

Awareness based technologies for leadership development: utilising Immunity to Change coaching

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Abstract

This article presents a study of the use of Immunity to Change (ITC) coaching in an integrated leadership development programme as an example of awareness based leadership development technology. Constructivist developmental theories of leadership, self-awareness and the use of ITC coaching are reviewed. Findings from interviews with eight ITC coaches revealed a process of movement from embeddedness and a socialized mindset to detachment and evidence of an emerging self-authoring mindset. Discussion leads to conclusions that the ITC coaching process can make a significant contribution to leadership development.

Keywords: Awareness, coaching, development, leadership, immunity to change

Introduction

Coaching has become a big industry and leadership development is a significant part of this. Integrated leadership development programmes generally include the use of a 360 feedback instrument, experiential learning and coaching (Coates, 2013). In this article, we will examine the coaching element of one such programme. In particular, we examine how the use of Kegan and Lahey's (2009) Immunity to Change (ITC) process as the foundation for coaching exemplifies an awareness-based approach to leadership development.

Awareness, whether self-awareness (Axelrod, 2012), stakeholder awareness (Trine & Nielsen, 2011), or contextual awareness (Joiner & Josephs, 2007), is foundational to the approach used in the programme we are studying. While all the aforementioned aspects are addressed in the programme, self-awareness is foundational and is understood in the context of a developmental approach to leadership development (Day & Dragoni, 2015; McCauley, Drath, Palus, O'Connor, & Baker, 2006; Torbert & Associates, 2004). Day & Dragoni's (2015) current review of this research identifies four key indicators necessary for leadership development; leadership self-efficacy, self-awareness, leader identity and leadership knowledge, skills and competencies. Work over time in these areas can lead to outcomes such as having more dynamic skills as well as more adequate levels of complexity of meaning making structures and processes. There is a clear link between awareness development processes and desired leadership competencies.

Carey, Philippon, and Cummings (2011) performed an integrative meta-review of coaching models for leadership development, finding five main themes; relationship building, problem defining and goal setting, problem solving, transformation processes and outcomes. While all of these themes are part of the coaching programme we are investigating and touched on in our research, our main focus is on

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the transformational processes. For understanding this we utilized transformative learning theory (Mezirow & Associates, 1990) in our analysis of the data. In this article we will provide some background for the study, cover relevant literature related to the research, describe our methodology, report on the findings and briefly discuss implications for coaching and leadership development programmes.

Context and Background of the Study

The research presented here is connected to the design and delivery of a leadership development programme, *Developing Your Leadership* (DYL) for a multi-national engineering and manufacturing company. Ongoing research on this programme (Reams, Gunnlaugson, & Reams, 2014; Reams & Johannessen, 2011; Reams & Reams, 2013) has been supported by the company. The programme has been running since 2011 and by the end of 2014 has had approximately 350 leaders participate.

The programme design covers three modules (3, 2 and 2 days) outlined in figure 1. Along with these three modules, participants receive 360 feedback utilizing The Leadership Circle (TLC), which links limiting underlying assumptions and personality traits to well researched leadership competencies and behaviors (Anderson, 2006). This feedback enables deeper entry points into the coaching conversations. These consist of eight sessions that are based on coachees' TLC profiles and ITC tools and processes for enhancing self-awareness, transformative learning and developmental growth. (For those unfamiliar with the ITC process, a brief overview can be found in Reams, 2009, or in Kegan and Lahey's books, 2001, 2009).

Developing Your Leadership on three dimensions



Figure 1: Overview of the Developing Your Leadership programme

Eight of the ten coaches involved with the programme were interviewed,¹ (the interviewer was one of the coaches), with all but one of these eight having been certified in Kegan & Lahey's ITC coaching process. At the time of the interviews, they had coached approximately 300 leaders located in Norway, the UK, North America, Brazil and Malaysia. The interviews were conducted in the spring of 2014.

Literature

Developmental Leadership Development

The need for developing better leaders and leadership as a competitive advantage is widely understood today, and from this “there is little doubt that leadership education and development has become a big business” (Pfeffer, 2011, p. 220) with more than \$170 billion spent on leadership training in US businesses (from the ASTD, in Myatt, 2012). Despite all these resources being spent, building leadership talent was identified as a significant challenge in the 2008 IBM Global Business services report (in Day, Harrison & Halpin, 2009). Mike Myatt, in his December 19, 2012 Forbes leadership blog noted that the number one reason leadership development fails is that it is done as training or indoctrination. His solution is to stop training and begin to develop leaders. But what does it mean to develop leaders?

Palus and Drath (1995) distinguish between training programmes that impart new skills and development programmes, which question and stretch existing ways of making sense of oneself and one's work. In terms of leadership as *development*, McCauley et al. (2006) outline how constructivist developmental theory can be used to understand key factors in leadership development. They note that Kegan (1980) first introduced the term “constructive developmental” as a way of describing “a stream of work in psychology that focuses on the development of meaning and meaning-making processes across the lifespan” (McCauley et. al, 2006, p. 635). (For an in depth overview of the history of the field of developmental psychology, see Reams, 2014).

In recent years, some researchers have begun to apply constructive developmental theory to management and leadership research. Much of the work in this area was pioneered by Bill Torbert (2004) as well as the work of Robert Kegan (1994). Others such as Bill Joiner & Stephen Josephs (2007), David Day (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; Day & Zaccaro, 2004) and Karl Kuhnert (Harris & Kuhnert, 2008; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987; Lucius & Kuhnert, 1999; Strang & Kuhnert, 2009) among others have also contributed to understanding the relationship between leadership development and structural orders of consciousness. In their survey of this research, McCauley et al. (2006) identify a need for moving beyond a focus on “developmental order to include the general dynamics of developmental movement” (p. 648) and this research is a small step in that direction.

In relation to the dynamics of developmental movement, Sammut (2014) applied Mezirow's (1990) seminal work in the field of transformative learning to coaching, concluding that the coaching process can help clients learn more effectively if a transformative learning process was employed. In looking at the question of what *form* is transforming, Kegan (1980, 1982, 1994) focuses on the cognitive *form* (rather than the content) of the learner's consciousness or mind. He organizes this into five orders, of which the third and fourth (socialized mind and self-authoring mind) address the vast majority of the adult population, and are thus relevant for this study.

The journey through these orders of structuring meaning, (and by implication how one perceives, interprets and acts in their role as a leader), utilizes critical reflection on deeply held frames of reference,

¹ The authors would like to acknowledge the valuable input of the coaches that participated in the study and contributed with their reflections as well as valuable feedback on earlier drafts.

or assumptions. This can be experienced as having rational as well as intuitive or emotional components. Integrating Mezirow's ten steps for transformative learning and Kegan and Lahey's ITC process, we can describe major steps along this journey as including; encountering disorienting dilemmas, being able to reflect on and inquire into their underlying sources, exploring options for testing the validity of assumptions, gathering data on such tests, building new frames of reference and enabling new orientations, attitudes and behaviors. Palus and Drath (1995 in McCauley et. al, 2006, pg. 641-42)

argue that well-designed development programmes provide individuals with significant experiential lessons that cause a temporary disequilibrium in their meaning-making system. The individual's attempt to deal with such disequilibrium opens a window, however briefly, into new ways of making sense of their experiences. This glimpse of new possibilities creates the potential for development after (sometimes long after) the programme is completed.

It is from this developmental orientation that the Developing Your Leadership (DYL) programme and ITC based coaching, that is a part of it, are designed.

Self-awareness

Above, we characterized our approach to leadership development as an *awareness based* approach. Our use of this term is derived from a number of influences over many years (Gallwey, 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Scharmer, 2002, 2007). A preliminary description is that an awareness based approach to leadership development and coaching shifts the focus of work from individual will power to a focus on learning and growing awareness about what is present within the experience of the leader. This allows awareness to 'work' in a non-judgmental manner, at conscious and unconscious levels, by creating an inner container or space where the roots of behavior can be inquired into and addressed, enabling belief systems driving behavior to shift. Put another way, awareness grows to become larger than beliefs and behaviors.

A Google search using the term 'awareness based leadership development' revealed no direct matches. What did appear were a number of items related to self-awareness. Axelrod (2012) examined self-awareness in relation to psychotherapy and coaching, noting the critical role of emotional awareness. Self-awareness is linked to emotional intelligence competencies of "accurate self-assessment, emotional awareness and self-confidence" (p. 345). He distinguished between self-awareness, self-reflection and self-observation. The term 'self-awareness' is also used extensively in relation to 360 feedback (e.g. looking at self-other agreement).

Goleman (2006) notes the importance of emotional awareness and social intelligence, citing recent neuroscience research into mirror neurons saying that "whatever the supposed business at hand, we continually transmit emotions, making another feel better or worse" (p. 78). McCraty, Atkinson, Tomasino, and Bradley (2009) describe extensive research in the field of neurocardiology that substantiates this and indicates our ability to sense the electromagnetic field produced by the heart at up to three meters. This ongoing transmission of emotions contributes to what Kegan and colleagues (Kegan, Lahey, Fleming, & Miller, 2014) describe as our 'second job' where we spend a great deal of time and effort to wrestle with the daily implications of how this social-emotional environment plays into our personal growth. Thus awareness of our own state at an emotional level, and the ability to take a perspective on another to enhance social intelligence are critical capacities for leaders.

Self-awareness itself, as a construct in leadership research is approached by many theorists. Fusco, Palmer, and O'Riordan (2011, p. 130) note that "self-awareness ... is the first of the four constructs shown to underpin authentic leadership" while Ashley and Reiter-Palmon (2012, p.2) note that "empirical support is mounting suggesting that self-awareness is related to leadership such that leaders higher in self-

awareness tend to get better outcomes than those with lower levels of self-awareness". Axelrod (2012, p.340) likewise says that "the critical importance of executive self-awareness for organizational effectiveness has been frequently noted by a wide array of modern leadership development experts." The growing acknowledgement of the central role that self-awareness and consciousness play in leadership and its development makes research into the actual workings of an awareness based approach of critical importance.

Coaching Self-awareness using ITC

Early work on implementing the ITC process in the context of a curriculum reform effort at a medical school (Bowe, Lahey, Armstrong, & Kegan, 2003a, 2003b) indicated that this kind of work requires a lot of upfront investment. This investment was seen to pay off as it brought significant changes "to the institution's educational culture and general acceptance of alternative educational approaches" (Bowe et al. 2003b, p. 733). To not make this investment can lead to "deteriorating resolve, demoralization and the inability to sustain altered behaviors essential for substantive change" (Bowe et al., 2003a, p. 721). Kegan and Lahey (2009) describe a number of similar cases where they have applied this process, with similar results.

Pinkavova (2010), in reflecting on her application of Kegan and Lahey's work in coaching found the theory to be useful in addressing aspects of client growth that life-stage theories (Erikson, 1982) did not appear to adequately address. She used a number of case illustrations to show that understanding how a client's meaning making structures appeared to evolve helped in providing useful insights for the coaching journey.

A heuristic inquiry into the use of Kegan and Lahey's subject object interview process in coaching was undertaken by van Diemen van Thor (2014). Noting the potential advantages of utilizing a developmental tool in the coaching process, she found that using a self-taught version of the subject object interview process to support coaching was experienced as beneficial. While her approach was to do the interviews and give feedback from the analysis of them as specific events in the larger coaching journey, she also notes that an alternative approach could be to make use of knowledge about the theory and process 'live' in regular coaching sessions. Information about the coachee gained from either of these approaches could be used to help set the agenda, identify developmental needs and "setting the pace and tone of the coaching" (p. 19). The use of this approach was seen as supporting a developmental process where "coachees are invited into a reflective space which may have an impact on their mood immediately afterwards, and perhaps even longer" (p. 20).

Also specific to this research project, Markus (2013) undertook a study on the effectiveness of Immunity to Change coaching. She studied 46 supervisors who were engaged in ITC based coaching to foster leadership development. (This project involved one of the coaches interviewed for this study). Her analysis indicated significantly more progress towards self-identified leadership development goals than in a control group of 25 supervisors from the same organization who worked alone on similar self-identified goals. Markus (2013) notes similarities between Kegan and Lahey's work and Ellis' (1962, 1991) model of rational-emotive behavior therapy, which focuses on how irrational beliefs (assumptions) can lead to dysfunctional behaviors. Her research employed quantitative analysis of pre and post intervention surveys in both the test group and control group. Regression analyses revealed that the ITC coaching intervention accounted for about 30% of increases in reported progress towards stated goals. Moreover, retrospective self-reported progress toward goal achievement indicated a 69% average improvement for the ITC coached participants, compared to no significant improvement for the control group. However, she notes that for those individuals who did not fully achieve their goals, there was no difference between the groups in confidence about achieving them in the future.

Altogether, the existing reflections and quantitative research on the use of ITC indicates very positive results relevant for leadership development from using of ITC in coaching. It is from this vantage point that we now delve into our qualitative research into better understanding the processes of transformation that these coaching journeys entail.

Method

As noted above, this research is based on the analysis of eight interviews with coaches utilizing the ITC processes and tools in one organization. Our research question was; *how do these coaches perceive the process of developing self-awareness and leadership skills in their coachees?* Our overall goal for the larger research project this is a part of is to get a picture of awareness based leadership development through understanding the dynamics and interplays between the DYL programme and the coaching. Thus this study focuses on the coaches' experiences of the coaching journey and their perception of this process and patterns of growth in the approximately 300 coachees they have worked with.²

The data for this analysis was collected through using a structured interview guide consisting of background questions about the coaches, and 10 questions (based on earlier research on the DYL programme) on their impressions of key elements of the coachees' journeys. These questions asked about; the most common challenges encountered, disorienting dilemmas, resistance, social and emotional intelligence, common points of insight, self-observation and self-reflection, degrees of progress and success, the use of metaphors, narrative themes that emerged and the impact of ITC tools. Each interview lasted between one and one and half hours and was transcribed verbatim (including longer breaks, sighs, laughter, etc.) for further analysis.

The data coding and categorizing phases of the methodology were accomplished using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (McCloud, 2011) (in conjunction with NVivo 10), a method to explore in detail how research participants make sense of a lived experience, an event or a phenomenon. We also used Latent Content Analysis (Dunn, 2000), which enabled us to scan the initial groupings (derived from simply organizing the responses to each question into separate folders) for themes and "requires a determination of the underlying meanings of what was said" (p. 76). Scanning these initial groupings, we worked with nodes in NVivo 10 which, through using IPA, brought a first layer of content analysis to the project. Using 'queries' we identified certain word clusters and currents, coded them and developed a complex structure of categories and subcategories. This enabled us to see that some statements were more marginal (or stood alone) and these were separated out as less relevant.

This complex structure was further analyzed and synthesized into a set of high level themes representing the key findings. This sorting and structuring allowed for a second, more thorough phenomenological analysis of the data. From this, the themes that emerged were; the challenges coachees brought into the process, (including 'embeddedness'), different types of resistance in the process, disorienting dilemmas bringing more awareness into the process, signs of transformation which included reflective insights leading to subject object shifts in the coachees and outcomes and benefits of the ITC coaching process.

² We wish to make clear that the quotes used below to illustrate the findings represent these coaches' generalized perceptions and illustrations of client conversations. Any quotes within those are not taken from any specific client conversation, but created from broad patterns to exemplify themes being discussed.

During this process, we were cognizant of potential biases in the data and looked as much as possible for tangible descriptions of evidence supporting any generalized claims.³ We were also aware that we were limited by not having direct access to clients' own experiences. Nor could we directly assess the longer term impacts of this coaching on leadership behaviors, although we have some evidence supporting this from previous research (Reams, 2013).

Findings

What came through clearly in the interviews was that in the start of the process, the kinds of descriptions given about coachees correlated primarily with how Kegan talks about the third order of consciousness, or socialized mindset. This came from numerous comments describing how the coachees tended to depend on how others define them and when facing adaptive challenges many would explicitly ask the coach what to do. "*For some people who have a highly reactive profile, then you could find that the coach becomes part of the 'who they need to follow,' you know, the socialized system.*" From this starting point, these coaching journeys would use awareness raising processes in an attempt to facilitate movement in specific areas towards a more self-authoring mind, or Kegan's fourth order of consciousness.

Challenges Brought into the Process

Connected to these descriptions indicating a socialized mindset were a set of challenges the coachees brought into the process. Some coachees were aware of these challenges to varying degrees. Two coaches in particular mentioned that "*they are busy people and coaching is the antithesis to their work.*" It is an important part of their job to be very precise, follow rules and guidelines, deal with deadlines, numbers and tables. Thus an inquiry into their subjective world of emotions, reflections or general uncertainty was foreign territory for most of them. (We did hear that there was a greater openness to exploring this subjective world among women coachees). Being used to solving problems in a technical way, the coachees often operated from within a 'quick fix solution mode' that inhibited adaptive thinking. This was grounded in what appeared as embeddedness in fearful thinking (which emerged as a reactive consciousness) and a lack of social and emotional intelligence, reflective capacity and self-awareness. A lack of self-awareness tended to generate self-deception and justification or rationalizations. Many of the coachees also showed a strong need for control which shaped their sense of vulnerability in a non-generative way. They connected vulnerability to weakness, embarrassment and the loss of power.

Embeddedness

The analysis of the interviews showed a high level of assertiveness among coachees in relation to what the coaches identified as a set of attachments, centering on identity. We want to illustrate this as 'embeddedness.' These embeddednesses are anchored in absolute thinking patterns (e.g. a fixed sense of identity) and attachments to negative feelings such as; fear, doubtful thinking and a reactive consciousness. The embeddedness in fearful thinking brought forth a more complex construct of what impeded their actual growth, the fear of loss.

This fear revealed itself as multi-faceted. The fear of losing self-respect, respect from others, status, reputation or even their job was described as "*powerlessness and helplessness*" toward what was going on. Being strongly driven by wanting to meet external expectations, they tended to look to others to define themselves. The fear of not being good enough and not performing well enough revealed a need for perfection and victimhood in relation to their circumstances.

³ For example it is possible that our interviewees used casual descriptive language about their clients' stage development beyond their expertise to evaluate.

Many coachees expressed fear of losing the identity they had worked so hard to build up, as they were not ready to face the uncertainty this change would encompass. Their identity had thus far provided a safe structure from which to observe, deal with and fix problems. Thus the emergent feeling of identity dissolution could for some end up in a disorienting dilemma, mixed feelings and being “*compositely constrained towards growth and the invitation of the creative consciousness.*” Concerns about the uncertainty that this loss and the whole process would bring about triggered new avoidant behaviors in some coachees. Some tried to “*argue their way around the self-observations.*” Others were highly assertive. “*I am who I am and you are not going to change me*” and “*I am already stretched, so, where does this thing go here?*” reflect some of the participants’ embeddednesses in their fixed sense of identity. The perspective of letting go of aspects of their identity and entering the new territory was experienced as a loss of control.

There were differences in the way the coachees experienced this. For some, being present to feelings was perceived as generative for their growth process. For others it could be a stretch.

Some are comfortable in the sense that they are highly self-aware ...the process develops their own self-awareness and their self-management around their emotions. Others just tend to shut down. They'll move away from that. ... The more you try to keep them in their emotional space the more is the solution and the quick fixes. The emotional discomfort, you know, they will shy away from it.

From this we can connect back to the sense of vulnerability noted above. This vulnerability can be viewed as coming from embeddedness in and attachment to a fixed sense of identity (along with all the success it has brought up to this point). Thus it can touch on existential issues for many coachees.

Resistance in the Process

Because they feel this vulnerability, once they entered into the ITC coaching process, they often consciously resisted, or shied away from exploring their subjective, social-emotional world. While some of them saw glimpses of something that seemed true in this area, being asked about what that truth could be often led to withdrawing, because they found it too scary to face these shadows inside them.

Now the most resistance I see is this is new territory for them, for all, you know, going to a place inside where you start to see some beliefs, some assumptions, some sort of facets of yourself that seem scary and dark. Some people don't want to go there, and there's resistance to admitting that it's there. So I've had some people say when we've done the third column in the hidden commitments, saying that, “Okay, so perhaps a little bit of this is true, but it's (pause), I can't recognize this in me.” ... So part of them knows about this, but the conscious part doesn't want to know.

There is an internal conflict as it is a competing commitment; they open up to say that there is some truth and then pull back. They refuse to identify themselves with what emerges although they show clear signs and glimpses that there is some truth in it. Another coach described this kind of resistance as coachees saying something like, “*I can't write down the worry until I know how to fix it.*”

The interviews revealed that there were also other types of resistance in the coachees. What was similar among them was that they were tied to the coachees’ absolute thinking and assumptions they were subject to. The coaches observed the emergence of behaviors which were closely connected to each other such as; protective behavior, projection, defensiveness, dis-identification and self-deception. Also blaming any business reason ‘out there’ such as time pressure or the others’ work mode was used as an excuse to bypass responsibility. Maintaining and justifying assumptions often fueled the coachees’

attempts to rush the coaching process in the manner that was familiar to them, the ‘quick fix solution mode.’ The coaches noted avoidant and resistant behaviors in different qualities, from ego-centric to feeling like a victim.

There was also healthy resistance. Some coachees brought up things that were just not ready to be processed as there could be a whole set of prior, underlying patterns underneath that needed to be attended to first. Some things were connected to personal experiences from early childhood that had shaped their assumptions of how to show up in the world to varying degrees. In general, there was an enormous amount of valuable data in the coachees’ resistance. It revealed a lot to the coaches that could be converted into learning opportunities later in the process.

Disorienting Dilemmas

The exposure to their Leadership Circle profile and working with the ITC map and the big assumptions enhanced the participants’ awareness about their reactive patterns and underlying beliefs. Gaining more awareness in this process initiated micro-developmental steps which could make the participants encounter the limitations of their thinking patterns, or disorienting dilemmas. Considering and integrating new perspectives and viewpoints could be perceived as a ‘pull in two directions’ for many. Both directions would make sense and seemed opposed at the same time. What had been guiding their thinking so far was then perceived as breaking down.

My general impression is the dilemma of what I would call some form of movement between socialized and self-authored. That certain values that I've embedded, that are really, really, really strong, are not making sense now. Let me give you a concrete example. A value that I need to take care of everybody and the realization around, "Oh my gosh, that's not viable." In this context it's absolutely not viable, and how can I live with myself when my ethics say that I'm supposed to? So when I see senior management do really "apparently evil things," and I'm supposed to sit back, that's an unconscionable dilemma. But it's all based on this sense of this value, how I've understood it, embedded it, lived it, and all of a sudden learning to relate to that value in a new way without relinquishing it is very disorienting and destabilizing.

The emergence of disorienting dilemmas brought about discomfort and frustration. From the coaches these experiences were welcomed as key moments for change that could help disentangle the coachees’ assumptions of not being good enough, failing or even being wrong. The collision with the old (socialized) mindset usually comes when the disorienting dilemma is in their conscious awareness sufficiently so that the experience can be contextualized. By then, the old mindset no longer fits with the newly arising thinking patterns. It is a process of clarifying, reorganizing, deconstructing and reconstructing a worldview which one of the coaches described as “*that’s not how we learned to be in the world, isn’t it?*”

The anticipation of the loss of identity and control was experienced as disorienting for them and goes along with a feeling of being exposed and vulnerable in a negative sense. Being a strong leader was connected to having to know and implied a feeling of having to be invulnerable.

“I’ll look weak. ... My self-esteem would be damaged,” that's more the self-authored response. Then there's the hero response: “All are dependent on me, so if I give up control I relinquish my responsibility to them.” So that was number one. I think second most dominant was failure. Reason being, “I can't fail because I have to be perfect.” I hear that a lot. “I’ll look like an idiot. I’ll lose respect.”

The fear that their jobs were at risk if they failed fueled their lack of trust and ‘chewed’ on their sense of identity. Relations to higher levels in the organization were described as easily shattered, so that this was a circumstance that collided with the participants’ new level of awareness and knowledge.

Signs of Transformation: Reflective Insights and Subject Object Shifts

Working with their big assumptions and encountering a number of disorienting dilemmas, the coaching initiated different processes in this fertile ground. It scaffolded understanding of their process which eventually gave shape to reflective insights. These insights enabled them to expand their awareness, or their container for growth. Instead of their previous denial, defensiveness and projection, as they got further into the process they were better at attending to their experiences. Deeper inquiry enabled them to unravel what was underneath the big assumption and its history and gave access to what they had been subject to so that they could begin to be proactive. They also learned to let go of control and preconceived assumptions of identity, which they experienced as a great relief.

As opposed to the different kinds of losses they had been afraid of in the beginning of the coaching journey, their later narratives revealed that they actually had lost a number of things. The difference was that they realized that these things no longer served them. They could hold this as an object of reflection and acknowledge how the reactive forces had previously served them and realized the limited return from them now. They valued the impact these insights had in all kinds of relationships, at the work place and at home. (The coaches emphasized that most coachees commented on improvements in family relationships as well).

A common insight among the coachees seemed to turn around the shift from one level of consciousness to the next higher level.

So, the realization that it worked with me and it's not working anymore, or it's not working the same way, or it's not working as effectively, so they turn to an opportunity for something else, and with that, then, the realization that they were able to activate something inside themselves rather than having to solve the problem.

The coaching linked the coachees’ experience of their growth and development to the disentanglement and understanding of the big assumption they had identified. Thus they discovered (to varying degrees) a way of relating to themselves and to others that allowed them to take a perspective on this process of outgrowing their old mindset.

The coaches observed their coachees made subject object shifts where their initial absolute thinking patterns were no longer sufficient. Instead, their awareness turned to where the focus was more on integration rather than exclusion. These subject object shifts came to the surface in the coaching conversations when people gave voice to their reflections on how things have impacted them and how that shaped their behaviors and that they can choose to not be run by their assumptions.

Outcomes and Benefits

The main shift observed in this process can be described as a shift from being embedded to being detached. Their initial primarily socialized mindset and fear based consciousness that focused on quick fixing, control and having to know, had in many places turned to something more generative. Being more relaxed and detached included a sense of “*feeling their way into knowing*” and growing into themselves. Feeling detached from a need for a certain outcome, or that the world had to be a certain way, they now had more perspectives and choices to act from and could better face uncertainty.

Going through the coaching and experiencing micro-developmental changes in relation to their sense of identity and big assumptions tied to this, testing these and making meaning of that experience led to a shift in their lenses of perception. Their thinking patterns became 'softer,' more transitional and contextual. Staying with the feeling of disorientation they were experiencing during the coaching eventually dissolved their attachment to a fixed sense of identity, which enabled changes in the structure of their meaning making. Working in this generative space and with their new sense of vulnerability they could experience relief from the energy previously required to maintain their sense of identity. What had been perceived as weak in the beginning shifted to a new understanding of vulnerability that gave space for new learning.

I can think of a number of clients for whom the whole idea that they didn't have to fix anything, that they just had to be able to, just to cut out the current reality whilst they focused on a creative outcome or ambition that they wanted to achieve, was actually very relaxing for them. And they were able to kind of like, just almost energetically, a great big sigh of relief came in. So another key insight I think with people was that there was a way now of operating that was not as exhausting and not as tiring as having to kind of maintain a high level of control or maintain a high level of complying, which meant essentially that they were always trying to survive. So I think that was probably the key piece where people began to realize, "This is it, if I am now able to look at this with this new perspective ... which means I have to start to just notice that the world doesn't have to be like this."

The coaches also noticed that several changes came along with these shifts in perception and identity such as; different meaning making and more complexity (in the coaching conversations), a sense of less impenetrable infallibility and more equanimity, that uncertainty felt ok, a different sense of urgency, letting go of control and the 'quick fix solution mode,' less use of force and more empowerment, enhanced social and emotional intelligence, better quality of presence and increased creative imagination. All of these benefits and outcomes from the ITC coaching process, and participation in the DYL programme, can be seen as symptomatic of the desired move from reacting rather than leading (from a socialized mindset) to being proactive, and leading by being able to better access a more appropriate structure of meaning making that enabled better contextualized decision making (in other words, operating from more of a self-authoring mindset).

Discussion

What we see from these findings is that the process of using awareness practices to facilitate transformative learning and develop leadership competencies, identity, self-efficacy and self-awareness (Day & Dragoni, 2015) can be captured in a model (table 1 below) of parallel processes. These processes are only generalizations of patterns found in the more individual journeys of the coachees. Nor do we claim that coachees have moved in a full sense from Kegan's third to fourth orders of consciousness. What we do claim, based on this data, is that within the ITC coaching journey, accompanied by participation in the DYL programme, many coachees often display significant shifts in their ways of thinking and behaving that fit with such descriptions. A report based on interviews with senior managers (Reams, 2013) of DYL participants provides further support for this, noting improved leadership and performance in areas of personal growth and team development as well as in building relationships. One senior leader described a manager who went through a difficult time. "*He defended some of his people. Before [DYL] he would have blamed them for not doing their job. But now he took responsibility for the outcome.*"

Stage of process	Lens	Characteristic	Type of Thinking
Entry to process	Lens of fear and exclusion	Embeddedness	Absolute thinking
During process	Lens of confusion	Vulnerability	Transitional thinking
End of process	Lens of integration	Detachment	Contextual thinking

Table 1: A Model of the ITC coaching process

These results could be due to a number of factors. While we would of course like to be able to claim that the programme itself is fully responsible for these shifts, what is more likely is that coachees come into the DYL programme with varying degrees of being ‘ripe’ for change and that DYL is a good fit for making use of this ripeness. The complexity of their jobs provides them with ample conditions to grow from. The cultural norms for promotion in an engineering company can be viewed as fostering the use of expert knowledge to maintain control. The individual struggle to cope with job demands through these mechanisms can easily build up a readiness for trying something new, even if unconscious, or resisted at first.

At the same time, we can see that there needs to be a degree of resistance to the process to enable a transformative engagement (Omer, Schwartz, Lubell, & Gall, 2012). It is natural to resist losing ourselves in chaos. While we noted an externalizing dynamic in the descriptions of the coachees’ processes that at times acted as a defense mechanism to protect themselves from new experiences, there is a need to take the issues within us and make them visible through such externalizations. In a sense, this process enacts Joseph Campbell’s (1991) hero’s journey, where after meeting and slaying the dragons of our big assumptions, we gain the strength to return to our community and share the gifts of new behaviors that come from realizing a new relationship to and detachment from our human fears.

Conclusion

In the introduction we noted Day & Dragoni’s (2015) current review of leadership development research pointing to key indicators necessary for leadership development. Our findings indicate visible signs of some of these key indicators are present from using the ITC coaching process in the context of an integrated leadership development programme (DYL). They also point to more long term or distal outcomes from engaging these key indicators as being related to more adequate levels of complexity of meaning making structures and processes, in other words, ego stage development. We have also described evidence of this kind of developmental growth occurring through the ITC coaching process. While we have not attempted to evaluate leadership behavior outcomes directly in this study, we ground our optimism in the research findings in previous work (noted above) showing clear benefits for leadership coming from subject object shifts towards a more self-authoring mindset.

From this we can say that based on the growing popularity of Kegan and Lahey’s (2009) Immunity to Change process, its application in coaching and previous research in this area, that the ITC process is well suited to fostering the kind of developmental approach to leadership development that many authors are calling for today. Future research needs to further examine the ways to facilitate this work and the fine grained details of the developmental process in the context of using awareness based technologies in constructivist developmentally oriented leadership development programmes. This can involve a wide range of factors from tools or methods for scaffolding this process all the way to subtle issues involving the impact of the coach or facilitator’s quality of presence (Reams & Caspari, 2012). We feel that this research project has taken an initial step in this direction.

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