| Coaching relationship | Coachee's perception of the coach |
| Kind of Conversation | Descriptions of the conversation itself |
| Episodes of different action | Action taken as a result of the coaching conversation |
| Leadership Programme | The Leadership programme and / or the coaching element |
| Making sense of leadership | Coachees construction and / or mind-set around leadership |
| BBC Culture | What difference has coaching made to the leadership culture of the BBC |
| Impact on business | What difference has coaching made to how the leader contributes to the business of the BBC |

3b. Create interview protocol

Imagine a methodology which helps me look at what is being created in the coaching conversation

3a. Select sample of leaders who have completed their coaching programme (50)

3c. Create hierarchies of meaning diagram

3d. Leaders stories
- taped
- transcribed

3e. Read through interview script discovering the story

3g. Identify what seems to be privileged by the coachee in the conversation

3f. Map each story on to the diagram to identify individual shifts

3h. Connect the individual shifts to create story map for each leader

3j. Look at the multiple stories accross the 50

"what is shifting in leadership across the organisation"

3k. What is the organisational emergent conversation

3i. Reflexive Rewind

Share the story map with the leader and what is being privileged

3L. Re-connect with a sample of participants. Whats the story now?

(revised protocol)

What next

3m. Transcribe and analyse for further shifts

3n. Whats the individual continuing conversation

Third cycle of Inquiry
Imagine a methodology,which helped me look at what is being
created in the coaching conversation

| No | Timeline | Definition |
|---|---|---|
| 3a | 2006 | Selected a 10% sample of leaders who had completed their coaching between 2005 and 2006 ( sample population) 50 participants |
| 3b | 2005 | Adopting a generative approach (appreciative inquiry), create a protocol which seeks to discover the best of what is or what has been created.  Building on the coaching proposition, the design of the questions help the coachee articulate their story |
| 3c | 2006 | Created diagram which expresses the multiple contexts within a conversation which may give meaning.  It is the role of the researcher to determine the multiple levels of context, although Barnet Pearce offers the following: |

- Episode
- Speech Act
- Relationship
- Self
- Culture

I offered a definition for each of the context labels ( see appendix twelve) to ensure a shared understanding between those interpreting the data.   These labels provided a structure through which I could determine the learning.

In this research the labels started at how  people come to the coaching,  what were their ideas about how to use coaching, the conversation over the four sessions, their role as a leader, self, with others and organisationally and the culture.  By breaking down the contexts it allowed me to notice how the different contexts speak into the conversation.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3d | 2006 | Leaders stories collected, taped and transcribed |
| 3e | 2006 | Read through the scripts: |

- First reading familiarisation with the text
- Second reading, begin to notice the stories within the text

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3f | 2006 | Mapped each story onto the diagram created in step 3c in order to identify each of the shifts – these are called "native shifts". Identified the start point and end point for each shift |

| No | Timeline | Definition |
|---|---|---|
| 3g | 2006 | From the third reading of the script, identify what the coachee has privileged in their story. What is the coachee placing significant importance on, where is their focus? |
| 3h | 2006 | Compared the native shifts which what the client has privileged and use this to inform the client's story map. This is a pattern which illustrates how the coachee may be learning in practice and from practice. *This is an adapted version of the Serpentine model from Barnett Pearce.* |
|  |  | Reviewed each of the shifts. Is the shift single, double or triple loop learning? |
| 3i | 2006 | Reflexive re-wind |
|  |  | With a sample of participants shared the interpretation of their story with them. |
| 3j | 2006 | Looked at the different individual stories.  What is the learning, what is shifting in leadership across the organisation? |
| 3k | 2006 | Identified the emerging conversation and fed it back into the OD team |
| 3l | 2007 | Reflexive re-wind 2 |
|  |  | Reconnect with a sample of original participants and inquire into their ongoing story using a revised protocol. |
| 3m | 2007 | Transcribe and analyse the data (as in steps 3e,3f,3g,3h,3i) |
| 3n | 2007 | Identified the individuals ongoing learning. |
|  |  | What's next – feed back to data to the organisation |

**Scripts Review – Shifts**

| Script No | Shifts – Expectations of Coaching | Coaching Conversations | Making Sense of Leadership |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Scale shift pre 6, post 8<br>* * * | ✓ Expected guidance but built confidence – even in adapting own coaching style | ✓ Coaching conversation<br>✓ Own development<br>✓ Challenged values – see from other perspective – stay BBC – new job | ✓ Inclusive<br>✓ Conference<br>✓ Listened to people's coaching style<br>✓ Value of conference to team |
| 2. pre 5/6<br>post 7/8<br>* * | ✓ Wanted to make career and choice –stalled – in tech, low visibility area | ✓ Coaching questions and space – empower others more | ✓ Questions asked reframed made possibilities– you can be more innovative<br>✓ Becoming visible – new job |
| 3. no pre or post<br>* | | ✓ Coaching is about asking questions – not advice<br>✓ You work at it | ✓ What told and others do<br>✓ Freed doing too much |
| 4. no pre or post<br>X | ✓ Previous coaching been introspective this gave more positive outcomes | ✓ Coaching productive<br>✓ Helps you move forward<br>✓ Builds confidence<br>✓ Own agenda | ✓ Successful change<br>✓ New job<br>✓ Few causalities |
| 5. pre 6; post 7/8<br>* | ✓ Coaching gets you focused on what is crucial<br>✓ Now knows how to do coaching | ✓ Having own assumptions captured – real me<br>✓ Understand others better | ✓ Small sustainable steps – focus on what makes a difference |
| 6. pre? Post | | | ✓ coaching leadership style – better conversations better able to cope |
| 7. pre 6; post 8 | | ✓ Reframing my communication and how people respond to me<br>✓ Challenged assumptions<br>✓ Enable to interact with people different to me | ✓ Leadership is about relating differently to difference<br>✓ Change delivered |

## Coaching – the ongoing conversation
## Guidelines for Interviewers

The purpose of this second interview is to discover leaders' ongoing stories about their experience of coaching as part of the leadership programme. We are interested in sharing with you our interpretation of your story and to see how it maps with your own interpretation. We want to discover with you what has happened to you since the coaching programme, what have you constructed differently for yourself and how have you continued to apply the learning. **This interview forms part of Eunice Aquilina's doctorate research.**

## Basic Guidelines
### Interviews will be taped and transcribed

Interviews will take 20 minutes.

All who take part will receive

Interviewees have the right to withdraw from the process at any time during the interview.

Interviewees who have been invited back for a second interview have been chosen at random from the fifty original interviews.

The interview will follow a similar frame to the previous interview:

- The coaching experience

- Value and benefits – business impact

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.


## 1   The Coaching Experience

Thinking back to your coaching sessions….

- What was the conversation like?


- What did the coach do that helped you make good use of the sessions? What did you find particularly useful or valuable?


- What particular aspects of the conversation have remained with you?

- What is your story now? (If appropriate) what is different?

**Value and Benefits – business Impact**

- On completing the coaching you felt your leadership contribution had gone from x to x /remained the same. Thinking about your part of the BBC now what is you leadership contribution?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

- What takes you to this level now?

- Describe the differences you have been able to make to your style of leadership?

- What different conversations are you creating with others now?  Can you give me an example.

- Describe the impact these differences are having on how your performance as a leader is viewed by others?

- (If applicable) How do you believe the business has benefited from the changes in your leadership performance?

- Looking back what have you learned about the way you learn?  What will help you sustain this learning?

- Given where you are at the moment, in the next 6 to 12 months how would you want to see yourself as a leader? What would make the real difference for you?

If you had to **summarise** the impact coaching has had on you as a leader what would you say in one headline?

Informally ask if they have any questions or anything they would like to add that has not been covered.

**BBC**

## Executive Summary

Coaching is a growing part of today's business culture. It's spreading across organisations, across the UK. But it is still seen as a one-to-one initiative. If coaching is to reach its potential, it must be seen as an organisation development initiative.

This research shows that coaching is enabling leaders to generate their own learning. When this is multiplied across an organisation through a critical mass of leaders, coaching is showing itself to be the catalyst for seismic change and sustained growth.

The key findings from this research include:

- Leaders in the BBC show an outward and increasing spiral of shift in thinking and acting;

- Through this journey leaders in the BBC recognise an increased potential/capacity in self as a leader and others;

- Leaders have an expanded conversational repertoire leading to improved team performance;

- Single, double and triple loop learning was evident;

- A wider perspective on leadership was developed, an ability to step back, to be strategic and see the unseen;

- Leaders are able to use coaching as a participative conversation both for themselves within the coaching and outside with their wider network;

- A methodology to track learning in and from practice.