Coaching for Emancipation: A framework of coaching in oppressive environments

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award

of Doctor of Philosophy

Business School

Oxford Brookes University

February 2014

ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a theoretical and practical framework for the use of coaching in oppressive environments to support the emancipation and development of individuals. A review of the literature suggests that the dynamics of oppression affect every aspect of the human condition. Meanwhile, there is limited understanding of how to support individuals in liberating themselves from the implications of oppression. The study sets out to examine whether coaching can be used as an emancipatory approach, and aims to explore how the context of oppression affects coachees, coaches and the coaching process. Building on a cross-disciplinary review of emancipatory approaches, an initial coaching model was developed. Then, a cooperative inquiry was conducted with a group of twelve coaches from Egypt, who used the initial model with 22 coachees over six months. The first set of findings offers a theoretical view of the individual's journey from oppression to emancipation, starting from feelings of helplessness and self-blame through a number of cycles that lead to actions of resistance and narratives of liberation. Findings suggest that oppression has implications for the individual's cognitive and emotional development, and emphasise the role of emotions in enabling the emancipatory process. The second set of findings is organised into three coaching processes, each underpinned by a theoretical understanding of its dynamics, enablers and barriers, as well as a number of practical considerations to improve its effectiveness. The first process "Naming Oppression" suggests that coaching can support emancipation through encouraging coachees to use narratives to understand, externalise and re-author their life. The second process called "Renewing Beliefs" explores how coachees can use critical reflection to understand and challenge the social and psychological structures leading to their experience of oppression. The third process titled "Fighting Back" focuses on how coachees undertake actions to resist and break from the cycle of oppression and to discover new possibilities for change. The third set of findings suggests that coaches in oppressive environments face a complex web of philosophical, psychological, and practical challenges, and discusses the implications of these challenges on their development. The study offers a theoretical and practical foundation upon which coaching for emancipation can be built, and proposes the need for further research into the experience of coachees and most especially the emotional side of their experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my two supervisors and mentors, Dr. Elaine Cox, and Dr. Tatiana Bachkirova. They offered me a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and support. Learning from them was one of the most inspiring experiences in my life. Elaine's questions, advice, and challenges have kept me on track for the whole journey, her massive experience made such a formidable endeavour very achievable. Tatiana's passion and belief in the topic were very motivating, her depth of knowledge pushed me to dig deeper and learn more, and her unconditional support on both academic and personal levels held me standing in the most difficult moments.

My admiration and gratefulness go to the coaches who shared this journey: Silvana George, Nadine Emile, Sarah Hani, Sheren Louis, Fady Adel, Miral El Desoki, Nouran Khairy, Samar Gamil, Nevin Ghattas and Marianne Hanna, as well as to Rami Sedhom and Salma Akl for their earlier contribution. Together they formed the inquiry group, and met in the room they used to call "the room of hope" to reflect on their experience. I have learnt from each one of them. Their passion and dedication exceeded all expectations. Their care for their coachees and for each other was only equalled by their professionalism as co-researchers. I also admire them for their hope, as they dream of a better life for the people of Egypt, and they happily pay the price of supporting change in such turbulent times. The research journey was also shared with my dear friend Magy Malek, who supported and added to the thought process of the research from its earliest conceptions, her curious questions always reminded me of the value of wonder, and the joy of trying to search for answers.

I wish to thank the 22 coachees who are the real heroes of the stories in this thesis. While I have not met them, every part of their journeys was an inspiration. People like them, striving despite all odds to liberate themselves from the consequences of oppression, are the reason that makes a study of coaching for emancipation worthwhile.

I wish to extend my gratitude to Mohamed Hammady, my manager, for his support and encouragement throughout the research. I am very grateful to British Sky Broadcasting for partially funding my studies. I wish also to thank my

colleagues and my team who have shown great understanding of the demanding nature of doing part-time research involving frequent travel abroad, especially Karen Sayer for her valuable support in that regard.

I wish to thank the Culture and Scientific Renaissance Association in Egypt for hosting the group meetings and many of the coaching sessions, making us always feel welcomed.

I wish to thank my friends in Oxford Brookes who have always helped me with questions and advice, most especially Dr. Tina Salter and Muhammad Rafique. I also thank Hany George and Nesrine Pascal for helping in simulating the coaching techniques during the training on the initial coaching model. I also wish to thank those who could not commit to the entire research, but continued to show interest in the project and support us with words of encouragement. I also thank the many individuals who have helped in distributing the research invitations to the coaches and coachees.

This journey would not have been possible without the unconditional love and incredible support of Sally, my wife. She was there for me at every moment of the long journey, using every opportunity to lift me up, and carrying the load of my absence without a glimpse of complaint. I also admire how my young daughter and son, Tia and Alexander, have learned, in their own way, how to allow me the time to work on the thesis, while boosting my energy in the amazing, albeit short, moments of fun.

I wish to thank my parents for their warm and loving support, and for attending to every detail of my travels to Egypt, thus offering me an environment that could only lead to success. I thank them for teaching me to always try to be my best.

The connected world of today has encouraged me to share this journey with many friends around the world whose small gestures of encouragement and support have kept me going. It is amazing how a normally lonely journey of research has become one of the most shared experiences of my life. So, to everyone who has taken the time to show support, to hear my almost daily talks about the research, or to celebrate with me the moments of success, thank you.

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1. Introduction

This study aims to develop a theoretical and practical framework for the use of coaching in oppressive environments to support the emancipation and development of individuals. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the background to the study, and an introduction to the contents and structure of this thesis. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the drivers behind the research question, from personal, theoretical and practical perspectives, as well as a brief overview of previous research on the topic. Next, I present the aim of the study, together with the main definitions and concepts relevant to the study. In the third section, I present the approach of the study, describing briefly the methodology used. I also discuss the chosen context for the action research that was carried out in Egypt between December 2011 and August 2012. Finally, I present the overall organisation of the thesis, with a brief outline of the contents of the different chapters.

A. Background

I was born in Egypt, in the crowded city of Cairo, considered to be the largest urban area in the Arab world and Africa (Demographia, 2013). The name "*Cairo*" – as one of the research participants noted – is pronounced "*al-Qāhirah"* in Arabic, which means "*the Conqueror*", but is also the same Arabic word for "*the Oppressive*". Indeed, my experience of living in Egypt has been a key motivation for trying to understand the dynamics of human development in oppressive environments. Examples of oppression were abundant, from state dictatorship, through discrimination based on gender and religion, to extreme levels of poverty and illiteracy. As a human development practitioner in this environment, my experience led me to some early questions: *What makes people seem to accept oppressive conditions as givens, for themselves and others? How can individuals be supported to grow in this environment, and to liberate themselves from its impacts? And why do many developmental efforts seem to fail to achieve a sustainable change in the lives of the individuals they are targeting?* These questions remained broadly unanswered.

The following wave of questions came from my experience of coaching concurrently in the United Kingdom and Egypt. Reflecting on the comparison between the two worlds, I started questioning whether the same approaches could be used equally, regardless of the environment the coachees were living in. In my experience, coachees from the UK seemed to be more in control of their lives and more able to make choices. The issues they brought to coaching were related to achieving goals in their personal lives. Conversely, coachees from Egypt seemed much more constrained in their ability to make choices, and much more afraid of following their choices through implementation. Their issues seemed shared amongst many, to the extent that I was feeling – as a coach – like it was not the individual who was present in the room, but rather the whole society that was omnipresent in every coaching relationship. The impact of the society on the coachees renewed my interest in understanding the impact of oppression. This generated a number of questions:

1. *How does living in oppressive environments affect the individuals' ability to develop and to act on their lives and in the world?*
2. *How can human development approaches, and particularly coaching, be adapted to fit the developmental needs of individuals in oppressive environments?*
3. *How can coaching be used as an emancipatory approach to support individuals in liberating themselves from the consequences of oppression?*

The above questions were the main drivers behind the current study. In the following lines, I will discuss these questions in more details:

The first question: "*How does living in oppressive environments affect the individuals' ability to develop and to act on their lives and in the world?"* has been approached by many authors within different disciplines. Most theories of oppression have focused on one of its dimensions, in specific discourses such as class struggle, gender discrimination, racism, disability, or decolonisation. For example, different feminist theories analyse oppression in relation to gender, combined with other dimensions such as race, age and sexual orientation (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008), while Fanon (1967) focuses on the psychological impact of oppression in post-colonial contexts. In social theory, the critical theory tradition of the Frankfurt school, including writers like Horkheimer and Adorno, Gramsci,

Fromm and Habermas, analyses the dynamics of oppression as a central theme (Brookfield, 2005). In education, the work of Freire (1970) in developing the tradition of critical pedagogy starts with an analysis of how learning and oppression affect each other. In social psychology, Plous (2003) discusses the impact of discrimination on the development of individuals. In psychology, the work of Martín-Baró on liberation psychology studies the impacts of oppression on victims, bystanders and perpetrators (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

These works are but few examples of a large body of work that examines the phenomenon of oppression; they are presented in more detail in chapter 2. They form a valuable foundation in understanding the impact of oppression. However, the majority of the theories in this area do not rely on empirical research in oppressive environments. Where some form of empirical research exists, it often originates from group-based approaches, like Freire's (1970) culture circles or studies focused on mental illness. Hence, it appears that there is a gap in understanding the individual's experience of developing in an oppressive environment, and a gap in understanding how individuals are affected by living in environments where multiple forms of oppression co-exist, as opposed to analysing the experience from a single perspective such as class, gender, or race.

The second question: "*How can human development approaches, and particularly coaching, be adapted to fit the developmental needs of individuals in oppressive environments?"* reflects a need that is hardly fulfilled. A key critique of coaching, as well as other human development approaches, is that much of the documented knowledge reflects approaches that were created in western developed countries (Western, 2012). It is common for practitioners working in the third world to copy these approaches, hoping for the same claimed outcomes. It is also common to link the credibility of a certain approach to its origination and use in developed societies, and to evaluate its success based on criteria that have been defined in the context of these societies.

While adopting theories and approaches from developed countries might have some benefits, I believe that copied approaches have a limited chance of success in underdeveloped societies. The reason for this is linked to the dynamics of living in oppressive environments; if coaching, as Rogers (2008) notes, assumes a self-directive and resourceful learner who is living in a context where choice and self-responsibility are key principles, then it becomes questionable whether coaching

can be used in contexts where such principles are heavily violated. Moreover, as Hegazy (2013) notes, the psychology of oppressed societies implies specific challenges to the process of development, these challenges need to be met with approaches specifically designed for that purpose. Considering the prevalence of oppression in many societies, it becomes essential that the theory of coaching expands its understanding of such conditions, and how they impact practice. Meanwhile, there is limited research offering a theoretical understanding of coaching in oppressive environments or the use of coaching for emancipation.

The third question: *"How can coaching be used as an emancipatory approach to support individuals in liberating themselves from the consequences of oppression?*" stems naturally from the two previous questions. If living in oppressive environments affects individuals' ability to develop, and if coaching is to be used as a developmental approach in such environments, then it would be important to explore the ways coaching can facilitate a process of emancipation; helping individuals to critically reflect on their experiences, and to find ways to liberate themselves from the social (external) and psychological (internal) consequences of oppression.

In the past few decades, several disciplines have started to develop emancipatory approaches. For example, in the field of education, critical pedagogy has been developed as a process of education for emancipation, where both the educator and learners engage in an informed praxis to emancipate self and others from the conditions of oppressions (Freire, 1970, 1974; 1989; 1994). Another emancipatory genre of education is feminist pedagogy, where feminist educators attempt to recover women's voices, and make the systems of oppression visible (Merriam et al., 2007). In the field of psychotherapy, feminist therapists help individuals to explore how psychological wounds are created and intensified by structural inequality and societal power imbalances (Magnet & Diamond, 2010). In theatre, the theatre of the oppressed engages actors and audience in oppressive environments in a process of critical consciousness and action (Boal, 2002). More recently, the new umbrella term "Applied theatre" combines many theatrical forms that are used in non-traditional settings and that share principles of participation, critical awareness and action (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). In the field of social work, new anti-oppressive practices are emerging, focusing on the role of social workers in helping their clients fight oppression (Dominelli, 2002). In

research, participatory action research is proposed as a research approach that can be both scientific and emancipatory (Fals Borda, 2008).

While practitioners across the above disciplines have identified the need for emancipatory genres within their practices, coaching remains behind in offering a model of coaching for emancipation. To the contrary, some studies critique coaching for being sometimes used as a hegemonic tool, through its focus on individualism and instrumental knowledge (Western, 2012), its role as a deflector for organizational issues of power and inequality (Kühl, 2007, 2008; Schultz, 2010), and the tendency of many cross-cultural coaches to avoid confrontation with the established norms of the coachees' societies, focusing instead on adapting to these norms (Du Toit & Sim, 2010).

Despite these critiques, Western (2012) argues that coaching can be an emancipatory force, helping individuals to achieve a fuller sense of life and to strive for a collective endeavour to improve workplaces and society. In the past few years, coaching has been one of the fastest growing approaches for learning and human development (Passmore, 2008). Its flexible and participatory nature makes it a powerful approach for analysing the experiences of individuals living in oppressive environments. In the meantime, the practice of coaching can benefit from the development of a theoretical and practical framework that acknowledges the needs and limitations of individuals in oppressive environments, and that supports their development and emancipation.

B. Aim and definitions

This study aims to develop a theoretical and practical framework for the use of coaching in oppressive environments to support the emancipation and development of individuals. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives have been set:

1. To undertake a critical review of the coaching literature, exploring its use in oppressive environments, as well as a cross-disciplinary review, providing a theoretical foundation of the concepts of oppression, emancipation and development.
2. To define an initial model of coaching for emancipation.

3. To explore, through critical reflective practice, the dynamics of coaching as an emancipatory approach in oppressive environments.
4. To contribute to the theory and practice of coaching, through the development of a framework of coaching for emancipation.
5. To contribute to knowledge in the fields of human development and social psychology, by analysing the impact of oppression on the experience of coaches and coachees.

Below, I present the key definitions and concepts that are relevant to a clear understanding of the aim, objectives and scope of the study.

The first key concept is that of **oppression**. According to Freire (1970), oppression is what happens when a social order distorts the humanity of some of its members through unjust and sometimes violent perceptions and actions. The Merriam Webster dictionary suggests that the first known use of the word oppression was in the 14th century, and it defines it as unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Oppression usually targets specific groups based on gender, ethnic, physical ability, age, wealth, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and other factors (Harro, 2000b). It can also target whole nations, under dictatorship or colonisation (Kucukaydin, 2010; Sharp, 2010).

In this study, I use the term "**oppressive environment**" to describe a social context where one or more of the different facets of oppression are present. Studying oppressive environments as social systems avoids the dichotomy of oppressor versus oppressed, as everyone living in an oppressive environment becomes identified as part of a mutually affecting relationship with the environment. The term "Oppressive environment" is also intended to describe the multi-dimensional and multi-layered nature of oppression. In oppressive environments, different forms of oppression (for example: gender, age and class) overlap and interact, creating a dynamic web of social interactions that cannot be simply reduced to any one form of oppression (Kucukaydin, 2010).

Oppression is a wide area of study that can be analysed from many perspectives, including historical, political, socio-economic and psychological. It can be seen as a collective or an individual experience. It affects both public and private spheres. The dynamics of oppression affect every aspect of the human condition (Dominelli, 2002). This study focuses on the experience of individuals living in an

oppressive environment, as they go through a journey of coaching to support their development. Within this scope, particular attention is given to the concept of **internalised oppression**; the manner in which an oppressed group comes to believe the messages and stereotypes assigned to it, and to use against itself the methods of the oppressor (Rosenwasser, 2002). Internalised oppression relates to the system of beliefs that makes an oppressed group contribute to the maintenance and regeneration of the oppressive conditions. From a coaching perspective, the individual's beliefs are key to understanding and improving the way the individual acts upon his/her external conditions.

Another key concept in the study is that of **emancipation**. I define emancipation as the process of restoring one's humanity through liberating oneself from the conditions and consequences of oppression. Along with Freire (1970), I believe that humanisation – becoming fully human – is the vocation of all people, and that emancipation is the process that seeks to liberate us from the dehumanising consequences of oppression. As with internalised oppression, the focus of coaching is on the individual's beliefs, ideas, and perceptions. However, this does not and should not exclude external actions aiming at challenging and changing the oppressive environment.

The term **development** is used in this study from a constructive-developmental point of view. Development describes the evolving self or ego and its progressive reorganisation and meaning-making in response to its changing experience with the world (Loevinger, 1987). It assumes an ongoing process in which meaning systems evolve over time, both as a natural unfolding as well as in response to the limitations of existing ways of making meaning (McCauley, Drath, Palus, O'Connor, & Baker, 2006). It is a continuous process of differentiation and integration. Bachkirova (2011) defines development as "a combination of changes in the organism, manifested in a sustained increased capacity of individuals to engage with and to influence their environment, and to look after their internal needs and aspirations" (p.7). Constructive-developmental theories build on the early work of Piaget (1969), and benefit from the significant contributions of Loevinger (1987), Kegan (1982), Torbert (2004), and many others. Development, in its wider sense, goes beyond the cognitive dimension, to include emotional, interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects. Although they are often organised in stages, constructive-developmental models also focus on the processes and the price of

transformation, and they also acknowledge the social context of the individual and how it affects development (Kegan, 1982). As the focus of this study is on development in the context of oppressive environments, I expand my understanding of development to include theories of moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1981), racial and sexual identity development (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baugmartner, 2007), and women's development (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). I also examine the relationship between development and emancipation. For example, Marshall (2009) argues that the structures and stages outlined by developmental theories may be seen as roadmaps to liberation, as they help reveal the paths through which individuals, each in their own unique way, move towards the fulfillment of their own potentials.

Coaching means different things to different people. There are abundant genres, contexts and approaches of coaching, and the issue of defining coaching is still unresolved according to Bachkirova et al (2010) who propose a working definition of coaching as "a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders" (p. 1). Many other definitions exist that define coaching in terms of its processes, purposes or types of clients. For example, Palmer and Whybrow (2007) suggest that the purpose of coaching is to "enhance well-being & performance" (p. 2), Rogers (2008) proposes that coaching aims to "achieve speedy, increased and sustainable effectiveness in the clients' lives and careers" (p. 7). Others argue that coaching is solution-focused or goal-driven. These definitions may be important in trying to discriminate between different types of coaching in a relatively mature environment. However, as Western (2012) suggests, they may also be limiting in terms of allowing new genres of coaching to respond to emergent needs. In chapter two I discuss existing approaches of coaching. In this study, I approach coaching at its most fundamental level, as a dialogical space between two individuals where one is facilitating the learning of the other. Coaching for emancipation is defined as *life*, *developmental*, and *emancipatory*. It is *life* coaching in the sense that it is mainly done outside organizational settings, and all the topics that the coachees bring to the coaching sessions are welcomed, as opposed to focusing exclusively on work. By *developmental* I mean that coachees are encouraged to expand the scope of

coaching beyond the achievement of specific outcomes, to issues that address their whole selves. Similarly, by *emancipatory* I mean that coachees are encouraged to discuss issues of oppression and to use the coaching process to help them overcome those issues.

In the current study, I use the terms **coaching in oppressive environments** and **coaching for emancipation** to describe two distinct though related things. Coaching in oppressive environments is any form of coaching practiced in the context of oppressive environments, while coaching for emancipation is proposed as a specific genre that aims to help coachees liberate themselves from the consequences and conditions of oppression. The overlap between the two notions is considerable. However, coaches wishing to work in oppressive environments without supporting emancipatory work would only benefit from the findings related to that category.

There are a couple of tensions that exist within the above definitions; these are questions that I reflected upon at the early phases of defining the scope and approach of this study, and continued to examine and review throughout the study. They relate to the different aims of the study as depicted in table 1.1.

Primary aim of the researcher	Primary aim of the practitioner
Practical Knowledge To develop a framework for coaching for emancipation based on a critical theory of coaching	**Emancipatory** To use coaching as a process for empowering and liberating individuals from the consequences of oppression
Secondary aim of the researcher	**Secondary aim of the practitioner**
Theoretical Knowledge To understand the dynamics of development and coaching in oppressive environments	**Developmental** To provide a critical approach to coaching to help better support the development of individuals in oppressive environment

Table 1.1 Different Aspects of the Study

The first tension exists between what Heron (1994) calls transformative versus informative intentions. The primary focus of the study is to generate a theory of coaching for emancipation. Meanwhile, the value of such theory is linked to how far it enables emancipatory action. Lewin (1951) wrote: “There is nothing more practical than a good theory” (p. 169), suggesting that while practitioners should make use of available theory, theorists should aim to provide conceptualisations

that can be used to solve social or practical problems. Hence, theoretical knowledge is a key outcome of the study, and its value extends beyond coaching to other theories and approaches of human development. Meanwhile, the study is designed to enable action and change as a primary aim.

The second tension is between emancipation and development; emancipation is the primary aim of this study, in terms of supporting people in their struggle to remove the dehumanising effects of oppression, development, on the other side, is essential, as it underlies people's ability to engage with the world, within or outside oppressive contexts. As will be shown, emancipation and development affect each other to a great degree; people's development is hampered by oppression, and is in the meantime a key enabler for the emancipatory processes. I believe that, in the context of oppressive environment, it is not adequate to address either emancipation or development in isolation from one another. Hence, a theory coaching for emancipation needs to encompass both emancipatory and developmental processes; it is aimed at people who either come to coaching with emancipatory goals, or those who come to coaching with developmental goals that are hampered by issues of oppression.

C. Approach and Context

The aim and objectives of this study originate from a critical theory paradigm that defines my view and role as a researcher-practitioner. Critical theory – as a research paradigm – maintains a historical-realist ontology, proposing that we live in virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, ethnic, economic, and gender values that are crystallised over time. In order to gain knowledge about the studied environment, critical theory proposes a dialogical epistemology, where knowledge is created by inquiry through a dynamic interaction with the environment (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005, 2008). Critical theory research challenges the status quo of this virtual reality, by analyzing it critically, and by being critical of its own processes of knowledge generation. It looks at how the social context and the use of language affect how the research is conducted, analysed and presented, and seeks, through critical awareness, to empower its participants to uncover new realities (Miller & Brewer, 2003). Following these principles, studying coaching for emancipation needs to take place in a research setting that is itself emancipatory, in the sense that it recognises the dynamics of

context and language, as well as the power dynamics with and between the research participants, and that it ensures their voices are represented authentically throughout the study. The methodology chosen to meet these requirements is co-operative inquiry, developed by Heron and Reason (2008). It relies on working collaboratively with a group of co-researchers, reflecting on their direct experience with the studied environment. In the following lines, I present briefly the research approach. Then, I discuss the context where the inquiry took place between December 2011 and August 2012.

1. Outline of the research design

The timeline of the study is shown in figure 1.1. Following a cross-disciplinary review of different emancipatory approaches, and incorporating my personal experience as well as a number of informal online discussions with a group of Egyptian coaches, I developed an initial model of coaching for emancipation. Lennard (2010) defines a coaching model as “a general guide or a framework of ideas for understanding and navigating an approach to coaching” (p. 4). She argues that models can be used to facilitate the process of inquiry. The initial model is presented in chapter 3, and was used as a starting point for the study, to be applied, critically evaluated, and improved.

Next, a formal invitation to join a co-operative inquiry group was sent to various circles of human development practitioners in Egypt. This resulted in the formation of a group of twelve coaches/co-researchers who would undertake the study. The inquiry group attended an extensive eight days training on the initial coaching model, as well as a formal initiation into the inquiry. The training included theoretical and practical elements. The initiation of the group focused on the key aspects relevant to the research process and group dynamics, including – as suggested by Heron (1996) – methodological, political (participative) and emotional dimensions.

Following the training, each coach invited willing coachees to be part of the study. The coaching model was used with 22 coachees over the period of the research. Coaching sessions constituted the action phases of the co-operative inquiry. During action phases, the coaches were collecting data in the form of reflective journals, research forms and personal notes. Each action phase was two months long and included one to two coaching sessions per coachee. At the end of each

action phase, the group gathered for two to three full days reflective workshops, where all the data generated was collaboratively analysed, reflected upon, and discussed. The study included three full cycles including each an action phase and a reflection phase.

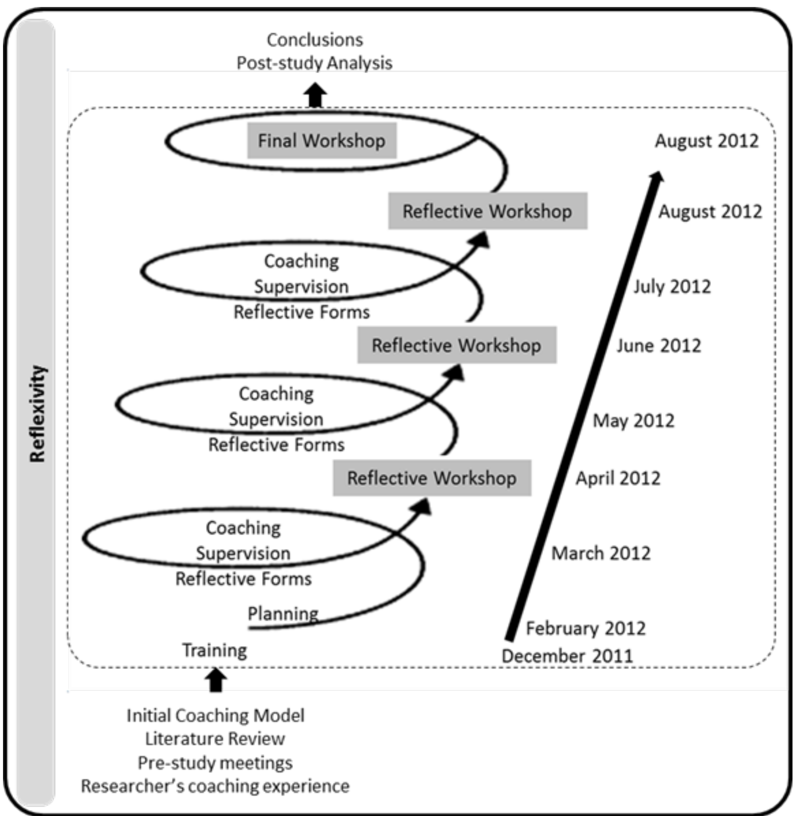


Figure 1.1 Research Timelines and Cycles

The findings from the reflective workshops constitute the key outcome of this study. Following the principles of co-operative inquiry, both the process and contents of the research were driven by the participants. My role, beyond the initial training, was to offer coaching supervision during the action cycles, to facilitate the reflection process during the reflective workshops, and to document and summarise the findings from each workshop, to be shared with, and validated by the group in the following reflective workshop. The detailed procedures of the study are presented in chapter four.

2. Context: Egypt as a model environment

The selection of Egypt as a model environment for this inquiry is based on multiple factors:

On the 25th of January 2011, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians took to the streets of Cairo and other cities, demanding the fall of Mubarak's regime. People around the world watched the 18 days of demonstrations that led to Mubarak stepping down, after 30 years in power, in what was praised by western politicians as a great revolution that must be taught in schools (El-Bendary, 2013). The story is however much more complicated. Egyptians have learned that it takes more than a revolution to become free. The events of the last three years since the revolution are but a reminder that oppressive environments have the ability to regenerate themselves. What was coined the "Arab Spring" is still unfolding as a long and painful struggle (Francois-Cerrah & Sadik, 2013). Egypt has had a history of political oppression throughout its modern history, from colonisation (1517-1952) to military dictatorship (1952-2012). Political oppression has been coupled with extreme poverty and religious extremism, leading to gender discrimination and violence against religious minorities (Christians, Baha'i, and Shi'a). Ethnic groups in Nubia and Sinai also have a long history of struggling from exclusion. The levels of corruption are evaluated as extremely high (Sorensen, 2012).

More than third of the Egyptians are illiterate (28 million people), and female illiteracy is more than 42%. Egyptian females earn on average 27% of males' income, and hardly have any representation in the houses of parliament (UNDP, 2012). In multiple surveys, around a third of Egyptian women reported being subject to violence in the marital relationship, and 50% reported being subject to violence from the age of 15 (Ambrosetti, Abu Amara, & Condon, 2013). In 2010, the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report ranked Egypt 125th out of 136 countries in terms of the disparity in rights between men and women (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2010). The prevalent Islamic heritage, with its tendency towards collective/authoritarian values, patriarchy, and religious culture, provides a very rich context for the study, for both Muslims and non-Muslims living in this environment. While Islam promotes values like equality, human dignity, and respect of women, there are many debates on whether the religious resurgence of the last few decades has improved or deteriorated the conditions of women and religious minorities in Egypt (El Guindi, 2005; Megahed & Lack, 2011; Osman, 2003; Weir, 2013). For decades, the discourse of human rights, and especially

women's rights was accused and rejected as a foreign and un-Islamic tool of western culture and political agendas (Mokhtari, 2012).

After the January revolution, it became clear that emancipation is a much harder battle to win; many people feared the change and instability, and supported a military rule. Islamic extremism flourished, and Islamist groups known for being repressive of civil liberties and freedoms became very active (O'Brien, 2012). Mass sexual harassment incidents increased. Religious discrimination led to significant numbers of religious minorities forced out of their homes or choosing to leave the country. By the summer of 2011, the psychology of hope that dominated Tahrir square was replaced by fear (Masoud, 2011), and notable writers were predicting the end of the revolution (Žižek, 2011). Nevertheless, Egypt is in a historical moment, after decades of stagnation. The political change is forcing many debates and taboos related to oppression to surface and to be confronted, thus creating an excellent environment for a practice of coaching for emancipation.

While many human and social development movements started working actively in Egypt, and youth groups became more active in the public domain, many of these initiatives experienced the challenges of working with internalised beliefs and established social norms. Many activists reported an overall environment of fatalism, mistrust, and prejudice. Meanwhile, they also reported a growing appetite for engaging in public discourse, and for accepting developmental and emancipatory initiatives that challenge the status quo. As in many cases throughout history, political and social changes are coinciding with a rise in emancipatory ideas (Golley, 2004). While few studies have explored the impact of social movements from an emancipatory perspective (For example: (Saba, 2004), there are no studies that examine the use of emancipatory approaches, especially those directed to individuals rather than groups. More generally, Egypt with both its Arab and Islamic dimensions represent a context that is one of the least studied in the coaching and counselling literature (Dwairy, 2006, 2009). Coaching is still in its early days in Egypt. Most coaching is NLP-based and is usually coupled with a training programme. The word *coaching* in Arabic (*Tadrib*) is actually the same as *training*.

Another important factor that affected the aim of this study, as well as the chosen context, is my personal experience. Born and educated in Egypt, I have worked in the human development field there for more than 20 years, mostly with youth

and religious minorities, as well as coaching a broad range of individuals in the past four years. Since 2003, I have been a political activist and blogger. This personal experience provided me with enough background to build the initial scope of the inquiry as well as the initial coaching model. It has also provided me with an important access to the interested individuals who would join the inquiry group. Living in an oppressive context for many years of my life, it has been tempting to accept what seemed like a deterministic nature of oppression, working as a well-knit system that cannot be challenged. It is only through working with people and witnessing their journeys of resistance and development that I learned to see the world differently. I believe that individuals can and do open opportunities for their own liberation and the change of their societies, and I approach this study hoping to support, through new knowledge, the opportunity for liberation and change.

D. Organisation of the thesis

The thesis structure is illustrated in Figure 1.2. The current chapter 1 served as introduction and background to the study. In chapter 2, literature review, I present a theoretical foundation to the phenomena of oppression, emancipation and development, I critically review the literature pertaining to the use of coaching as an emancipatory approach, and I explore the research in a number of relevant disciplines, discussing its relevance to inform the development of a practice of coaching for emancipation. Starting the thesis with the literature review also reflects the actual starting point of the study, and thus enables the reader to follow the assumptions upon which the study was founded.

Following from the literature review and building on it, I developed an initial model of coaching for emancipation, to be used during the inquiry as a basis for the coaching practice. The initial coaching model is presented in chapter 3. Each block of the model is presented in terms of purpose, key tenets, detailed processes, and suggested tools.

In chapter 4, methodology, I present the methodological approach and procedural steps taken in the study. I begin by reflecting on how a critical theory worldview has informed the methodological choices of this study, and then I discuss the different elements of the study in detail, discussing their implications on the research outcomes and validity.

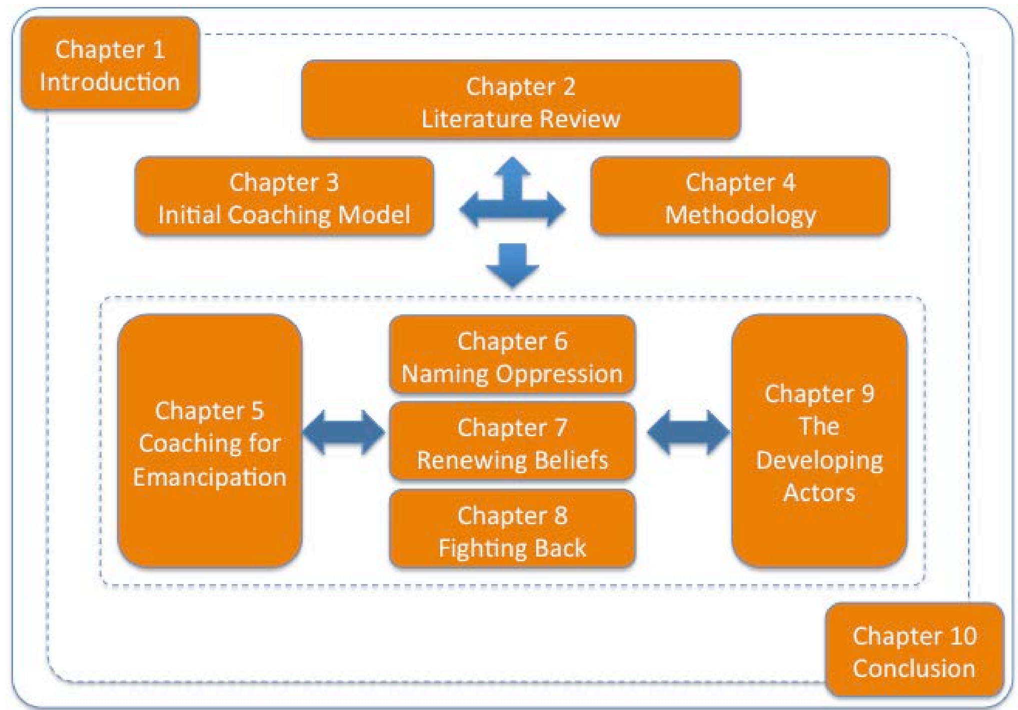


Figure 1.2 Structure of the thesis

From a chronological point of view, chapters 2, 3 and 4 represent the preparatory work for the cooperative inquiry, as figure 1.2 shows; they are interconnected and intrinsically linked. The following chapters, from 5 to 9, represent the analysis of the findings from the inquiry. They are broken down following the main themes that emerged from the inquiry.

Chapter 5, coaching for emancipation, includes the findings related to the philosophical and psychological foundations of the coaching model. It examines the experience of the research group in relation to the questions of oppression, development, and empowerment. Chapters 6 to 8 follow the same structure, focusing each on one of the three key processes identified by the group as the core of coaching for emancipation, namely: naming oppression, renewing beliefs, and fighting back. In chapter 9, the developing actors, I present an analysis of the developmental journey of the different actors in the study, the coachees, coaches/co-researchers, and myself. I present reflections on each journey from multiple perspectives.

In the five analysis and findings chapters (5 to 9), the data from the cooperative inquiry is analysed, followed by discussions linking the presented findings to the wider research of human development in oppressive environments. Discussions

pertaining to specific findings are included in the respective sections of the chapters, and more general discussions are included at the end of every chapter.

In chapter 10, conclusion, I present a critical summary of the key findings of the study, and discuss the implications of these findings from multiple perspectives. As one of the few empirical studies in this area, this study hopes to contribute to building a theoretical and practical foundation of coaching for emancipation. The methodological implications and limitations of the study are also discussed, with recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

The main focus of this study is the theory and practice of coaching, as a human development process, in the context of oppressive environments. The operational definitions and context of the study were introduced in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I review the available literature and previous research relevant to the focus of the study. This includes literature covering three main areas that are shown in figure 2.1, namely: the dynamics of oppression, emancipation and development, the potential and limitations of coaching, and lessons from non-coaching emancipatory approaches.

The reviewed literature includes classic works providing foundations in the relevant theoretical fields, peer reviewed papers and doctoral dissertations covering the latest theories and empirical research, and books offering critical accounts of coaching and emancipatory approaches, and discussing the impact of oppression in the Middle East.

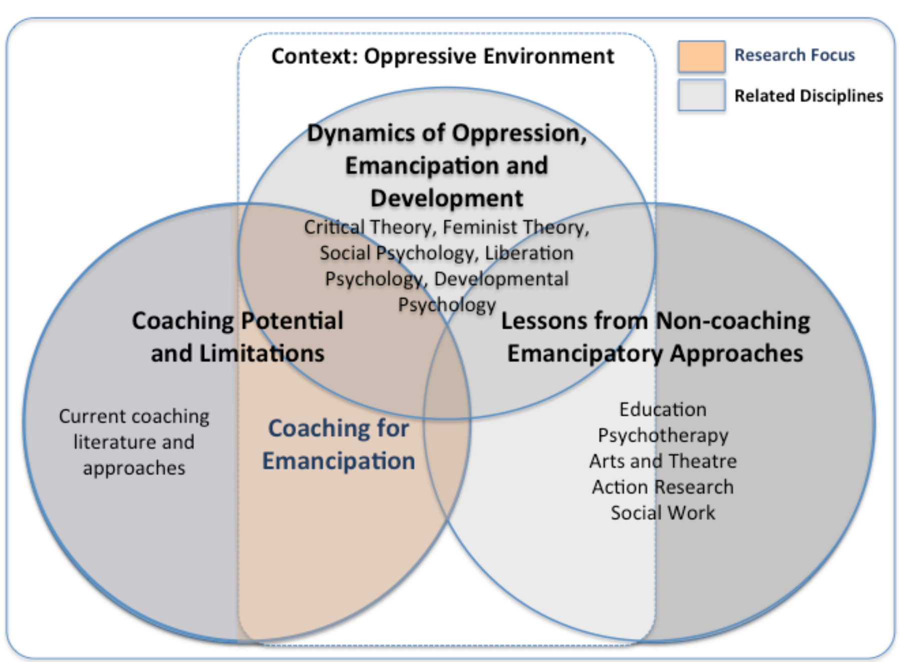


Figure 2.1 High-Level Map of the Literature Review Chapter

In the first section, I start by exploring the phenomenon of oppression, in terms of its definition, causes, symptoms and mechanisms. I organise the literature on oppression into four distinct theoretical traditions, namely critical theory, feminist theory, social psychology, and liberation psychology. These traditions are chosen

because each of them provides a different perspective on the concept of oppression, and uses different research methods and language. Critical theory considers one of its key purposes to liberate people from oppression, to the extent that Horkheimer, one of its founders, describes a theory as critical insofar as it seeks to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them (Horkheimer, 1972). Critical theory tries to link different disciplines (economic, political, social, psychological) to understand how oppressive systems are built and maintained. Feminist theory does not claim to offer a grand narrative for all kinds of oppression. It focuses on the mechanisms of discrimination and inequality but from an intentionally feminist epistemology. Similar theories are also used in other contexts like race, age and sexual orientation, both as separate topics and in combination with gender (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008). Social psychology is mainly concerned with understanding the processes through which the social context influences the individual's thinking and behaviour. It is also much more empirical in nature than the previous two traditions. Finally, liberation psychology offers a view on the psychological world of those affected by oppression, looking at their internalised beliefs, self-images and psychological wounds.

Next, I explore the concept of emancipation, discussing what previous research suggests as key ingredients for emancipatory work. Then, I present the concept of development; I discuss – through a number of developmental psychology theories – the implications of living in oppressive environments on the development of individuals, and the relationship between development and emancipation.

In the second section of the chapter, I review the literature on coaching. I begin by presenting the potential of coaching as an approach for emancipation and development. I discuss a number of specific coaching approaches that are relevant to these causes. Next, following an extensive survey of the coaching literature, I present a critique of the current coaching theories in terms of their suitability to address the issues present in oppressive environments, and show that there is not sufficient research published in this area. Considering this gap, I argue that there is a need for empirical research and practical knowledge that address the developmental and emancipatory needs of coachees living in oppressive environments.

In the third section, and because of the absence of relevant coaching research, I survey a number of relevant disciplines that have more history in addressing

issues of oppression and emancipation, including education, psychotherapy, arts and theatre, action research, and social work. I discuss the implications of the research in these disciplines on the study of coaching for emancipation.

A. Dynamics of Oppression, Emancipation, and Development

Many scholars and thinkers have studied the phenomenon of oppression from historical, political, socio-economic and psychological perspectives. The dynamics of oppression affect every aspect of the human condition (Dominelli, 2002). In this section, I focus on oppression as a socio-psychological phenomenon that affects the development of individuals. I explore prominent theories and recent research on the mechanisms and implications of oppression, the meaning and conditions of emancipation, and how development takes place in oppressive environments.

1. Oppression

Oppression is the exercise of authority or power in an unjust or cruel manner. According to Freire (1970), oppression is what happens when a social order distorts the humanity of some of its members through unjust and sometimes violent perceptions and actions. Oppression usually targets specific groups based on gender, ethnic origin, physical ability, age, wealth, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and many others (Harro, 2000b). It can also target whole nations, under dictatorship or occupation (Kucukaydin, 2010; Sharp, 2010). Oppressed groups often experience economic, social and psychological disadvantage (Abberley, 1987). Oppression is usually built on the assumption that the target group is 'different', where such difference is seen in a negative way that justifies treating the group members as inferior (Thompson, 2012). Institutionalised oppression happens when major social institutions, such as laws, customs, religion and education, work to systematically reinforce discrimination and reproduce inequities based on one's membership in targeted social identity groups (Cheney, LaFrance, & Quinteros, 2006).

Cudd (1994) defines four criteria of oppression; that it involves some sort of physical or psychological harm, that it applies to groups who are identifiable independently of their oppressed status, that some persons benefit (or think they do) from it, and that it involves some coercion or force. However, many authors argue against defining oppression as simply one group harming or being unjust to

another. For example, Dominelli (2002) argues against the emphasis on unjust treatment and the exercise of power in theorising oppression, as this view relies on a simple uni-dimensional dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed. He proposes instead that oppression should be analysed as a complete system of structural elements that continuously reproduce inequality in everyday practices. Kucukaydin (2010) also notes that oppression is multi-dimensional and multi-layered, each dimension (e.g. legal structure, religion, traditional values) has its own multiple layers (e.g. gender, age, class), and these layers and other dimensions' layers are also dynamically interrelated. Similarly, Young (2000) suggests that oppression refers to systemic constraints on groups that are not necessarily to result of the intentions of a tyrant, oppression is structural in the sense that it extends to the "vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms – in short, the normal processes of everyday life" (p. 36). She suggests that oppression has five faces, namely exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism (universalisation of dominant group culture), and violence (Young, 2000).

In order to understand the mechanisms and implications of oppression, I review the relevant literature from four theoretical traditions. I start from critical theory, as an interdisciplinary approach that is mainly concerned with clarifying the conditions of oppression and opening avenues of resistance (Bronner, 2011). Next, I explore feminist theory, as it seeks to analyse how oppression and inequality – in this case, based on gender – affects the lives of women (Jackson & Jones, 1998). In the third part of this section, I review the relevant research from the social psychology field, looking at the processes of socialisation, prejudice and passive obedience. Finally, I present the concept of internalised oppression, and discuss the psychological implications of oppression based on literature from the field of liberation psychology.

1.1. Critical Theory

Critical theory as a philosophical and analytical approach offers a deep insight into the mechanisms of oppression. The body of work of critical theory is much wider than can be presented in this section, but a brief review of some of its main

concepts is key to an exploration of oppression. Brookfield (2005) lists seven tasks that critical theory can help adult learners in achieving; challenging ideology, contesting hegemony, unmasking power, overcoming alienation, learning liberation, reclaiming reason, and learning democracy. Each task is related to a key concept or perspective that critical theory offers on how oppression and oppressive environments are maintained. These key concepts are discussed below in the same order. Although this is only one way of organising the different ideas of critical theory, I believe that organising them around adult learning (or counter-learning) tasks is the most relevant way to the focus of this study.

Ideology is defined as the set of ideas and beliefs that help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group (Eagleton, 2007). It is the system of beliefs that serve to maintain oppression and inequity as a normal state (Brookfield, 2005). The inquiry into how ideology governs and reproduces the social phenomena is covered in the works of Marx and Engels (1970), Horkheimer and Adorno (1973), and others. A key task to help people free themselves from social oppression is uncovering and challenging the dominant ideology.

Gramsci (1988) acknowledges the centrality of ideology, and argues that its power is magnified through the concept of hegemony; he describes how people learn the values that make them accept and defend an unjust social order, not only as natural, but also as desirable. For example, a mother would happily accept a socially constructed view of her home duties as it fits with the positive association she has learned about the value of sacrifice. Cudd (1994) argues that people may choose an oppressive social condition, not only because of ideology and hegemony, but also because they are coerced to do so by the power of the limited choices they are allowed to choose from. The idea of limited choices also relates to what Smail (2001) calls the power horizon; where people can only see the individual or direct sphere of factors affecting their choices and conditions, without realising the wider spheres of power that are kept invisible.

Power is another core concept in critical theory, extensively discussed in the works of Foucault (1986). In his analysis, he argues that power is always present in all situations and interactions, sometimes clear and visible, and sometimes subtle and hidden. Power is present in organisational hierarchies, peer expectations, and is built from the ground up in everyday practices and behaviours. Feminists build on the ideas of Foucault and conceptualise power as a capacity for exercising

agency within specific contexts. In this sense, power can be used to achieve both positive and negative ends (Dominelli, 2002). Similarly, Welman and Bachkirova (2010) discuss power in the coaching relationship; they argue that power is inherent in the coaching relationship, and that it can be used with or without awareness, as a mean of domination or empowerment. They call for power to be examined and researched in the context of coaching, as the current literature offers a limited account of how it is exercised and experienced.

Oppressive structures create situations where their outcomes often contribute to the maintenance of the same structures that created them. An example of such outcomes is the phenomenon of objectification or alienation. Alienation was proposed by Marx and Engels (1970) from the perspective of the worker who becomes alienated from his/her creativity and identity, acting only as a means of production. Fromm (1942), building on the ideas of Marx, extends his analysis of alienation from the world of work to many aspects of public and private lives, where the full energy is dedicated to the making and the consumption of things. Fromm (1942) argues that people escape from the challenging demands of freedom into either submission to a leader or an alienated state that he calls automaton conformity, a desire to think and act as part of an anonymous mass. In this state, people are estranged from their identity and ability to think freely and critically, and hence unable to challenge the conditions that cause their alienation (Brookfield, 2005).

Another mechanism for maintaining the social condition is one dimensional thought, presented by Marcuse (1991). He explains how the whole experience of the individual, including needs, identity, and emotions, is transformed into a commodity; something to be acquired, owned, and consumed. This is achieved through an over-emphasis on making the current system work better. People are taught to seek improvement from within the social system rather than to question it. In a coaching context, Marcuse's work can be seen as a critique of performance and goal-oriented coaching, in the sense that it limits the scope of change to small steps in a specific context, thus implicitly validating the overall system by working within its boundaries.

One of the most relevant concepts to coaching in critical theory is the invasion of the *lifeworld*, presented by Habermas (1987b). The web of presuppositions, assumptions, language and meanings is invaded by unquestioned socialised

cultural knowledge. This unquestioned frame is at the heart of Mezirow's (1981) theory of transformative learning as will be discussed in a later section. For Habermas, people may become aware of their false knowledge or distorted assumptions when they are confronted with a particular situation that demands action (Brookfield, 2005). In a coaching context, this opportunity is almost always present in the coaching discussion.

1.2. Feminist Theory

Feminism has multiple streams; liberal feminism focuses on opposing the socialisation of gender roles and patriarchal ideologies and calling for equal rights, radical feminism focuses on fighting sexism and challenging the patriarchal social order, cultural feminism argues for a review of culture to include the perspectives and qualities of women (Flanagan, 2011). An important concept is that the analysis of women's conditions requires theories that are intentionally gendered, rather than borrowed from the male's fights against oppression (Du Toit & Sim, 2010). A similar call exists within feminism between western and African feminist approaches (Mushibwe, 2009). This idea is important to consider when applying models about oppression into other contexts.

One of the core ideas of feminism is that gender roles are constructed and can therefore be changed. Women need to be reminded that gender 'reality' is not fixed and can be reconstructed (Du Toit & Sim, 2010). Another key idea is consciousness-raising; it defines a key trait in feminism as opposed to other approaches, in that it does not start by an analysis of society, but by giving voice to the oppressed and bringing forward their lived narratives. The feminist slogan of "personal is political" expresses this primacy of the personal (Hart, 1990), it seeks to politicise the personal, to draw attention to the political nature of the oppression of women, and to personalise the personal, to engage women in the collective political struggle for equality and equal rights (Thompson, 2012).

Feminist theory also examines the complex relationship between gender and language, and how stereotypes of femininity play a major role in using and interpreting language. Mills (2008) reviews the body of research analysing how women speak: from studies that look at the connection between the social and political oppression of women and their linguistic behaviour, to studies suggesting an intertwined relation between gender, race, class and many other factors.

When women use what seems to be a “powerless” language, this is partially due to their unfavourable position in the power relations, but is also related to the cultural meaning of speaking “like a woman”. In the discourse of gender, as in other human dimensions, inequality exists in the interplay between sameness and difference. Lorber (2000) discusses how society teaches individuals to be the same as their group, and then structures itself on the basis of differences between each group, while Hughes (2002) discusses the different feminist theories, arguing from one side that women are the same as men, and from the other side that difference itself is to be valued, be it between men and women, between different women groups, or within the same group.

Feminist theory has a mixed response to critical theory; some feminist theorists critique the work of the Frankfurt school for reflecting a male perspective of the world as a place of work, ignoring the world of and issues of women, overlooking the strong relation between capitalism and patriarchy (Hartmann, 1995), and for its emphasis on rationality as opposed to feminist epistemologies and its reflection of the male privilege in theorising (Luke, 1992). Other theorists build on critical theory, use some of its concepts, and re-interpret them in a gendered form of criticality (Brookfield, 2005). The critical discourse between and within theories is important for evolving our understanding of oppression, and it serves as a call for approaches that draw on multiple theories, and for studies that explore the phenomenon of oppression from multiple perspectives.

1.3. Contributions from Social Psychology

Social psychology studies how the social situation affects how we view and affect one another: it seeks to understand how social thinking, influence, and relations affect the way people think and behave in a given situation (Myers, 2012). Social psychology theories are often based on empirical evidence, compared to the more conceptual analysis of critical theory. Instead of relying on global theories to explain behaviour, social psychology utilizes a range of specific theories for various kinds of phenomena. In this section, I focus on three concepts in the literature that are relevant to the understanding of the dynamics of oppression, namely socialisation, prejudice, and passive obedience.

The first concept to examine is the process of socialisation, as it may offer a way to explain what happens to people who grow in oppressive environments. Social

constructivists assert that knowledge construction is a social product that evolves through discourse and is influenced by cultural and historical factors (Prawat & Floden, 1994). But this processes goes both ways, as people contribute to the creation of cultural processes and cultural processes contribute to the creation of people (Rogoff, 2003). Harro (2000b) argues that we get socialised to playing the roles prescribed by our social identities. This process is pervasive, consistent, and self-generating. She suggests a model to explain how this process starts from birth, through people we trust and love, and how it is reinforced through our interactions with the social world (e.g. schools, places of worship). People who try to contradict the norm are penalised, and people who conform are considered normal. By staying in the circle of socialisation, social identities are reinforced even further, and roles are perpetuated to the socialisation of others. For example, Mushibwe (2009), in an ethnographic study of the Tumbuka people of Zambia, shows how cultural traditions are transferred from one generation to the other, through parents, schools and initiation teachings. She argues that these traditions operate on a discriminatory basis with girls/women given a low social status that supports, reinforces and maintains patriarchy as the norm. The cultural system perpetuates tendencies of inequality, subordination and oppression of women, and makes them internalise such a structure as normal. Those who do not conform to the traditional teachings are subject to loss of respect, denouncement, dishonour, poor reputation, and instant punishment.

A second area of interest is the phenomena of prejudice and stereotypes. They are tightly linked to oppression in two ways, the most evident one is linked to how oppressors view the oppressed as somewhat inferior, for example Bar-Tal (2000), drawing on several empirical studies, examines what he calls delegitimising beliefs, where one social group attributes extremely negative characteristics to another group, with the purpose of excluding it from acceptable human groups and denying it humanity. These beliefs serve to justify aggression and to provide the in-group with a sense of uniformity and superiority. The second way stereotypes are linked to oppression is in terms of how the oppressed are affected by stereotypic views associated with their social group. Plous (2003) presents a large number of empirical studies showing that stereotypes have a powerful impact on perceptions, behaviour and performance. When stereotypic representations are activated, relevant behaviour also becomes activated, so

people act in a way similar to the stereotypical claim. A number of tests on priming have shown how people even outside a social group (e.g. young students primed with images relating to old age) act according to their perception of that social group (Kawakami, Young, & Dovidio, 2002). Steele (1997) discusses how people who are stereotyped face the burden of the threat that their behaviour will confirm a negative stereotype. It has been proven that stereotype threat can create anxiety and hamper performance. Once learned, stereotypes can become self-perpetuating, as individuals behave in ways that elicit reactions and reinforce stereotypical perceptions (for example, self-objectification or hostility), also when stereotyped individuals are made to feel self-conscious or inadequate. Even subliminal priming can lead to self-perpetuating stereotypes (Plous, 2003).

The third concept that needs to be considered is the concept of passive obedience. Several famous experiments have shown how the social situation can make people behave as oppressors (Milgram, 1974) or careless bystanders (Darley & Batson, 1973). On the other side, consistent oppressive situations also force people to withdraw to a state of passive obedience. Zimbardo (2008) notes from the records of the Stanford prison experiment that 'prisoners' showed signs of resistance in the first few days, they also tended to "positively individuate others, asked questions of them, gave information to them, and rarely showed the negative behaviour toward others that became typical of the dominating guards" (p. 210). As the days went on, and the 'guards' escalated their harassment of the prisoners, the prisoners started to "behave less and less over time. There was a general decrease across all behavioural categories over time. They did little initiating, simply becoming increasingly passive as the days and nights moved numbingly on" (p. 210). This behavioural withdrawal may be important to consider in the context of oppressive environments.

The above concepts of social reality and stereotypes are also relevant to the coaching process. Brockbank and McGill (2012) argue that the learning that occurs in coaching is socially constructed, through the coaching discourse but also by the interaction of the coach and learner with their environments. Hence, it is important to be aware of how the prevailing discourse of the coachee's social context and taken-for-granted assumptions in this context are affecting the coaching discourse. Flaherty (2005) argues that social identity presents an obstacle to coaching. He defines social identity as how the person is known by

people around her and the story she tells about herself. He argues that people are likely to interact with us in a way that encourages us to respond in an anticipated ways. When we do not, often the response will be surprise, questioning change, or voicing a negative judgment. Moreover, because our social identity is so embedded in our personal narrative, we often lose the distinction between reality and how it fits into our story about ourselves.

1.4. Internalised Oppression and Psychological Wounds

In the previous sections, I have reviewed the main theories covering the mechanisms of social oppression, in terms of how it regenerates its presence in the social systems, and how it shapes the perceptions and behaviours of individuals. In this section, I focus on the internal dynamics of people living in oppressive environments. I start by exploring the concept of internalised oppression, and then present the available research on the psychological wounds generated by oppression.

Pheterson (1986) defines internalised oppression as “the incorporation and acceptance by individuals within an oppressed group of the prejudices against them within the dominant society. Internalised oppression is likely to consist of self-hatred, self-concealment, fear of violence, and feelings of inferiority, resignation, isolation, powerlessness, and gratefulness for being allowed to survive. Internalised oppression is the mechanism within an oppressive system for perpetuating domination not only by external controls but also by building subservience into the minds of the oppressed groups” (p. 148). Freire (1970) offers a deep account of the dynamics of oppression, before and after external oppression has been lifted. He argues that the oppressed suffer, in their innermost being, from the duality of wanting freedom but fearing it, “they are one at the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized” (p. 30). It is not uncommon that the oppressed become oppressors once they have gained liberation from their original perpetrators.

Fanon (1967) describes how in post-colonial contexts, oppressive roles originally played by the occupiers are quickly assumed by members of the colonised communities. Said (2003) describes the same phenomenon in terms of how the western claims of superiority are still maintained and accepted in the orient even after years of the end of occupation. Bulhan (2004), building on the work of

Fanon, notes: “the institutionalization of oppression in daily living also entails an internalisation of the oppressor's values, norms, and prohibitions. Internalised oppression is most resistant to change, since this would require a battle on two fronts: the oppressor within and the oppressor without” (p. 123). From another perspective, Žižek (2001), drawing on the ideas of Jacques Lacan, argues that people may struggle to let go of their oppression, because they have emotionally invested in it a lot over the years. Gradually, the oppressive condition becomes an integral part of their identity. He argues that, because of the energy tied to their symptoms, they may come to enjoy them. Butler (2000) notes: “I believe that Laclau, Žižek and I agree on this point. The salience of psychoanalysis comes into view when we consider how it is that those who are oppressed by certain operations of power also come to be invested in that oppression, and how, in fact, their very self-definition becomes bound up with the terms by which they are regulated, marginalized, or erased from the sphere of cultural life” (p. 157).

Hegazy (2013), writing about the Arab world, presents a detailed account of the psychology of the oppressed. He suggests that the oppressed individual suffers from a depreciating self-regard, living in a continuous state of fear and a feeling of loss of control over his/her life; he/she learns to admire and submit to the idealised image of the oppressor. The oppressed amplifies the wounds of the past, feels helpless towards the present, and sees no future. In other phases, the oppressed may become aggressive, blaming and punishing others for his/her conditions. Hegazy suggests that the cognitive and emotional processes of the oppressed are disturbed and affected by the experience of extended oppression. He lists a number of defense mechanisms that are commonly used in oppressed societies, such as self-retreat, identification with the oppressor, superstitious beliefs, and violence.

The study of the psychological wounds of oppression is part of the emerging stream of liberation psychology. Watkins and Shulman (2008) draw from a number of disciplines, including the work of Martín-Baró, and the concepts of depth psychology, to analyse the symptoms of victims, bystanders and perpetrators. Of special relevance to living in oppressive environments are twelve psychic wounds of bystanding: Severing of the self, preoccupation with personal survival and success, comparative neurosis, loneliness, narcissism, degrading of others, fear of oneself, empty self, replacement of being with having, greed and

false feeling of entitlement, psychic numbing, and an obsessive compulsive rehearsal of violence.

The literature in this section emphasises the centrality of oppression to the experience of people living in its context, and the need for human development approaches to incorporate an understanding of oppression in their frameworks, in order to be able to deal with its consequences. The literature so far draws a dark picture of an all-pervasive internal and external structure that is not easily challenged. I now turn to examine the literature on the antithetical concept of oppression: the concept of emancipation.

2. Emancipation

Despite the seemingly pervasive nature of oppression, and the pessimism of some of the works reviewed in the previous part, there is a general consensus by most writers that the fight for emancipation is pervasive. Freire (1994) establishes this point in his later book titled “pedagogy of hope”, but it is from his earliest works that he asserts the vocation of all human beings to become more fully human; “This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well” (Freire, 1970). Emancipation can be described from a political or social point of view, providing equal rights for disenfranchised groups. For the purpose of this study, emancipation is defined as **the process of restoring one’s humanity through liberating oneself from the conditions and consequences of oppression**. Within this context, emancipation can be seen from three perspectives, as a restoration of the basic humanness features distorted by oppression, a process of resistance, or a process of development that is inherently liberating. I present the first and second perspectives in the current section, and then discuss the developmental view in the following section.

Haslam (2006) argues that any understanding of dehumanisation must proceed from a clear sense of what is being denied to the other, namely humanness. However, a clear analysis of humanness has rarely been offered. Haslam (2006) proposes that a definition of humanness includes two distinct dimensions; first *Uniquely Human* characteristics, defined as not applying to other species, these include civility, refinement, moral sensibility, rationality, and maturity. The second dimension is *Human Nature*, defined as what are fundamental aspects of how we

understand humanity; these include emotional responsiveness, interpersonal warmth, cognitive openness, agency, and depth. In this framework, Haslam is mainly concerned with defining what gets denied in a process of dehumanisation, through creating a situation where an individual or a group is perceived and treated as an animal or an object.

Humanistic psychology offers another perspective on what may be sought when doing emancipatory work; Rogers (1961) describes the characteristics of the fully functional person as: a growing openness to experience, an increasingly existential lifestyle (living each moment fully), increasing organismic trust (trusting own judgment without relying on existing codes and social norms), freedom of choice, creativity; reliability and constructiveness, and a rich full life (the experience of joy and pain, love and heartbreak, and fear and courage more intensely). It can be argued that this kind of human experience sits on the other extreme of the characteristics of living in oppressive conditions. Rogers argues that becoming fully human involves the stretching and growing of becoming more and more of one's potentialities; it involves the courage to be. Frankl (1964) describes a journey of restoring meaning and purpose, despite external oppression, and through suffering, work and love. He emphasises the centrality of awareness to the creation of possibilities for freedom, and the importance of the person accepts his/her freedom and responsibility as an author of his/her own life. These views are not however without limitations, as they mainly focus only on the individual without reference to how this individual engages with others and the society.

The second way to define emancipation is as a process of resistance. Brookfield (2005), drawing on a number of critical theorists, argues that oppression has in its heart the possibility of resistance, so ideology is continually being contested and redefined, hegemony is never either total or exclusive, power can be used both by and against the oppressor, one dimensional reality can be escaped, and taken-for-granted assumptions can be exposed and critically reflected upon. At the heart of this process of liberation is learning (Brookfield, 2005), or rather, as Kucukaydin (2010) suggests, counter-learning (learning to challenge the ideas of the oppressive system). Kucukaydin (2010) argues that under oppressive conditions, some learn to be conformist, silent, or obedient, others resist the reality that is imposed by the oppressive system and construct their own reality; they counter-

learn, by recognizing the oppressive systems and learning how to challenge them. As a case in point, Kucukaydin presents a narrative of Zelo, a poor Kurdish woman who has lived through multiple dimensions of oppression. She has been socialised to her gender role, has been objectified, and has learned the hegemony of the poor and the culture of silence. However, she has also learned to develop her consciousness, to find her self-confidence, to problematize and politicise her conditions, and to negate the dominant discourse. She has even learned to conceptualise reality, despite being an illiterate for most of her life. Brooks (2000) lists a number of moves that might take place as part of women's learning and personal growth, including moving from alienation to agency, confronting authority, developing awareness of cultural, historical, and political structures of marginality, and gaining personal power through supportive relationships.

Harro (2000a) presents the cycle of liberation as a counter-cycle to the process of socialisation; it starts from a critical incident that acts like a wake-up call, goes through getting ready, reaching out to others, organising, then creating change and maintaining it. It can be argued that the first step is what brings many people to coaching. The second step 'getting ready' includes elements that can be part of the coaching process such as empowerment of the self, dismantling dysfunctional beliefs and internalised oppression, and gaining inspiration and authenticity. Co-counselling, developed by Jackins in the 1950s suggests that in order to attain complete liberation two processes are necessary: effective organized social action and struggle, and discharge and re-evaluation to free each individual from his or her individual distress patterns. Oppressed groups must consistently strive for unity within the group around a clear-cut program of goals and actions, and unity and mutual support with every other oppressed group (Jackins, 1974).

The third way to understand emancipation is as a process of development that is inherently liberating. Marshall (2009) argues that the structures and stages outlined by developmental theories may be seen as roadmaps to liberation. They help reveal the paths through which individuals, each in their own unique way, move towards the fulfillment of their own potentials. It can be argued that higher levels of development include the same features that are required for emancipation. It is also important to understand how the development of individuals is affected by the experience of oppression. A review of the key theories of development is presented in the following section.

3. Development

The concept of development is widely researched and also widely contested, literature is filled with discussions on whether development is just another word for change or a directional movement to perfection, whether it is linear, spiral or sporadic, whether it is biologically, psychologically, or socially driven, whether it is continuous or has discrete stages, and whether the concept of development itself is socially constructed to reflect a prevailing discourse (Merriam et al., 2007; Sugarman, 2000; Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

In this section, I present a number of theories from the field of adult development psychology, and explore their possible implications in the context of oppression. However, there is no adequate research on the impact of living in oppressive environments on the development of individuals. I begin by presenting a number of constructive-developmental theories. Next, I extend the exploration to include theories of moral development and identity development. In each of these categories, I also discuss the theories proposing different developmental frameworks for women.

3.1. Constructive-Developmental Theories

From a constructive-developmental point of view, development describes the evolving self or ego and its progressive reorganisation and meaning-making in response to its changing experience with the world (Loevinger, 1987). It assumes an ongoing process in which meaning systems evolve over time, both as a natural unfolding as well as in response to the limitations of existing ways of making meaning (McCauley et al., 2006). It is a process of differentiation and integration. Constructive-developmental theories build on the early work of Piaget (1969), and benefit from the significant contributions of Loevinger (1987), Torbert (2004), Kegan (1982) and others. It is possible, using these theories, to explore how living in oppressive environments has an impact on the developmental level of the individual, in terms of what is conceptualised and evaluated as truth, and how the process of knowing takes place (Helsing, Drago-Severson, & Kegan, 2004).

One of the most acknowledged models of development is Kegan's (1982, 1994) model of orders of consciousness. Each order of consciousness represents a fundamental transformation in the way that we know the world. The ways of knowing that we are subject to in one stage become object to us in the following

one. For example, a person’s social perceptions at a point are the person’s subject, and at more developed point an object to the person’s consciousness. This concept of subject/object is very relevant to oppressive environments where objectification is a clear symptom; people become the ‘things’ (e.g. needs, beliefs, roles) they should be free to own, change or dispose of. Kegan’s model is also almost unique in terms of not only explaining the stages of development, but also analysing the processes and the price of transformation, and acknowledging the social context of the individual and how it affects development. This may be particularly important for a model of coaching in oppressive environments.

Another dimension of development is how people evaluate information and make decisions in the face of uncertainty. In the model developed by William Perry, students proceed from blind acceptance of authority, through gradual acceptance of multiplicity of views to the commitment in the face of uncertainty (Felder & Brent, 2004). Building on the work of Perry, King and Kitchener (1994) defined a model of reflective judgment with seven levels each representing a view of reality and epistemology. The lower levels are more inclined towards absolute truth and trust in authority while the higher ones emphasise context and judgment.

Looking at the gender dimension, Belenky et al. (1997) defined a five levels model for women’s ways of knowing. The first level, ‘*Silence*’, is characterized by isolation, helplessness, and complete surrender of power to authorities. The fifth level, ‘*Constructed Knowing*’, integrates subjective and objective sources of knowledge and sees all knowledge as contextual. Baxter Magolda (2004; 2001) defined a model of epistemological reflection that combines development and gender-related ways of knowing. Her model moves from a belief in absolute truth and reliance on authority, to a belief in contextual truth and responsibility for making judgements. Methods of assessing an individual’s level of development have been developed for each of these models.

Basseches (2005) argues that, beyond Piaget’s formal reasoning, dialectical thinking is a sign of intellectual development. Dialectical thinking is measured in terms of the ability to identify truth as an on-going process of change, integration, and differentiation, and that everything exists in relation to other things. It emphasises change, wholeness and relationships. Dialectical thinking is key to understand the historical and dynamic process of one’s social condition. Inglis and Steele (2005) argue that complexity intelligence is needed to meet the challenges

of the prevailing life conditions. Complexity intelligence integrates reasoning capacity, emotional capacity, and social cognition.

Many of the above models have developed a measurement instrument, to assess the stage of development of individuals. There are however very few studies that uses these measures in the context of oppressive conditions. For example, Bridwell (2013) uses constructive-developmental tests to examine transformative learning among six low-income and homeless women of colour pursuing education in a shelter-based literacy program, and shows that despite their conditions, the women exhibited transformative learning and growth toward more complex epistemological perspectives. Another example is the study by Seaton (2010), where the influence of cognitive development in the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological well-being was measured on a sample of African American adolescents. The results suggested that perceptions of institutional racism were more harmful for the self-esteem of pre-formal reasoning youth than that of formal reasoning youth. In other words, less cognitively developed individuals were more vulnerable to the negative psychological effects of perceived racism.

However, constructive-developmental theories are also subject to multiple critiques that need to be considered. First, most of the adult development research has largely privileged learners with economic and educational advantages (Drago-Severson, 2004), leaving a gap in our understanding of the development of the unprivileged. Developmental models are sometimes accused of being built on assumptions of equal access to resources, which discounts the realities of many adults (Belenky & Stanton, 2000). Another critique is related to the focus of developmental theories on cognitive processes, as opposed to affective, interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects, and the impact of the social world on the person's development (De Mul, 1997), a critique that Kegan (1982) and Loevinger (1987) tried to address in their models. From a more philosophical perspective, the concept of development itself needs to be critically understood. Many authors have stressed on the idea that development does not necessarily follow a linear path towards something 'better' (De Mul & Korthals, 1997). While this is not an idea that many developmental psychologists would defend, the concept of stages provides a sense of determinism, as if it must be the case that what comes later would be better (van Haaften, 1997), it also presents itself as a

prerequisite for liberation; for example, Merriam (2004) observes that all cognitive development models assume that being able to critically reflect requires one to be at the more developed stages. This makes it hard to understand how oppressed people can practice critical reflection to be able to resist the conditions that are preventing them from developing into the higher stages.

The above concerns apply in varying degrees to other developmental domains, like moral and identity development theories discussed below. There are also specific concerns related to the use of developmental measurement instruments in the context of coaching, which I discuss in chapter four. Meanwhile, I believe that a basic awareness of the different developmental models and access to research linking development to oppression and emancipation are important aspects of the development of emancipatory coaches.

3.2. Moral Development

In the last 100 years, psychologists and social scientists have explored the various meanings of moral development. Their different views offer a broad spectrum of features that are related to the definition of moral experience. Some of these features, as reviewed by Sherblom (2012), are: the social sense of community (Baldwin), the formation of conscience (Freud), the understanding of and respect for systems of rules (Piaget), the perception of universal good (Erikson), and the ability to understand and integrate diverse points of view on a moral conflict situation (Kohlberg).

What most of these diverse definitions agree on, is the close relation between the moral and the social experience. As Durkheim (2002) notes: "A moral system is built up by the same society whose structure is thus faithfully reflected in it. It is quite the same with what we call the moral individual" (p. 87). Hence, it is essential for an understanding of the dynamics of oppressive environments to explore how the social experience of the individuals in these environments affects their moral development, and how this in turn may affect the way they make choices in morally conflicting situations, which are abundant in the context of oppression.

Kohlberg (1981) argues that people move through three levels (six stages) of moral development. From obedience and instrumentalism, through interpersonal and social conformity, towards social conscience and universal ethics. Gilligan (1982) offers a critique of Kohlberg's model, on the basis that it is based on data

collected on men and that describes the moral development of men in one social setting. She suggests a better representation of women's moral development in a model that goes from care for survival, through care for others, to care for integrity. Using Gilligan's methods, and building on the research that grew out of the Gilligan-Kohlberg debate on moral development, Caolo (2010) studied the case of Connie, a 20 year old victim/survivor of chronic sexual and physical abuse, who is shown to be suffering from severe issues in her ability to develop and sustain psychologically healthy relationships because of her experiences.

Turiel argues that people learn, through their development, to differentiate between moral rules and social conventions, and to differentiate and negotiate between their personal and social domains (ÇAm, ÇAvdar, SeydooĞUllari, & ÇOk, 2012). According to Turiel (1983), moral rules are held to have an objective, prescriptive force; they are not dependent on the authority of any individual or institution, and violations of such rules involve a victim who has been harmed, whose rights have been violated, or who has been subject to an injustice. It can be argued that an increased delineation between social conventions and moral rules may change a person's position as opposed to oppression.

3.3. Identity Development

Identity development is conceptualised as the process of integrating and expanding one's sense of self (Myers et al., 1991). Many researchers have tried to develop models for the identity development of specific groups. For example, Cross (1978) developed a model for Black identity development, or what he calls "the process of becoming Black", the model is built in developmental stages starting with pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalisation. The final stage is one of inner peace and openness to the racial identity. Race and ethnic identity development models are abundant. There are also developmental models for white identity development, white-racial identity development (leading to abandoning racism and committing to its eradication), and bi-racial identity development (Merriam et al., 2007). Beyond race, there are a number of models that focus on the identity development of women. For example, Downing and Roush (1985) created a model that explores feminist identity development; they suggest that development takes place over five phases: passive acceptance, revelation, embeddedness–emanation, synthesis, and active commitment. There

are other studies that look at the sexual identity development of gays and lesbians. For example, Cass (1979, 1984) developed a model for homosexual identity formation; she suggests that the homosexual person moves through stages of confusion, comparison, tolerance, acceptance, pride and finally synthesis of the sexual identity into one's self.

Myers et al. (1991) suggest that these models describe a similar developmental process in which individuals progressively experience (a) denial, devaluation, or lack of awareness of their oppressed identity; (b) questioning of their oppressed identity; (c) immersion in the oppressed subculture; (d) realisation of the limitations of a devalued sense of self; and (e) integration of the oppressed part of self into their whole self-identity. Atkinson et al. (1993) note that there are many parallels across identity development models, because the experience of oppression serves as a unifying factor. In their model of Minority Identity Development (MID), they try to combine the experience of oppression across race, sex, and sexual orientation. MID stages include conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, and synergistic articulation and awareness.

Myers et al. (1991) report that few of the identity development models have been systematically developed, and even fewer have been empirically validated. Other critique is that these models only consider how individuals change as reactions to their environment, without considering how they can contribute in changing it, also that these models do not consider multiple oppressions and multiple identities. Myers (1993) presents what she labels optimal theory, and applies it to the creation of the Self Identity Development Model of Oppressed People (SIDMOP). Optimal theory proposes that Oppression creates a suboptimal conceptual system that is self-alienating; it yields a fragmented sense of self, based on devaluation by self and others. All people who adopt the system are affected by it and have a difficulty developing a positive identity. This removes the dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed as both are part of the conceptual system. SIDMOP is based on a stage model in seven stages: Absence of conscious awareness, individuation (the world is the way it is), dissonance, immersion, internalisation, integration, and transformation.

Summary of section A

The literature reviewed in the first section of this chapter has focused on the foundational concepts relevant to the study. As summarised in figure 2.2, Oppressive systems are maintained through multiple social and psychological processes that lead to the internalisation of oppressive beliefs, and acceptance of oppressive conditions. Although oppressive systems are described as pervasive, the literature also suggests the persistent hope and possibility for emancipation. Emancipation can be seen from three perspectives, as restoring one's humanity, as a process of resistance, and as a process of development. The process of supporting emancipation is suggested to include elements such as empowerment, consciousness-raising, and transformation of dysfunctional beliefs.

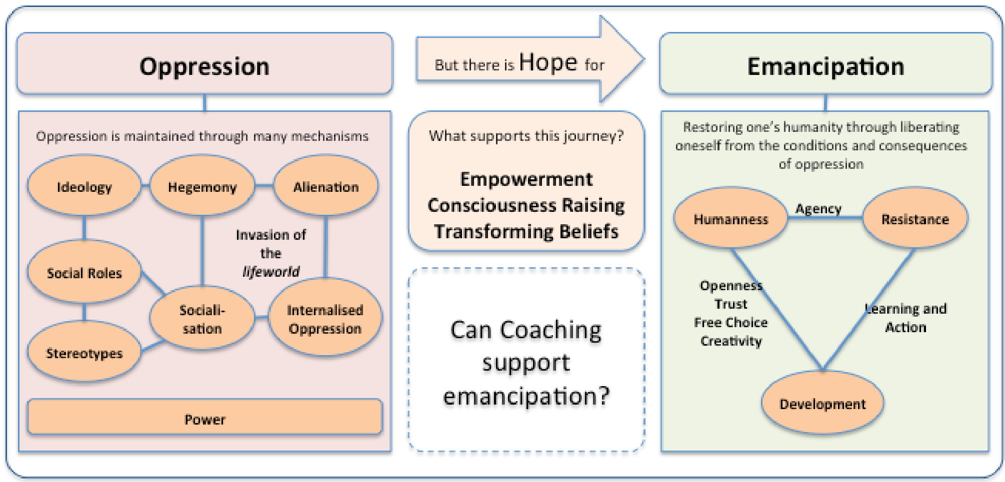


Figure 2.2 Possible role of coaching in supporting emancipation

Meanwhile, the review of the literature has shown a number of gaps; first, conceptual models may benefit from more empirical research; second, much of the literature is focused on one aspect of oppression rather than the experience of living in environments where multiple levels of oppression overlap; third, much of the research is done in the western world, which may not be representative of how people deal with oppressive challenges in other contexts; and fourth, many of the presented models aim to understand and analyse the dynamics of oppression rather than the dynamics of intervening in the oppressive systems to support emancipation. The latter gap drives the question of whether coaching can be used as an emancipatory approach, which will be discussed in the next section as I review the literature on coaching.

B. Coaching potential and limitations

The aim of this section is to explore coaching as an emancipatory and developmental approach in oppressive environments. I provided in the previous chapter a working definition of coaching as it is used in this study. In this section, I review the current coaching research, theories and approaches, providing a critical evaluation of their potential and limitations. The survey of coaching research is based on a search in several databases (Academic search complete, Business source complete, Educational research complete, PsycINFO, and the British library) for combinations of "*coaching*" and any of the following keywords: "*oppression, emancipation, development, social, political, cultural, critical, power, empowerment, discrimination, diversity, prejudice, violence*". The search was repeated several times until January 2014. In addition, all 634 scholarly coaching publications from 1937 to the 2010 were surveyed (Grant, 2011).

1. The potential of coaching

Over the past decade, coaching has established itself as a fast growing approach for learning and human development (Passmore, 2008). Surveys conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) have reported coaching as wide spread in surveyed organisations (over 80%), and that it is seen to be one of the most effective learning and development practices (CIPD, 2011). A study by the International Coach Federation (ICF) estimated around 47,500 professional coaches working in 117 countries around the world, with around $2 Billion in annual revenue (ICF, 2012). From a research point of view, peer reviewed papers and doctoral research on coaching grew from a total of 93 between 1937 and 1999, to 335 between 2000 and 2007 (Turner, 2010). A simple search for coaching books on *amazon.co.uk* in October 2013 returned 21,021 records (This includes "sports coaching" which generates 9,595 records in a similar search).

One of the main characteristics of coaching, as opposed to other human development interventions, is that it is participatory in nature; equality between coach and client is a core principle (Rogers, 2008). There is a general consensus that coaching is non-directive (Ives, 2008). Coaches are not expected to be more experienced or qualified than their coachees (CIPD, 2004), and coachees are assumed not to be in a mentally vulnerable state (Rogers, 2008). Hence, coaching can be seen as a more collaborative and facilitative relationship between coach

and coachee (Grant, 2003). Wilson (2007) argues that one of the core principles of coaching is to support self-responsibility and ownership of one's life. It is important to note that these principles are not always adhered to (Parsloe & Wray, 2000); boundaries between coaching and counselling are sometimes crossed (Maxwell, 2009), coaches are expected – in some cultures – to be wiser and to give advice (Nangalia & Nangalia, 2010), and power issues do exist in the coaching relationship (Welman & Bachkirova, 2010). Nevertheless, the general assumptions about coaching suggest that it may provide the right environment for fostering empowerment.

Another important aspect of coaching is its capacity to support critical reflection. Critical reflection is considered as a key enabler for emancipatory learning (Mezirow & Associates, 1990a). Cox (2012) argues that coaching creates the space for reflective learning; she suggests that "one of the fundamental, but usually unspoken, aims of coaching is to facilitate clients to become critical" (p. 91). Brookfield (1991) notes that becoming critical involves increased awareness of the assumptions under which we and others think and act, questioning these assumptions and being ready to act differently based on that critical questioning, critical thinking also involves becoming aware of the context in which we think and act. Kristal (2009) suggests that the change happening in coaching is often the result of the process of critical reflection, that may result in either action or a new frame of reference. Brockbank and McGill (2006) argue that critical reflection in coaching helps to transform the client by exposing power relations, challenging what is deemed natural, accepting the reality of conflict through dialogue, and appreciating the power of language and the prevailing discourse.

A third aspect of coaching is flexibility. Coaching is often critiqued for being unregulated and unstandardised, but it is also this fact that makes it open and adaptable to serve different purposes. Western (2012) describes coaching as "a vital and dynamic space that enables creativity to emerge, whereas other 'helping relationships' are often saddled with more restrictive cultures" (p.10). In the dynamic and often chaotic context of oppressive environments, flexibility and adaptability can become key success factors.

Coaching is characterised by its participatory and empowering nature, its potential to support critical reflection, and its flexibility and adaptability. These features make it a candidate approach for tackling problems that stem from

oppression. Coaching literature includes many theoretical approaches, processes, and methods that are applied to different genres and contexts (Bachkirova et al., 2010). Many of these approaches can inform parts of a model of *coaching for emancipation*. For example, approaches like cognitive, gestalt, or narrative coaching and processes like contracting and building rapport remain generally relevant regardless of the genre of coaching and the context of application. Considering the wide range of coaching approaches, I only focus here on the ones that are most directly relevant to the scope of this study.

Hall and Duval (2004) identify that coaching happens in different domains: performance (incremental improvement in skills & actions), developmental (evolutionary progression in thoughts, feelings & beliefs), and transformational (revolutionary changes in the frames of mind). Similar domains are arranged in a linear continuum by Hawkins and Smith (2006). Brockbank and McGill (2006) propose a model of four types of coaching; a functionalist (akin to performance coaching), engagement (a humanistic version of the former), revolutionary (transforming individuals to fit a predefined ideology), and evolutionary (transformative learning). Coaching for emancipation has common elements with developmental and transformative coaching.

Developmental coaching aims at supporting the coachees to make the changes necessary to grow and mature (Cox & Jackson, 2010). It follows that the goal of developmental coaching is the person being coached rather than an external achievement or a behavioural change. Developmental coaching is grounded in the development theories discussed in the previous section of this chapter. A key assumption in developmental coaching is that people have a tendency for development, and that development is more of a reflection of what happens as a reaction to the changing environment, than it is a purposeful progression towards a better state. Therefore, the developmental coach is mainly concerned with facilitating this developmental process rather than directing it, by exploring the themes and challenges relevant to the current needs of the coachee (Bachkirova, 2011). Developmental coaching is particularly relevant because of its focus on who the coachee 'is' than what he/she 'does' (Laske, 1999), its appreciation of the individual as continuously changing, and the fact that it is mainly concerned with how individuals increase their ability to engage with their internal and external world (Bachkirova, 2011).

Transformative coaching, as presented by Askew and Carnell (2011), is grounded in the theory of transformative learning which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Askew and Carnell (2011) observe that issues to do with self-identity and power relationships are at the root of many of the concerns that coachees bring to coaching. While acknowledging a number of critiques of coaching on its ability to change situations of injustice, they argue that a coaching approach that fosters critical consciousness through reflective learning is capable of helping individuals think differently about themselves and their society. Reflective learning is also at the heart of developmental coaching, as described by Brockbank and McGill (2012).

Another approach with specific relevance to emancipatory work is existential coaching; an approach grounded in existential philosophy and psychotherapy. It emphasises the individual's continuous search for meaning, and more importantly the individual's ability to create meaning, as van Deurzen (2002) writes: "The existential approach in this sense is founded on the notion of self-fulfilling prophecy. However confused and disorganized life may seem to those who believe themselves to be adrift on a sea of contradictions and chaos, it is always possible to find clarity and order for those who believe life to be basically meaningful. The existential position is neither that of belief in chaos nor that of belief in order. It is that of belief in people's ability to create meaning and order, in spite of seeming chaos and absurdity." (p. 6). Existential coaching is relevant because it is open to the examination of life's big questions around concepts like freedom, responsibility, and suffering (van Deurzen & Hanaway, 2012). Although it considers these questions from a philosophical rather than a critical social perspective, an existential dialogue may be beneficial in exploring issues of oppression and emancipation with coaching clients. Existential coaching argues that as beings express themselves through an inter-relational context, there is always the freedom of constructing new meanings and possibilities (Spinelli, 2010). It emphasises dialectical tensions that lead to new synthesis, and presents anxiety and suffering as inevitable processes of searching for meaning, rather than adverse effects that need to be avoided (Corey, 2008).

Despite the relevance of the above approaches, they contain very limited discussion on the relation between coaching and the social context, in terms of how a phenomenon such as social oppression affects coachees, and how coaching

can support emancipation. There are few calls in the literature to explore the role of coaching in promoting social change and emancipation. Schultz (2010) argues that critical accounts of coaching are rare, and that coaching is rarely viewed from the social/political perspective. He suggests that the common understanding of coaching in organisations needs to be reconstructed in order to allow it to become a tool for emancipation and to foster a reflective space for new visions of the organization, instead of acting as a tool to deflect conflict, individualise it, and enforce managerial control.

Eyre (2012), in an interview with Sir John Whitmore, quotes him saying that coaching can save the world. Whitmore argues in the interview that coaches must become aware of the bigger social and economic context where their organisations operate, and that coaching can help leaders of these organisations appreciate the need for a more inclusive and caring capitalism, that balances profit and people. Along the same lines, Outhwaite and Bettridge (2009) argue that coaching can be used to impact the holistic social and ecological system, not only the individual, by helping coachees (primarily executives) to link the social perspective with the organisational and personal goals.

Dyer (2002) argues that coaching can help restructure the belief systems of executives to prevent destructive behaviours driven by arrogance and power. Similarly, Du Toit and Sim (2010) argue that lessons from the recent credit crunch push us to seek new ways to evaluate organisational and social systems. They suggest that a critical form of coaching can help leaders understand their role in establishing corporate social responsibility. They extend the scope for critical coaching to counter groupthink in higher education and the wider society, as well as establishing self-responsibility amongst offenders in prisons and rehabilitation centres. They argue that coaching is "a valuable tool, due to the fact that it addresses the values and beliefs we all hold about the world, ourselves, and our place in that world. [It] provides the mechanism through which individuals and organizations are able to challenge the stories and narratives which dominate the organization" (p. 136). Outside organisational contexts, Caspi (2005) argues that social workers need to develop and evaluate new coaching models that are more appropriate to the issues they face.

There are also calls to include the social conditions in coaching models and research. For example, Smither and Reilly (2009) propose that coaching research

and practice would benefit from a foundation in social psychological science. They stress on the critical importance of the power of situation in understanding coachees' behaviours. They suggest that: "coaches need to work hard at appreciating the situational constraints that face the person being coached" (p. 11). Karboul (2010) argues that coaches working in authoritarian/collective cultural environments should "pay special attention to understanding the status of that client in the family or clan. An analysis of the context, relationships, dependencies and social class background is critical" (p. 5).

Perhaps the strongest call for research in this area comes from Western (2012). He argues that coaching can be an emancipatory force, helping individuals to achieve a fuller sense of life and become more creative and autonomous, but also helping them to strive for a collective endeavour to improve workplaces and society in general. He provides a critical analysis of coaching origins and different discourses, and states that "if coaching is not an emancipatory project, then by default it becomes an instrumental project" (p. 28), in the sense of treating the coachee's development as a commercial product.

In summary, the growth of coaching, and its participatory and reflective nature, have incited some calls to examine coaching from a social perspective, and to develop new coaching models that can take into account the social system of the coachee, and the mutual influence between the individual and the society. Meanwhile, the discussion of this area in the literature remains very limited, as are current coaching research and approaches. There are also some key limitations and issues in the current coaching research and approaches, which are discussed in the following section.

2. Limitations of current coaching research and approaches

Although coaching seems to offer a good basis for an emancipatory practice, the current coaching research and approaches fall short of building on this basic potential. In this section, I present the outcomes of an extensive survey of the coaching literature, and discuss the limitations of the current literature in several aspects: First, I report the absence of adequate research linking coaching and oppression. Second, I argue that the current literature is biased towards its use in specific contexts where the effects of oppression are less relevant. Then, I present a critique of the current coaching approaches, where some authors warn against

the hegemonic use of coaching (situations where coaching may result in maintaining the oppressive conditions). Next, I discuss how a number of common assumptions of coaching are violated in oppressive environments, which suggests a need for specific coaching models that address these environments.

2.1. Absence of research

It appears that there is hardly any empirical research on coaching for emancipation. An extensive survey of the literature was conducted to explore the existence of research covering the following questions:

1. What are the implications of practicing coaching in oppressive environments?
2. Can coaching be used as a tool for emancipation?
3. Can coaching be used as a social practice, to help individuals in understanding and improving their unfavourable social conditions?

Few studies have tried to explore the impact of socio-cultural contexts on coaching (Passmore & Law, 2009). One socio-cultural factor that has been almost ignored in the coaching literature is social oppression. Even fewer studies have provided accounts of coaching in oppressive environments. For example, Ngwenya and Hagmann (2007) and Soars (2008) discuss how leaders of two participatory programmes, in South Africa and Brazil respectively, use coaching approaches as interventions within the programme to foster change. Meanwhile, there does not seem to be any empirical research or empirically tested models for coaching for emancipation in oppressive environments.

2.2. Coaching literature bias

Askew and Carnell (2011) argue that coaching books often ignore many of the critiques of coaching. One of the critiques of coaching is that it stems from one dominant cultural view. The main rise of coaching has been in western developed countries, it is predominantly a westernised phenomenon, and the dominant culture it arose from is western, individualized, democratic capitalism (Western, 2012). The number of coaches in North America, Western Europe and Oceania represents more than 75% of the estimated total number of coaches in the world, with an average of more than 45 coaches per million in these regions versus an

estimated 1.7 coaches per million in the Middle East and Africa, and 0.9 coaches per million in Asia (ICF, 2012).

It also seems that coaching research has followed its main market. The main studied population in coaching are managers in medium size and big organisations. In coaching literature, there is a gap between applications in organisational contexts where a body of research is rapidly growing (Bennett & Bush, 2009), and applications in a personal/life context, where confusion exists between evidence-based approaches, and adaptations of 'pop-psychology' and the self-help movement (Grant & Cavanagh, 2010).

In organisations, managers are primarily alpha males, who allegedly occupy 75% of the senior positions in big corporations in USA and Europe (Erlandson, 2009), while women are estimated to occupy only 21% of senior management positions in business worldwide (GrantThornton, 2012). From another perspective, managers from ethnic minorities are estimated to occupy only 3% of CFO positions in all Fortune 500 companies (Bencuya et al., 2007). This divide may result in coaching research failing to capture the implications of unfavourable social conditions or organisational cultures on the coachee and the coaching process. Winum (2005) notes that, when coaching African American coachees, race matters and must be discussed, self and others' perceptions are impacted by prejudice and stereotypes. Wright (2006) discusses how coaching can support older workers to face the barriers of ageism and negative stereotyping.

Another important bias in current coaching literature is towards the use of coaching in achieving goals, improving performance and changing behaviours, as opposed to facilitating development and meaning making. Askew and Carnell (2011) note that the dominant model of coaching focuses on goal-setting and achievement, and argue that this may avoid important learning about the self. Using Habermas' (1970) domains of learning, applied to coaching, it can be argued that there is more focus on learning new skills and competencies (Technical and practical learning) than on reflective learning leading to perspective transformation (Emancipatory learning) (Askew & Carnell, 2011). Western (2012) criticizes a domination of the coaching space by 'technocratic functionalist coaches', who apply tools and techniques borrowed from therapy with instrumental mind sets.

Whitmore (2007) has put the growth of coaching down to a growth in individualism, and desire for self-exploration. This same individualistic aspect has been a key theme for the critique of coaching and the general therapeutic culture of the last few decades (Swan, 2010). Lasch (1978) argued, even before the rise of coaching, that the therapeutic culture creates a narcissistic and introspective society, focusing on 'I' instead of 'we'. Western (2012) argues that coaches, on the whole, prefer practice to theory, that the positivism of coaching has a built-in resistance to criticality, and that the promise of individual happiness favours an individualistic focus over social understanding.

2.3. Hegemonic use of coaching

Some studies respond to the bias in the literature by focusing on coaching women, ethnic minorities and people in non-western and/or developing countries (Passmore, 2009). These studies represent an opportunity to explore the concept of coaching in oppressive environments. While oppression is not culture-specific, oppressive conditions are often embedded into the culture of the oppressive community or organisation. Hence, a review of coaching in such cultural contexts may reveal whether current coaching models are suitable to address the implications of coaching in oppressive environments.

Cultural coaching models are mainly based on the works of anthropologists, and cultural experts such as Hofstede (2001), and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997). Cultural orientation is usually defined as multi-dimensional; for example, Hofstede (2001) suggests six dimensions to analyse cultural orientations: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term, and indulgence versus restraint. Rosinski (2003) suggests a cultural orientations framework that includes seven categories and 17 dimensions. He then suggests coaching approaches to leverage each of these dimensions to become a more effective coach. Passmore (2009) presents accounts by multiple contributors, each focusing on coaching in a specific culture or coaching a specific group based on ethnicity, gender, or age.

While such accounts are valuable to coaches working in these contexts, a common critique for studies in cultural coaching is that they tend to focus on understanding the culture and finding ways to adapt to it and work within its boundaries. To give but few examples; Ng (2009) discusses how family values and

social hierarchy are embedded in the Chinese experience of coaching, but does not explore how some of these values can affect individuals to the extent that they need to be critically examined and challenged. In similar ways, Palmer and Arnold (2009) discuss the religious and obedience values in the Middle East; Tulpa and Bresser (2009) note how some coaching topics in Turkey are culturally taboo such as relationships with the opposite sex, and political and religious subjects; Ludeman (2009) discusses the micro-inequities that women face in their work life. All these accounts seem to be missing a critical approach, whereby these cultural traits are also questioned and challenged where necessary. Nangalia and Nangalia (2010) explore how executive coaches across Asia adapt coaching, from the conventional (essentially western) understanding, to make it culturally congruent. They identify how the deeply embedded concept of social hierarchy influences the role and status of the coach in Asian culture, and suggests that coaches working with Asian clients need to flex their style to suit their social context. The underlying assumption here is that the coach needs to accept the social order as a given, regardless of its implications on the individual. Another assumption is that all coachees living within a certain cultural context will prefer to abide by it, thus implicitly denying them the right to resist such an identity and to define their own. Karboul (2010), discussing coaching in the Arab world, notes that the coach may judge the relationship of the coachee with his or her family or group to be submissive and ‘unhealthy’, but advises against pushing the coachee for more independence as this approach is likely to result in greater conflict and open wounds. Instead, the coach is advised to find out about the coachee’s level of collectivism and develop coping strategies that will work within that context. In her view, social pressure is deemed to be so powerful to the extent that coping is favoured over resistance.

In my view, the above approaches are more inclined towards adaptation rather than criticality. In the context of oppression, the role of coaching, as implied by these approaches, may be seen as hegemonic, as it reinforces the dominant culture. From a critical perspective, coaching can be accused of not offering “a challenge to the entrenched worldviews of the individual or organisation”, as argued by Du Toit and Sim (2010, p. 49), and I would equally add “and the worldviews entrenched in the overall social system”.

Organisational culture is another area for exploring how coaching can be hegemonic. Many writers argue that coaching may also act as a deflector for organizational tension by individualising conflicts, so that problems are interpreted and narrated as being individual issues, ignoring other non-individual interpretations (Kühl, 2007, 2008; Schultz, 2010). By mainly focusing on improving performance, coaching can be used to detract the employees from reflecting on the structures that oppress them (Western, 2012). Fook (2004) argues that a focus on self and individual issues colludes with the organisations' tendency to ignore issues of power and inequality within them.

Brockbank and McGill (2012) argue that the focus on performance coaching and mentoring in organisations aims to maintain the status quo by suppressing challenge and questioning to the existing system. They argue that learners go through a process of socialisation to ensure that existing values and norms are maintained. In their view, performance coaching tends to reinforce existing power relations and reproduce social inequalities. In contrast, coaching approaches that are based on autonomy and reflective dialogue may enable learners to recognise the constraints of the social systems in which they work.

It is important to note that this critique of coaching assumes that there is a difference between what should be appreciated as a cultural norm and what needs to be challenged as an oppressive environment or belief. From a constructivist point of view, culture and oppression are social constructs, and coaches are not expected to project their own definitions on the coachee. Flaherty (2005) argues that coaches do not have to deal with 'The Truth', but with ways of speaking; for him, the essential job of the coach is to make the coachee's own structure of interpretation explicit and accessible; thus eliciting awareness and critical reflection without assuming the role of a judge.

2.4. Violated assumptions of coaching

Coaching shares the assumption of andragogy that adults are self-directive resourceful learners (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). It has its roots in the human potential movement with its assumptions on free will and the actualizing tendency (Western, 2012). One of the ground precepts of coaching is the belief that the coachee is resourceful. Underneath this belief are the principles of choice and self-responsibility (Rogers, 2008). However, these assumptions may be

violated under oppression, where the concept of choice may be prohibited by external coercion, or internally relinquished because of dysfunctional beliefs. In many cases, coachees are bound by socially acquired frames of reference that hinder free choice. Fromm (1942) and Freire (1970) describe this as 'fear of freedom'. Critical reflection, as a prerequisite for self-responsibility is often missing (Cranton, 2006). The violation of these core principles implies a need for a coaching theory that acknowledges these issues and their impact on the coaching process.

Summary of section B

The literature reviewed in this section shows that coaching has many important features, such as its ability to support empowerment and critical reflection, which raise its potential as a candidate approach for emancipatory work. There have been a number of calls in the literature to study coaching as a social practice. Meanwhile, an extensive survey of the coaching literature shows a gap in empirical studies covering the use of coaching for emancipatory purposes, or the use of coaching in the context of oppressive environments. A critique of the limitations of the existing assumptions and approaches shows that a new theory of coaching is required. While this gap is partially explored in some coaching approaches, there does not appear to be enough research to support a critical theory of coaching for emancipation. In the absence of relevant approaches from the coaching discipline, I turn in the next section to a number of non-coaching emancipatory approaches to explore how they approached anti-oppressive and emancipatory practices.

C. Lessons from Non-coaching Emancipatory Approaches

While the coaching literature does not provide enough information on its use in oppressive environments, a number of other disciplines include relevant literature on the topic. This includes the fields of education, psychotherapy, arts and theatre, action research, and social work. In these fields, the mainstream literature also does not cover the issue of oppression. However, schools of theory and practice have originated from within these fields that offer valuable insights into the development of an emancipatory approach for human development. These five schools are briefly covered in this section.

1. Education

In the field of education, three schools of pedagogy offer valuable insights into using education as an emancipatory approach, namely critical pedagogy, transformative learning, and feminist pedagogy. These schools draw on shared theories such as critical theory and on other specific concepts.

Freire (1970, 1974; 1989; 1994) introduced **critical pedagogy** in his seminal 1970 work “pedagogy of the oppressed” (Published in Portuguese in 1968). In critical pedagogy, the process of learning is participatory, where the oppressed get to see themselves as creators rather than consumers of culture. Freire’s work with the illiterate is a showcase of how the learnt words are used as generative themes that elicit critical discussions about the daily life of the learners. Freire (1970) emphasised the need to start from "the concrete, existential, present situation of real people" (p. 92). A key concept in critical pedagogy is *conscientização* (Conscientisation, Critical Consciousness). Critical consciousness focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions. With this understanding, the learner engages in an informed praxis, working in the world to emancipate self and others from the conditions of oppressions (Freire & Macedo, 2001). Critical pedagogy is not only concerned with the learner’s perspectives, but with changing his/her world. According to Ryan (2011), the education for liberation passes through three key phases: awakening awareness; critical analyses; and changing reality. All three phases are concerned with both the personal and the political. Besides engaging in criticality and resistance, critical pedagogy also involves continuous emphasis on empowerment and hope, as the increased awareness may result in hopelessness and fatalism.

Transformative learning is widely acknowledged as one of the most important contributions to adult learning in the last few decades. Mezirow (1981; 1994; 2000; 1990a; 2009) first introduced the concept in the 1981 paper “A critical theory of adult learning and education”. Mezirow used the work of Habermas and suggested that emancipatory learning can take place through perspective transformation; “a process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions [-meaning perspective-] has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, and reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience

and acting upon these new understandings" (p. 6). The goal is to support learners to "negotiate and act upon [their] own purposes, values, feelings and meanings rather than those [they] have uncritically assimilated from others" (Mezirow & Associates, 1990b). There is abundant literature on transformative learning. Taylor (2007, 2008) provides an overview of the latest research and main streams (cognitive versus holistic) and purposes (individual versus society) being debated. Two limitations of the transformative learning research are that the majority of it is done in a classroom setting, and that the issue of power between teacher and student is under-researched. According to Taylor (2008), there are various views of transformative learning, of which the social-emancipatory one, inspired from the work of Freire, is the most relevant to this study. In addition, a race-centric view of transformative learning focuses on people of African descent, most often black women (Sheared, 1994; Williams, 2003). It is a conception that is culturally bounded, oppositional, and non-individualistic. It promotes inclusion, empowerment (belongingness and equity), and learning to negotiate effectively between and across cultures (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006). The theory of transformative learning is closely linked to the different models of constructive development (Bridwell, 2007). In experiencing transformational change, some learners not only make gains in what they know but modify the shape of how they know – that is, they acquire new and more complex ways of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004).

Feminist pedagogy originates from the different feminists theories. It involves elements such as consciousness-raising and activism. Feminist educators attempt to recover women's voices, and make the systems of oppression visible (Merriam et al., 2007). Tisdell (1998) argues that there are four recurring themes in feminist pedagogy; knowledge construction, development of voice, authority and power, and positionality (dealing with difference). Learners examine how social systems of privilege and oppression have affected their own identity, through this learning; they can break the circle of oppression and increase their capacity for agency. Feminist pedagogy encourages learners to look at their lived experiences from a feminist epistemic standpoint and to validate their interpretation of the experience through sharing and discussing it with others (MacDonald, 2002). Hoffman and Stake (1998) identify four teaching strategies articulated by a significant majority of those writing about feminist pedagogy: participatory

learning, validation of personal experience, development of critical thinking, and encouragement of activism.

Emancipatory approaches in education were perhaps the first to emerge among the other approaches presented below, they benefit from many years of published practices and a large number of theoretical and empirical studies, which makes them relevant to the development of an emancipatory coaching approach. Meanwhile, educational approaches are more focused on working with groups, and often have to examine the tension between the emancipatory stance and the dynamics of the educational institution. Education is also often based on some form of curriculum, and may involve some form of evaluation; both features may affect the power dynamics between educators and learners.

2. Psychotherapy

In the fields of psychiatry and psychotherapy there have been multiple critiques to the traditional approaches of these fields as forming part of the oppressive structure. The work of Fanon (1967a, 1967b; 1967) established such a strong critique and called for a new practice that would aim to liberate the oppressed rather than contribute to their oppression. Two schools of therapy seem to try to answer this call, namely feminist therapy and liberation psychology.

Feminist therapy originated in the early 1970s, inspired by the second wave of feminism (Thomas, 1977). During the 1980s, effort was spent in defining the principles and methods of feminist therapy, and new scholarly journals focused on feminism emerged (Flanagan, 2011). Worell and Remer (2002) present a long list of dissatisfaction and frustration with traditional therapy that lead to the rise of feminist psychology and feminist therapy. Feminist therapy is based on the premise that personal problems are created and intensified by structural inequality and societal power imbalances (Magnet & Diamond, 2010). At the heart of feminist therapy is the concept of gender roles, “the patterns of culturally approved behaviours that are regarded as more desirable for either females or males in a particular culture” (Worell & Remer, 2002). Current trends in feminist therapy focus on integrating a multicultural perspective that understands the impact of other factors like race, culture and class in order to become more inclusive of diversity, also the practice has started to include men both as therapists and clients (Evans et al. 2005).

Liberation psychology emerged in Latin America, as a response to the criticisms of traditional social psychology. Traditional approaches were accused of social irrelevance, false pretension of universal validity, and scientific neutrality that mean a denial of the moral dimension. Most of the research in liberation psychology is focused on understanding the psychological effects of oppression (Burton & Kagan, 2005). The key thinker of liberation psychology is Ignacio Martín-Baró. He proposed that psychology should acknowledge the wounds caused by war, racism, poverty and violence, and should support historical memory and critical reflection, thus supporting people in creatively making sense and responding to the world. This involves the transformation of fatalism into critical consciousness, an awakening of agency, and a quickening of imaginations of desire (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Liberation psychology was influenced both by the work of Paulo Freire, and by the preceding movement of liberation theology. Liberation theologies construct theology by reflecting upon the common experience of oppression by virtue of membership in particular social groups. They seek both personal liberation and social transformation (Todd, 2011). Bulhan (2004) argues that a psychological theory and practice of liberation needs to reflect the priorities of the oppressed, by giving primacy to the attainment of collective liberty, as opposed to the focus on individual narratives, that is, balancing the attention giving to alleviating the direct symptoms of the individual's suffering with the aim to change pathogenic social conditions as well as persons. He writes: "What is needed in situations of oppression is a mode of intervention that bridges the separation of insight and action, internal and external, individual and collective" (p. 272). Watkins and Shulman (2008) suggest that "through methodologies of liberation psychologies, people may reflect together on how limits came to be, begin to see them as construction that can be undone, and as a situation that can be rethought and transformed" (p. 207). They suggest that this is possible through communities of resistance, liberation arts, and participatory action research; the latter two areas are discussed below.

Emancipatory therapeutic approaches provide us with an understanding of the deep wounds that the individual living in oppressive environments may be suffering from. However, examining the symptoms of oppression as psychopathologies is not necessarily the best way to supporting the individual in his/her struggle. In many societies, the notion of psychopathology is in itself

disempowering and may act as a deterrent. From a practice point of view, the methods used in feminist therapy are mostly transferrable to coaching, but they would benefit from being extended beyond the focus on gender, to include the multi-dimensional aspects of oppression.

3. Arts and Theatre

The use of arts in emancipatory practices is an evolving field. Liberation arts allow layers of subjectivity, symbolism, memories and interpretations to be exposed in an empowering environment, they provide alternatives to silence, violence and historical neuroses for victims of oppression (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Liberation arts include music and dance (Reagon & Rock, 1993), community radio (Dragon, 2001), storytelling circles (Smith, 1999), photography and visual arts (For example: Photovoice techniques), video (White, 2003), and theatre. In the field of theatre, 'Applied Theatre' is the new umbrella term that combines many methods for the use of theatre in dealing with social issues and in empowering individuals from marginalised communities. The disciplines and contexts of applied theatre are many, including theatre of the oppressed, theatre in education, theatre for development, prison theatre, community-based theatre, and many others (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). For the purpose of this review, I only consider the theatre of the oppressed in slightly more detail.

The Theatre of the Oppressed is a theatrical form established by the Brazilian practitioner Augusto Boal in the 1960s. Influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, he has worked with very different groups, from professional theatre to trade unions and slums. Several theatrical forms emerged such as image theatre, invisible theatre, and forum theatre. All these forms have common traits. Boal (2002) defines theatre as the art of looking at ourselves. The approach is often used with marginalised groups of people, helping them first to free themselves through acting. The work is then shared with the public, often in places like streets and prisons, where spectators are invited to become actors in the analysis of oppression and co-creators of new possibilities. Critical consciousness and social action are at the heart of the theatre of the oppressed, as Boal notes: "Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society" (p. 16). The work of Boal has inspired many of the other methods of applied theatre as it was culturally changed and adapted through its integration into other

community theatre practices in other countries (Thompson, 2012). It is worth noting that the first events of forum theatre in Egypt took place around the same time that the current study was being conducted.

The use of arts and theatre is a field that deserves more research in the general coaching practice. Arts are more specifically relevant to coaching for emancipation, as they may provide the opportunity to break from the daily oppressive cycle. Arts, however, may require access to knowledge and resources, as well as a level of training for practitioners that may make their growth relatively more difficult than coaching.

4. Action Research

Action research is defined as a "participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Action research includes many diverse approaches, of which some identify their purpose directly in relation to working with oppressed groups (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Selener, 1992). Fals Borda (2008), one of the founders of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the 1970s, recalls the need for an approach that is both scientific and activist/emancipatory. In PAR, the knowledge generation, and social transformation are only two aspects of it, as it also involves changing the lives of its practitioners and empowering those who participate in co-creating that knowledge. The experience of many participatory research projects has common themes with coaching in oppressive environments (Strier, 2007; Whitmore, 1994), as they provide valuable insight into the impact and dynamics of working with the oppressed to empower them and to develop, in a participatory way, practical knowledge that can help improve their lives.

Action research is not only aimed at producing knowledge, one of its key outcomes is the enablement of action. Social action constitutes an integral part of all the approaches discussed above. Inglis (1997) argues that it is impossible to reach emancipation without action. If the focus is only on personal learning and transformation, empowerment becomes a way to act more successfully in the existing system rather than changing it. Critical reflection – while important – is not enough on its own. Instead, 'educators' can help learners understand the dynamics of power embedded in the social system, and become part of the struggle to turn this power to their benefit. Meanwhile, learning also happens as a

result of social action. Foley (1999) notes that "Some of the most powerful learning occurs as people struggle against oppression, as they struggle to make sense of what is happening to them and to work out ways of doing something about it" (p. 1). Cain (1998) describes the transformative learning that occurred among members of grassroots groups working to remove toxic waste from their neighbourhoods. However, what constitutes social action is an area for discussion, for example, Moane (2010) discusses how women in a study challenged the narrow views of political activism, and argued that 'small acts', in circles not traditionally considered political (e.g. family), can provide hope and accumulate into system change.

5. Social Work

In the field of social work, a number of practices have been developed under the labels of anti-oppressive or anti-discriminatory social work. Dominelli (2002) argues that for social workers to successfully address issues of oppression, they must understand the multi-dimensionality of oppression; where different forms of oppression (based on gender, class and so forth) take place in different levels that go from the personal to the international, and involve physical, cultural, economic, political and spiritual dimensions. She argues that social workers need to support change, as opposed to traditional approaches that focus on getting the individuals to adopt accepted social norms. Practitioners who follow emancipatory approaches focus on the specifics of a situation in a holistic manner, working with their clients to develop clear goals and use networking and negotiation techniques to secure change. They open discursive spaces for the clients to develop their own interpretive story and to understand how dominant discourses operate to support this story. They also need to pay attention to the power dynamics, between the worker and the client, and between the client and all other parties involved in the discussed situation. Baines (2003) stresses on the importance of a deep understanding of oppression, for social workers to improve their ability for emancipatory work. Baines' research, based on interviews with social workers, shows that despite good intentions, many social workers adopt simplistic or fatalistic assumptions on the nature of class, gender and race (For example: poverty cannot be changed, anyone who has a job can be middle class, the only problem related to gender is home violence). Thompson (2012) proposes that social workers use PCS analysis to understand the Personal, Cultural, and

Structural levels of oppression. He argues that it is necessary to go beyond the personal level in tackling oppression, so individuals can start "playing their part in collectively challenging the dominant discriminatory culture and ideology, and, in so doing, playing at least a part in the undermining of the structures which support, and are supported by, that culture" (p. 36).

Anti-oppressive social work is a valuable source for the development of coaching for emancipation, as it provides important and systemic insights into the overall dynamics of oppression; it is also supported by a growing body of research. Meanwhile, social work, as a practice, is linked to the general structure of the political and social institutions, and is therefore often limited by the inherent boundaries within these institutions, as opposed to coaching that may be practiced outside these institutional boundaries. Furthermore, the research on anti-oppressive social work is more abundant in more developed countries.

Summary of section C

In this section, I presented a review of a number of emancipatory approaches across different disciplines, where practitioners came to the realisation that dealing with the phenomenon of oppression requires new methods and frameworks. Each of these approaches plays an important role that is unique to its specific purpose. They also offer valuable insights towards the development of coaching practice that can support the emancipation of individuals. Figure 2.3 shows that there are many similarities in the concepts suggested by these different approaches; many of them agree that emancipation is supported through: (1) Participatory learning, (2) empowerment and agency, (3) focus on the concrete experience, (4) critical awareness of the lived experience, (5) critical analysis, (6) creation of possibilities, (7) engaging in a praxis of action and reflection to change one's conditions and the world. These concepts can also be supported through coaching. The far right part of figure 2.3 shows how these concepts have guided the creation of the initial coaching model, which will be presented in the following chapter.

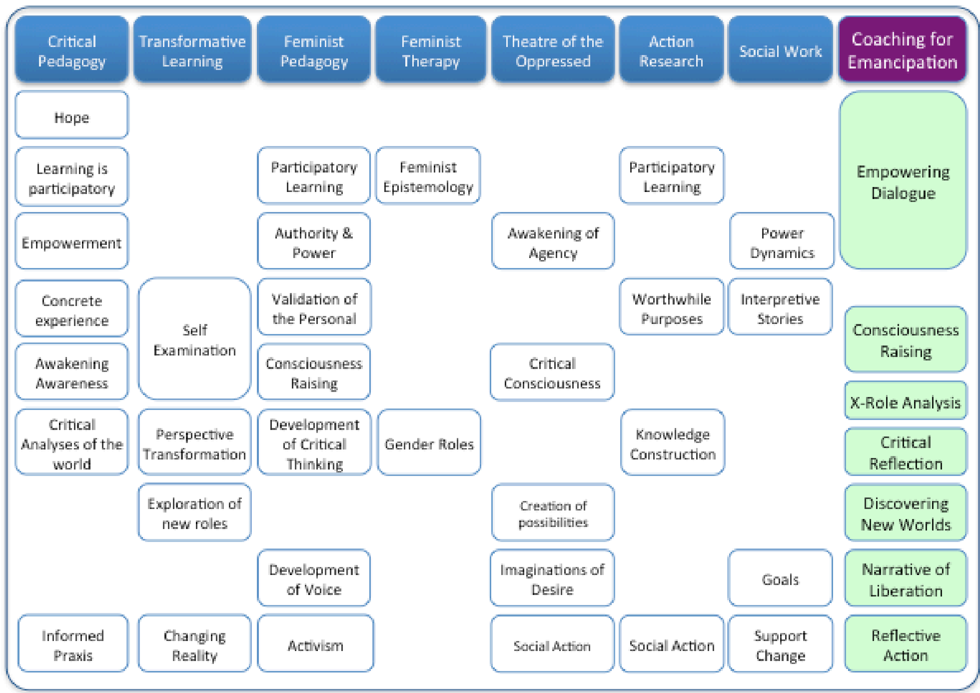


Figure 2.3 Key emancipatory processes across multiple approaches

3. Initial Coaching Model

There are many coaching models available in the literature, but very limited discussions on the structure and process of building a coaching model. Similar to what Cushion et al. (2006) conclude about sports coaching, many coaching models result in a representation of the coaching process that is reduced in complexity and scale. Coaching models are often presented in ways that do not make visible the theory underpinning them, which results in a separation between theory and practice. Lennard (2010) defines coaching models as general guides or frameworks of ideas for understanding and navigating an approach to coaching. According to her, a model is an intellectual and cultural device that depicts the philosophy and practice of the coach. Coaching models are based on theoretical foundations (such as learning theories), and reflect a set of unique experiences, goals, assumptions, and values. They may also reflect the context in which coaching is practiced. The development of a coaching model may involve the identification of the processes, behaviours, tools and techniques used during coaching; coaching models can be seen as tools for coaches' learning, through facilitating the process of inquiry that leads to continuous development.

I developed the initial coaching model before the start of the inquiry process. I designed the model by reflecting on my experience of coaching within the context of oppression, and analysing theories of oppression, emancipation, and development, as well as relevant theories and approaches from the fields of coaching, education, psychotherapy, arts and theatre, action research and social work. The intention was to provide a starting point, to initiate participants into coaching for emancipation so that new theory can emerge from their practice in the chosen context. The main principle was to create a balance between a number of dualities, namely empowerment and criticality, personal and political, and reflection and action. The model can be seen from several perspectives:

- As a cultural model, it provides the philosophical and moral foundations for using coaching in oppressive environments as a tool for development and emancipation.
- As a theoretical model, it defines its underlying social and psychological theories.

- As a practical model, it provides a detailed description of the coaching process, with a range of suggested tools and techniques for each of the process blocks.
- As a learning device, the model was built as a training programme where practical exercises and interactive debates support the learning of the coaches.
- As a research tool, the model included a number of areas that are highlighted as areas of interest, with more questions than answers. The model was intentionally broken down to a level of details that allows detailed analysis of the coaching experience during the inquiry.

In the following sections, the initial model will be presented using the same structure and style used in the training delivered to the co-inquiry members before the start of the first action cycle.

High-Level Overview of the Model

The initial model of "coaching for emancipation" is composed of five main blocks that are depicted in figure 3.1. The blocks are labelled from A to E for ease of description.

A. **Philosophical Foundations – A Critical Theory of Coaching**: This block provides a philosophical foundation for the entire model. For coaches to provide coaching for emancipation they must reflect on the main philosophical questions imposed by the oppressive context. The coach needs to understand the dynamics of oppression and to reflect on the ethical choices required in emancipatory practices, before getting engaged in the facilitation of the coachees' development.

B. **Psychological Foundations – Developmental Journey**: This block provides a psychological foundation for the coaching process. Coaching for emancipation is developmental in nature, and while it does not necessarily rely on an assessment of the coachee's development, a critical understanding of the theories and models of development is essential to the coaching practice.

Blocks A and B do not offer much on the coaching process, but rather underlie the overall position and understanding of the coach applying the model. Blocks C, D,

and E are more practical in nature. They do not follow each other as a logical process, but rather happen in parallel throughout the coaching process to provide a complete coaching experience.

Figure 3.1 High-level Initial Coaching Model

C. Empowering Dialogue: This block provides the basic environment for the coaching relationship, being dialogical, empowering and critical. These three elements are examined from the contextual nature of oppressive environments.

D. Critical Reflection: This block is the core of the practice of coaching for emancipation, it is further broken down into six key blocks that provide many perspectives and interventions to support coachees in critically understanding their lives, the core assumptions they live by, and the social conditions that affect them, then to develop a new narrative for their journeys.

E. Reflective Action: This block covers the process of supporting coachees through changing their lives in a concrete manner. It is based on a belief that reflection without action is not effective, and that action without reflection is not sustainable. Hence, the coach is always keen to encourage the coachee to choose and implement actions that would help them in developing themselves and improving their lives.

The following sections of this chapter cover the five blocks of the model in detail.

Detailed Description of the Model

As mentioned, the coaching model was initially developed as a training programme for coaches. For the purpose of this section, each block of the model will be explained in terms of the following:

1. **Purpose**: The overall goal of this block in the coaching context
2. **Key Tenets**: key statements that summarise the elements of the model
3. **Detailed Description**: A detailed discussion of the block's contents, as well as a description of key learning activities linked to this specific block.
4. **Suggested Tools**: In the sub-sections of block D – Critical Reflection – a short description of the suggested tools and techniques is provided. Reference is made where tools have been adapted from published approaches. It is important to note that while coaches were trained on the use of the tools, these were provided as means for a better understanding of the purpose and dynamics of the discussed block, coaches were encouraged to develop their own interventions or adapt the suggested tools to fit the needs of the coachee.

A. Philosophical Foundations: A Critical Theory of Coaching

Purpose:

To provide the coach with a critical understanding of oppression, and to raise his/her awareness of the key ethical and moral questions in the practice of coaching for emancipation.

Key Tenets:

- Oppression exists and is unjust.
- Oppressive environments are maintained through pervasive and self-generating social systems.
- Internalised oppression distorts beliefs, hinders growth, and has psychological implications.
- Emancipation is possible through an empowering dialogue, critical reflection that links the personal and political/social, and a process of liberation linking action and reflection.

Detailed Description:

This section is largely built on the theoretical works discussed in Chapter 2 under the subtitles Oppression and Emancipation.

Oppression exists and is unjust: Oppression is what happens when a social order distorts the humanity of some of its members through unjust and sometimes violent perceptions and actions (Freire, 1970). Coaches are invited to reflect on the various forms of oppression in their societies; examples are given covering state oppression, in terms of colonisation and dictatorship, class oppression, in terms of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, disability-related oppression, race oppression, gender oppression, in terms of sexism, patriarchy and objectification of women, and belief-related oppression, in terms of discrimination against religious minorities and extremism. Coaches are invited to cite examples from these categories and any other forms they perceive as oppressive, and to discuss the criteria they use to judge a system as oppressive.

This coaching model builds on the acknowledgement of the presence of oppression; condemning it as unjust, and siding with those who are affected by it. This value position should not, however, result in over-simplification. Coaches need to remember that their views of the world, and hence their judgements, are subjective, and are based on their own interpretations and beliefs. Coaches are asked to consider the impact of their personal context on their stance, via three questions:

- Do I see myself as being inside or outside the circle of oppression?
- What is my experience of being the oppressed, the oppressor and the bystander?
- How is my role as a coach affected by my values and my previous experiences?

Oppressive environments are maintained through pervasive and self-generating social systems: Working in oppressive environments, coaches are likely to be presented with situations where oppression is so embedded in the social system, and even in the coachee's beliefs, that it can be evaluated as the accepted social norm. Hence it is key that coaches develop an understanding of the social mechanisms that maintain oppression, so that they can support the process of

critical reflection. These mechanisms are analysed in the works of many critical theorists (for example, Gramsci, Fromm and Habermas). Coaches are made aware of how any Ideology can carry beliefs that justify oppression, how hegemonic ideas can present a situation of oppression as one that is for the oppressed own good, how power is used to favour some groups over others, how people become alienated into conformity with the system, and consumed into one dimensional thoughts of hoping to improve the current system rather than challenge it. Social behaviours and popular norms are also examined from the perspectives of socialisation processes and prejudice.

This theoretical grounding is important for the development of the coaches. While only a basic introduction of the above concepts may be required, becoming aware of the systemic nature of oppression is considered key to support the the coaching process.

Internalised oppression distorts beliefs, hinders growth, and has psychological implications: There are many theories that try to explain how and why oppressed groups internalise oppressive beliefs and behaviours. (For example: Harro 2000, Žižek 2001). From a coaching perspective, the focus is on how these beliefs can be accessed and reflected upon. The framework developed by Mezirow (2000) is deemed useful to achieve this objective. Mezirow's work describes how assumptions that have been uncritically assimilated form our meaning structures or frames of reference in many dimensions (epistemic, aesthetic, socio-linguistic, moral-ethical, philosophical, and psychosocial). This structure constrains the way we see others and ourselves. Emancipatory learning can thus take place through perspective transformation.

People living in oppressive environments may also be suffering from psychological wounds. This is important to consider in relation to the coach's background and capability. Coaching in the context of oppression requires a clear ethical understanding of the boundaries of coaching, and a commitment to assess whether the process of coaching is the right choice for the coachee.

Emancipation is possible: Emancipatory coaches believe that people can go beyond the barriers set to them by the oppressive environment. This is another value position, and without it, it would be futile to consider the practical approaches in the model. Coaches being trained on the model are asked to reflect

on the question of hope, and to voice what they want and think they can achieve through coaching others.

The goal of coaching is defined as supporting coachees to:

1. Feel empowered to be and act in the world, and
2. Becoming free from constraining beliefs about self, others and the world.

Three elements are identified as key to the process of coaching for emancipation:

1. An Empowering Dialogue: One that balances empowerment and criticality
2. Critical Reflection that links the personal and the political/social
3. A process of liberation that links action and reflection

These elements are mapped to the three key practical blocks of the model that are presented later in this chapter.

B. Psychological Foundations: Developmental Journey

Purpose:

To provide the coach with psychological models to explain the developmental journey of coachees.

Key Tenets:

- Development takes place in many dimensions, flowing towards more differentiation and integration.
- Development is not a goal in itself, but a key enabler to the emancipatory process.
- Oppressive environments may affect the developmental level of both coach and coachee

Detailed Description:

This section is largely built on the theoretical works discussed in Chapter 2 under the subtitle Development.

Development takes place in many dimensions, flowing towards more differentiation and integration: Development can be seen from many perspectives, across the life span, cognitive, emotional, moral, spiritual, ego and others. It maintains, by definition, a flow towards more complex structures that are characterised by more differentiation and integration and the ability to

maintain a dialectical relationship between both (Basseches, 2005). Several developmental models are available, of which a number of models, presented in chapter 2, are deemed more relevant to coaching for emancipation. For example, Kegan's model of orders of consciousness shows, in one of the transitions, an evolution from the identification of self with the social being to gaining an independent identity that has the social being as its object (Kegan, 1994). King and Kitchener's model shows a move from acceptance of the judgement of authority to the ability of making an informed judgement and the appreciation of contextual reality that can be interpreted in many different ways (King & Kitchener, 1994).

Development is not a goal in itself, but a key enabler to the emancipatory process: Coaches need to consider the different lines and models of development, in order to help them visualise how development can support emancipation. Development is seen as a change that takes place as one tries to deal with a complex environment more effectively. Therefore, the priority of the coaching process is to support the coachee in achieving the change they want to achieve in themselves and their environment. From this perspective, development becomes integral to the processes of empowering dialogue, critical reflection, and reflective action; as it enables them, and is also forced to happen by the type of challenge they provide.

Oppressive environments may affect the developmental level of both coach and coachee: In oppressive environments, it is often the case that choices are limited, access to information is more difficult, authorities are to be respected, and challenging the system is penalised. These factors may affect the development of all people living in these environments, including the coaches. After going through a number of exercises that initiate coaches into thinking about their own developmental level, coaches are asked to consider the following questions:

- Is it useful to assess the developmental level of the coachee in the beginning of the coaching process?
- What are the implications of the coach's developmental level on the process?

C. Empowering Dialogue

Purpose:

To enable an authentic dialogue that balances criticality and empowerment

Key Tenets:

- Authentic dialogue is built on respect, understanding, openness, and communication.
- Empowerment is built on hope, trust, presence, and the right use of authority.
- Criticality is at the heart of the coaching process.

Detailed Description:

Authentic dialogue is built on respect, understanding, openness, and communication: Coaching is essentially a dialogical process. There is nothing that can be achieved in coaching that does not rely, at least in part, on the authenticity of the dialogue between coach and coachee. It is proposed that the following four conditions are key to maintain an authentic and rich dialogue throughout the coaching journey:

1. Mutual respect between coach and coachee, throughout the process.
2. That the coach expresses a sincere desire to listen and to understand.
3. Openness on both sides, the coach to offer unconditional acceptance, and the coachee to be open to a dialogue full of disclosure and challenges.
4. Good use of communication tools; questions, visual tools (e.g. mind maps, rich pictures), body language, and silence.

During the initial training, coaches are presented with basic coaching questions that can be used to start and progress the discussion, to identify goals, clarify meanings, evaluate ideas, reflect on previous experiences, discover possibilities, or make decisions. Also forms of questions to avoid are discussed (e.g. advice in disguise, why questions, complex questions), and basic summarising and paraphrasing skills are practiced.

Empowerment is built on hope, trust, presence, and the right use of authority: In my experience, coachees in oppressive environments may suffer from lower self-esteem and self-confidence. The coach needs to be aware of this and not

allow the relationship to become one between a wiser authority (coach) and a lesser follower (coachee).

Following Freire's (Freire, 1970) advice to educators, coaches working with the oppressed need to base their practice on love, faith and hope. This hope is translated into an authentic trust in the coachee. This is particularly challenging in the context of oppression, because coachees often do not trust themselves, they may come with different kinds of negative stories about their previous experiences and expect the coach to see them as victims and to act as a saviour. Maintaining hope throughout the process may require coaches to consider their own sources of support including supervision.

It is proposed that for coaches to act as empowering facilitators, four behaviours are important:

1. To abstain from giving advice, and try to seek answers from the coachees.
2. To be fully present in the session with attentive and caring listening.
3. To 'dance in the moment' (Whitworth et al. 2007), rather than act out of a standard or a pre-decided approach. This is important because coachees may feel more empowered if they are able to direct the flow of the coaching session.
4. To use authority in an integral way. Heron (1989) argues that a facilitator may act in three ways; full use of authority, co-operating with others to reach a shared agreement of decision, and allowing others to act in full autonomy. It is not always the case that autonomy is more empowering than authority. People left to act on their own on the wrong issues or in the wrong time may feel lost, confused or frustrated. In the context of coaching, the model depicted in Figure 3.2, in the next page, is used to help coaches reflect on their use of authority throughout the coaching process. The three modes of authority are considered across two dimensions: Content (topics being discussed), and process (methods used, meeting frequency and so on). This matrix is also moving in time: as the coaching process progresses, the use of authority can change. Coaches need to consider their use of authority according to the needs of the coachee. For example, a coach could start with full authority over the process while allowing autonomy in terms of content, then move in a

later phase to making decisions about the process co-operatively, while using authority at times to focus the discussion on one topic.

Coaches need also to be aware of the hidden games of power. These are situations that unintentionally create an environment where the power difference between coach and coachee does not allow the coachee to be empowered:

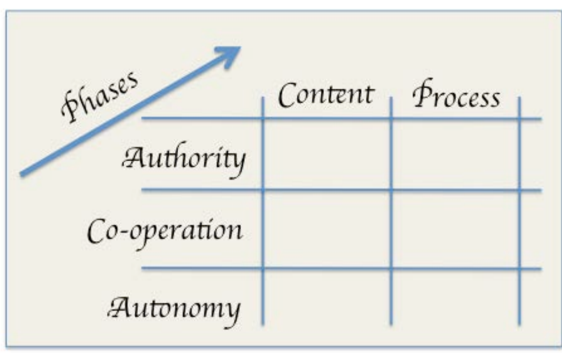


Figure 3.2 Dynamic Use of Authority

- **Coach's Mastery**: While coaches try to perform their role as well as they can, coachees may tend to associate their coaches with idealised images. Coaches should be aware where their silence is being perceived as 'mystic wisdom', or their use of creative tools is seen as 'the work of a wizard'. The coach may need to break the pattern of idealisation through changing style, focusing on connectedness and spontaneity, and – where appropriate – self-disclosure.
- **Social Status**: In the context of oppressive environments, it may not be uncommon for a coach and coachee to belong to different social groups with significant differences of power leverage. For example, a man coaching a woman in a patriarchal society, or a coach from a religious majority coaching someone from a religious minority, or coach and coachee belonging to different social classes. It is only fair to assume that issues of gender, discrimination and poverty, respectively, may be important issues to discuss during the coaching process. The question should then be discussed, of whether the pre-existing power difference presents a burden on the process, and whether the coachee will fail to feel empowered despite all the efforts of the coach, because of this inherent difference.

- **The Drama Triangle**: first presented by Karpman (1968), the drama triangle depicts three famous psychological roles in coaching; victim, persecutor and rescuer. This model has a special relevance to the practice of coaching for emancipation, as it may explain a lot of the transactions that take place in a coaching session, as the coachee tends to play the role of victim, and the coach alternating between the roles of rescuer and persecutor. Karpman's work uncovers a number of hidden games that may negatively affect empowerment.

Criticality is at the heart of the coaching process: Coaching for emancipation is primarily a critical form of coaching. Criticality exists in three forms (Fook & Gardner, 2007):

1. **Critical Thinking**: The cognitive skills required to analyse a behaviour or an idea by examining it from multiple perspectives, assessing its evidence, uncovering its underlying assumptions, and evaluating these assumptions for truthfulness and suitability in order to reach a proper judgement.
2. **Critical Reflection**: The process of reflecting on one's own thoughts and behaviours, and evaluating the underlying assumptions and meaning perspectives that one is holding.
3. **Critical Theory**: The process of analysing the way social and political systems are working and the historical process that underlies these systems.

The three forms of criticality are overlapping but distinct, as they require different skills, enablers and interventions. Coaches should be capable of adequately initiating and fostering the different angles of criticality through the coaching process.

A formal training may be required for the coaches, dependent on their background, in order develop their abilities to support critical reasoning. A simple framework, presented in figure 3.3, was developed to help coaches examine statements said during coaching discussions, and learn to:

- Capture the position of the coachee on a certain question
- Understand the arguments of the coachee that led to this position

- Question the internal consistency of these arguments, whether the argument includes an internal contradiction, or cannot be re-used in similar situations.
- Question and highlight flaws and fallacies in the arguments. There is a long list of logical errors that can often go undetected in arguments, including, for example, reliance on wrong sources, generalisation, perceived causality, limited information, group think, over-simplification, inaccurate analogies, subjectivism, and projection.
- Support the discovery of the underlying assumptions
- Help the coachee link these assumptions to their own narrative and to the wider historical process, looking at how their previous experiences, learning, and the social systems around them support or contradict with these assumptions.

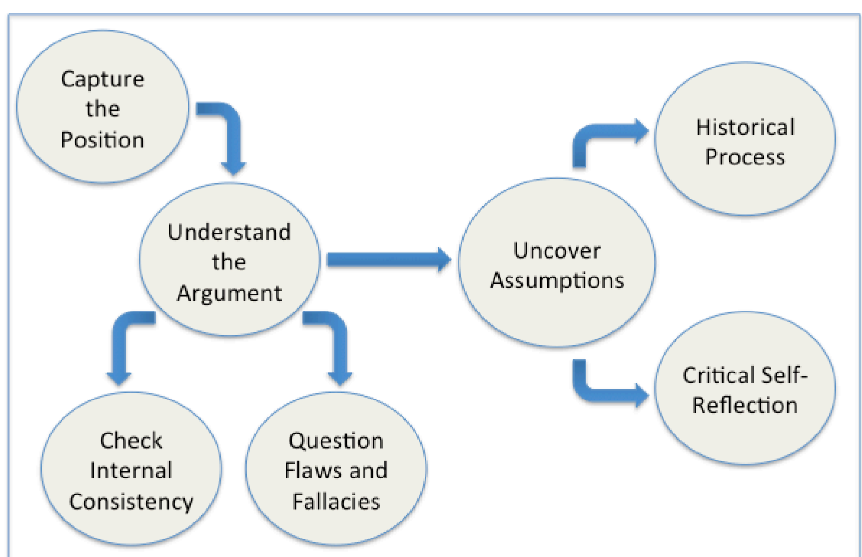


Figure 3.3 Critical Analysis Framework

Having the skills to manage a critical discourse is a key capability of the coach working within this model. These skills are not only cognitive. The coach is expected to use relational and emotional skills to maintain a positive balance during a critical conversation. As opposed to the role of facilitator, Boal (2002) suggests the term ‘difficultator’; one who takes responsibility for asking difficult questions, pushing the boundaries of what is discussed, and fostering criticality.

The coach comes to understand that we are all trapped in our current beliefs, and that we have a natural tendency to resist breaking these boundaries. This resistance may even increase as we reach the edge of our comfort zone. Being able to deal with this resistance without breaking the empowering nature of the dialogue requires fine balance.

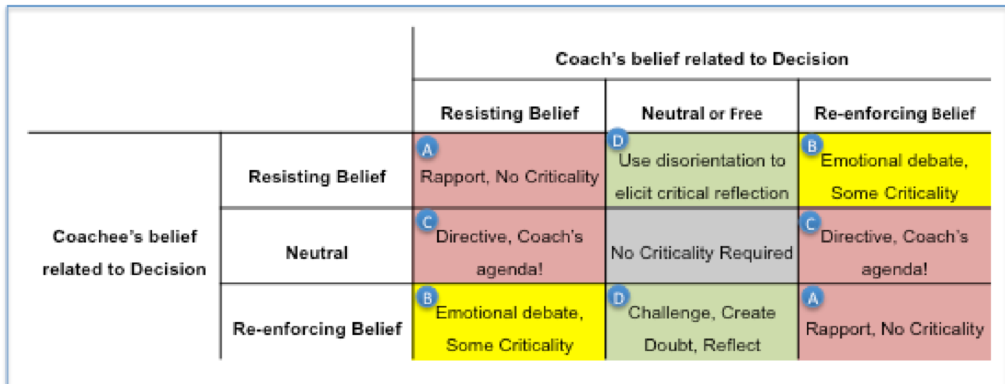
Working with beliefs requires awareness of two factors that may affect the process:

- **The Limitation of Language**: Coaching is dialogical, and hence relies extensively on the use of language. However, language is not free from assumptions (Saul, 2010). There are many examples where words are contaminated with social values, interpretations and bias. This is a philosophical problem that coaches have to deal with, as they are almost required to help coachees find new words, or new meanings for old ones.
- **Coach's own assumptions:** Coaches – by virtue of being human – have their own meaning perspectives, see the world from their specific lens, and are susceptible to their own set of limiting beliefs. Like their coachees, they are aware of some of their beliefs and are unaware of others that may even contradict sometimes their expressed points of view. Coaches sharing the same background as their coachees are likely to have several shared beliefs. I developed a model in 2009 to examine the impact of coaches' beliefs on their ability to facilitate a critical discussion. Figure 3.4 shows a matrix of coach and coachee's beliefs. If we assume that the coachee is trying to make a decision around a certain topic, getting divorced for example. The coachee may be neutral, in terms of not having initial beliefs that prefer one course of action over the other, or may be affected by previously held beliefs that resist this action (For example: divorce is evil), or beliefs that reinforce the considered action (For example: all marriages are doomed to fail). The same case applies to the coach, considering the idea of divorce, the coach may be holding resisting beliefs, reinforcing beliefs, or be neutral towards the topic. The coloured cells of the matrix represent possible outcomes of the combination of the coach's and coachee's beliefs towards the discussed issue:

A. Having similar beliefs may improve rapport but may hinder criticality.

B. Having contradicting beliefs may result in a critical discussion. This discussion may however be emotional and disruptive to the relationship.

C. If the coachee is neutral, but the coach has specific beliefs about the topic, the overall discussion and decisions may become reflective of the coach's dispositions.



		Coach's belief related to Decision		
		Resisting Belief	Neutral or Free	Re-enforcing Belief
Coachee's belief related to Decision	Resisting Belief	A Rapport, No Criticality	D Use disorientation to elicit critical reflection	B Emotional debate, Some Criticality
	Neutral	C Directive, Coach's agenda!	No Criticality Required	C Directive, Coach's agenda!
	Re-enforcing Belief	B Emotional debate, Some Criticality	D Challenge, Create Doubt, Reflect	A Rapport, No Criticality

Figure 3.4 Coach-Coachee Beliefs Matrix

D. The only scenario with a positive outcome is when the coach is able to maintain neutrality over the topic. This may happen naturally given the topic being discussed, but is also possible if the coach has gone through a process of development and critical reflection that would allow him/her to be free from the implications of his/her own beliefs and focusing entirely on the coaching process.

D. Critical Reflection

Purpose:

To enable the coachee to critically reflect on assumptions about self, others and the world

Key Tenets:

- Critical Reflection requires an integral approach that balances focus on self and the world.

Detailed Description:

This block is further broken down into six sub-blocks that are shown in figure 3.5. These blocks are presented in detail in the following pages. The six blocks have no specific order in terms of their use during coaching. The blocks are organised in two categories: Inside Out, and Outside In:

- The Inside-Out blocks have as a starting point the personal experience of the coachee. They emerge from a focus on the self, and reflect on how the self acts in the world.
- The Outside-In blocks have as a starting point the external world. They are intended to change the centre of focus away from the self. They reflect on how the world affects the personal experience, and what it offers as renewal opportunities.

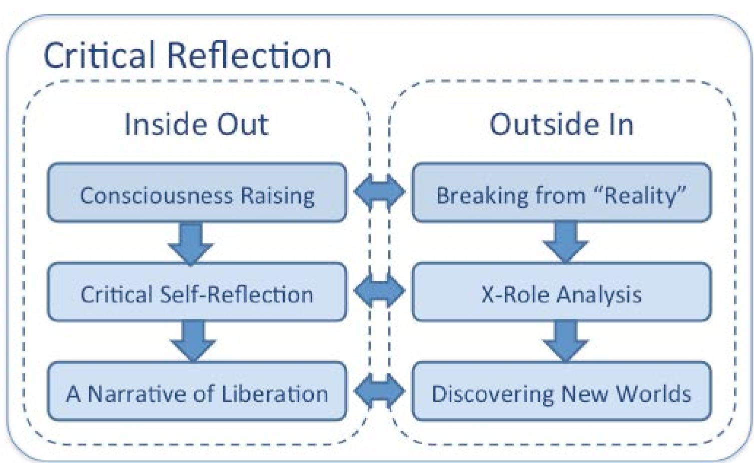


Figure 3.5 Critical Reflection Structure

The model is built on a concept of integration and balance between the two perspectives:

- Too much focus on the Inside-Out dimension is a feature of most coaching and psychotherapeutic approaches (Swan, 2010; Western, 2012). This over-occupation with the self may risk becoming a form of narcissism. Furthermore, it may result in the coachee losing many perspectives and opportunities outside their personal experience, and can become a limitation for growth, in terms of forcing the individual to accept the boundaries of his/her current reality.

From the other side, too much focus on the Outside-In dimension can hardly result in any change. An over-occupation with the world may lead to it becoming an escape from facing one's reality; it may lead to theoretical rationalisation and engagement with universal perspectives that would not lead to a real reflection on the self.

These elements of Inside Out and Outside In are discussed in more detail below. Suggested tools are also provided for the blocks in this category in order to make their implementation easier for the coaches:

CR1: Consciousness Raising

Purpose:

Starting from the lived experience, to become aware of one's oppressive conditions

Key Tenets:

- Change starts from the lived experience. The personal is political.

Detailed Description:

Consciousness raising is an approach adapted from the feminist movement (Hart, 1990), and the culture circles in the critical pedagogy approach (Freire & Macedo, 2001). It has been generally done in groups rather than the one-to-one coaching sessions. It is mainly based on helping coachees to talk about their daily experiences, and then use these narratives to discover unjust conditions and situations that need to be changed.

Suggested Tools:

How do you live this?	Starting from pictures, or through a direct question, the coach invites the coachee to talk, from his/her daily experience, about how he/she lives the idea of … [work, marriage, home, church, money, family, expression], Ask for examples, facts, ideas and feelings.
My life as …	If your life is a … [house, island], can you describe it? Describe the rooms, their size, shape, colour, and sounds. How much time do you spend in each room, why? Why do I leave the room? Who stays with me? What do I want to change?

Life Curve	Draw your [whole life, one day] on a curve, can you talk about it?
The Play	If your Life (Specific Situation or Relationship) is a theatrical play, is it a drama or a comedy…? Who is telling the story? How would an external viewer describe the play?
Consciousness Raising	Taking the narrative from any of the above approaches or direct questions: 1. The coach retells the story in an abstracted way 2. What do you think? Is this a good expression of your life? 3. Hearing the story, what descriptions do you think of? 4. What are the real needs you see behind this story? 5. What does that tell you about your life? 6. How has this story become as it is? 7. Is this your story alone? 8. How do you want to describe your story in the future? 9. What needs to happen for this story to change?

CR2: Breaking from Reality

Purpose:

To break from the daily cycle of oppression, to open space for change

Key Tenets:

- Breaking the circle of daily reality and the exaggerated focus on the self can provide a fresh starting point for emancipatory journeys

Detailed Description:

In many cases, people are so embedded in their daily constraints to the extent that they cannot see their lives from any different perspective; they are locked in their own experience. This block intends to break this association, by encouraging coachees to engage in a rich experience completely out of their daily realities. This concept was developed in a training programme that I delivered in Egypt in 2007. It also echoes and expands the view of Marcuse (2007) that liberating transformations are only possible after one has dissociated oneself from the

contaminated influences of the day-to-day reality, through – for example – immersion in artistic experience.

Suggested Tools:

Silence	Commit to few days, or few hours a day, of complete silence. No written or visual communication as well. What do you hear in the silence? Do you hear your different voices? Do you see hidden parts of you? What new sounds around you? What new images you become aware of when you watch in silence? Is silence a comfortable place? Why? What noises are you happy to get rid of? What sounds are you missing?
Art	Immerse yourself completely in a work of art. (Not one that speaks to your mind but one that speaks to your senses)
Nature	Leave the city and spend several days in direct contact with nature, in desert, mountains, or the sea.
Natural Sciences	Using a selected library of documentary movies, immerse yourself in the richness of the universe. Spend time looking at how other species live and engage with the world from their perspective.
History & Culture	Using a selected library of documentary movies, immerse yourself in the lives of other human beings, living in other times and cultures.
Literature	Read few items from a selected library of novels, short stories and children stories. Literature has the ability to take the reader into a world of free images.
Physical Activity	[If this is not part of your daily routine], engage yourself in a physical activity, like exercise, playing, dancing, or yoga. Seek to be completely immersed in the activity, focusing on breathing, the movement of the muscles, and the physical environment that you interact with. Make this activity your primary focus for a number of weeks.

CR3: Critical Self-Reflection

Purpose:

To critically review taken-for-granted beliefs on self, others and the world

Key Tenets:

- Our meaning perspectives guide our interpretations and our actions. For change to happen, these perspectives need to be continuously and critically reviewed.
- Critical reflection is primarily cognitive, but requires emotional support to succeed.

Detailed Description:

There is an abundant theoretical and practical literature on critical reflection, especially in the fields of transformative learning and action research. Critical self-reflection involves the examination of a personal experience and reflecting on it to uncover the key assumptions that lead to how the person interprets and acts on the experience. These assumptions are then critically evaluated and reviewed, and either kept or changed. From a dialectical perspective, reviewed assumptions are hardly just proven right or wrong, as through the process of critical reflection new – higher-order – assumptions are developed; ones that include within them the dialectical nature of old assumptions.

Reflection may happen on three levels, identified by Mezirow (1991):

- Reflection may start from the *content* of the experience (What happens),
- It can then evolve into a reflection on the *process* (How it happens).
- Then, most importantly, it may focus on the premises upon which the experience is interpreted and acted upon (Why it happens).

Suggested Tools:

Critical Incident Analysis

Taking one incident (Through dialogue or a reflective journal):

1. What happened, describe it as objectively as possible
2. What were my thoughts? What were my feelings?
3. How did I judge the incident? How can I explain my thoughts and feelings? On what basis did I make that judgement?

4. What different voices existed in me? How do I evaluate them?
5. Are there similarities between my action in this situation and other situations?
6. What messages do I consistently repeat to myself?
7. What am I assuming about myself/the other/the world?
8. Can I make a list of all my assumptions around this topic?
9. How can I judge whether these assumptions are valid?
10. How can I see this differently?
11. What is my responsibility/freedom over this experience?

The Big Assumptions List	A list of over 50 assumptions, partially adapted from Powell (1976), is presented to the coachee to pick relevant ones for discussion 1. When did I started believing this assumption 2. How did my social circle affect this belief? 3. How did my personal experience affect this belief? 4. How can I evaluate the validity of this assumption? 5. Can I see this assumption from other perspectives? 6. How can I reformulate this assumption to be more valid?
Internal Dialogue	Think about a situation where I experience strong guilt, passion, or confusion, then imagine the most important person I want to have a discussion with about this situation, a person whom his/her opinion is present in my feeling: • How do they see me? What are they saying? • How it impacts me? • What is my reply to what is being said? • Am I hearing the real message? Is what they are saying true? Is the impact it has on me suitable? • What is my own belief about the situation? Is it different from theirs?

- How do I want to see the situation?
- How do I want to act?

CR4: X-Role Analysis

Purpose:

To become critically aware of the impact of society on one's beliefs about self and others

Key Tenets:

- We learn much of our beliefs and actions through a life-long process of socialisation.
- One can become free from the negative impacts of this process by deconstructing the social roles, messages and power dynamics.

Detailed Description:

Much of this block is adapted from the concepts of gender roles and power analysis used as key tools in feminist therapy (Evans, Kincade, & Seem, 2010). The term 'X-Role' is used to expand the concept to different types of socially constructed roles, such as disability, social class, education, religion and many others. During a coaching session, coachees may come to realise that much of what they are experiencing is related to their X-Role.

This block also questions our process of interacting with the society, including the role of the media on shaping knowledge, the role of the situation or context in defining behaviour, and the role of power in organising social interactions.

Suggested Tools:

X-Role Analysis

Starting from pictures, or through a direct question, pick a context (e.g. work, marriage, and education), incident, or topic (e.g. self-esteem).

Coach explains role analysis from a specific perspective, then asks

- What messages are related to the X-Role in this scene
- How do these messages affect the scene?
- What messages do I conform to or believe in?
- What messages have I internalised? How does that

	impact my life? - What do I want to change/keep?
Situation Analysis	Draw multiple circles to represent the different contexts you live in - How different is my life in these different circles? Why? - What rules do I have to follow? What roles do I have to play? - What do I like/hate about these different roles? - How does this context/situation affect me?
Power Analysis	Coach explains the concept of power, and how every situation includes the use of power from one or more of the parties involved. Coach presents a list of different powers that are commonly used (e.g. violence, coercion, reward, legitimate, information) - What power do I use? What power is exerted on me? - What power can I use? What power can I use in a better way? - What do I want this to look like? - How can I make it work for me?
Media Analysis	Pick a number of different sources of information that I use (e.g. newspapers, TV Channels, online pages, political parties) - Draw a map of values that shows similarities and differences. - Decode the messages (style, language, questions, setting, time), Reflect on how different values lead to different content - Reflect on my choice of sources from which I acquire information, and on the impact of their bias on my views.

CR5: Discovering New Worlds

Purpose:

To open new possibilities for understanding and action

Key Tenets:

- Development can be measured by the multiplicity of perspectives
- Experimentation of thoughts and actions opens up new worlds of possibilities

Detailed Description:

This block aims to support the coachee in opening up as many new possibilities as possible. This is done through reflecting on the experience from multiple different perspectives, and through conducting thought and action experiments. These experiments act as a safe environment for testing new ideas, relationships, and behaviours.

Suggested Tools:

Empty Chairs

This exercise is adapted from a technique developed by J. L. Moreno, the father of psychodrama, and used in Gestalt therapy (Dayton, 1990). It is especially useful in reflecting on relationship issues.

- Setup the coaching room to include multiple chairs. Coachee is asked to imagine empty chairs as other persons in the relationship
- How do you see the other person? What do you want to tell him/her? What do you want from this person?
- Coachee then sits on the other chair and is asked the same questions
- Coachee then takes a far position, looking at all chairs, and asked to describe the scene, and can this scene be improved.
- Coachee can re-arrange the chairs to reflect the ideal setup
- Sitting on the original chair, the questions are then repeated

Forum Theatre

This exercise is adapted from the work of Boal (2002) in the theatre of the oppressed. Coachee starts by telling a story that depicts current situation.

- The story is then acted and repeated by the coach.

- Coachee is asked to shout 'stop' at any point he/she thinks there are alternatives that can be considered.
- Coachee acts different alternatives and discusses how they can lead to different outcomes.

What If

- The problem is solved?
- You are at your most resourcefulness?
- You assume the opposite of what you believe?
- The power leverage is reversed?
- The X-Role is changed?
- You take action?
- This is as good as it gets?
- The problem is maximised?
- You are the other person in the story?

Letter Write a letter or draw a picture to the relevant people telling them about your new beliefs, decisions, or feelings

New Worlds Join new circles where you can experiment with your revised beliefs with less stress and prejudice.

CR6: Narrative of Liberation

Purpose:

To formulate a new narrative about self in a journey of development and emancipation

Key Tenets:

- We become our stories

Detailed Description:

This block aims to synthesise and formulate the overall coaching journey in one connected narrative. It is built gradually over the different phases of the coaching process, and is used explicitly at specific points to provide reference points for the coachee. As the coaching process evolves towards the end, the narrative of liberation becomes one of the main outcomes of coaching, one that the coachee can continue building beyond coaching.

Suggested Tools:

Figure 3.6 depicts example blocks in the narrative of liberation and the role of the coach in supporting the process of creating this narrative.

E. Reflective Action

Purpose:

To integrate learning and action

Key Tenets:

- Action and Reflection are integral to one another; only through action can learning be complete, and only in reflection can action become sustainable.

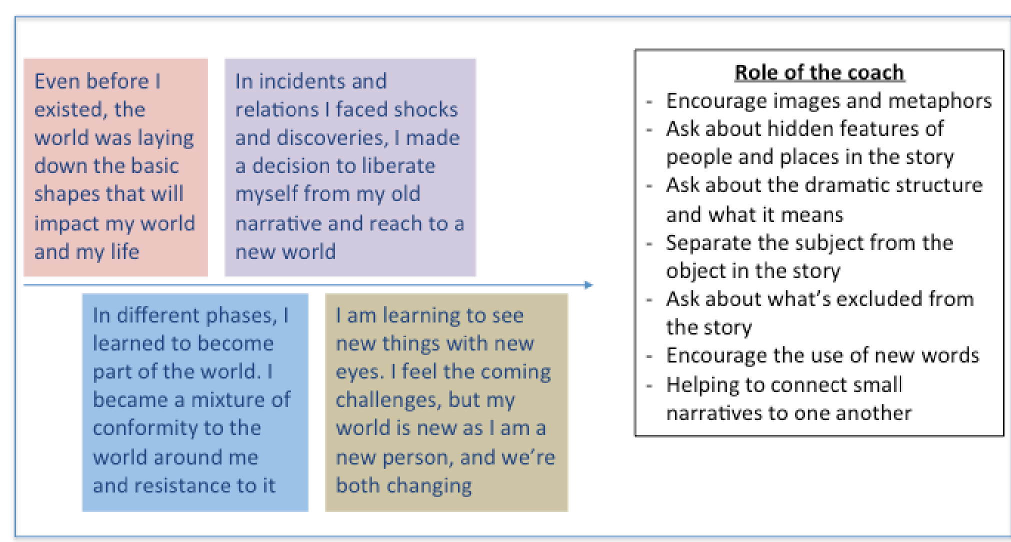


Figure 3.6 Narrative of Liberation

Detailed Description:

Reflecting and learning in action belongs to a long tradition of educational theories. Schön (1987), building on John Dewey's propositions, argues that observing and critiquing our actions gives rise to new improved ones. Freire (1970, 1974) emphasises the need for a praxis that integrates action with reflection, as one without the other would result in an unauthentic form of existence either way.

This block aims to support action that leads to change and learning. From as early as possible in the coaching process, concrete steps are encouraged. No matter how small these steps may seem in the beginning, they are key to restoring hope and empowering coachees with the realisation that they have a choice. Reflective

action is also an integral part in the process of learning and internal emancipation. Action originates from the learning that occurs in coaching, and then generates new learning through a process of critical reflection. In the context of oppressive environments, action is also seen as an act of resistance that challenges the oppressive system and can initiate change.

Supporting action requires an understanding of different dynamics:

- **The Readiness to Act**: Using models like the transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984), suitable coaching interventions can be used to cope with the phase the coachee is at. For example, focusing on raising awareness and doubt during the pre-contemplation phase, as opposed to building an action plan in the preparation phase.
- **Stage of Transition**: According to Bridges (1980), change is an external phenomenon, that can cause, or be caused by, a slower psychological process of internal transition. By understanding the stage of transition of the coachee, the coach can choose the appropriate strategy to support that stage. For example, asking about what will change and what will remain stable in the ending phase, as opposed to visioning success in the new beginning phase.
- **External and Internal Forces**: Using a modelling tool like Force Field Analysis (Lewin, 1943), the coachee can reflect on the forces driving towards action or blocking it, whether these forces are internal or external. Discussion can then take place around shifting the balance of forces towards supporting action.

Summary

In this chapter, the initial coaching model was presented. Figure 3.7 shows the different blocks of the model. The two vertical blocks, covering philosophy and development are fundamental to the coach's learning. The higher and lower horizontal blocks, empowering dialogue and reflective action, describe the two forms of activities that take place throughout the coaching process. The critical reflection block, broken down into the six sub-blocks, is the heart of the coaching model, where coaches can move freely between different strategies and interventions in order to support a critical review of the coachee's frames of reference. The process of developing this initial model involved an exploration of many theoretical and practical approaches, as well as reflection on my own

coaching practice. The search was centred on the theory underpinning oppression, emancipation and development, and the question of how to support emancipation through coaching: what the coach needs to know, to believe in, and to do during the coaching process?

Many elements in the model, when initially conceived, generated more questions than answers. This is how it was presented to the coaches, as a theory in progress and an emergent framework model that cannot be developed further without authentic knowledge generated through reflective practice. As presented in chapter two, the second half of the training focused on providing the coaches with the tools to engage with the cooperative inquiry, encouraging a critical stance to the initial model, and a collaborative approach to the generation of new theory. In the next chapter, I provide a detailed description of the research methodology.

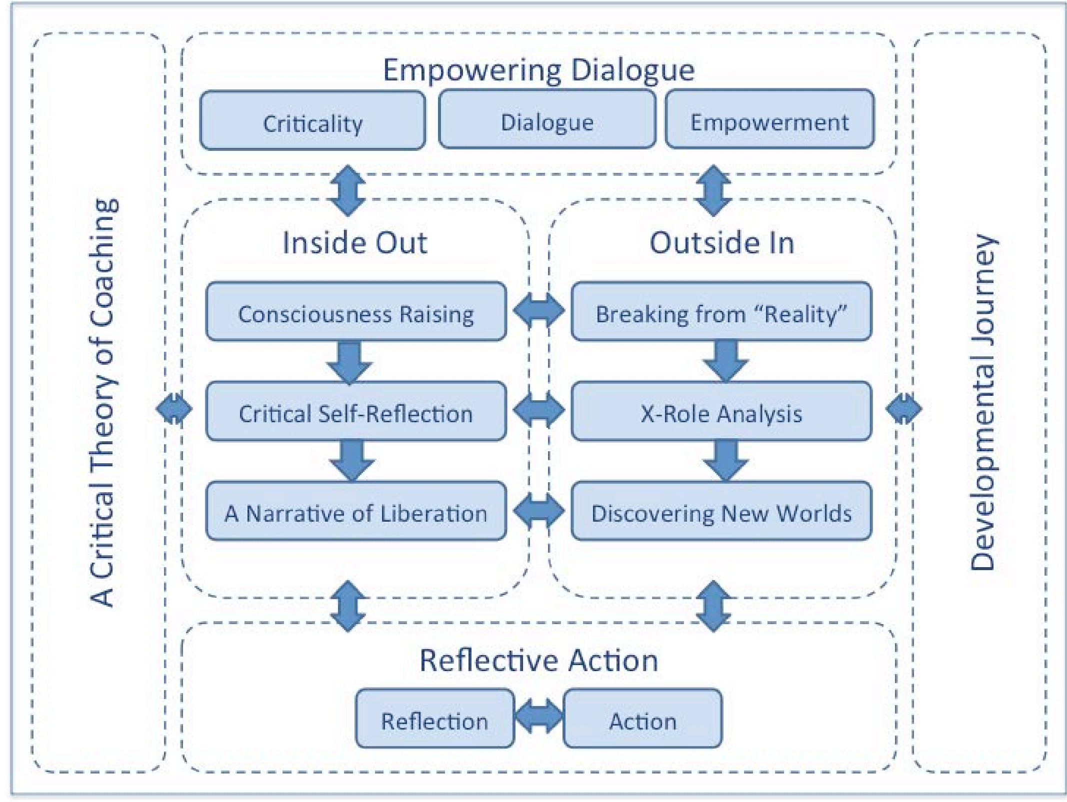


Figure 3.7 Initial Coaching Model - Detailed

4. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to develop a theoretical and practical framework of coaching to support the emancipation and development of individuals in oppressive environments. In this chapter, I present the methodological approach and procedural steps taken in the study. It starts by discussing the philosophical assumptions and practical choices that underlie the methodology. Next, I present the detailed research procedures, together with the analysis method and a discussion of how the different voices in the study are considered. Finally, I discuss the key concepts related to the research validity and ethical considerations, as well as the structure used in the presentation of the findings. It is important to note that, while the general methodology has been defined before data collection started, many of the discussed procedures were co-created with the inquiry group throughout the inquiry. This is due to the participatory and cyclical nature of the chosen methodology. The choice of approach and methodology has also evolved through a process of reflection on how best to address the complexity of doing research in oppressive environments. I try to make this evolutionary process as explicit as possible in the relevant sections.

A. Research Paradigm: Critical Theory

The aim and approach of this study originate from a critical theory paradigm that defines my view and role as a researcher-practitioner. Critical Theory (CT) – as a research paradigm – maintains a historical-realist ontology; proposing that we live in a virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, ethnic, economic, and gender values; crystallised over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). But no matter how pervasive this reality may seem, people can still reconstruct their world through action and critical reflection (Voce, 2004). Critical Theory holds that epistemology is dialogical, and that knowledge is created by inquiry through a dynamic interaction with the environment (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Knowledge is constituted through the lived experience, and is understood within social and economic contexts. The contextual nature of CT research means that its outcomes are also related to a specific context, but may be applied in other contexts as hypotheses to be tested.

Critical theory maintains that facts can never be isolated from values, especially those of the researcher (Voce, 1994). In critical theory, the researcher is rooted in concrete experience, highly critical, uncovering power relations, promoting liberation, and critically self-reflective. Critical researchers side with the oppressed in seeking to promote a better world through their work (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). In reflecting upon my own values, I believe in the right of every individual to be fully human, and I believe, alongside Freire (1970), that becoming fully human is a vocation that gets distorted by the effect of oppression. The reality of oppression needs to be recognised and contested at the same time. Denying oppression as an external reality denies us the means to understand and fight it, while approving its existence without critical analysis fails to expose how it is artificially and socially constructed. As a researcher-practitioner, I believe that although the act of humanisation can only be defined and owned by each individual, there is a need for theoretical and practical knowledge that supports the individuals' struggle for emancipation. I approach this research with the hope that it will have such an effect.

The critical paradigm drives the purpose of this study as well as the choice of methodology. In critical theory, research has a role in promoting critical consciousness, breaking down structures that produce oppressive ideologies and social inequalities, shifting the balance of power, and supporting emancipation (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Critical theory links the purpose and validity of the research to the possibility of emancipatory action done by the participants or as a result of the created knowledge (Kemmis, 2000). The same view is shared across different critical traditions; in the critical pedagogy paradigm, research is done by practitioners and originates from praxis (Kincheloe et al., 2011). The work of Freire (1970) in critical pedagogy has been a key inspiration for participatory action research, emphasising research done with people rather than on people, and establishing the link between research and action as one of its core tenets (Kemmis, 2000). Similarly, in the participatory inquiry paradigm defined by Heron and Reason (1997), inquiry is often incomplete without action on the part of participants, and knowledge is co-created in a democratic dialogue that engages participants in the creation of both content and method of the inquiry. Herr and Anderson (2005) note the similarity between the above views: "Although Freire was influenced by Marx and liberation theology, and Heron by humanistic

psychology, both are concerned with using participatory research as a way to highlight paths toward greater humanisation and away from dehumanisation. In both models, our ontological vocation is to become more fully human" (p. 16). The methodology put forward by Heron and Reason (1997) is a form of participatory action research that they termed "Co-operative Inquiry". Lessem and Schieffer (2010) describe co-operative inquiry as a methodological choice that stems naturally from a critical theory worldview. It will be covered in more detail in the following section.

B. Methodology: Co-operative Inquiry

Co-operative Inquiry (CI) has been chosen as the methodology for this study and as suggested above, the choice of CI is driven both by philosophical and research considerations. CI is described as a research 'with' people rather than 'on' people (Heron & Reason, 2008), and also described as an inquiry in action (Reason, 1988). These two features are deemed key in a study that involves people living in oppressive environments. Freire (1970) is adamant that any effort to fight oppression must happen 'with and by' the oppressed rather than for them, he also warns about only doing action without reflection (activism) or focusing on theory without real change (verbalism).

From a research perspective, as shown in chapter 2, there are no studies on coaching in oppressive environments, and no published models of coaching for emancipatory purposes. The fact that coaches living in oppressive environments would also be affected by their contexts implies the need for them to be partners in the inquiry rather than mere participants. The final reason for choosing CI is the emphasis that it has on issues of validity as will be explained in a later section. In making the choice of the methodology, it was important to make it coherent with the purpose and values underpinning the study. I believe that research done in the context of oppression needs to follow the same emancipatory principles that are driving its aim. I wanted the methodology to allow a direct engagement with oppressive environments, and to ensure that such engagement will be empowering and generative of new knowledge and practices.

Co-operative inquiry involves two or more people researching a topic through their own experience of it, using a series of cycles in which they move between this experience and reflecting on it. Everyone is co-subject in the experience

phases and co-researcher in the reflection phases. Everyone is as involved as possible in research decisions about both content and method (Heron, 1996). As shown in Figure 4.1, adapted from Heron (1996), the research usually involves four stages, and four forms of knowledge, co-inquirers move between acting as co-researchers (R), and co-subjects (S).

In stage 1, co-researchers collaborate to define the question and the methodology (propositional knowing). In stage 2, they apply the method in practice (practical knowing). In stage 3, they become, as co-subjects, completely immersed in their experience, leading to new awareness (experiential knowing). In stage 4 they reflect on their experience, using a wide array of cognitive and intuitive forms of knowing, they find ways to express their reflection (presentational knowing); and find a revised propositional understanding of the originating questions (propositional knowing). Stages 2 to 4 are repeated several times until the inquiry group decides to stop.

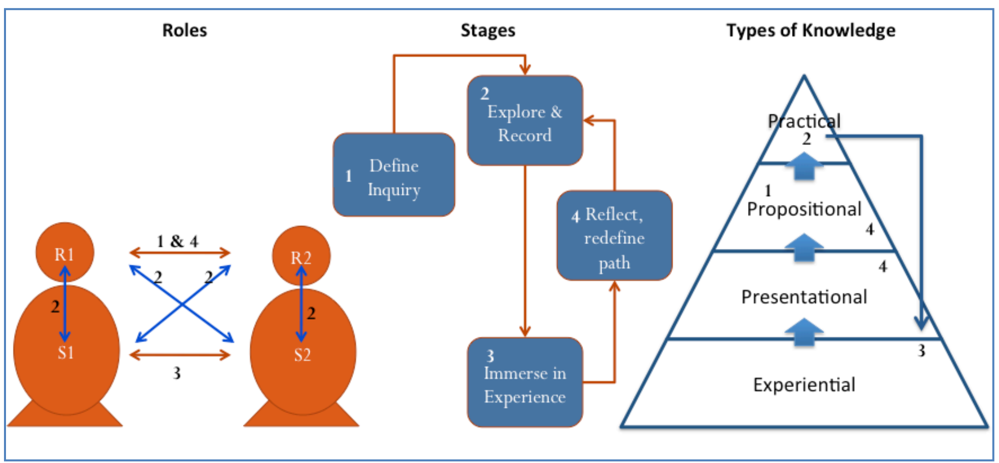


Figure 4.1 Stages of Co-operative Inquiry in this Study

Following these stages, the current study involved the development of an initial model of coaching for emancipation (stage 1), training and supervising a number of coaches, also acting as co-inquirers, to use the model in practice (stage 2), living the coaching experience fully (stage 3), and meeting regularly with the inquiry group to reflect on the experience and to evaluate and improve the coaching model (stage 4). The detailed steps are explained in a later section of this chapter. There are many variants of co-operative inquiry, Table 4.1 defines the current study using the typology developed by Heron (1996):

Full or Partial Cooperation	**Partial**: Co-inquirers are partially involved in the design of the research, and the researcher is not fully involved in all aspects of the experience
Internal or External	**Internal:** Researcher is internal to the inquiry focus, culture and practice
Same or Different Role	**Same Role**: All co-inquirers have the same role as coaches
Inside or Outside focus	**Outside Focus:** Co-inquirers are working with coachees outside the group
Open or Closed Boundary	**Open Boundary:** Some feedback is collected from the coachees who are external to the inquiry.
Systemic or Non-Systemic process	**Systemic:** A rational, linear, and explicit approach to the research cycling.
Transformative or Informative purpose	**Transformative:** Inquiry is primarily concerned with improving practice.

Table 4.1 Methodological Typology of the Inquiry

The choice of the above setup involved a number of reflections. Initially, I examined the possibility of doing the inquiry directly with coachees, while playing the role of the coach as well as the role of the main researcher. I discarded this option with the view that it would be more powerful for both the coaches and coachees to be living in the same environment throughout the time of the research, and that it would also allow for more coachees to be part of the study. I also considered including my own coaching practice as part of the inquiry. In reflecting upon the power dynamics in the designed group, I decided not to include my practice, for fear that my own reflections on the coaching model would be perceived by the group as more relevant, given the fact that I produced the initial coaching model. Instead, I decided to only act as facilitator during the group discussions, allowing group members to leverage their direct access to the experience during the action phases of the study. Following the same reasoning, I also discarded the idea of creating a group that is composed of both coaches and coachees, with the acknowledgment that not having the coachees as internal to the inquiry might exclude an aspect of the experience that would need to be covered in future research, but it would allow the group to focus more on their experience as practitioners.

Another important aspect of the methodology is the choice of Egypt as a model environment. I have covered the background and conditions of Egypt in the

introduction chapter. The choice of Egypt as a context took place in late 2010, few months before the revolution started in January 2011. At that time, it was possible for insiders to see how oppressive conditions were presenting themselves in every aspect of people's lives. The choice of the context was revalidated in the second half of 2011, as it became even clearer that the ousting of a dictator was far from enough to threaten the structure of oppression. Issues of oppression were also becoming clearer and easier to expose because the environment was bursting with ideas of hope and liberation. In hindsight, I believe that the timing of the study was an important factor in making its scope and aim more relevant to the participants. Choosing to do the study in one country is based on the assumption that the dynamics of oppression are cross-cultural. In the meantime, findings need to be critically examined in order to discriminate between what is a product of the structure of oppression, and what is a product of a specific culture at a historical point. I reflect further on the impact of context and time in chapter 10.

C. Research Procedures

The following sections provide the steps taken in the study. The study took place between December 2011 and August 2012, and included three research cycles and a final reflective workshop. The steps described below include the work done before the study, the invitation and demographics of coaches, the development of the initial coaching model, the training and initiation of the inquiry group, the invitation and demographics of coachees, and a detailed account of the activities in the action and reflection phases of the inquiry.

1. Pre-study Co-operative Meetings

In the spirit of setting a participatory approach from the beginning, an informal discussion group was established with a number of Egyptian coaches/trainers almost a year before the invitation for the formal inquiry was sent. This group was helpful in exchanging ideas about oppression, development and emancipation in the context of the Egyptian culture. The group included five participants, and had four meetings over a period of six months, after which informal collaboration continued with one participant who also attended the last reflective workshop with the formal inquiry group.

2. Invitation of Coaches

The formal invitation to join the inquiry group was sent in December 2011. The invitation consisted of a short description of the project, required commitment and sought profiles. It was posted on Facebook and Twitter, and sent via email to a number of individuals who forwarded it to their respective networks. The main focus in the distribution strategy was on reaching individuals working in the human development field, who would find the project relevant to the challenges they are experiencing. A translated copy of the invitation is in Appendix A.

A participant information sheet (Appendix B) was sent to all 51 individuals who expressed interest in the study. Of those, 38 completed all the information required, including their age, contacts, career and educational background, vocational background and the main driver for them to be part of this group. Clarifications were sought or offered via email or phone where required. A total of 20 candidates were invited to the first orientation meeting. The selection criteria were that the invited individuals needed to meet one of the following conditions:

- Currently involved in human development activities; working or actively seeking to become coaches, trainers or educators.
- Currently working or have direct access to a community where they can apply the coaching model on a voluntary basis, such as NGOs, political parties, or awareness raising initiatives.

During the first meeting, time commitments were discussed, and 12 individuals confirmed they were happy to commit to the full study, and were asked to sign the research consent forms (Appendix C). Two coaches had to drop out of the inquiry after the first cycle for personal reasons. The inquiry group continued with ten co-inquirers and myself for the remainder of the study.

2.1. Coaches Demographics

Figure 4.2 describes the demographics of the inquiry group members. Figure 4.3 provides a brief description of the types of voluntary work they were doing at the time they joined the inquiry. Participating coaches have chosen the names they are represented by in this study.

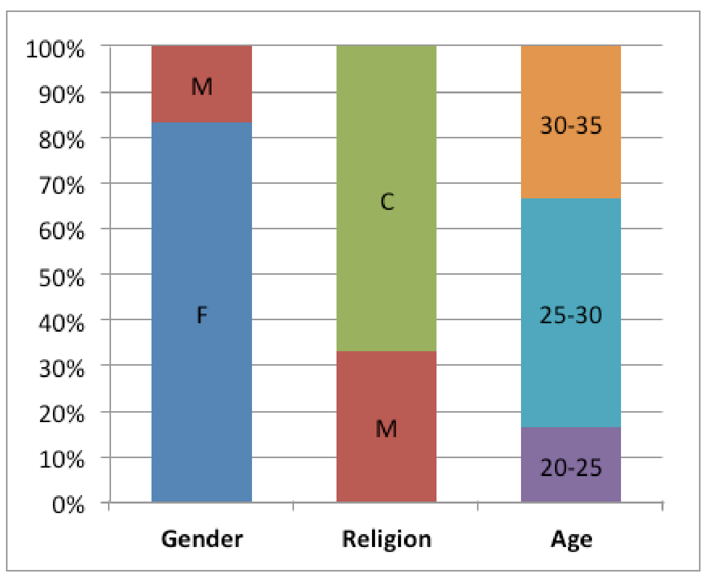
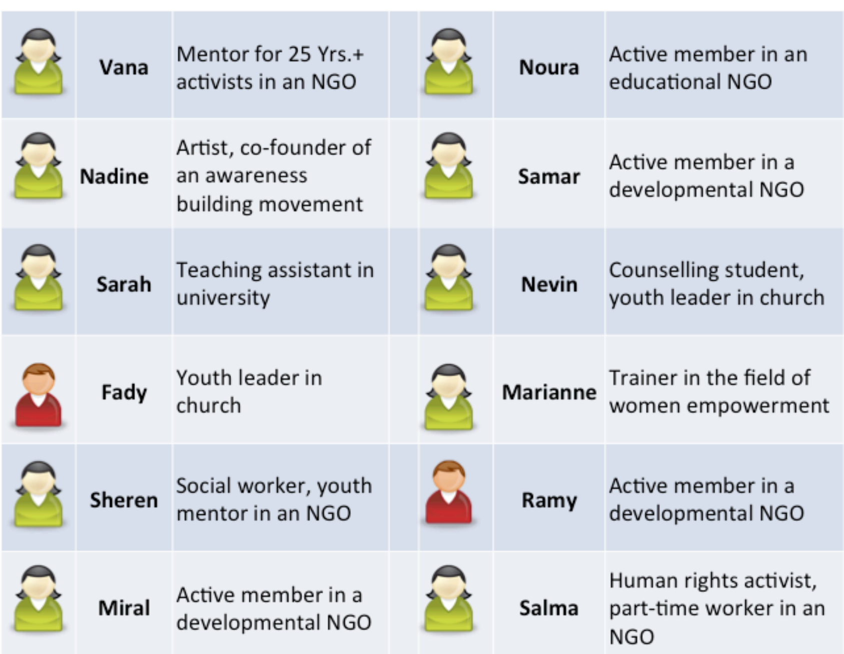


Figure 4.2 Demographics of the Coaches

The composition of the group in Figure 4.2 reveals the following facts:

- Female coaches were vastly over-represented in the group. This can be partially explained by the fact that vocational and developmental work in Egypt is generally more dominated by females, as males are more inclined to seek higher paying jobs in the private sector.



	Name	Background		Name	Background
	Vana	Mentor for 25 Yrs.+ activists in an NGO		**Noura**	Active member in an educational NGO
	Nadine	Artist, co-founder of an awareness building movement		**Samar**	Active member in a developmental NGO
	Sarah	Teaching assistant in university		**Nevin**	Counselling student, youth leader in church
	Fady	Youth leader in church		**Marianne**	Trainer in the field of women empowerment
	Sheren	Social worker, youth mentor in an NGO		**Ramy**	Active member in a developmental NGO
	Miral	Active member in a developmental NGO		**Salma**	Human rights activist, part-time worker in an NGO

Figure 4.3 Description of the inquiry group members' background

- All the female coaches were single. This is an important dimension, as the social norms in Egypt are generally more discriminating against

unmarried, divorced, or widowed females. Meanwhile, three female candidates who submitted their applications had to withdraw from being in the inquiry group because of issues related to their male partners.

- Christian coaches were also over represented. This might be the impact of the snowball approach to the distribution of the invitation.
- Average age was relatively low. This is normal, as the population pyramid in Egypt is highly skewed towards younger ages, and culture does not encourage older people to start learning new things.
- None of the inquiry group members was a practicing coach. This is also normal as coaching is barely a known word in Egypt. It is also a word that does not exist in Arabic (Coach is the same as trainer in Arabic), and therefore people do not identify themselves as such.

3. Initial Coaching Model

Lennard (2010) defines a coaching model as "a general guide or a framework of ideas for understanding and navigating an approach to coaching" (p. 4). She argues that models can be used to facilitate the process of inquiry and offers a set of reflective activities for practitioners to define their own models. The initial coaching model, presented in detail in chapter 3, included three distinct layers:

- A theoretical/philosophical layer: Describing the beliefs, values and theoretical frameworks that underpin coaching for emancipation.
- A process layer: Describing the key blocks in the coaching process
- A practice layer: Describing useful tools and interventions that can be used during coaching

The initial coaching model originated from a mixture of exploration of the literature, my personal experience and practice, and adaptations from other non-coaching approaches relevant to the emancipatory purpose of the model. The approaches covered in the literature review (chapter 2) were the main sources of ideas of what a model of coaching for emancipation would include. Following the definition of its main components, the coaching model was transformed into a training programme in Arabic that aims to initiate participants into the coaching practice as well as the research project. It might be argued that the coaching

model and the training on it are not distinct from one another. For the co-inquirers, following the training was the way they came to appreciate the initial model. This included their questions, discussions and concerns as a group. Hence, by the time the training was completed, the model had already been enriched by their discussions. The model presented in chapter three is the product of my initial work and the discussions that took place during the initial training, making the distinction where relevant.

4. Training and Initiation of the inquiry group

The training took place over approximately eight full days. It included two parts:

1. **Training on the coaching model:** this included both a theoretical training on the model, and a set of practical exercises and peer coaching sessions. It also included interactive debates and exercises to initiate the group into critical thinking.
2. **Initiation of the inquiry group:** this included the key aspects relevant to the inquiry process and group dynamics.

4.1. Training on the coaching model

The theoretical training mainly followed the structure of the coaching model. It started with an overview of coaching and different coaching models. Next, the overall coaching model was discussed in an interactive manner, covering the topics shown in table 4.2.

A special focus was put on taking a critical stance. For this to be achieved, a number of exercises were introduced to encourage participants to discover their own assumptions, linguistic biases, and prejudices. Many examples were used from their day-to-day context, touching on political topics, gender, class, religion, parental relations and so forth.

Almost half the training time was spent in practical training, this included:

- Modelling coaching sessions and interventions in front of the group.
- Filming interventions and discussing them with the group after watching.
- Analysing a written script of a coaching session.
- Peer coaching, with coach and coachee evaluating the experience.
- Peer coaching, with an observer, sharing comments in the whole group.

- Peer coaching, with another coach acting as shadow (offering advice to coach).

Philosophical Foundation
Does oppression exist? Where do I stand? How does it work? What does it do to us? Is there hope?
Psychological Grounding
Developmental Theories, Coaching Dilemmas
Enabling an Empowering Dialogue
Empowerment, Criticality, Dialogue
Key Approaches for Critical Reflection
1. Consciousness Raising 2. Breaking from Reality 3. Critical Self-Reflection 4. X-Role Analysis 5. Discovering New Worlds 6. Narrative of Liberation
Reflective Action

Table 4.2 Topics of the Training on the Coaching Model

The training needed to strike – in terms of length – a fine balance between providing coaches with enough confidence in their ability to apply the model, and avoiding making them too comfortable with it, in order to maintain their criticality and their freedom to experiment with the model. Feedback was being collected throughout the training to try to gauge that balance.

4.2. Initiation of the Inquiry Group

Heron (1996) argues that there are three fundamental issues to consider during the initiation of a co-operative inquiry group:

1. The initiation of the group members into the methodology of the inquiry, so that they can make it their own.
2. The emergence of participative decision-making and collaboration.
3. The creation of an emotionally supportive environment.

Heron calls them methodological, political, and emotional empowerment, respectively. Figure 4.4 shows the framework for the initiation of the group.

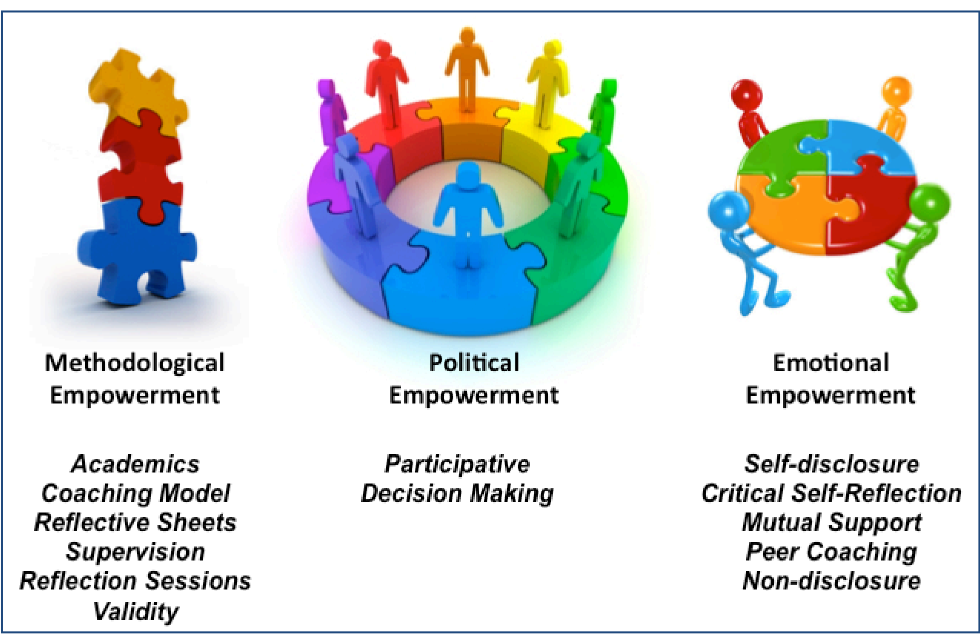


Figure 4.4 Framework for Initiating the Inquiry Group

4.2.1. Methodological Empowerment

Even before the first orientation session, much attention was given to making all the methodological choices of the study as clear, accessible and open to discussion as possible. The academic context of the research was explained, as well as the structure of the expected resulting publications. The ethical procedures followed were also explained. During the training session, Co-operative inquiry was introduced to the group. The reasons behind the selection of the methodology, its stages, and the roles of the co-inquirers were discussed. The reflective sheets that were prepared for the use of data collection were explained. Every session, suggestions were made on how to improve the reflective forms, and these suggestions were incorporated into the following cycles of the inquiry. As the coaching process included monthly supervision sessions with all coaches, the supervision model to be used was explained. Before every group session, the structure and methods of the sessions were explained in detail. Finally, the issue of research validity was discussed.

4.2.2. Political Empowerment

Establishing participative decision-making took place in two dimensions. First, some basic concepts were presented, using frameworks and models of

participation and group dynamics from Heron (1999) and Kaner (2011). Next, a group discussion was held to agree the ground rules of the group meetings and the decision-making mechanisms.

Another important aspect in establishing participation was the facilitation style. Facilitation had to be democratic, allowing all voices to be heard, but also striking a balance between the use of authority in implementing the agreed process and ground rules, and allowing for enough flexibility to encourage a consistent flow of creative and critical ideas to improve the inquiry process.

A third factor was power dynamics. Being the initiating researcher, and the creator of the initial coaching model, I had to withdraw gradually from leading the inquiry into a more facilitative role. This started from the second meeting onwards, whereby whole parts of the discussions were being led by members of the group, with me either sitting in the back or completely out of the room. More subtle power differences existed within the group, based on gender, religion or age. Hence, continuous attention was given to allowing all members of the group to participate fully in the discussions and the decision-making.

4.2.3. Emotional Empowerment

An inquiry group about coaching in oppressive environments was bound to generate a fair amount of emotional stress. A discussion took place on the first day of the first reflective meeting, where the group exchanged ideas and feelings about four key topics:

- How much are we prepared to disclose, in terms of our personal experience as coaches and as human beings living in the same conditions as our coachees?
- How can we remain critical to our own experience, preventing groupthink, while protecting our idiosyncratic interpretations from too much rationalisation?
- What kind of emotional support are we willing to provide to each other?
- What are the behaviours that foster trust?

In addition to the above, every group meeting started and ended with an open space for sharing emotions and views about the self, the inquiry, and the inquiry

group. The three empowering dimensions – methodological, political, and emotional – proved to be extremely important from the first reflective workshop.

5. Invitation of coachees

Each member of the inquiry group sent invitations for coaching to their respective networks. Distribution channels varied between public posts on social networks, emails, wall posters in relevant institutions, and brief speeches in community meetings. Each member targeted places and circles they are already working with, some of them redesigned the invitation to make it more colourful and to make the language more accessible, while meeting the same ethical guidelines.

Coaching was offered free of charge, and an estimate of six sessions over six months was suggested, albeit not stated as mandatory. Coaching was explained as an approach that may help coachees reflect on their development and how it relates to their historical and social condition. The only criteria for selection were that they were above 20 years of age, and they had read the Coachee Information Sheet (Appendix D), signed the Coachee Consent Form (Appendix E) and confirmed this is the type of coaching they need.

5.1. Coachees' demographics

Most coaches had two to three coachees to work with throughout the study. All candidates were provided pseudonyms as soon as they registered interest. Thirty-five coachees had their first session, of which 22 coachees continued with the coaching process. The 13 coachees who dropped out after the first session included six who dropped out after their coach apologised for not continuing the process, one who said she was searching for something else, and six who continued to express interest in coaching but failed to agree suitable times and locations with their coaches. Figure 4.5 shows the demographics of the 22 coachees who continued the process.

The distribution of the coachees covered a wider age range than that of the coaches. It also showed some over-indexing towards female coachees and Christian coachees (compared the overall percentage of Christians in Egypt, not officially reported, but believed to be between 10% and 15% of the population). This can be explained as a combined result of the networks to which the

invitations were sent, and the suitability of the coaching genre to these groups in terms of their experience of discrimination. The oldest coachee was 44 years old.

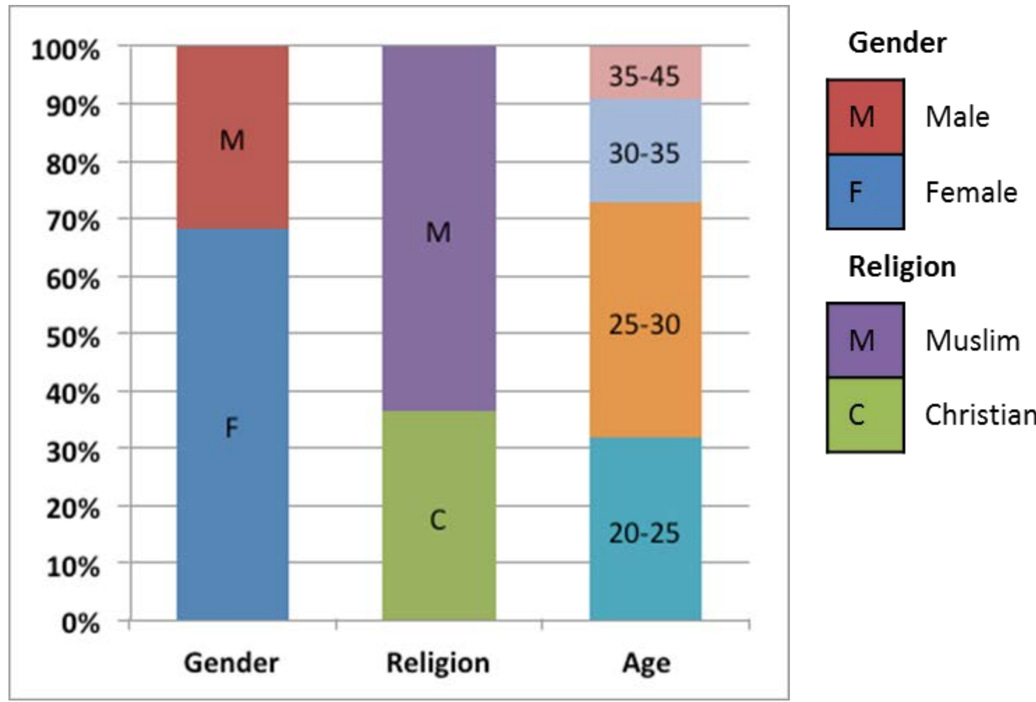


Figure 4.5 Coachees' Demographics

6. Action Phases

The study involved three full cycles including an action phase and a reflection phase. Each action phase was two months long, and included one to two coaching sessions per coachee (Two to six sessions per coach). A total of 87 coaching sessions were conducted during the three cycles of the study. Sessions were one to three hours long, with most taking around 90 minutes. Location of the sessions varied, with the majority of them taking place in meeting rooms in community organisations.

Each action phase included a one to one phone supervision session, midway through the two months, between the coaches and me. A total of 20 supervision sessions were conducted. A typical supervision session was two hours long, and was mainly broken into two parts:

- In the first hour, any issues that the coach wanted to discuss were covered. The supervision approach was facilitative and reflective. The supervision model used was adapted from the seven-eyed model (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2011). Figure 4.6 presents the supervision model as explained to the coaches.

- In the second hour, each coaching journey was mapped in a structured way against the coaching model, using each block in the coaching model to generate alternative perspectives and interventions for the discussed coaching case. During this time, no solutions were decided, but a whole array of options was generated with the coach to reflect upon before the following coaching session.

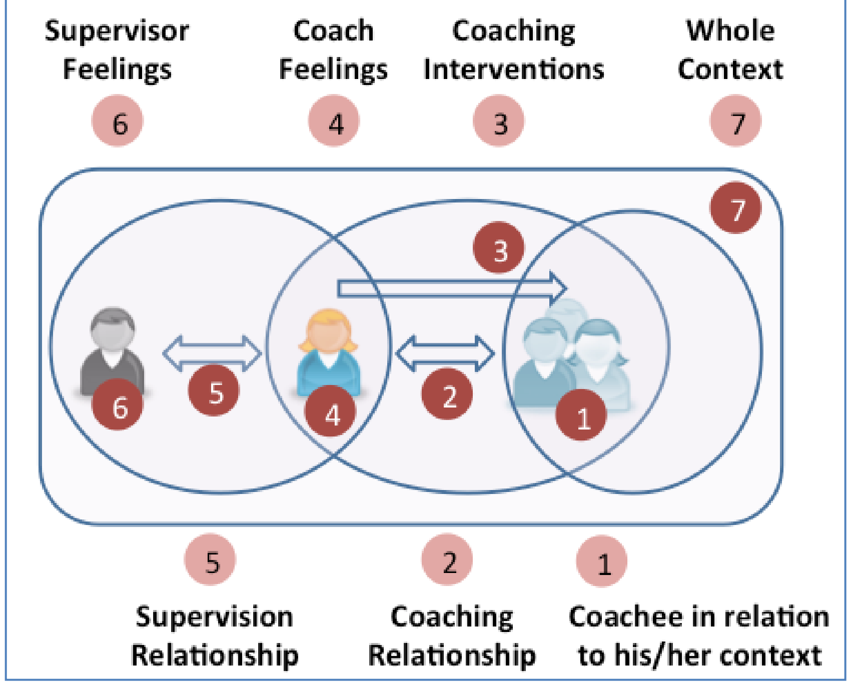


Figure 4.6 Coaching Supervision Seven-eyed Model (Adapted)

6.1. Data Collection

Several types of data were generated during the action phases of the study.

A. Reflective Journals: Reflective journals are used in many disciplines including coaching (Woods, 2011). Coaches were asked to complete a reflective journal entry after each coaching session. A simple template was provided, adapted from Gibbs (1988), that followed a five-steps structure:

1. Describing the session (or part of it) from a subjective perspective.
2. Recording what happened as objectively as possible.
3. Analysis of the subjective and objective accounts.
4. Critically reflecting on my experience.
5. Recording the lessons learnt.

A total of 57 cases in reflective journals were filled during the three cycles. Appendix F includes an empty reflective journal, and one example of a filled journal.

B. **Research Forms:** Coaches were asked to fill a research form after each coaching session. A template was provided that included a matrix, where the following questions were asked against each of the coaching model blocks:

    1. How was this aspect [of the model] present in the session?
    2. How do I evaluate it, critically?
    3. What do I learn?
    4. Two further questions were asked around how I understand oppression and development in light of this experience.

A total of 42 forms were filled by the coaches during the three cycles. Appendix G includes an empty research form, and one example of a filled form.

C. **Coachees' Feedback:** Coachees who finished the coaching journey were asked to provide a written feedback. A form was provided (Appendix H) that asked about several aspects of coaching relevant to the model. Respondents were asked to rate how far these aspects were present and how far they were important to them. Five coachees filled the feedback questionnaire.

D. **Coaches' Notes:** Several coaches kept notes that included their preparations before the sessions, as well as ideas generated in the sessions and during supervision. Unlike the previous data types, these notes were not shared with the group, but were used personally in several instances by the co-inquirers during the reflective workshops.

E. **Research and Supervision Notes:** Throughout the inquiry, I kept a journal of ideas and reflections that I used after each reflective workshop and each supervision session. This journal was used in discussions with my own supervisor, and was used as a personal source of reflection and sharing during the reflective workshops.

F. **Online Posts and Discussions:** During the study, an online forum was established to enable the coaches to communicate with each other between the workshops. Posts on this forum were not structured, and any member of the group could initiate a discussion or post a comment or personal sharing.

> The group members used this space extensively to share their feelings and reflections; they also used it to offer emotional support to each other, to agree on logistical matters, and to share learning resources. The posts on the online group were not systematically analysed during the reflective workshops, but were essential in forming a sort of shared memory and language despite the fact that the group was only meeting every two months. The personal reflections published on the group were used in analysing the development of the coaches, discussed in chapter 9.

One form of data collection that I considered, during the design of the methodology, was a formal measurement of the developmental level of the coachees. The field of developmental psychology includes many instruments that seek to measure different aspects of development, following specific developmental models. The value of such data would have been to increase our understanding of the interaction between oppression, developmental levels, and coaching. After reflecting on the option and discussing it with the group during the training, we decided against including it in the study, for many reasons: First, the emancipatory nature of the study seemed to be at odds with starting the coaching process by measuring how 'developed' the coachees were. The initial coaching model suggested that coaches should have a basic understanding of different developmental models, but using measures on the coachees was felt as being disempowering. The coaches also argued that it implied a standard both the coaches and the coachees should strive to achieve. The second reason for not using measures was practical; most measurement instruments are complicated, requiring extensive training and considerable amount of time in analysis, to produce measures related to only one aspect of development. Any instrument would have also probably required to be validated in terms of the way it is used in Arabic. The third reason was that the concept of development was itself being revisited from the perspective of oppressive environments; hence, it was felt that using a measure related to one developmental model might prevent the group from critically examining the meaning of development according to their experience.

7. Reflection Phases

This study included four reflective workshops, one at the end of each of the three action phases, plus one final workshop at the end of the inquiry. Each workshop took between two and three full days. The structure of the workshops evolved between cycles, as the group agreed on better ways to approach the inquiry.

Figure 4.7 provides a visual description of the relationship between the four reflective workshops. The first workshop had three inputs from the first action phase; the reflective journals, the research forms, and the coaches themselves, as they have been part of the experience. Each input was further processed during the reflective workshop; coaches shared their feelings, questions and discoveries, journals were read by everyone and reflected upon, and research forms were analysed. These forms of analysis were transformed into presentational and propositional knowledge.

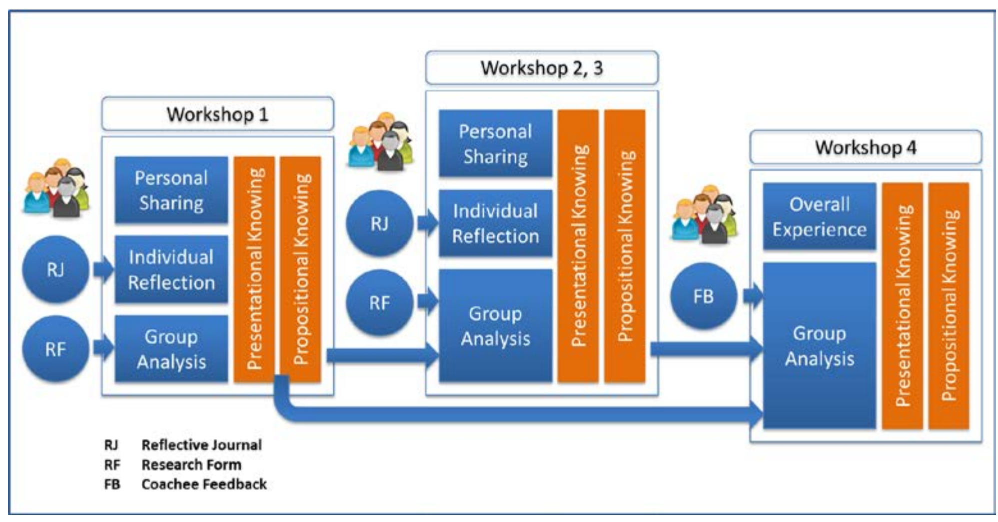


Figure 4.7 Reflective Workshops, Inputs and Outputs

In sessions two and three, the same inputs existed, but an additional input was added which was the findings and presentations generated in the previous session(s). This additional input meant that the workshops were not only building on knowledge previously created in the group, but also that this knowledge was being critically examined and validated based on new experience.

In the fourth and last reflective workshop, there were no new inputs coming from the action phases. The only new input was the coachees' feedback that was collected at the end of their coaching journeys. This session focused on providing

a final analysis of all the outputs generated in the previous three workshops. Co-inquirers were also asked to reflect on the overall inquiry experience.

The design of the reflective workshops followed a structured approach. Four dimensions needed to be covered in the reflection:

1. **Aspects of the experience:** Using an adaptation of the seven-eyed model, these included: Coachees in their context, coaching relationship, coaching interventions, coach, coach-supervisor/coach-group, inquiry, and whole context (Bigger system).
2. **Blocks of the coaching model:** This was broken down into five areas: Oppression, development, empowering dialogue, critical reflection, and reflective action.
3. **Levels of reflection:** According to Heron (1996), these include four distinct types: Describing, evaluating, explaining (making meaning), and applying [new skills].
4. **Types of dialogue:** This included individual reflections, reflections within small groups, dialogue in small groups, and open discussion with the whole group.

The four dimensions were mapped against each other in a matrix format, and specific interventions were designed to facilitate reflection on specific aspects of the experience, related to one or more blocks of the model, on a particular level of reflection, using a type of dialogue. Next, all interventions were ordered into time slots of the workshop.

For example, Figure 4.8 shows the matrix used to design the first reflective workshop. The numbers in the matrix refer to the order of addressing each cell during the workshop. The letters in the cells refer to the type of the activity (P= Personal, G=Sub-Groups, A=All Group). The figure also shows the design of the workshop space. Prior to the workshop starting, all the materials used in the session were put on the walls in designated places around the room. Empty whiteboards, as well as empty wall spaces were also left to allow discussions to take place. Materials included the data generated during the action phase, data generated in previous reflection workshops, and initial training materials. This design was intended to support a feeling of immersion in the data, and to allow

spontaneous discussions or ideas to emerge, as co-inquirers would walk around the room and would read the provided data or the discussions from a previous part of the workshop. This setup was also useful in helping the discussion to 'move' from one topic to the other, as the participants also had to physically move in the room. Interventions used in the four sessions included individual reading of the reflective journals, personal sharing with the whole group, analysis of the research forms in smaller groups, whole-group critical discussions on the analysis done in smaller groups, drawing, watching videos of previous discussions, creation of narratives, and development of personal coaching statements.

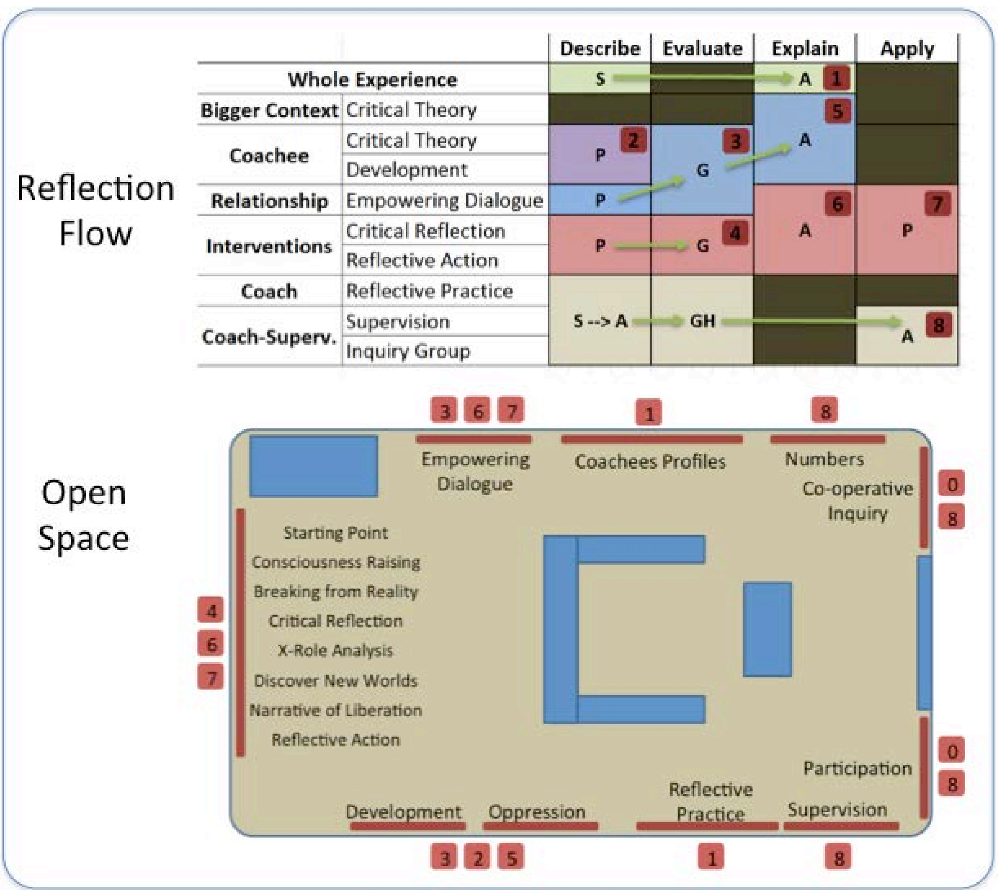


Figure 4.8 Design of the Reflection Framework and Space

To provide an example of how these interventions were typically used: I would first ask participants to talk for few minutes each about their feelings in relation to the whole experience or an aspect of it, then, I would present the materials generated in a previous session, in terms of documented findings and visual representations. Next, the data to reflect upon for the session was given to each participant to read individually and write his/her reflections. Following individual

reading, the group was broken into three or four subgroups of three persons, where they would spend around an hour reflecting together on a specific dimension of the coaching model, and document their reflections and notes with statements and drawings on the available whiteboards. Then, the whole group would gather around each of the whiteboards, to hear the findings of the subgroup, and would then engage in a facilitated discussion about these findings. After repeating this exercise on each dimension, the group would gather in the centre of the room, to reflect on how they feel about all what has been discussed so far, and its implications on their own practice. Finally, participants were invited to take personal time to reflect privately.

D. Analysis of Data and Multivocality

In order to remain faithful to the principles of the co-operative inquiry, I aimed at ensuring that the group undertook almost all of the analysis as part of the reflection phases described in the previous section. Except for the coaches' notes and my own notes, all the data collected was shared with the group in its near raw form. This data was only pre-processed in terms of aggregating the forms from different coaches and organising them into sheets broken by the blocks of the model, as well as removing any information that may reveal the name of the coach or the coachee. There were two types of analysis performed by myself outside the reflective workshops, namely the analysis of the findings between the workshops (In preparation for the following workshop), and the final analysis and reflection on the findings. I discuss both procedures in more detail below.

The reflective workshops generated a considerable amount of data; debates and ideas were exchanged verbally, audio recorded, noted on whiteboards, and recorded in writing by members of the group. After each workshop, I took the responsibility of transforming all these sources into a form that could be used by the group in the following workshop. The steps below describe the process I followed after each workshop:

- First, I listened to the audio recording of the whole workshop, and took notes of what was being said. Notes were naturally categorised in the same structure of the workshop, which was also mapped to the structure of the model.

- Then, I placed my notes from the audio recording of one part of the workshop, beside the minutes written during that part, and a photo of the whiteboard used during that discussion. I used the three sources to describe the findings and questions agreed upon during the workshop.
- If any of the findings coincided with a theoretical model that I was aware of, I would research and include some information on that model for discussion in the following session (For example, emotional development).
- Finally, I included quotes from the recording, and unclear or unfinished findings, in order to present them to the group next time for clarifications.

After the end of the final reflective workshop, I started the second round of data analysis, which was done outside the group. The purpose of that round of analysis was not to generate new knowledge, but rather to organise the knowledge already generated by the group and reflect on its theoretical and practical implications, comparing it with the available models and literature, and discussing the questions that arose from such comparisons. Outside the generated findings, I also analysed the self-reflections shared in the group, online posts, and my notes and reflections from the supervision sessions, in order to reflect on the coaches' development throughout the experience, as well as my own journey. In order to maintain the group's involvement in all aspects of the study, the outcome of the final analysis was shared with the group members as it was emerging, and confirmation was sought on whether they felt that it was an accurate reflection of what was communally generated.

In following the process of the inquiry, my key concern and focus have been to ensure that the multiple voices in the study were faithfully presented. Much of the methodological focus was on how to empower these voices and avoid them being masked by my voice as researcher, and doing so without the risk of losing my own voice and contribution. In reflecting on the inquiry process, I used the diagram in figure 4.9 to understand how these different voices would interact, from the inner to the outer circle.

The core experience in the study, upon which the whole process was built, was the experience of **coaching**, taking place in the private space between coach and coachee. Since the coachees were not active participants in the inquiry, extra care

was taken not to misrepresent their voices. Hence, I do not make any direct claims about the coachees, and do not directly quote them, except in terms of the feedback forms filled at the end of the coaching journey. Knowledge about the coachees is only possible through the interpretation of the coaches of their experience with them, so only the coaches are quoted, and only their interpretations are used as data for the analysis.

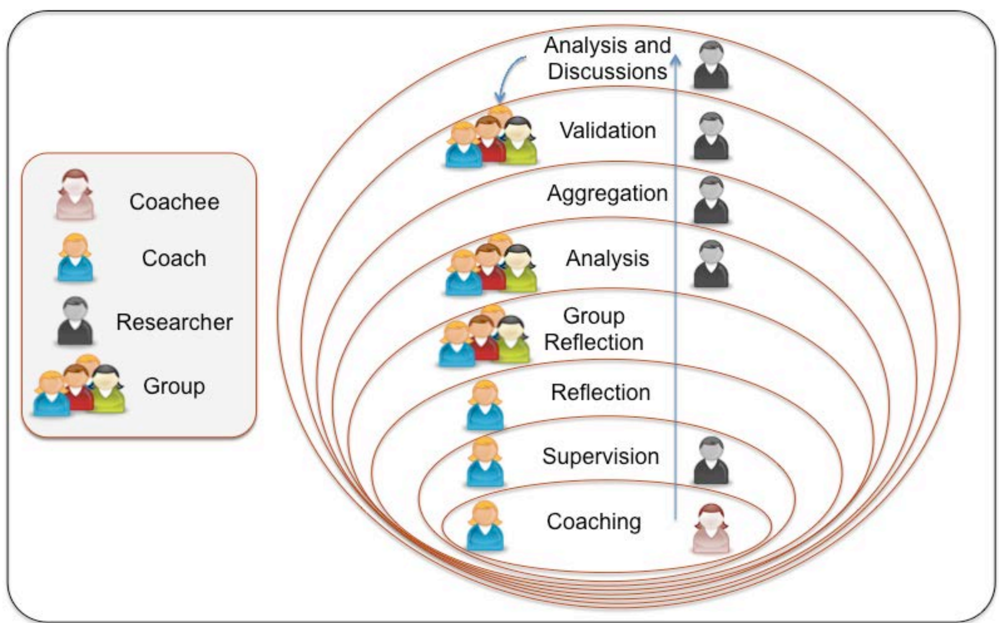


Figure 4.9 Different Voices in the Analysis of the Experience

Individual coaches expressed their voices primarily through the reflective journals and the research forms they filled during the action phases. Their individual voices are maintained through the quotes that are used in chapters five to nine. I also got direct access to their individual voices through the **supervision** sessions.

The collective voice of the group appeared during the **group reflection** on the data. In the discussions and **analysis** done by the group, I played the role of facilitator, making sure through the discussions that everyone's voice was heard. During the group discussions, themes emerged in a natural process where the group would start listing and discussing different observations, and as one topic started to emerge as important, we would use it as a central point for aggregating all the observations that relate to it, in a process similar to how a sizable mass in space acts as a magnet to other smaller rocks, eventually becoming a planet. The process of analysis required problematisation and criticality in order to avoid groupthink. So whenever an interpretation was suggested by one of the coaches

or a sub-group, it was put forward inviting scrutiny by other coaches. If a certain proposition quickly gained consensus, I invited someone from the group to play the devil's advocate and suggest limitations to that proposition, or did so myself. Conversely, if a proposition was ruled out without enough consideration, I invited the group to consider ways in which that specific experience could be integrated into a broader formulation that would include diverse scenarios. Wherever relevant, I took notes of areas of conflict or unresolved debates in order to point to these areas in the findings chapters.

In the following phase, **aggregation**, I organised the findings generated from the group analysis, trying to remain true to their structure and language. As mentioned above, this phase was not intended to be open to my own interpretation, but to improve the effectiveness of the inquiry through the organisation of the findings, allowing the group to validate the findings in the following session. In the **validation** phase, I discussed the findings with the group, offering my view and interpretation of their findings in order to enrich the validation process.

Finally, reflecting on the validated findings, I performed the last phase of **analysis and discussion**, with the purpose of understanding the implications of the findings, and relating them to the wider theoretical and practical literature. In this phase, I allowed my voice to be heard, drawing on my experience with the different phases of the study, to discuss questions and draw conclusions.

The above framework has implications for the organisation of the findings chapters (Chapters 5 to 9). In these chapters, I try to make a clear distinction between the findings generated and validated by the group, and my discussion of these findings. Due to the nature and size of the findings, I have chosen not to group the discussions in a separate chapter, but to discuss each set of findings directly after they are presented, while trying to make the distinction explicit.

E. Ethical Considerations

As part of the research initiation, co-inquirers were introduced to the ethical framework governing this study, as well as the ethical framework underlying the general coaching practice (EMCC, 2008). Data handling procedures and confidentiality were observed throughout the study. The identity of the coachees

were hidden to the inquiry group, by using pseudonyms to refer to the coachees, as well as processing the data shared with the group to remove all reference to the coachees identity. The coaches participating in the study have chosen the names by which they are referred to in the thesis, and have reviewed the description provided for them earlier in this chapter. In the second part of chapter 9, where I discuss the development of the coaches, I have chosen not to include names against the quotes, as they were taken from their self-reflections shared with the group. Beyond these basic ethical guidelines, the specific nature of the study raises a number of ethical questions that I discuss below:

1. **Issues stemming from the emancipatory stance:** Coaching for emancipation, by definition, is not value neutral. It stems from a critical paradigm and drives towards a somewhat predefined purpose. There is a question about the impact of this journey on coachees, as it might put them in confrontation with their environment. In the context of oppressive environments, there are often social repercussions affecting those who wish to challenge the oppressive structure. It was therefore important for the coaches to ensure that their coachees consider the implications of their actions and choose what is best for their wellbeing. The same situation applied for the coaches in the inquiry group, as their practice of this type of coaching might have implications on their lives. During the group initiation, these issues were discussed, the coaches had several forums where they could raise any concerns related to this question, including the supervision sessions, the reflective workshops, and the online forum. The process of coaching inherently involved raising the awareness of the coachee to the implications and barriers of change, and discussing the best way to address these issues.

2. **Issues of power with the coachees:** Growing up in an oppressive environment may result in a real or perceived vulnerability on the part of the coachee. Power inequities between coach and coachee needed to be carefully addressed, in order not to generate any harm. All supervision calls included questions about signs of the coachee being too vulnerable for a balanced coaching relationship. Power relations, combined with the emancipatory intention in the coaching model, raised another question about whether the coach’s agenda might stand in the way of the

coachee's needs. From a contracting point of view, all invited coachees were made clearly aware of the type of coaching suggested, and were asked to confirm that this was what they thought they needed.

3. **Issues of power within the group:** The dynamics of power relations were also important to consider within the context of the inquiry group. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the empowerment of the coaches was a key focus during the initiation of the group and throughout the study, as it was embedded in all parts of the research procedures. As part of the facilitation of the group discussions, a set of ground rules were established and followed to ensure everyone was provided a safe space to contribute and express their opinions and concerns. Handling power relations between the participating coaches and myself was reflected upon as part of my supervision.

4. **The future of the group:** In action research studies there are often questions on what happens to the participants after the study is over. As part of the group initiation, I discussed with the group the emotional implications of working closely together for around nine months, and the fact that there was no planned future for the group beyond that point. With this awareness, the group members took ownership of using this experience to establish what can be considered an informal community of practice, where they continued beyond the end of the inquiry to communicate and share their experiences.

The above questions are further addressed as part of the findings. The first two points are discussed further in chapter 5, and the third and fourth points are discussed in chapter 9.

F. Research Validity

Heron (1996) lists a number of conditions that are essential to the validity of a co-operative inquiry. Some of these conditions relate to the overall design of the inquiry, and other conditions are more specific to the structure of the reflection phases. The following points cover these conditions:

1. **Multiple cycles of data collection and analysis:** This condition was met by doing three complete cycles of action and reflection. The reflection

phases in the second and third cycles also included parts where the findings of the previous cycle(s) were critically evaluated and re-validated. The fourth reflection phase was dedicated to reviewing the overall journey.

2. **Divergence and Convergence:** The validity of the inquiry relates to its ability to allow two opposing phenomena; on one side, to open up to divergent experiences and contexts, and on the other side, to find enough similarities in the different experiences in order to generate reliable findings. Divergence and convergence took place on multiple levels:

    a. **Within Inquirers' Experience:** Each coach worked with several different coachees.

    b. **Between Inquirers:** Each coach developed his/her own personal coaching style, albeit inspired from the model. Their different backgrounds and the different contexts they were working in meant that their experiences were somewhat different.

    c. **Within and Between Cycles:** Although coaching journeys were not linear in nature, there was an inherent flow that made the experience of the first few sessions different from those after relationship had been established, and different from sessions near the end of the journey. This flow created divergence in the discussions between the three cycles. Meanwhile, coaches progressed through their journeys at different paces, resulting in some of them experiencing different issues within the same cycle.

3. **Congruence of Outcomes:** One of the key tenets of co-operative inquiry is that the validation of outcomes is established "through the congruence of practical, conceptual, imaginal and empathic forms of knowing among co-operative knowers, and the cultivation of skills that deepen these forms" (Heron, 1996). The inquiry design sought to balance and overlap all these forms of knowing, validating them against each other. Feelings and images were translated into conceptual models, models were developed into skills that can be applied in practice, and practical experiences were expressed in images.

4. **Worthwhile Purpose:** A co-operative inquiry takes part of its validity from its purpose. In this study, the main purpose was to develop knowledge that can be beneficial in helping people living in oppressive environments to develop and liberate themselves. Another worthwhile outcome was the development of the co-inquiry group members.

5. **Collaboration and Participation:** As previously shown, the design of the inquiry ensured participation in both content and method. The initiation of the group and the facilitation of the workshops stressed the vital importance of collaboration.

6. **Criticality:** Reflective journals, research forms, and group discussions all included elements of criticality embedded in them. During group discussions, members of the group were encouraged to play devil's advocates in order to challenge uncritical subjectivity.

7. **Language and Context:** An important question related to the validity of the inquiry findings is around the shared meaning across different languages and cultures. Coaching sessions were all held in Arabic. Data and findings were generated in both Arabic and English. Heron (1996) argues that "inquiry is an inter-subjective space, a common culture, in which the use of language is grounded in a deep context of non-linguistic meanings, the lifeworld of shared experience, necessarily presupposed by agreement about the use of language itself" (p. 11). The context of Egypt, especially in this historical period, may also be unique in many perspectives. However, it provides a lot of shared experiences with other contexts where oppression is an active ingredient.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four criteria that contribute to the trustworthiness of qualitative research: (1) Credibility: congruence of findings with reality as experienced by the research participants, (2) dependability: whether the research is somewhat repeatable, (3) transferability: the degree to which the results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts, and (4) confirmability: the degree to which the results could be corroborated by others. Shenton (2004) lists 22 possible provisions that may be made by the qualitative researcher to address these four criteria. The research design and detailed procedures cover many of these provisions, ensuring that the research findings

are credible and reflective of the coaches' experience, and that the inquiry process involved adequate criticality, reflexivity and triangulation to ensure that the findings are confirmable from multiple points of view. I discuss in chapter 10 the limitations of the study and how they relate to the transferability of the findings.

G. Presentation of Findings

Findings from the reflective workshops are organised in chapters 5 to 9, as follows:

- **Chapter 5, coaching for emancipation**: covers findings related to the philosophical and psychological foundations of the model, covering the concepts of oppression, development, and empowerment.
- **Chapter 6, naming oppression**: covers findings related to the blocks of the coaching model that support the coachee in developing critical awareness and hope, namely consciousness raising and narrative of liberation.
- **Chapter 7, renewing beliefs:** covers findings related to the blocks of the model that support the coachee in critically reviewing the underlying assumptions, beliefs and social structures, namely x-role analysis and critical self-reflection.
- **Chapter 8, fighting back**: covers findings related to the blocks of the model that support the coachee in making positive change and action; namely breaking from reality, discovering new worlds, and reflective action.
- **Chapter 9, the developing actors**: covers reflections related to the overall coaching journey and the experience and development of the coachees, the coaches and myself. It also includes a section evaluating the overall inquiry process.

This structure of the findings chapters is identical to the structure of the last reflective workshop, which was found by the group as the most useful in describing the results of the inquiry. A chronological organisation of the findings chapters around the three reflective workshops was considered less effective, as it was important to examine how each dimension of the coaching framework emerged and evolved through the overall journey. A chronological organisation

would also be limiting as different coachees were in different phases in any research cycle.

In all chapters, quotes by coaches are included in *highlighted italic*, and are followed by the name of the coach and a reference to the research cycle where that quote was generated (For example, C1 means the first research cycle). The choice of quotes to include tries to mimic the use of these quotes as starting points during the reflective workshops. In some cases, discussions emerged from the coaches' overall experience without direct reference to the data they were analysing. In these cases, no quotes are included as part of the presentation of findings.

5. COACHING FOR EMANCIPATION

In this chapter, I present the findings from the overall coaching inquiry covering three areas, related to three blocks of the initial coaching model:

A. **From oppression to emancipation**: This section describes the group's experience with the first block of the initial coaching model: a critical theory of coaching. It explores, from experience, the phenomenon of oppression, and presents the perceptions, questions and challenges that the coaches and coachees face in oppressive environments.

B. **Development and goals**: This section relates to the second block of the initial model: developmental journey. It explores findings related to the developmental needs of both coaches and coachees, and discusses how practical and developmental goals are addressed in the context of coaching for emancipation.

C. **Empowerment and authority**: This section relates to third block of the initial model: empowering dialogue. It discusses the power dynamics in the coaching relationship, and the process of supporting coachees in dialogue that balances empowerment and criticality.

The three covered blocks of the initial coaching model are shown in figure 5.1, highlighted in blue:

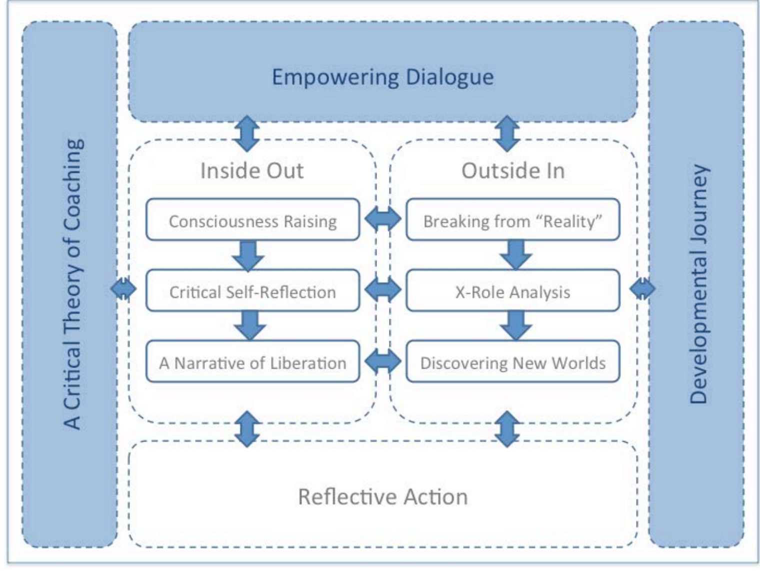


Figure 5.1. Blocks of the model discussed in this chapter

During the reflective workshops, these three areas proved to be very rich and often controversial; they invited much discussion and the group decided on many occasions to extend the times allocated to reflecting on the three topics. Discussions were often filled with emotions, heated debates, and personal narratives. It was clear, across all workshops, that other blocks of the model, discussed in the following chapters, were seen as practical challenges that can be overcome through the aggregated knowledge generated in the group. Meanwhile, the three areas – mainly theoretical in nature –were experienced at a more fundamental level; one that defines who we are as coaches, and how we see our coachees and the world they live in. Discussions also showed that the three areas are tightly coupled. Reflections on one area often linked to the other two. This inter-relation led to an internal cycle of reflections within each workshop, where the group would go back to discussing one block after having discussed another, resulting in new questions being raised about the first. Combined, the concepts covered in this chapter form the main foundation for a theory of coaching for emancipation.

The following sections are organised thematically. The chronological development within each theme is discussed where relevant. Quotes from the discussions and the coaches' reflective forms are included in *highlighted italic.* Each section is followed by a discussion where I review the main themes, limitations and questions related to that section and discuss their links with relevant literature. I also include a summary section at the end of the chapter, where I reflect on the implications of the presented findings and discuss the relation between the different sections discussed in this chapter.

A. From Oppression to Emancipation

The objective of the first block of the coaching model was defined as: To provide the coach with a critical understanding of oppression, and to raise his/her awareness of the key ethical and moral questions in the practice of coaching for emancipation. During the reflective workshops, coaches were asked to reflect on their coaching experience using the following questions, provided as starting points for the discussions:

a. How is my understanding of oppression changing, based on my coaching experience?

b. How does oppression affect the coaching process?

c. What are the challenges that I face as a coach when dealing with oppressive contexts?

d. Can coachees develop individually, independently from their social conditions?

e. Do I see hope in emancipation?

The resulting discussions are broken down into five key themes. The first theme covers how the coaches defined oppression. The second theme looks at the question of responsibility for oppression and emancipation, and whether it lies with the individual or the society. The third theme presents the impact of oppression on the coachees, as evaluated by the coaches. In the fourth theme, the coaches list the different ways the context and environment of the coachee seemed to affect his/her experience. The focus of the fifth theme is on emancipation and resistance, in terms of how they are experienced by the coachee.

1. Definitions of oppression

Oppression was expressed as an umbrella term that covers multi-dimensional and multi-layered phenomena. Oppression can be invisible, happening in the background; but once brought into awareness, it can explain a lot of the social and psychological context of the individual. From the first research cycle, the group started to define oppression as a daily experience, closer to reality than their initial perception of it, as reflected in the quotes below:

> *Oppression can hide in so many ways below the radar of awareness (Sarah, C1).*
>
> *Oppression has so many layers and degrees; it is relative, but its outcome is usually one that involves the person not doing what they feel like doing, the time they want to (Sarah, C1).*
>
> *Oppression is everywhere, in so many different forms, big or small; I don't feel that there are societies or persons on this earth who were not victims of oppression. It is always viewed as a big word, yet it is present in our daily lives (Nadine, C1).*

Specific examples of oppression were often mentioned related to gender, religion, physical disability, age, family origins, social class, political affiliation and others. Examples of acts of oppression included violence, coercion, discrimination, or prejudice. However, oppression was consistently discussed as a more generic system that encompasses and links all of these examples. It seemed more relevant that we talk about the oppressive system rather than any of its symptoms. Once established, an oppressive system targets almost everyone based on multiple and different criteria. Out of the specific examples, coaches came up with general definitions like the ones below:

> *Oppression is everything that is unnatural; seeing myself in a stereotypical way, losing my self-confidence, believing the images and ideas of the society is oppression (Fady, C1).*
>
> *Oppression is not discovering my true self (Fady, C1).*
>
> *Oppression is surrendering to a condition that I don't want (Group, C2)*

2. Individual versus society

Some of the most controversial and evolving questions in the inquiry were whether oppression is internal or external, whether the responsibility for the coachees' conditions are with the individuals or the society, and whether change can happen individually or must happen on a social level. In the first reflective session, participants debated their philosophical positions, based on their first encounter with their coachees, and their personal experiences. Their views fluctuated between two positions regarding oppression:

i. On one side: External oppression is not to be acknowledged, as people own their destiny and are responsible for allowing their social conditions to affect their lives. There are many stories of amazing success despite adverse conditions. Those who are negatively affected are only so because they are self-oppressive. If they manage to change their beliefs, they would discover that they are completely free to live what they want.

ii. On the other side: External oppression is present and is aggressive. The society exerts significant pressure on the oppressed and they cannot avoid being affected by it. Oppression stops growth, and deprives the person from the concept of choice. Those who successfully manage to free themselves or avoid the implications of oppression, including

coaches, may fail to appreciate the deterministic nature of social oppression, and may blame others for not liberating themselves. An individual cannot be fully free until the socially oppressive conditions have been addressed.

Female members of the group reflected on the question of gender. The two above positions were also expressed, in terms of the Egyptian female's ability to face the adverse social conditions. Some of the female coaches expressed some hard judgments against their own gender; that Egyptian females were responsible for accepting and surrendering to the unfair conditions that they are living in, and that they can get themselves out of these conditions if they chose to do so. The other female coaches in the group felt offended by this position. They expressed a view that social pressures are so pervasive to the extent of depriving women the consciousness and the will that are basic for their emancipation, and that blaming women for their inability to fight back is unfair. One of the coaches arguing for the first position wrote few months later to the group, she said:

> *Seeing what is happening in the country, I think I was seriously living in another world. Pardon me for a debate that seems now out of context. I'm blessed to know what I now know, and I must admit that it was TOUGH being faced with this mirror all at once! (Samar, Post C3)*

Reflecting on the above debate, the group created the model in figure 5.2 to explain how they perceived oppression and emancipation between the individual and the society:

	Reasons for Oppression Reasons for Emancipation	Role of the coach (Empowerment)	Signs of Emancipation Signs of Oppression
External (Social)	Oppression is forced by External Conditions	Coach helps in planning reflective action (Resistance)	Liberation may involve a change in the external condition
Internal (Individual)	But people have a choice to internalise it or resist it	Coach facilitates perspective transformation	Emancipation normally starts from an internal transformation

Figure 5.2. Oppression and emancipation in a coaching context

The model suggests that there is interplay between the external and the internal:

- Oppression has social roots; it is not self-inflicted but rather forced by external conditions.
- However, a person has a choice whether to internalise oppression or to resist it, those who internalise it, lose the concept of choice.
- Liberation starts from the inside; external improvements in the social condition may help but are not enough for an emancipatory transformation.
- Meanwhile, emancipation often demands and drives for a change in the external condition of the coachee. If this does not happen, the cycle may be broken.
- In coaching for emancipation, coaches have both internal and external roles:
    - Internally, they facilitate the process of perspective transformation.
    - Externally, they support in planning actions aiming at change.
- Throughout the process, coaches empathise with the coachees' inability to exert free choice. They help them reclaim that ability through an empowering dialogue.

In the second reflective workshop, two months after the above model was developed, much of the focus was put on the examination of how external oppression becomes internalised. This is discussed in the next section. In the third reflective workshop, the model was examined again, and more focus was put on the move from internal oppression to internal emancipation, and the role of the coach. The group formulated the following scenario to reflect upon:

- It has been observed that people living in oppressive environments are often contented with their current conditions. They give themselves a feeling of comfort towards what they are used to, and that makes it possible for them to continue living in these conditions.
- Meanwhile, coachees often become emotionally disturbed by the continued symptoms of oppression that they experience in their daily

lives, and the repetitive stories of failing to resist their conditions and achieve what they want.

- In this continuous movement between adaptive comfort and painful discomfort, should coaches drive towards more dissatisfaction with the current conditions, in order to trigger the process of perspective transformation? Or should they offer emotional support to the coachees, in order to support them through their pain, thus maintaining the status quo?

Following discussions, the group created a model that explains how they see the role of the coach in relation to the satisfaction of the coachee; the model is shown in figure 5.3.

		Coach	
		Critical	**Support**
Coachee	**Satisfied**	Raise questions	Celebrate Positives
	Unhappy	Trigger Reflection	Ease Pain

Figure 5.3. Coach's reaction to coachee's satisfaction with the current condition

The first premise, to answer the above question, is that coaching for emancipation is sought by people who feel somewhat dissatisfied with their current conditions. Coachees may not be fully aware of the reason of their dissatisfaction, or the barriers to their growth, but they choose to go through a process of coaching that, by definition, encourages them to explore the impact of the social context on their lives. This choice, the group concluded, provides the coach with an implicit agreement to encourage criticality where appropriate. During the coaching process, the coach is encouraged to make use of all quadrants in figure 5.3:

- A coachee who accepts his/her current conditions may benefit from a critical approach to trigger some doubt and questioning.
- A coachee who is not satisfied with current conditions may use critical reflection to support the process of perspective transformation, from internalised oppression to emancipation.

- If dissatisfaction is emotionally disturbing for the coachee, the coach may offer support, focusing on the positive sides of the story, especially during relapses.
- If the process of change starts, the coach may choose to focus on the positives and encourage the coachee to celebrate them. This step may offer enough energy to support another cycle of criticality.

Overall, the role of the coach was deemed to be to balance the needs resulting from living in oppressive environments, and the requirements for embarking on an emancipatory process. Also the coach needs to balance the focus on the internal change and the external one.

3. The impact of oppression on coachees

Coaches have tried to understand the common traits that they see in their coachees. The most common trait in coachees was a sense of helplessness; a general feeling that they are not in control of their lives and they are incapable of taking control, as expressed in the following quotes:

> *Oppression is a feeling of weakness and incapability and it makes the person hate his nature and never enjoy it (Vana, C1).*
>
> *It is difficult sometimes to empathise with coachees, being that helpless (Group, C2).*
>
> *He's taking a proactive step by coming to these sessions, by taking the initiative to call and ask for one, by running late for Iftar (Breaking Fast in the Islamic month of Ramadan), all this because he wants to change; yet despite all that, he says to himself what a hopeless case he is, he can't see hope in anything he's doing (Sarah, C3).*

In the group's experience, many coachees start the journey in a state of surrender to their current condition. They are oppressed but are helpless towards it, they are aware they want to change something, but do not know what and how to change. Oppression seems to foster a sense of fatalism, accepting that 'all life is unfair, and my life is no exception'. With few coachees, they exhibit the other extreme of rejecting everything in their lives.

> *Sometimes oppression is about not accepting that one can live a happy life, one continues to find unfair and oppressive situations to live in, to keep the oppression status continue (Vana, C2).*

Oppression is when we are not used to the possibility and the right to dreaming, when we are living without a dream (Sheren, C3).

Coachees living in oppressive environments have a lot of negative beliefs about themselves that they have acquired from the society. The group found that many coachees appear to be suffering from self-imposed oppression and numbness, they feel unworthy as individuals and they trivialise their achievements and their capabilities. Coachees show resistance to change, because they have tried and failed before, as two coaches express:

Losing confidence makes the person hostage of a circle of internal oppression (Fady, C2).

Oppression makes the person blind and can't see his own progress and achievements, as everything seems nothing, compared to his pain and oppression (Vana, C2).

It appears that coachees are often held in cycles of blaming and punishing self and others. They have a tendency to identify with grief and to magnify pain and sadness. They build their assumptions from the darkest experiences in their lives, and use these experiences to prove that things cannot be better. Many people in the inquiry group expressed images of their coachees acting like "an angry child". Vana's notes below show how blame and grief were central to her coachees' experiences:

Sometimes the person punishes others and punishes himself because of the expectations he has from both (bad and good expectations) (Vana, C1).

Oppression distorts meanings and values; it makes the person loves and glorifies grief (Vana, C2).

A bad experience affects the vision and expectations of the person and makes him see everything through his "bad experience" and never expect any different experiences (Vana, C2).

It is when a person acts childish and does not accept he is wrong and blames others all the time, or on the opposite side over-blame himself (Vana, C3).

4. The impact of the environment

The group looked at the external factors that affect coachees. This is not intended as an exhaustive list, but rather a reflection on how the symptoms of oppression relate to the external environment. Oppression is seen to build up through daily

messages and situations that act like gradual programming of the mind. When external oppression no longer exists, people continue acting in the same way because it is now part of their identity. Oppression acts like a connected web of repeated messages, often delivered by people in the coachee's circles, as seen in the quotes below:

> *Oppression can be exerted in small daily dosage through a long period of time. Repeated words like "you won't be able to do it; this might be dangerous..." created a child who is aware that something is wrong, rather than an oppressed adult (Nadine, C1).*
>
> *Oppression is the messages and behaviours of the people around me that are blocking me from being myself and from trying new experiences (Sheren, C2).*

The role of family was clear in many stories; parents were often seen as an integral part of the cycle of oppression. In many stories, religion and religious institutes played a role in the oppressive system. Reflecting on the abstract and anonymous narratives of oppression, the group noticed that it was not easy to differentiate between stories of Muslims and Christians (Although Christians are a minority in Egypt). Similarly, it was not easy to identify the age of the person from the narrative. Meanwhile, the narratives of female coachees were clearly identifiable without any direct reference to gender; being a girl in Egypt seemed to affect the narrative more significantly.

> *Society, and ironically the family, plays a major role in oppression. The most dangerous thing is that it leaves traces inside and it becomes self-inflicted, even after the change in the circumstances, so the question is how to liberate the person from herself (Nadine, C1).*
>
> *Oppression happens when people use religion to control or to get into the other's life, when people accept the religious rituals and requirements as they are (Vana, C2).*

Oppression has a soft way in impacting one's life. The group described how oppression uses simple social forms such as advice giving, peer pressure and friendly critique in order to force people into a set of pre-defined 'must do' and 'must not do' behaviours, removing free choice from the perception of the individual. Coaches were uncovering the way with which oppression infiltrates the identity of the individual, forcing him/her into predefined roles, as expressed in some of their reflections:

> *Oppression doesn't have to be violent or aggressive; it can take place by just closing the individual's perception of reality (Sheren, C1).*
>
> *Society forces us into specific roles, we always ask about what will people think of me. Oppression is to willingly let go of what we want to live in order to fit the social role (Sheren, C1).*
>
> *Society is changing the definition of so many concepts in our lives; the concept of relationship, of caring, of responsibility...etc. People are victims of this society (Sarah, C3).*

5. Emancipation and resistance

Over the course of the research, the group has discussed common traits in the experience of coachees going through emancipation. The process of emancipation takes place both internally and externally. External changes, however small, are often experienced as huge internal leaps by the coachees. Some coachees express a lot of internal change from the early phases of the coaching journey, but their expectations of an external change are initially very limited. However, once change starts to happen, many of them express the need and the will to achieve much more change in their lives. This process is not linear, it includes many relapses, and there is a continuous need to build a form of immunity that protects what has been achieved so far. Emancipation starts with awareness, and may involve or need a shock to the coachee's perception of the world, and then the challenge becomes how to translate this new awareness into effective change, overcoming the experience of failure.

> *Emancipation is not only about awareness, but is also about changing behaviour. I may 'know' how to be free and 'know' the oppressive chains in my life, but I don't use this knowledge to change my condition (Fady, C1).*
>
> *Liberation needs a shock; to realise the assumptions we're all living by (Nadine, C3).*
>
> *There is an initial stage of change where all can fall, but once this critical threshold is passed, there is no way back (Group, C2).*

The reaction of the society to the individual trying to change is varied, however, coaches observed a number of common scenarios across many coachees:

- As soon as one starts to change, society fights the change and may delay the whole journey. Fighting the change happens through denial,

disapproval or punishment. However, society cannot force the person not to change, even if the external conditions remain the same, the person's awareness has changed.

- In many cases, oppression is hard but brittle; social resistance to the change reaches its peak very quickly then breaks, social punishment is escalated quickly but cannot withstand will. It is remarkable how the oppressor feeds from the oppressed, and how when the oppressed is liberated, the oppressor is helpless, and internal change starts to shape the external factors.
- When faced with failure, the person's resistance to oppression may take new indirect forms, such as withdrawal, or finding new worlds, but internally, emancipation continues. The group wondered:

Is it development, when we realize our current society can't be changed and move away to find a new one? Is it emancipation when we become free from the painful effects and hopelessness of oppression even when the external conditions do not change? When is acceptance a step in the developmental process? When is it a liberating act? And when it is just giving up? (Group, C3).

Discussion

The group's account of the meaning of oppression reflected the value of looking at oppression from a coaching perspective. Instead of the common understanding of oppression as a social and institutional problem, the coaches' reflections and the group discussions focused on the daily experience of the individual in living oppression. According to the group, an oppressive system is experienced as a web of interactions that deliver a continuous flow of messages gradually depriving the individual from the concept of choice. This view has common elements with the notion of Habermas (1987b) of the invasion of the *lifeworld*, in terms of it being a connected web of presuppositions that often acts silently in the background, below the radar of awareness, but that once it is exposed, it can serve as a framework for understanding the overall experience of the individual. The group's definition, in line with Habermas, suggests that this system is not exclusive to a defined group of oppressors. Instead, it invades every aspect of the experience of people living in the oppressive system, and continues to invade the individual's perception of life through his/her closest social circles such as family and work. Habermas (1987a) also notes that the lifeworld is continuously being tested for

legitimacy and reproduced in every interaction, thus opening the possibility to challenge it and change it. This view of oppression also coincides with Bell's (2007) definition of the features of oppression, as pervasive (woven throughout social institutions and embedded within individual consciousness), restrictive (shape a person's life chances and sense of possibility), interrelated, internalised, and often invisible. It must be noted here that the group's definition of oppression emerged at odds with the general discourse in Egypt at the time of the research; coming out of a revolution, there was a general sense of hope that ousting a dictator is a big, if not definitive, win against the oppressive system. Meanwhile, The group's experience with their coachees suggested that the system was embedded much deeper into the subconscious of the environment, and that it was closer to home than how they have previously thought it to be.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the group's reflections on oppression is the dynamic view of the journey from oppression to emancipation, and the dynamic role of the coach throughout this journey. The group looked at how oppression moves from society to the individual (External to Internal) and how emancipation moves from the individual to society (Internal to External), and defined different roles for the coach on the different levels. They also looked at how coachees moved from helplessness and defeated acceptance of their conditions, to criticality and resistance, to counter-resistance from the society and the possibility of withdrawal or relapse, to making change happen and celebrating it. In all these stages, the coaching situation changes, and the role of the coach is required to change accordingly. The dynamics of the journey of emancipation, as defined by the group, coincide with Harro's (2000a, 2000b) definition of the cycles of socialisation and liberation, where she touches on how people get to accept or resist the oppressive conditions, and how the society quickly tries to punish attempts for breaking the cycle. Harro argues that if we try to liberate ourselves without support we might fail, and notes: "Almost inevitably, as we are getting ready, it becomes necessary for us to seek experiences outside ourselves in order to check our reality and to expose ourselves to a wider range of difference than we had before. We need to practice using our skills and tools with others, and experiment with expressing our new views, and speaking out when we disagree, instead of staying silent" (Harro, 2000a, p. 466). Harro's words bare a clear resemblance to what would take place in a coaching relationship. The dynamic

role of the coach across the different phases also reminds of the way Heron (1999; 2001) argues that practitioners working with individuals or groups need to move elegantly and flexibly from on type of intervention to another (For example from cathartic to confronting interventions), as the developing situation and the purposes of the interaction require, and to be aware of what intervention is used and why, and how power is exercised at each point.

Meanwhile, the group also raised important questions about the nature of emancipation and resistance. Beyond theory, borderlines are elusive and difficult to grasp: between acceptance (finding peace) and surrender; between finding freedom in a new world and escaping the reality of the current; or between resistance and anger-driven reactions. The literature focuses more on the social mechanisms and linear models of fighting oppression, while paying less attention to the wide array of daily borderline choices that face the individual in the journey to emancipation.

B. Developmental Journey

The objective of the second block of the coaching model was defined as: To provide the coach with psychological models to explain the developmental journey of coachees. Coaches were asked to reflect on their coaching experience using the following questions, provided to initiate discussions:

a. Do coachee's goals from coaching tend to be external/practical or internal/ developmental?

b. Considering developmental theories, how do I assess the coachees' development level?

c. How does the coachee's developmental level impact the experience of coaching?

d. How do I help coachees develop themselves?

e. What kind of development do I observe with coachees? How do I measure it?

f. What is the relation between achieving the coachees' goals and their development?

The resulting discussions are broken down into three key themes. The first theme focuses on the importance of emotional development and emotional

empowerment as missing aspects in the initial coaching model. The second theme presents a view of the coachees' developmental journey as theorised by the coaches. In the third theme, the group discussed the dynamics of goals and goal setting in the context of coaching for emancipation.

1. Emotional development and empowerment

From the first reflective workshop, and throughout the research, emotional development and emotional empowerment emerged as key themes in the coaches' reflections. While the initial coaching model focused on development from a cognitive point of view, it was clear that the coaching process needed to address the emotional dimension as a key factor.

> *Our own feelings can oppress us, they can block us from our developmental journey, because we don't act based on what we know but on what we feel (Nadine, C3).*

According to the group, in many cases coachees are overwhelmed with strong emotions that are blocking them from accessing the reality they understand on a cognitive level, and from having any courage to move forward. These emotions are usually ones of fear of loss or pain that have been formed through previous experiences. Coachees who are emotionally blocked may show signs of high cognitive development, understanding and critically reflecting on their experience. However, they cannot benefit from such understanding in moving forward, as Nadine notes:

> *It is difficult sometimes when the coachee is cognitively aware, has the power and the tools and knows where she is and why she is behaving in a certain manner, but – for other reasons, I think related to her emotional development – she is resisting change (Nadine, C2).*
>
> *Sometimes a person is intellectually developed and aware, yet emotionally traumatized. In that case, what is the role of the coach? Is it the same journey and the same blocks? (Nadine, C2)*

Coachees who are not emotionally developed may face a harder journey to change. The group tried to define what is meant here by emotional development: It is not the ability to stop the pain. In fact, pain is seen as an important part of the experience. Emotional development helps the person deal with the blocking emotions and take a stance from them that conforms with their overall wellbeing

(For example, choosing to break an oppressive circle even if it meant losing an emotional reward associated with it). Emotional development is about improving the ability of the person to deal with the emotional demands of change.

The group agreed that the coach should assess the coachee's emotional ability to cope with change. If the coachee is lacking such ability, then coaching may focus on the emotional empowerment of the coachee. The analogy was made in terms of someone wanting to play tennis for example, but has first to use a fitness coach, as opposed to a tennis coach, until he/she is ready to face the demands of the sport he wants to learn, the group termed it as 'coaching for emotional fitness'. This is particularly important in handling the stress and frustration of relapses. Before action is initiated, the coach needs to remind the coachee that relapses are quite common in the journey, and that if he/she wants to achieve their goals, he needs to be open to accept the frustration of relapses. The coaches experienced several situations where they felt that emotional empowerment was a prerequisite to moving forward or even a possible outcome of the whole coaching journey.

> *At a point he wanted to stop the session, I think it's because he felt like it is impossible to explain his feelings and pain (Vana, C2).*
>
> *Emotional empowerment is essential in the developmental journey of an emotionally wounded person; it can be the whole coaching journey (Nadine, C3).*

From another perspective, emotional stress was also evaluated as an important ingredient in the process of transformation. People living at the edge of their emotional stability seem to be more ready for a radical transformation than those living in their comfort zone. Coachees starting the journey in more distress may aim for a quicker and more fundamental change compared to others. Sometimes, coachees are forced, by external conditions, to start the journey of change. While this might have emotional impact, it can be used positively in the coaching process. Also, coaching may indirectly generate emotional instability. As coachees try to achieve their goals, they are faced with shocks in their own behaviours and the reactions of people around them. These shocks generate questions that lead to growth, as Vana expresses in the following quotes:

> *Sometimes people resist change only because it's obscure, and prefer to stay in the oppressed condition just because it is already experienced and clear,*

> *and sometimes people start on their development because they were pushed out of this condition against their will (Vana, C2).*
>
> *Shocks are very important to discover the big illusions (Vana, C1).*
>
> *Development can't be really done without real reconciliation with the painful history (Vana, C2).*

Emotional problems were seen as linked to the experience of the coachee with oppression, and the presence of current oppressive conditions. Before realising the internal impacts of oppression, coachees are often emotionally consumed in self-blame. The process of critical reflection, coupled with a focus on emotional empowerment, may help to liberate the coachee from such blame, and to believe in their power. Oppression may shape the identity of the person as a victim, creating an emotional barrier of fear and helplessness that prevents him/her from acting. Coaches noted in their reflections how oppression was affecting their coachees' emotional wellbeing:

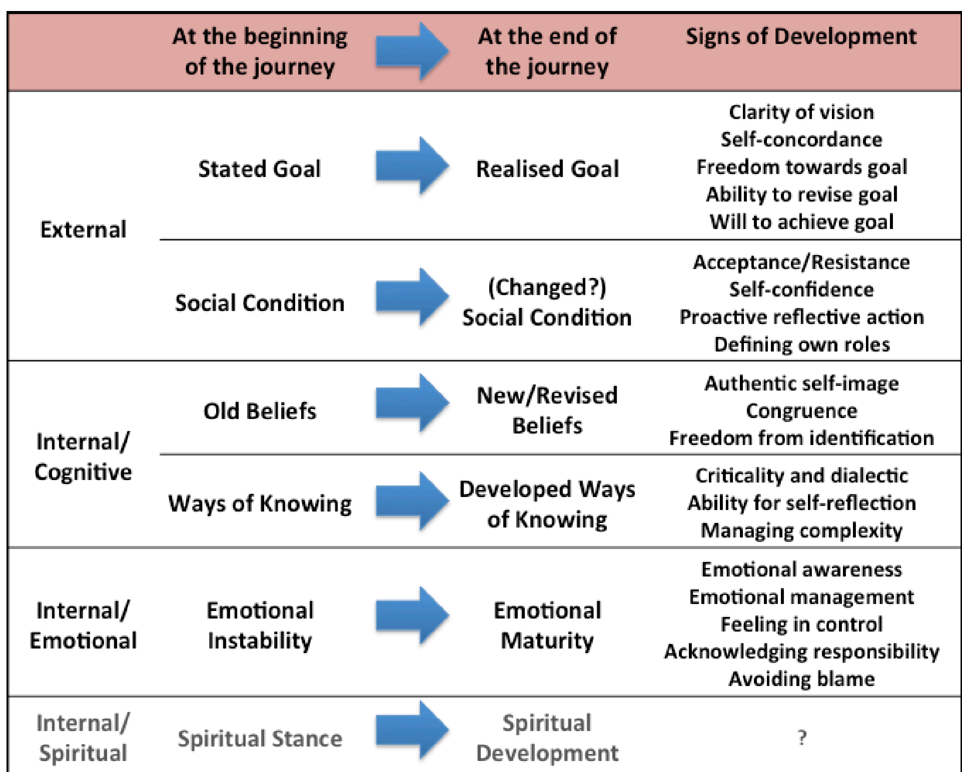
> *It is funny how when you write about oppression, development always appears and vice versa. I feel that his emotional problems are directly related to oppression, personal and national (Nadine, C2).*
>
> *Development happens when the person accepts that his nature is not the problem, and starts to recognize that he is capable and has strength. One can only move forward when one discovers that he does not have to be a victim to be loved, and that being oppressed does not have to be his identity (Vana, C2).*

2. The developmental journey

In the first reflective workshop, the group developed a list of the several dimensions that represent the developmental journey of the coachees. Each dimension in the list, presented in Figure 5.3, is reflected in a number of signs of development. Throughout the following workshops, the signs of development were reviewed and amended to reflect the cumulative experience of the group.

The developmental journey involves both external and internal dimensions. Externally, change occurs in terms of the goal stated by the coachee. As the coaching process evolves, the goal may remain the same or be modified. Eventually, an agreed goal would hopefully be realised at the end of the coaching journey. During the process of goal management, the coach can monitor signs of development through improvements in the following aspects:

- The Clarity of the coachee's vision in terms of what he/she wants to achieve.
- Goal self-concordance; how the goal is consistent with the person's interests and values.
- The coachee's freedom towards the goal, as opposed to an exaggeration of its importance.
- The coachee's ability to reflect on the goal, keep it, modify it, or change it, according to new information becoming available from the experience.
- The coachee's determination and will to achieve what he/she has defined as goals.



	At the beginning of the journey		At the end of the journey	Signs of Development
External	Stated Goal	→	Realised Goal	Clarity of vision Self-concordance Freedom towards goal Ability to revise goal Will to achieve goal
	Social Condition	→	(Changed?) Social Condition	Acceptance/Resistance Self-confidence Proactive reflective action Defining own roles
Internal/ Cognitive	Old Beliefs	→	New/Revised Beliefs	Authentic self-image Congruence Freedom from identification
	Ways of Knowing	→	Developed Ways of Knowing	Criticality and dialectic Ability for self-reflection Managing complexity
Internal/ Emotional	Emotional Instability	→	Emotional Maturity	Emotional awareness Emotional management Feeling in control Acknowledging responsibility Avoiding blame
Internal/ Spiritual	Spiritual Stance	→	Spiritual Development	?

Figure 5.4 Dimensions and signs of the developmental journey

A second external dimension is the coachee's social context. In many cases, at the start of the coaching, this context may include adverse conditions. The coachee may or may not perceive this context as oppressive. By the end of the coaching journey, the coachee would be living in a social condition that is either the same or changed in terms of reality and perception. The coach can monitor signs of development through improvements in the following aspects:

- Whether the coachee has an improved acceptance of the starting conditions, or a heightened resistance to them. Both scenarios may be evaluated as development, depending on the process through which the coachee went to reach such judgment.
- Self-confidence; knowing that one can change one's social conditions.
- The coachee being proactive in initiating action outside and beyond the coaching process.
- The coachee's ability to define his/her own roles in the social context.

Internal journeys are broken into cognitive, emotional and spiritual. The cognitive journey starts with the coachee's old beliefs. During the course of coaching, the coachee would acquire new beliefs, or revise and validate the old ones. As Vana notes below, this process is dialogical and critical:

> *Development happens through a dialogue that leads to new ideas. It happens when the person starts to listen to himself and see the contrast in his behaviour and reactions. It happens when one word hits you and makes you confront yourself, challenge your reality (Vana, C1).*

The coach can monitor development through the following aspects:

- The coachee's self-image, how the coachee discovers and defines who he/she is. Most importantly, how authentic this process seems to be, in terms of being based on a critical reflection on one's experience, and not surrendering to stereotypical representations.
- Congruence: overall peace and harmony between self-image, ideal-self, and real experience.
- The freedom of the coachee from identifying with things, ideas, and social roles.

Another cognitive dimension is the coachee's ways of knowing; the processes that the coachee uses to make sense of the world and make rational judgment on various issues. The group deduced that development could be monitored through the observation of the following aspects:

- The improvement in the ability to think critically and dialectically.

- The improvement in the ability to reflect on personal experience and assumptions.
- Coachee's understanding of the complexity of reality, in terms of its contextual nature, evaluating it from multiple perspectives, and being able to make judgment despite the uncertainty surrounding the situation.

> *Development wouldn't happen or be felt in one session; but I felt like I can know if the coachee is open enough to be self-reflective, critical, and able to contemplate her life, and that would be the first step in the process of development (Sarah, C1).*

The emotional development journey starts often with emotional instability caused by the oppressive conditions, at the end of the coaching journey, the coachee may develop the ability to manage his/her feelings in a better way, this can be monitored through the following aspects:

- The increase in the coachee's awareness of own feelings throughout the experience.
- The coachee's ability to manage emotions; being able to control and direct the emotional energy in a constructive way.
- The coachee's general calmness and feeling in control of own life.
- The coachee's readiness to acknowledge responsibility of his/her actions.
- Getting out the blame cycle, whether it is self-blame or blaming others.
- Being able to engage in relationships and reflecting on the relational experience.

In their reflective journals, coaches noted the changes happening to the coachees in terms of their awareness of their experience, like Sarah's comment below:

> *He started pin-pointing exactly where his problems lie, started giving out specific names/labels to what he's feeling, or where he's feeling not OK; there seemed to be a RELATIVELY higher sense of self-consciousness (Sarah, C3).*

The spiritual development dimension was only mentioned briefly in one coaching case, where the coachee's journey involved a reflection on his faith. This dimension was therefore identified as one that may require further inquiry.

The group then discussed the impact of the coachee's developmental level on the process of coaching. The coaching model was evaluated as 'level-neutral', in the sense that no specific blocks are more relevant than others when it comes to coachees in different developmental levels. The different developmental levels may, however, impact the coachee's expectations and goals at least at the start of the coaching journey. Coachees showing signs of slower development start by defining very small steps as ultimate goals, as Nadine experienced with one of her coachees:

> *It might be baby steps, it might be continuous push to empowerment, and it might be harder since she is living with the oppressors, but it is her story, her battle, and her victory. Maybe this is the liberation she needs, to survive, and then to live and then to be, some are born easily in circumstances to allow them a faster journey, some live all their lives in the stage of just surviving. To each a personal story, and in her context, she is on the road to being (Nadine, C3).*

In the last reflective workshop, the group revised the above representation of the developmental journey, and developed a meta-definition of development. The group argued that there is a difference between the signs of development [mentioned above] and the nature of development. The nature of development can neither be measured nor evaluated as good or bad. Development is a continuous state of motion; one can only be seen as "developing" rather than "developed". The existence of such motion is what can be assessed through the change in the different aspects [signs]. Meanwhile, these signs cannot be understood in isolation from the coaching and social contexts. Coaches need to be aware of what is changing in the coachee's response to coaching and to the world, rather than try to measure the coachee's development using an external scale. The quote below may serve as an example of how the coaches were assessing the developmental changes that were happening to their coachees:

> *Listening, being open, wanting to understand, to see the reality, interacting and responding to the session and to the coaching process, wanting to speak out and to be proactive, that's development. With all the doubtful moments he had, with the sense of hopelessness he expresses in several instances, but his immediate return to the "I want to change and I'm willing to do whatever it takes" is a sign of development. Taking responsibility for his actions, and knowing that it's all down to him to make the change, that's development (Sarah, C3).*

From this perspective, individual movements and changes, including relapses, cannot be evaluated separately as good or bad, but only in terms of the holistic form or shape that this movement takes over the course of coaching. The evaluation of these movements in a holistic manner is not the responsibility of the coach, but is rather an integral part of the developmental process itself; as the coachees develop awareness, on a meta-level, of the developmental journey they are going through, and become able to see and celebrate its signs, whether it happens in a proactive learning process or as a product of a struggle.

> *Development happens while you're paying attention and not paying attention at the same time. You know it when you see its sign. You see it and you don't always know when it and how it actually happened (Fady, C2).*

In the context of coaching for emancipation, development is not seen as a target in itself but rather as what is required in order to cope with the complex nature of the emancipatory journey. Emancipatory coaches focus on helping their coachees to liberate themselves from oppressive conditions. Because of oppression, it is most likely that the coachees' development has been affected, and during the journey of emancipation, it is also likely that development will take place. Hence, coaches see the developmental journey as a parallel to the emancipatory one.

3. Goals and development

During the training on the initial coaching model, the group requested expansion on the tools used as starting points to help the coachee identify the goal of coaching. The question of whether goals should be defined upfront was discussed. During the reflective workshops, the group discussed the use of goals, and listed all the goals that coachees identified during coaching. The group suggested that there is freedom in setting the goals; there are no right goals, and having a goal is not mandatory at all times during coaching. Meanwhile, setting and managing goals is a developmental process in itself, as explained in the previous section. One of the key positives about defining goals is to encourage coachees to acknowledge their right to want something and to seek it. In the context of oppression, many coachees struggle with the idea that they deserve happiness, and this reflects on their inability to define goals. The oppressive contexts may also affect the direction of the goal, focusing on changing oneself to conform to the requirements of the society (For example, a girl at a certain age wanting to get

married to satisfy her parents). The coach needs to challenge whether the goal reflects what the coachee wants, and whether it is driven by social messages and pressures that are hijacking the his/her free will, as Vana notes:

> *Real development starts when we realize that we are oppressed, and that we are directing our resistance in the wrong direction (Vana, C1).*

Many coachees seem to be primarily interested in finding their identity. Coaching is about *getting authentic knowledge about myself*. A common goal is *to be myself, as I want, not as others want me to be*, as Sheren writes:

> *Development is to see myself as it is, and to love it and live it as it is, only then can I present myself to others (Sheren, C1).*

The coach can help the coachee to set midway realistic goals and to identify quick wins. This process can be empowering to both coach and coachee. It is also important to understand that external change and internal transition are not always synchronised. If external change is taking place faster than internal transition, the coachee may experience relapses. If internal transition is faster, the coach may be confused as to why the coachee seems to be making decisions but is not able to implement them. Hence, the evaluation of change needs to incorporate both dimensions.

> *Development presented in actions can be external or internal; they are both important in the journey. Yet the internal liberation makes the person solid in the journey and can prevent relapses. But some people like to work on the external to see achievements, and to give boost to the self-esteem, which might later on trigger internal liberation (Nadine, C3).*

Discussion

The group's experience highlighted the importance of emotions in the process of emancipation. The group suggested that some coachees might need to develop their 'emotional fitness' as a prerequisite to emancipatory work, in order to improve their ability to deal with the emotional demands of change. This is an area that is often overlooked by writers in that field, who place more focus on cognitive processes like consciousness raising and critical reflection. Emotional empowerment is discussed in several works, such as person-centred approaches in therapy (Rogers, 1986) and coaching (Joseph, 2010), co-counselling (Heron, 2001; Jackins, 1974), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998, 2009). Brockbank and McGill (2013) provide valuable insights into the use of empathy in coaching to

deal with the coachees' emotions. Meanwhile, there is limited research on the role of emotions in emancipatory work. For example, Tsey et al. (2007) report on the results of a ten-year participatory action research in Australia to facilitate Indigenous people's capacity to regain social and emotional wellbeing. Gordon (2006) examines, in a longitudinal ethnographic study, the importance of emotions in girls' experiences of education and early career. Narayan (1988) emphasises the emotional vulnerability of those living in oppressive conditions, and lists six different ways in which outsiders to these conditions may unintentionally cause emotional harm to the oppressed. The group's findings strongly suggest that working towards 'emotional fitness' (the ability to manage the emotional demands of the emancipatory journey) may be a key task for all practitioners working in this field, a notion that can benefit from further study.

Another important finding by the group is the overall model of development as a parallel process to the emancipatory journey, being affected by oppression, and acting as an enabler for emancipation. The group offered a conceptual model of the different levels at which the coach may see signs of development, mainly by monitoring the processes and movements of the coachee within these external (goal, and social condition) and internal (cognitive, emotional, and spiritual) levels. The spiritual dimension of development needs further research. In addition to the covered dimensions, there is a need to further understand how identity development takes place and is managed within the coaching process, and how multiple identities are negotiated. For example, one of the coachees was an orphan Christian girl belonging to a minority ethnic group; each of these elements of her identity would have its own specific implications on her emancipatory and developmental journeys. Identity development is not adequately covered in the coaching literature, with the exception of limited discussions in relation to narrative coaching (Stelter, 2009). There is a need to understand how different models of identity development can help the coach facilitate the emancipatory journeys. Of specific interest are the models analysing identity in relation to oppression (For example: Atkinson et al., 1993; Cass, 1979, 1984; Cross, 1978; Downing & Roush, 1985; Myers, 1993; Myers et al., 1991).

Another dimension that was not discussed by the group, but was raised in an online discussion after the final workshop, is the dimension of sexuality and sexual desire. I asked the group why it was the case that sexuality was not brought up as

a key topic; is it because it was irrelevant, or did the coaches suppress discussion in this topic, or did the coachees suppress it in their narratives? The coaches felt that it was very relevant, but it was a taboo that was not easy to discuss. According to the coaches, sexuality was disguised in the desire to get married, feelings of loneliness, and the desire for motherhood. One coach commented: "*I think society, in its oppression, robbed us from the right to even consider it as a legitimate search, let alone talk about it critically. It is a religious taboo, and ironically the liberation journey did not challenge this framework".* Sharma (2008), interviewing 28 young women in Britain, found that their relationship to church had a similar impact on their experience of sexuality and sexual desire.

Goals and goal setting has become modus operandi in coaching (Clutterbuck & David, 2013). However, the group's view of goals exhibited doubts over the benefits of encouraging coaches to identify clear goals from the beginning of the journey, and committing to the achievement of these goals as desired outcomes of the coaching journey. The group saw an overemphasis on goals as distracting and not necessarily realising the coachee's best interest, as many of the initial goals presented by the coachees originate from frameworks that have been developed in the context of oppression. This view coincides with recent debates over the usefulness of goals (Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009), and the view of some coaches that goals may act as a barrier to working with real needs and emergent issues (Grant, 2013). The group's view of goals was that they were part of the developmental process rather than statements of the desired outcome of coaching. This can be achieved in two ways: The first, also expressed in an interview with Kegan, is by using them as entry points, or Trojan horses, to explore bigger developmental projects (Kegan, Congleton, & David, 2013). The second, proposed by the inquiry group, is to approach the goal setting process in a developmental way, analysing and improving the way goals are being defined, reviewed, and integrated.

C. Empowering Dialogue

The objective of the third block of the coaching model was defined as: To enable an authentic dialogue that balances criticality and empowerment. Coaches were asked to reflect on their coaching experience using the following questions, provided to initiate discussions:

a. What is my experience of the level of empowerment of the coachees?

b. How does the level of empowerment affect the coaching relationship and dialogue?

c. How do the coaching relationship and dialogue affect the level of empowerment?

d. How do I see the balance between using my authority and empowering the coachee during the coaching session?

e. Do I have trust, faith and hope in my coachees?

f. Do I feel empowered as a coach?

The resulting discussions are broken down into three key themes. The first theme looks at a set of empowering behaviours. The second theme examines the role of relationships in the empowerment of the coachees. The third theme looks at the phenomenon of the coachees' self-victimisation, and reflects on the question of sympathy from the coaches' point of view.

1. Empowering behaviours

Over the course of the research, the group identified a number of key behaviours that contribute to the empowerment of the coachees:

i. **Hope**: Coaches need to continuously reflect on whether they believe in their coachees' ability to achieve their emancipation. The issue of hope seemed be particularly relevant in the context of oppressive environments, as coachees' self-confidence and self-esteem are low, and social conditions are hard. This combination makes it even more difficult for the coach to believe in the coachee and to behave in an empowering manner. Hope is the light that makes the journey possible for both coach and coachee. The coaches expressed hope in their written reflections and their reflections shared with the group, similar to Nadine's words below:

> *I see hope in leaps of liberation. I see determination and desire to be (Nadine, C3).*
>
> *Liberation exists because there is oppression, it is very empowering to know that our story is filled with liberations, every single moment; we are all fighters on different levels (Nadine, C3).*

ii. **Appreciation**: After the first encounter with their coachees, many of the coaches expressed a shock over how gloomy the picture seemed to be. As the coaching sessions progressed, and during the reflective workshops, the same coaches were becoming more able to identify the positive aspects in their coachees' narratives. The coaches started reflecting back these discoveries to their coachees; showing them how they are heroes in their own right, and how they could be proud about a lot of what they were living, if only for continuing to have the determination to learn and grow despite their adverse conditions. The group saw that appreciative dialogues generated deep positive outcomes in the coachees' empowerment, so they started expanding them by asking about positive spaces in the coachee's experience, and coachees responded by spending considerable time talking about these spaces and acquiring energy from their stories, like Sarah's coachee below:

> *Empowerment was mostly expressed through her recalling her top moments at work; her relation with her students, and her friends and what she means to them (Sarah, C1).*

iii. **Goal setting**: Many coachees were initially incapable of defining what they wanted to achieve from coaching. They knew they wanted to improve something, but couldn't define their goals specifically. Defining clear goals proved to be empowering to these coachees, as this process resulted in two outcomes: Establishing their right to choose, and providing them with a reference point, from which they were able to take the lead and start driving the coaching process, as Fady notes:

> *Power can originate just from clarity of purpose (Fady, C2).*

iv. **Respecting boundaries**: Coachees may choose, at the beginning of the coaching journey, not to disclose some aspects of their issues. This has been noted in relation to home violence, history of sexual harassment, and other similarly sensitive topics. In these cases, it is important to respect the coachee's choice until such time they decide to talk about these experiences in the coaching session. When they choose to talk, the ability for empathic listening was identified as an empowering ingredient.

v. **Self-reflection on achievements**: Coachees feel empowered when they are asked to reflect on their successes between sessions, and realise that they have been able to achieve something. This process is sometimes tricky, as many coachees tend to downplay their success or to focus on the overall unchanging picture. The coach needs to help the coachee find a positive narrative between the lines of the rather negative one. Criticality is used in this sense to challenge the negative account. Focus is directed to the change in the coachee's ideas and behaviours, and what the coachee has learned from the experience, rather than the external evaluation of the success in achieving the goal. Sarah's reflection below records a successful use of this intervention:

> *The question I asked as a follow up one: "what did you do since last session" turned into a self-reflection question which in itself was an empowering point that allowed her to think back and observe whatever small achievements, to her, meant something (Sarah, C1).*

vi. **Imagination**: Opening up the horizon of possibilities is empowering. Most coachees would enjoy and benefit from coaching dialogues that trigger their imagination and involve them in creating new alternative scenarios and solutions. The main caveat around imagination, identified in the experience of few coaches, is that it may have a negative impact if the coachee is too stressed, as stressed coachee seem to have much less tolerance to discussions that are not based in their immediate reality.

vii. **Holistic awareness**: Coachees feel more empowered when they manage to reconstruct the holistic view of their lives from the pieces of puzzle representing the different aspects. In many cases, the coachee's initial view of his/her life is fragmented into separate domains that are not connected (For example: Work, home, relationship, and country). Coaches can help the coachees to feel more in control of their own life by supporting a holistic understanding of what connects these different domains, in terms of how they affect each other, and how the coachee's behaviour changes across these domains.

viii. **Consciousness-raising**: Coachees who discover the cycle of oppression they live in become more empowered. Many coachees expressed a relief in understanding the source of pain and discomfort they were

experiencing. The coaches noted that it was very empowering for coachees to be able to name their condition, and that finding and using new words like 'oppression' or 'assumptions' made the coachees feel more in control of their situation, as they can name it. One coachee used to call these instances: "Click moments":

> *He seemed to have some "click" moments, as he called them, when things seemed to get clearer for him, and he would thank me for the discovery (Sarah, C1).*

ix. **Process decisions**: The group encouraged involving the coachees in the decision making about the coaching process. This may start on the simplest things like the place of the session and the setup of the place, and can evolve to a much more collaborative level where the coachee makes decisions about the coaching interventions. Few coaches have chosen to explain the coaching model to their coachees, and evaluated this as good practice. The question of exercising authority over the coaching process was one that the group discussed in every reflective workshop. The more the coachees were taking the lead in the sessions, the faster they were moving forward in their journeys. Meanwhile, the more the coachees seemed in control of their lives, the bolder the coaches became in using their authority to drive the coaching process, whenever they felt that this was what the coachees wanted them to do. Vana's quotes below look at some aspects of the use of authority:

> *I discovered that the coachee is the one who gives you the authority and the one who takes it back. Accepting the coachee's trust is empowering for both of us (Vana, C2).*
>
> *Empowerment is getting better each time, she was the one who is taking the lead and directing the conversation. I think it's a combination of trust in the relation, the coachee's self-confidence, and clarity of the coaching process (Vana, C3).*

2. Empowering relationships

The nature of the relationship between the coach and coachee was seen as a key enabler in the empowerment process. Discussions in this area resulted in more questions than answers. The exact nature of the coaching relationship was seen

as depending on both coach and coachee. Meanwhile, three common themes were discussed:

i. **The coach's involvement**: Most coaches expressed the challenge of remaining untouched by the amount of struggle their coachees were going through. Many coaches could relate to the oppressive narratives of the coachees. The group discussed the scenario where the coach identifies with the coachee's oppression, as it is not uncommon that the coach may have suffered, or may be still suffering from similar forms of oppression to the ones experienced by the coachee. The question was raised regarding the degree to which coaches should share their own feelings and disclose some aspects of their experiences related to the oppressive environment. In some cases, the coach's involvement and self-disclosure were seen as empowering, as the coachee felt more understood by someone in similar circumstances. In other cases, coaches chose to limit their self-expression during the sessions, in order to keep the focus on the coachee, and used the coaching supervision to talk more about their own stories and feelings. The group suggested that the coach should always remember that no two experiences are the same, and that the coach and coachee may have very different definitions and assumptions about the same situation.

ii. **Relationship and support outside the coaching sessions**: Coaching sessions were mostly one to two months apart. The group discussed the time between sessions as a gap of support that needs to be considered. Ideally, coachees should be encouraged to identify and use their support circles throughout the coaching journey. A question was raised on how to ensure that such external circles would support the coachee in an empowering rather than a patronising manner. In some cases, coaches have found it useful to organise quick follow-up calls between coaching sessions. The intention of these calls was mainly to provide the coachee with some encouragement and support. Few coaches explored organising a non-coaching outing with their coachee in the second half of the coaching journey. The feedback from these sessions was quite positive, as it seemed to break some barriers in the relationship, and prepare the

coachee to take control of their own life as the coaching process gets nearer to its end.

iii. **The coach's doubts**: During the course of the relationship, many coaches noted that the coachees' feelings of helplessness were transferred to them; many coaches had moments where they did not feel confident enough to drive the coaching process, and where they lost hope in making change happen. Some coaches questioned their use of authority in driving the coaching process, and whether it was driven by their need for self-confidence, or by the coachees' need for clearer guidance. The group reflected on these moments of doubt, and recommended that coaches should continuously reflect on these moments as well as on their use of authority, to examine how they are affected by the coachees' self-image and empowerment. An example of a moment of doubt is revealed in the following quote:

> *The dialogue was equally empowering and critical, I asked her to write a letter that started with: "I dream, I hope, I love, I choose". I think the fact that she has a choice was empowering and new to her. But does she really have a choice? Does the society give her that choice? (Nadine, C3).*

3. Self-victimisation and sympathy

Some coachees present themselves as victims of their conditions, and show aspects of dependent personalities who thrive on others' protection and approvals. They emphasise the amount of unhappiness in their lives, and continuously seek some form of sympathy from their coaches. This behaviour has been noted by a number of coaches in the group, where they felt that the coachee was keen to get a sympathetic reaction from the coach, and kept trying to stress on the idea that their historical or current conditions makes them deserve such pity. This call for sympathy often starts in indirect ways, implicit in the coachee's narratives. However, if the coach doesn't provide the required reaction, the coachee may seek direct validation of their self-victimisation. The coaches noted a number of these cases in their journals:

> *He refuses any attempts to be happier. I think he feels that he failed in getting my sympathy (Vana, C2).*
>
> *He seemed like a child, fully dependent, who just wanted his toy (Fady, C3).*

> *"Everybody is bad and I'm the only good person on earth", he said. He probably knows that this is a false statement but it was an expression of his anger; like revenge from all the unfairness and injustice he feels (Vana, C2).*

Some coaches felt compelled to take responsibility of the coachee, and while being aware that this was not a useful feeling to have, the coachees' expressions of vulnerability presented a heavy emotional burden on the coaches. In the following quote, written in the first action cycle, Nadine reflected on her feelings as a coach towards her different coachees:

> *I believe that I am not the saviour, however so far I am acting this way, not by trying to help, but by assuming that I should help, and by questioning what will be of them if I failed (Nadine, C1).*

The group discussed the issue of self-victimisation, and defined a possible approach to address it:

a. During the earlier parts of the relationship, the coach should only offer empathic listening without trying to challenge the coachee's emotional needs for sympathy.

b. Once rapport has been established, the coach may choose at any time to 'call the bluff' and confront the coachee with their exaggerated need for sympathy. However, this confrontation must be done with love and hope.

c. The coach should aim to be caring but tough, helping coachees to see the problem in their behaviour but doing so without denying the coachee's right to be in pain. The emphasis should be on the coachee's responsibility for their future.

d. Coachees may seem sometimes helpless, but it is key to treat them at all times as resourceful adults.

e. Refusing the coachee's self-victimisation should not prevent the coach from acknowledging external oppression. The coach's belief that coachees are in control of their fate should not conflict with the coach's understanding of the social context.

Discussion

The group's approach to the question of empowerment originated from their direct experience with the coachees. The generated list of empowering behaviours focuses on removing the barriers that are preventing empowerment.

The group saw that coachees were not empowered because they did not believe in their abilities, did not feel in control of their lives, and could not make sense of their experience. To counter the coachees' loss of self-efficacy, the group proposed an environment of hope, appreciation, and celebration of achievements. To counter the loss of agency, the group suggested goal setting, respecting the coachees' boundaries, and inviting them to participate in directing the coaching process. To counter their feelings of confusion and loss of meaning, the group proposed using imagination, consciousness-raising, and helping the coachees to build a holistic awareness of their lives. In this sense, the interventions suggested by the group seek to address the affective, political, and epistemic issues preventing the coachee from being empowered in the coaching relationship. However, it is important to note that while this approach may provide an enabling environment in the coaching session, it also risks giving false signs of emancipation. As Inglis (1997) warns, a focus on empowerment may become part of making people act successfully within the existing system and structures of power, instead of critically analysing, resisting and challenging them. In a coaching context, coachees may feel they have more confidence and agency because of the enabling coaching environment. However, this does not make them any more able to face the external world, unless they use their empowerment to engage in a critical analysis of their experience, and to plan and act to change their oppressive conditions. The use of the empowering learning space to prepare learners to make action to change the world is a key tenet in Freirian thinking (Freire & Macedo, 2001).

A second aspect of the group's findings is that empowerment is mutual; coaches become more empowered when their coachees do the same, and vice versa. The coachees' sense of helplessness is often transferred to the coaches. Meanwhile, as coachees learn to believe in and use their power, taking more ownership of the coaching process, the coaches feel more comfortable using authority and critical questions to move the coaching process forward. This view is in alignment with Welman and Bachkirova (2010), who note that coaches are sometimes over-protective of the boundaries of the process, while their coachees would like them to be bolder and push them more. We suggest that a more empowered coachee may allow the coach the freedom to explore what Welman and Bachkirova (2010)

call: “New areas of legitimate influence that they [the coaches] may not yet have ventured to use” (p. 143).

The phenomenon of self-victimisation of the coachees needs further understanding. Based on the seminal work of Berne (1996) and Karpman (1968) on the drama triangle, Brockbank and McGill (2013) note that when coachees play the victim role, they do so on the pretext that they are unable to take care of themselves, a stance that is often the result of learned helplessness in childhood, “The victim feels powerless, hopeless, depressed and oppressed” (p. 60). Brockbank and McGill (2013) suggest that an ‘antidote triangle’ where the rescuer becomes reflective (analysing their need to nurture), the victim becomes valiant (recognising their part in being victimised and what they gain from maintaining this role), and the persecutor to become patient (allowing others to express their positions and giving up the pay-off of feeling superior). In an oppressive environment, the third part concerning the persecutor is unlikely to happen without assertive challenge from the victim. The steps suggested by the group to address the issue of self-victimisation rely on a premise of trust that gets built through the initial phases of the coaching process; this trust can allow the coach to honestly and directly challenge the coachee into reflecting on self-victimisation and to find practical ways of changing the oppressive situation rather than soliciting sympathy.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the findings related to the areas of oppression, development and empowerment, which are linked to three blocks of the initial coaching model. During the reflective workshops, it became evident that the three areas were tightly linked, in the sense that one could only be understood in relation to the others. Oppression affects the individual’s development and creates barriers for agency and empowerment. Meanwhile, the process of emancipation involves the empowerment of the coachee as a foundation for an emancipatory dialogue, and is tightly linked to a parallel process of development. Empowerment and development both have emotional and cognitive aspects that mutually affect each other. A theory of coaching for emancipation needs to incorporate this interrelation between oppression,

development and empowerment. Figure 5.4 shows a high-level view of the key concepts discussed in this chapter.

In the beginning of the study, the coaches had little appreciation of the concept of oppression. They saw it as a political concept that did not lend itself naturally to an approach like coaching. Over the course of the study, the coaches started to appreciate oppression as a general framework that can help understand the overall experience of coachees living in oppressive environments, as well as the dynamics of coaching in these environments. Within this framework, there is continuous interaction between the internal and external worlds of the coachee. Oppression flows primarily from the external/social world to the internal one, while emancipation originates internally and seeks to produce change in the external world. This act of resistance is often met by counter-resistance from the society, trying to maintain the status quo of the oppressive conditions. Parallel to this continuous interaction between the coachee and his/her world, development may occur. According to the group, development is not a state or a level, but is rather a process that can only be understood in terms of the overall form of its movement. Development can be assessed by looking at how the coachee changes the way he/she deals with a number of external and internal dimensions.

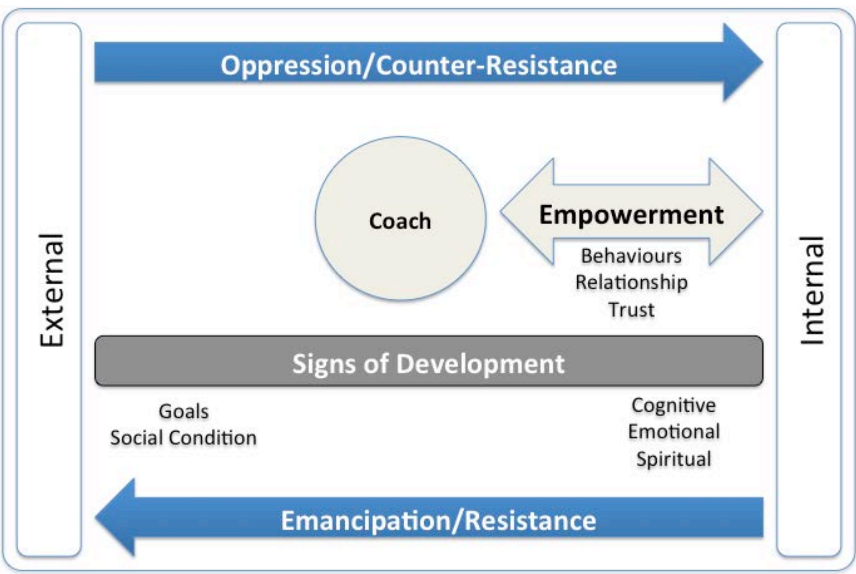


Figure 5.5 High-level view of findings on oppression, development and empowerment

One of the key aspects that affect the coachee’s ability to engage in the emancipatory process is his/her emotional empowerment. Building emotional fitness may form a goal for coaching, as a prerequisite for further progression.

Empowerment is a continuous process that takes place through a number of behaviours that help the coachee to recover a sense of self-efficacy, agency, and clarity. It also relies on a mutual relationship, where both the coach's and the coachee's empowerment are affecting each other. Empowerment is also enabled by trust, as it allows the coachee to positively consider open and honest challenges from the coach. Empowerment balances empathy, appreciation and confrontation. The coach's position and role within the above framework is not stable. Typically, an emancipatory coach would play different roles and take different stances to help the coachee in the various phases of interaction with the society. By acknowledging external oppression, the coach sides with the coachee, and offers empathy, appreciation and support. Meanwhile, the coach is also responsible to support the critical processes required for the internal emancipation, as well as the processes that support the organisation and implementation of external actions. In the next chapter, I present the findings related to the first of the three core coaching processes identified by the group, the process of naming oppression.

6. Naming Oppression

During the final reflective workshop, the group identified three main processes that were taking place during the coaching journey. These processes are underpinned by the theoretical foundation presented in the previous chapter. The first process that was called “Naming Oppression” aims to support the coachee in uncovering the reality he/she is living in and to transform his/her story into a narrative of liberation that is heading towards the future. The second process called “Renewing Beliefs” is presented in the next chapter, it aims to help coachees understand the reasons behind the current reality, and to critically reflect on the assumptions that have been created by that reality or are playing a role in maintaining it, with an aim to find new meaning structures that support a new reality. The third process called “Fighting Back” is presented in chapter eight, and covers the internal and external actions that the coachee may use in order to resist his/her oppressive conditions, and to explore new alternatives.

The three processes were seen as complementary and integrated. While the used structure emerged naturally from the group’s discussions, the group explored other ways of organising the model, and noted that other structures might offered equally useful perspectives. The group also noted that the concepts discussed in the previous chapter are relevant across all processes. Development, emancipation, and empowerment take place over the span of the three processes, and it is important not to limit these concepts to any single process.

Chapters six, seven and eight are all organised in the same way. During the workshops, the coaches were asked to reflect on their coaching experience using a set of generic questions across all the blocks discussed in the three chapters. The following questions were provided as starting points for the discussions:

i. What is my experience with this block? Is it easy or difficult and why?

ii. What is the coachee’s reaction to this block?

iii. How beneficial is it? When is it not beneficial and why?

iv. As a coach, am I always aware of when this process is happening?

v. Is the coachee aware of the process taking place?

vi. How does this block relate to other processes taking place in the session?

vii. What questions and doubts do I have regarding the use of this block?

Similar to chapter five, all the sections in chapters six to eight are organised thematically, while the chronological progression of the findings is noted where relevant within each theme. Selected quotes from the discussions and extracts from the coaches' reflective forms are included in *highlighted italic.* Each section is followed by a discussion where I review the main themes, limitations and questions related to that section and discuss their links with relevant literature. I also include a summary section at the end of each chapter, where I reflect on the implications of the presented findings and discuss the relation between the different sections discussed in the chapter. In the current chapter, the focus is on the process of naming oppression, which corresponds to two blocks of the initial coaching model:

A. **Consciousness-Raising**, supporting the coachee's understanding of his/her current lived experience and the process of uncovering external or internal oppressive conditions.

B. **Narrative of Liberation**, supporting the coachee's formulation of a new narrative about the self in a journey of development and emancipation.

The two blocks belong to the inside-out type of interventions, presented in the initial coaching model in chapter three, as shown in figure 6.1.

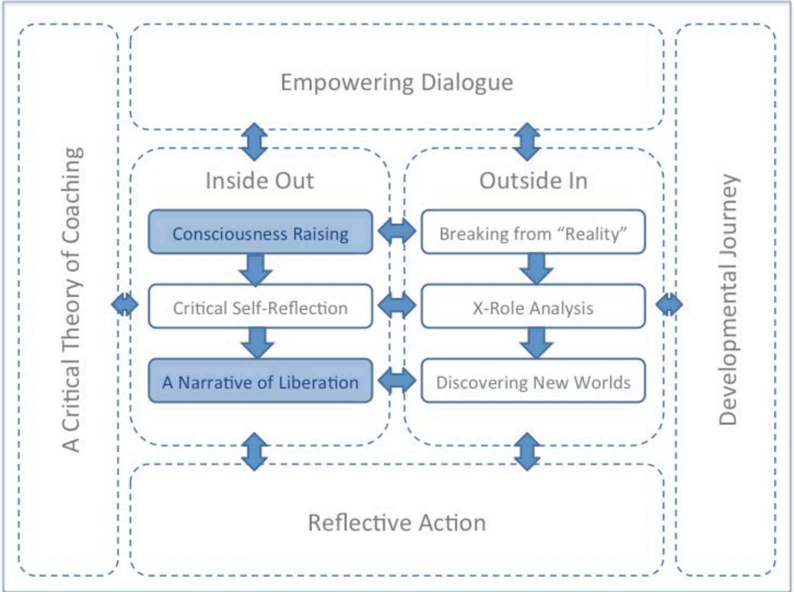


Figure 6.1 Blocks of the initial coaching model related to Naming Oppression

A. Consciousness-Raising

The objective of consciousness-raising in the initial coaching model (Chapter 3) was defined as: Starting from the lived experience, to become aware of one's oppressive conditions. While the initial assumption was that this block was primarily more important during the initial phases of the coaching journey, the group's discussions on it continued actively through all research cycles. Throughout the reflective workshop, the inquiry group identified five main themes: The first covers the signs of missing awareness that suggest the use of consciousness-raising interventions. The second theme focuses on the dialogical tools that support consciousness raising. The third theme examines the cognitive process of making new meaning, while the fourth looks at the emotional edge of consciousness-raising, or the emotional impact of uncovering oppression. The fifth theme covers the use of what the group called 'positive and continuous consciousness raising'. The five themes are presented in the following sections.

1. Signs of missing awareness

In the first reflective workshop, coinciding with the first two coaching sessions with many of the coachees, the group identified four general signs that would suggest when a coachee might benefit from consciousness raising. These signs were observed at the beginning of many coaching journeys, but were reported to become less evident during the latter parts of the coaching journey, they are:

Seeing self through others: When asked about their views about themselves, or their feelings towards specific aspects of their lives, many coachees reverted to how others see them or what others may say about them in that situation. This over-occupation with external judgment was coupled with confusion about their own view of things, which represented a call to develop such a view by reflecting on the lived experience. Sarah notes an example of such case:

> *When asked about how he sees himself, he referred to how people see him, then he very briefly spoke about how he sees himself; both had a negative underlying connotation (Sarah, C1).*

Denial of the existence of a problem: Many coachees were telling distressing facts about their lives without reference to the existence of a problem regarding these facts. While appreciating that their reactions are subjective, coaches were often surprised to see those contradictions. In stories that included home

violence, discrimination, broken relationships, or irrational behaviours, coachees were not identifying these as issues, but rather as facts to be taken for granted. When asked how they saw the situation, some coachees appeared as if this was the first time they were asked to consider it. In the quote below for example, Nadine reflects on the reaction of her 37 years old coachee to how she was being treated at home as a child who is denied the basic right of even having an opinion:

> *I think she is aware of the pressure she is living in, but not aware of the amount of oppression, or that it is not right, she seems to take it lightly (Nadine, C2).*

Separate stories with no link: Some coachees were talking about different parts of their lives as if they were completely disconnected, such as relationships with different members of the family, their lives at home and at work, or similar situations with different partners. Those coachees were unable to identify links, similarities and trends that are shared across all of these stories. It appeared that their initial perception was that they were experiencing – by chance – different problems in separate domains, despite the apparent links between many of these instances. This fragmented view also applied to the way they perceived their goals; they would express small localised goals concerning specific temporary issues. Between these goals there would be explicit contradictions and similarities that they would not identify on their own, as expressed by Sarah below:

> *At some moments, he seemed very aware of his dissonance and very self-critical. At other moments, he seemed to be quite limited in picturing the scope of things and what they mean to him. He is not clear on what he wants to do, or why he thinks he wants to do it (Sarah, C1).*

Mixing ideas, facts and feelings: When asked about situations, some coachees exhibited confusion between what was happening, what they thought about it, and how they felt about it. Such confusion may be generally present in many of the coaching dialogues. In these cases, however, the coaches felt that the confusion was notable. The main issue that the coaches identified was one of incoherence between these different dimensions. For example, describing feelings with rational ideas that do not match the emotions the coachee was exhibiting, or answering questions about facts with subjective feelings that did not seem to relate to the actual story, without identifying that the factual dimension was missing from the answer. The coaches felt that this confusion needed to be

challenged, because it was not allowing the coachees to make sense of their stories.

> *As I reflected back, I realised I needed to stress on the difference between "feel" and "think". They sometimes contradicted one another (Sarah, C1).*

2. Dialogical tools for consciousness-raising

The group used many of the tools suggested in the initial coaching model, such as the life curve, narrative abstractions, and exercises using the metaphors of life as a house or island. The main aim of these tools was to help the coachee find the new in the old. In other words, unravelling new aspects of the lived experience that the coachee is unaware of. The group identified a number of interventions that proved more useful in supporting the process of consciousness-raising, some of these interventions are commonly reported in coaching books (For example (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005; J. Rogers, 2008), and were re-iterated by the group in this specific context:

Finding the missing link: One of the most inspiring moments in the coaching journey is when the coachee discovers an underlying aspect that explains and links experiences that were otherwise disconnected. Coaches noted that by exploring different dimensions of the coachee's life, jumping from one story to another, they were able to help the coachee to uncover possible connections between those different stories, be it internal assumptions or external oppressive conditions. As discussed in the previous chapter, these moments appeared to be empowering to the coachees, as they felt able to make sense of their fragmented stories. One of these moments is captured in Vana's reflective journal below:

> *She wondered if all her problems are symptoms of the real injury. By asking about many stories it was very helpful to make her realize the real link between those stories (Vana, C1).*

Narrative abstractions: Coaches noted that repeating the coachee's narratives in an abstracted way, by removing all the details and keeping only the key elements of the story, was helpful to the coachees. Some coachees were laughing, or feeling shocked, while they listened to the abstracted version of their narratives, as they were previously too overwhelmed by the small details to see the bigger picture. Abstraction is also discussed in the next chapter as a tool for eliciting critical reflection, as the trends and contradictions in the story become more

exposed. Two coaches comment on the use of re-played narratives to their coachees:

> *Retelling the story is a clever way to affirm a discovery or allow it to appear (Nadine, C2).*
>
> *In different instances, I was pausing and narrating back what he said, then asking him to reflect on what he heard. He agreed with what I said once, saying he knows this about himself, at another instant, he said that it sounded different than what he meant and he wanted to rephrase it to be more accurate, and at the third time, it was more about him realizing something he wasn't quite aware of (Sarah, C3).*

Using metaphors: Amongst the coachees we worked with, two of them struggled with the use of metaphors, and were more comfortable speaking about their lives in real terms. Meanwhile, many coachees found the use of metaphors enabling, as it allowed them to expand and deepen their stories with images and comparisons. Metaphors also seemed to make the discussion less painful for the coachee, as they were describing more sensitive areas in indirect terms, like using colours to represent feelings or animals to represent characters and roles. For example, Vana notes how a use of metaphors to describe a relationship helped her coachee see something new about its reality:

> *When I quoted the different images he used about his relation [with his partner] "an escape, a pain killer, a charger", he was in total shock, because of what they imply (Vana, C2).*

Repeating and paraphrasing: Repeating and paraphrasing are commonly referred to in coaching books (as discussed by Cox, (2012). Many discoveries in the consciousness-raising area took place just through the use of these simple tools. In cases where the coachee was stating conflicting ideas, or incoherent depictions of his/her reality, it proved valuable just to repeat the different statements, to formulate how the coaches understood these statements, or to state the main keywords that the coachee used repetitively through these descriptions. This proved helpful in dealing with the issue of denial discussed earlier in this chapter, as it challenges the coachee to confront the meaning of his/her statements. This can be seen in the case below:

> *I was repeating the sentences exactly the way she was saying them. Sometimes I felt that she was not listening on purpose when I repeated the*

contrasting sentences. In the end, she told me that she was refusing to admit what she heard herself saying today (Vana, C1).

3. The making of new meaning

According to the group, there is a cognitive process that takes place during consciousness-raising. This process involves two main movements in the relation between the coachee and his/her narrative, namely immersion and re-interpretation.

Immersion, as defined by the group, involves establishing a deep engagement with the lived experience, bringing it fully to the coachee's field of awareness. This engagement was not happening naturally, as many of the coachees were showing signs of isolation from their realities. As discussed above, they seemed distant from their own views and feelings, denying the existence of issues, and missing a holistic understanding that binds their experiences in meaningful wholes. In consciousness-raising, the role of the coach is to support the coachee to dig deeper into his/her experience, helping to find and link the different manifestations of common aspects of that experience. The group saw that supporting coachees' immersion in the lived experience was often enough to help them discover new aspects in their lives without the need for more facilitation. For example, Sheren notes how their coachees became aware of how one aspect of her lives was affecting, almost causing, the other. This realisation was triggered by bringing the two aspects to the coachees' awareness and contrasting them against one another.

She talked about the messages she was receiving at home, how she decided to enforce people's wrong perceptions of her and follow the rules externally but create these big lies in her life to compensate for what they deprived her from (Sheren, C2).

Re- interpretation was defined as the second movement in consciousness-raising. When coachees try to evaluate their stories, for example in terms of the presence of oppression, their evaluation depends on how they interpret the situations and experiences they have to go through every day. The coachees' initial interpretations often tended to justify their conditions, by denying issues, exerting self-blame, accepting these conditions as given realities, or focusing on small positive aspects or gradual improvements over time. While some coachees experienced a change of interpretation during the coaching session, others

initially kept their original views but came after few weeks or in the following session talking about how they now see and interpret things in a different way. This suggests that consciousness-raising needs to be seen as a process that can take place over a long time, and can happen outside the coaching session. Once the lived experience is brought into awareness, and the coachee is invited to examine his/her interpretation of it, this process may keep happening in the background until such time the coachee is ready to acknowledge a new view of reality. Changed interpretations are also vulnerable to relapses, where coachees who try to act based on their new interpretations may face resistance and failure to change their conditions. In such cases, the coachee may try to find or restore an interpretation that allows him/her to co-exist with the oppressive environment. Hence, the group suggested that consciousness raising needs to be linked with other interventions, such as critical self-reflection, x-role analysis (Both discussed in the next chapter) or narrative of liberation (discussed later in this chapter), in order to improve the resilience of the new interpretations. Vana's quotes below provide examples of how her coachees created new interpretations of their experiences:

> *She suddenly saw how she over-expects the good from people, then gets shocked and punishes them for it (Vana, C1).*
>
> *She said that she is always afraid from male managers. She realised that, although she knows that they are never going to beat her, she is dealing with all men in her life as if they are her brother (Vana, C2).*

4. The emotional edge of consciousness-raising

Consciousness-raising was identified as an emotionally dense experience, compared to other interventions. It is one that removes many of the defensive walls that coachees may have constructed to separate themselves from their reality, and forces a close examination of the lived experience. It may also lead, in many instances, to uncovering oppression in the coachee's life. For these reasons, the group suggested that one of the essential roles of the coach during consciousness-raising is to provide emotional support and empathy. As discussed in the previous chapter, the coaches suggested that what prevents the coachees from confronting reality is often the emotional stress associated with that confrontation, rather than a cognitive inability to analyse their experiences, as appears from Vana's reflection in her journal:

> *He said: 'Everybody is bad, I am the only good person on earth', and when I asked him if this is true, he said 'that's how I see it now'. He knows that this is a false statement but it was an expression to his anger and revenge from all the unfairness and injustice he feels (Vana, C2).*

The group identified that it is both critical and challenging to maintain the balance between keeping the 'pressure' during the session for more immersion into reality, and realising when the coachee has reached areas where more time is needed before such areas can be explored. The dilemma here emerges from the fact that many discoveries happen at the edge of such process; when the coachee is outside the comfort zone of the 'already known'. In some cases, coachees appeared to have reached their 'edge' during the session, but came back in the following session with more discoveries and openness to the same topic. The two notes below are about the same coachee, from the first and third action cycles. In the first cycle the coachee was not yet able to face the problem that was hurting her, and the coach realised she needs to allow more time and not to push for more confrontation. By the third cycle, the coachee had developed ownership of her awareness, and was proactively going out of her comfort zone to explore her situation.

> *She branched into many points but always went back to where we started whenever we reached a sensitive point. I realized that she was hiding from something but did not challenge it. I learned that I have to allow her to take her time, and appreciate her situation more, and that she is hurt and wounded (Vana, C1).*
>
> *She started to own her consciousness-raising, as she brings the abnormal and unusual situations and ideas in her life to understand and dig into. All she needed is the first step and now she goes into all the uncomfortable places inside her by herself (Vana, C3).*

During the last reflective workshop, the group had a debate on crying, both by coachee and coach. Some coachees experienced crying incidents while telling their stories as part of the consciousness raising interventions. While the group acknowledged that crying is a normal way of expressing emotions for many people, and that it shouldn't be emphasised unnecessarily, it was also suggested that repetitive, extended or uncontrolled crying might constitute an important opportunity to help the coachee understand the reason behind strong emotions. The group also debated some coaches' experience with crying as a natural

reaction to sharing the moment with their coachees. There wasn't a definitive view on whether this is empowering or confusing for the coachee, and the topic was left open for further exploration in the future.

5. Positive and continuous consciousness raising

During the reflective workshops, the group saw consciousness-raising as one of the first steps in the journey of emancipation. Meanwhile, the group insisted that consciousness-raising should not be seen as a one-time intervention that leads to some sort of enlightenment. Instead, it is a continuous process that involves establishing a deep and critical connection with the lived experience, exposing the different manifestations of the oppressive conditions affecting the individual. Consciousness-raising works like peeling an onion, one layer after the other, with each discovery re-enforcing and complementing previous discoveries. According to the group, consciousness-raising exists somehow in all of the other interventions, as we cannot really avoid drawing the connection between what is being explored and our experience. The lived experience works as a reference point that gets revisited with every reviewed assumption, explored alternative, or taken action, as Sarah explains:

> *Consciousness-raising is an on-going process; and each time, a new aspect of herself and/or her life might open up for her to see. It is a continuous process, no matter the number of the session or the phase we're in; there are so many levels and elements in one's life that she will always keep discovering. They don't all have to be surprising/shocking, but they bring her closer to herself (Sarah, C3).*

During the first two reflective workshops, consciousness-raising interventions were mainly around supporting coachees to uncover the impact of external and internalised oppression on their daily lives. As discussed above, the experience was often emotionally charged, and was focusing on painful areas in the coachees' lives. During the third research cycle, the group discussed the application of consciousness-raising from a positive perspective. The group noted that discovering oppression might also be approached through a focus on the coachee's positive experiences. According to the group, through recalling and immersion in the positive aspects of the experience, coachees were able to appreciate their own value, and to question their conditions critically based on the feeling that they deserve better. By focusing on the positives, coachees were

able to contrast the different aspects of their lives, but from a position of merit and strength, rather than only expressing themselves as victims of their external conditions. Vana reflects on a session with her coachee, a victim of home violence, noting how becoming aware of her achievements helped her to reconstruct her view of herself as a strong and happy person who does not deserve such treatment:

> *She said that she almost forgot her achievements because of her current life. She was so happy to remember her progress and I think it made her think of herself as strong, and that she was already what she was asking for, and that made the goal more possible. She said that she was in need to remember the kind of person she used to be before her brother affected her (Vana, C3).*

The coaches noted that only talking about adverse conditions could lead the coachees, while acknowledging the issue, to ask, with an element of self-blame: "*What have I done to deserve this?*" Meanwhile, adding a focus on aspects that increase their feeling of self-worth might change the question to become: "*Why does society treat me unfairly?*". The difference in wording between these two questions is reflective of a difference of stance. However, the experience of the coaches suggested that such focus on the positives was rarely adopted proactively by the coachees, and that it often required the coaches to use their authority, forcing the coachee to look at his/her life from that perspective. As in the quotes below, the coaches felt they needed to consistently remind their coachees to consider aspects of their lives that would give them strength.

> *She said: I can review what happened to discover why I failed. I asked: what about the moments of happiness in this experience? She smiled and said: sure, there were many moments of happiness (Sheren, C3).*
>
> *I almost forced him to mention good things in his life, as he was assuring that "nothing in this life is worth being happy" (Vana, C2).*

Discussion

This section started with a presentation of a number of symptoms evaluated as signs of missing awareness. These included seeing self through others, denial of the existence of a problem, fragmented stories, and mixing ideas, facts and feelings. Combined, these symptoms signify a sort of separation from the lived experience and its meaning. The symptoms found by the group have clear similarities with some classic Freudian defense mechanisms, namely isolation,

introjection and denial (Freud, 1968). More recently, Baumeister, Dale, and Sommer (1998) reviewed several social psychology studies for evidence of such symptoms, and found evidence that people defend themselves against various threats by mentally isolating them, and that they refuse to face facts, by disputing, and dismissing information that threatens their self-esteem. They also report both isolation and denial as effective defense mechanisms in reducing anxiety. Watkins and Shulman (2008) suggest that the concept of dissociation is behind many of the symptoms of oppressive environments, that is, "the unconscious elimination of painful knowledge from conscious awareness" (P. 53). They note how difficult it is for victims of oppression to bear witness to the harm exerted on them or on others.

The group's findings related to dialogical tools and cognitive processes of consciousness-raising suggest that common coaching methods are essentially suitable to support the coachee in articulating his/her experience, becoming immersed in it, and finding new interpretations to understand it. For example, all of these relate to processes discussed by Cox (2012) in her review of what takes place during coaching. It appears from the group's experience that coachees did not need significant intervention to discover new perspectives in their lived experience. Instead, it was enough to encourage them to bring their experience under the spotlight of their awareness, and to invite them to re-interpret it. Even those who did not do so right away, continued the process outside the coaching sessions, and discussed its results proactively with their coaches in later sessions. This finding is both promising and disappointing; promising because it means that consciousness-raising can be supported through coaching, with little additional methods, and disappointing because it reveals how people under oppression can become estranged from their own experience for years, despite how cognitively able they are to reflect on it and learn from it.

On the other side, the emotional aspects of consciousness-raising proved to be much more problematic. Similar to the findings in the previous chapter, the emotional dimension emerged from the findings as a key ingredient in the success of this intervention. For consciousness-raising to succeed the coach needs to support reflections at what the group called "the edge of emotions", outside the coachee's comfort zone. Meanwhile, the coach has a responsibility to make sure that the coachee is safe from excessive emotional stress, and is only exploring

new areas at the pace that suits him/her. Coaching at the edge of emotions is not adequately researched, and may benefit from further studies. A related study is offered by Day et al. (2008) where they interviewed 28 coaches on 51 critical moments, they found that these moments were characterised by intense emotions for both the coachee and the coach, a tension in the coaching relationship and around its boundaries, that they were unexpected and unforeseen, and that they caused a qualitative nature in the coaching relationship. They suggest that, dependent on the coach and coachee's reactions, these moments can be opportunities for insight and change or result in a deterioration of the coaching relationship. The difference in the case of consciousness-raising is that critical moments emerge as a continuous possible outcome of the process.

The themes presented in this section offer a flow from the symptoms of 'missing consciousness', through a set of dialogical tools that supports consciousness-raising by eliciting a process of immersion and re-interpretation of the lived experience, one that takes place at the edge of the emotions generated by confrontation with reality. It suggests that beyond the first intervention, consciousness-raising continues as a consistent engagement with reality, starting to incorporate elements of liberation into the experience of oppression. The final step of consciousness-raising links it into the process of generating a narrative of liberation, which is the focus of the next section.

B. Narrative of Liberation

The objective of the narrative of liberation block in the initial coaching model (Chapter 3) was defined as: To formulate a new narrative about self in a journey of development and emancipation. The initial view was that this process would take place towards the end of the coaching journey, as a form of synthesis of the different steps that have been taken and the different discoveries that have been made. During the reflective workshops, starting from the first, this view was expanded to cover the overall coaching journey. During the discussions, coaches identified three main themes around the narrative of liberation. The first theme explored the use of narrative as liberation; how the creation of narratives affects the coachee's experience. The second theme covered the task of transforming narratives of oppression to narratives of liberation. The third theme presented a

set of practical tools for powerful narratives that came out of the coaches' experience. The three themes are presented in the following sections.

1. Narrative as liberation

A member of the group said once that she could not imagine coaching without narratives. It was clear to all the coaches that their coachees use storytelling to communicate, convey information and engage in dialogue. Meanwhile, the group tried to go beyond the understanding of narratives as a communication mechanism, and to focus on their emancipatory aspects.

The group saw narratives as a way for bringing different fragmented experiences into a coherent whole; they can help the coachee to see the bigger picture of his/her life. Narratives were considered as a way of making meaning; making sense of a personal journey that had been otherwise unintelligible, as Vana expresses below:

> *Telling the story really helps to describe feelings and to see the whole picture (Vana, C1).*

The group also saw a key benefit in the capacity of narratives to link the past and the future, as the coachees' stories were often unfinished ones. The meaning of 'unfinished' here was defined as either externally unfinished (for example: an on-going relationship or work problem), or internally unfinished (for example: an old experience that is still impacting the individual emotionally). In these cases, a narrative of liberation is an opportunity for the coachee to tell the story, not only as it happened so far, but also how it could progress or end. Telling stories was also praised as a method to help the coachees see the different transitions that they went through, and to express their feelings during and after these transitions. For example, Sheren invited her coachee to narrate a recent experience in the context of the bigger story, how she came to go through the experience, and what comes next. Reflecting on the session, she noted that the longitudinal aspect of the narration was empowering, as the coachee saw an evolving story that she was keen to progress:

> *She was happy just telling me about her life and the experience she lived. When we talk about our experience of liberation and resisting oppression, we become keener to move forward and less afraid of failing (Sheren, C3).*

A narrative of liberation is a form of narrative that has a celebratory aspect, as it focuses on moments of strengths, resistance and victory over oppression. The group noted in their reflections how the retelling of such moments was empowering to their coachees. As coachees were discovering their own strength, they were gaining a sense of pride and an improved self-image. The group noted that many coachees suffered from what was referred to as "loss of positive memory"; coachees were initially struggling to remember or consider the positive aspects of their experiences. As they engaged in their narratives, their 'positive memories' were refreshed, and they were able to see their stories from new perspectives, as Vana notes:

> *She was happy and proud when she was telling her stories. Talking about small victories is something very empowering (Vana, C2).*

The group's experience suggested that the narrative of liberation could start, as an intervention, from the beginning of the coaching journey, rather than be used towards the end as suggested by the initial coaching model. From as early as possible in the coaching journey, coachees could be encouraged to see and reflect on the coaching journey as one of liberation; a narrative in which they are the protagonists, or the heroes of their own fate. Meanwhile, the group also stressed that, although the narrative of liberation may initially focus on the coaching journey, it extends beyond it to cover the overall life experience of the coachee. The coach may consider it a worrying sign if the celebratory aspects of the coachee's narrative remained confined within the coaching journey. Another aspect of the narrative of liberation that was discussed by the group is around its empowering effect. The act of telling one's story, using one's own words, was considered to be empowering, especially to coachees who seemed to have low self-confidence and low ability to express themselves. Some of the tools, discussed in a later section, helped to create a sense of depersonalisation of the coachee's narrative, as if an external narrator was telling the story. This helped some coachees to start sharing their stories without the emotional burden of feeling that they are under the spotlight. On the other side, some coachees exhibited a strong feeling of emotional liberation, through being fully immersed and engaged in telling their stories. In these cases, coachees were longing for this immersion, as their default stance was to stay emotionally separate from their

own stories. Narratives seemed to generate a lot of positive energy, and positive comments from the coachees, as the one expressed below:

> *She was happily telling her story, discovering her own capabilities. She said: I don't feel the fear anymore, I feel I can do things I never imagined doing (Sheren, C2).*

2. Narratives of oppression and resistance

During the first two reflective workshops, some coaches reported that the coachees' narratives often represented ones of oppression and struggle rather than ones of liberation. The overwhelming amount of painful experiences and unfavourable social conditions made the coaches wonder whether a narrative of liberation could be a viable intervention. The coaches felt shaken by the amount of issues the coachees were expressing, and some of them struggled with keeping hope, as discussed in the previous chapter. Sarah's comments below are taken from her first session with two different coachees; her experience is similar to many coaches in the earlier part of coaching:

> *He spoke about his life in a chronological order, but the more he spoke and went into deeper details, the more "oppression" was there; with no intention or desire to change or any sense of liberation (Sarah, C1).*
>
> *I couldn't tell for sure to what extent her narratives were ones that expressed liberation or oppression (Sarah, C1).*

The group discussed the challenge of finding emancipatory aspects in the coachees' stories, and the possibility of transforming a narrative of oppression into one of liberation. From the group's discussions came a simple statement that described how the coaches could approach this transformation in the narrative:

In every story of oppression, there is a space for resistance, also for peace

The idea encompassed in the above statement is that all the stories of oppression, by virtue of being told by the coachee, have the potential of being transformed into narratives of liberation, through the exploration of the coachee's reaction to the oppressive environment. In almost all the stories, the coachees were able to create their own small ways of resisting and fighting back the impact of oppression. Some of these ways might have been ineffective, unsuccessful or even somewhat dangerous, like defying the system through breaking social rules or religious norms. For example, many female coachees were engaged in social

activities or movements where they could find their voice, despite their parents' objections, being able to attend these activities was a daily fight that they used all their tact and tricks to win. Others were fighting domestic violence through silence and isolation. Other coachees were part of the political action in Egypt without telling their parents. Others were defying the aggressive rules at work by abusing the system. These stories – regardless of their success or their rightfulness – were seen as evidence of strength that many coachees were often unaware of its existence within them. Many coachees, like the example below, would initially tell these stories as ones of oppression, rather than resistance.

> *She told me stories, about the time she took off her veil despite everyone, the time she challenged a religious rule while feeling no guilt, the time she stood to her brother, and the first time to have the courage to end a relationship. Most of the stories were first told as bad memories and experiences, but when she discovered so many strong points in her 'bad' memories, her voice was changing, showing joy. Everyone has got stories of liberation, and it's magical to tell them (Vana, C1).*

Another aspect of resistance is internal, where the focus can be directed towards the ways the coachee has been able to protect his/her own psyche from the damaging effects of oppression. For example, many coachees had artistic hobbies or were learning something they loved, such as photography, dance or academic study. They were using these activities to redirect and regenerate their energy, far from the impact of their daily conditions. A second aspect is that all coachees, by definition, took the decision to ask for coaching and to commit to the coaching process. Coaching is not known in Egypt, and all therapeutic forms of help are generally socially seen in a negative way. However, these coachees grabbed the first opportunity with the invitation for this programme, and were ready to start working with coaches they did not know, and in some cases, with more than one coach (In the case where one coach dropped from the programme after having met this coachee). A third aspect is one that was identified in the second reflective workshop, which is the ability of many coachees to create spaces of peace that isolate them from the direct confrontation with their social conditions. As with external resistance, internal ways of resistance might be limited in terms of success. However, as coachees realise that their stories of oppression are also filled with resistance, they become more empowered to find even bigger and more effective spaces of liberation. Vana reflects below on a session where her

coachee reviewed her development and internal struggles since she was thirteen years old:

> *She was talking about her personality progress since she was 13 and what was really touching and what the turning points were for her. It was very liberating; she was very proud of herself. She was able to think in a new way and she was happy and empowered, remembering all this. It also helped her see her problem in a different way as she started to reconsider her problem given her abilities. After a long journey of sorrow and grief it was enlightening (Vana, C3).*

During the first reflective workshop, the group decided to have another run of liberation narratives during the second action cycle, focusing – based on the above discussion – on finding liberation in the coachees' stories of oppression. The reported results were overwhelmingly positive, and the impact of this intervention seemed to change both the coachee's interpretation of the story as well as the coach's hope and belief in the coaching process. While the coachees' narratives did not change a lot in terms of new facts, coachees seemed to be building new layers of understanding and new perspectives of the same story through every coaching session. This slow build-up or deepening of the same narrative was transforming the narrative from one of oppression to one of liberation. The group suggested that one of the most important signs that the narrative is reflecting a transformation from oppression to emancipation is that the coachee is able to show signs of being in peace with the negative parts of the story. Rather than avoiding these parts, the coachees were starting to incorporate their worst experiences and social conditions into a positive narrative that takes them into a better future. Narratives of liberation are tangled stories where oppression and liberation go hand in hand, like the story Nadine heard from her coachee:

> *We talked about her stories of victory, the good moments in her life, and how she dealt with certain obstacles. She recalled how her mother was treating her in a special way because she believed she was retarded, due to an illness, when she was little, and how her teacher who treated her as normal, made her excel in his subject. She talked about how after the mother died, the father was deliberately not pampering her to toughen her up, and how she accepted different challenges, like studying hard and excelling at work. I kept on pinpointing those victories and how even with the hard circumstances, she made it in different fields (Nadine, C3).*

3. Tools for powerful narratives

Over the three reflective workshops, the group generated a list of practical advice, tools and techniques that are believed to enable a powerful narrative. To generate this list, the group focused on what they called the "great moments" of the coachee's stories. The main criterion of a powerful narrative was considered its emancipatory aspect, which is in turn related to the degree of emotional and cognitive liberation, immersion in the story, openness to possibilities, criticality, and coherence. The following 'tools' were suggested:

Life story in one shot: While most coaching sessions may focus on specific aspects or specific stories in the coachee's life, having one session for a full life narrative, start to end, was recommended as being very powerful in giving coachees an overall sense of control over their lives, and a holistic understanding of their story. Life history interviews and charting lifeline graphs are techniques that are sometimes suggested to support coachees' autobiographies (Rogers, 2008).

Drawing as story telling: A number of coachees experimented with the use of drawing during the narrative of liberation interventions. Experience suggested that, with some coachees, drawing enables them to bypass boundaries in their verbal story telling; they express things they were not able to express before. Pellowski (2005) suggests that drawing as part of storytelling is a very old tradition in many cultures. In some cases, coachees were not fully confident to draw their stories themselves, so they asked the coach to draw while they narrate their stories and guide the visual representation of images. The group discussed this technique and debated whether it is empowering for the coachee, as the coach is the one who has the power of the pen. The group then suggested a number of variations to the technique, whereby the coach asks the coachee in the second half of the exercise to own the drawing by adding colours and further aspects, or by re-drawing the picture after the initial barrier of confidence has been overcome. Alternatively, it was suggested that the coach might act like composite artists (Doing facial composites for the police), in the sense that the coach does the drawings but keeps asking detailed questions about how the coachee wants everything represented.

Artistic expression: The group found that some coachees had preference for other ways of expression. For example, one coachee had a hobby of photography,

another coachee greatly appreciated music, another coachee had always dreamt of learning acting, and was being enrolled in an acting course. The group suggested that in such cases, a powerful narrative might be enabled by asking the coachees to prepare their narratives using these methods (for example, a choice of photos or musical pieces). The use of artistic expression in coaching is an area that can benefit from more research. Outside coaching, there is a body of research that is gradually emerging around the use of arts for emancipatory purposes, in the areas of 'social action art therapy' (Hocoy, 2006) and liberation arts (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

The power of the word "liberation": The group noted that one of the simplest yet most powerful things in this intervention was the use of the word "liberation". By calling the intervention a "narrative of liberation", and encouraging the use of the word in different parts of the coachees' stories, coachees felt and reported being more empowered and encouraged to fulfil the promise of their stories. This was essentially important where the narratives were full of oppression. The word "liberation" as a title and as part of the language used enabled the transformation of these accounts into positive ones.

Story into chapters: The group suggested that coachees narratives get more enriched when they are broken into titled chapters. Chapters can follow a chronological order or can follow some thematic classification. Giving titles to each chapter in the coachee's narrative forces some level of synthesis that can bring different elements of the story together into a whole meaning. By transforming the story into a reasonable number of chapters, the coachee is able to reflect on what was behind the start and end of each chapter, to examine the transition between chapters, and to think about the coming chapter(s) in a more creative manner, by trying to choose titles for the coming chapters to live. The idea of life chapters is also discussed by Hudson and McLean (2006)

Analogies and metaphors: Coachees were different in their initial tendency to use analogies, metaphors and images in their stories. The more they were encouraged to do so, the bolder they became in tapping into new dimensions of their narratives. Different forms of analogies and metaphors were observed; some coachees used examples from the animal world, dramatizations inspired from movies, or models from a wide array of fields (for example: physics, traffic, football) dependent on their background. The group suggested that a coach could

improve his/her ability to facilitate the narrative of liberation through the use of the same images generated by the coachee to extend the questions into new aspects of the narrative.

Discussion

According to the group's experience, narratives of liberation are powerful mechanisms for helping coachees to construct and make sense of a story that has been otherwise fragmented and inaccessible. The narrative of liberation empowers coachees through helping them to transform their narratives of oppression into narratives of resistance, and to celebrate their victories, as well as their ability to continuously change their stories as both authors and actors. These findings align with much of the literature on the use of narratives in coaching. For example, Vogel (2012) argues that: "At some level, all coaching is a narrative process – focused on a story of change with the client as the protagonist" (p. 1). He reports – based on interviews with six coaches – how coachees' narratives can be built around the hero archetype (based on Campbell, (2008), where coachees go through a journey where they are tested and challenged before they fulfill their destiny as heroes.

Narrative coaching has its roots in narrative therapy, developed by Michael White during the 1970s and 1980s (White, 2007; White & Epston, 1990). Narrative therapy emphasises issues of power, oppression, and justice (Drake, 2010). It identifies, the role of socially constructed grand narratives that provide a ready-made way to define people's place in the world, thus reinforcing hegemonic narratives and relationships of authority (Vogel, 2012). Building on the work of Foucault (1967), narrative therapy also acknowledges how the process of therapy can itself become hegemonic (Abels & Abels, 2001), which emphasises the importance of becoming aware of how the individual's narrative is affected by the social context. In both narrative coaching and therapy, there are two key empowering processes, namely externalisation and re-authoring. Externalisation invites the coachee to notice how they have internalised the problems in their stories to become problems in them (Stelter & Law, 2010). Re-authoring invites the coachee to find alternative interpretations and new definitions (Drake, 2010), the coachee is free and empowered to change the story as the author, and to immerse herself in the 'thick description' of the alternative story or 'counterplot'

(Stelter & Law, 2010). Building on White's works, Afuape (2012) argues that oppression seeks to colonise the person's memory with a single story of hopelessness, and that narratives can be used to reclaim memory as a key step towards liberation. These ideas are strongly echoed in the group's experience of the narrative of liberation, especially the focus on reclaiming memory and re-authoring the oppressive story into one of liberation.

Meanwhile, Drake (2010) suggests that narrative coaching works best with coachees who have: "(1) a comfort with silence and self-reflection; (2) a willingness to work at emotional, metaphorical, and non-rational levels; (3) an astute awareness of and ability to articulate their experience; and (4) the necessary ego strength to be able to self-disclose through their stories" (p. 129). Although the group's findings suggest that few coachees did not prefer the language of metaphors, the overall experience suggests that the narrative of liberation seemed to benefit all of the coachees who were invited to do it, regardless of their rational preference, their self-awareness or their ego strength. In fact, the group's experience suggests that the narrative was used as a mechanism to increase awareness and empowerment, rather than depend on their presence.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the group findings related to the process of 'Naming oppression'. In this process, the group combined two interventions from the initial coaching model, namely consciousness-raising and narrative of liberation, suggesting that the two interventions rely on similar tools and internal processes to deliver complementary objectives. The relationship between consciousness-raising and narrative of liberation is shown in figure 6.2 in the following page, where consciousness-raising becomes needed when the coachee is showing signs of missing awareness, such as denial of the existence of problems, or confusion towards ideas and feelings. In such cases, the coach invites the coachee, through dialogical tools and narrative methods, to immerse him/herself in the stories of the lived experience. Through this immersion, the coachee starts to make sense of a more holistic and coherent story, where aspects of oppression may start to emerge. The immersion in the narrative of the lived experience, which is often a narrative of oppression, takes place in many cases at

the edge of emotions, where the coachee experiences his/her emotional pains both as a driver to discover the story behind the pain, and as a barrier to further immersion. In parallel to immersion, the coachee also starts to go through a process of re-interpretation, where the meanings derived from the coachee's narrative are being revisited and redefined.

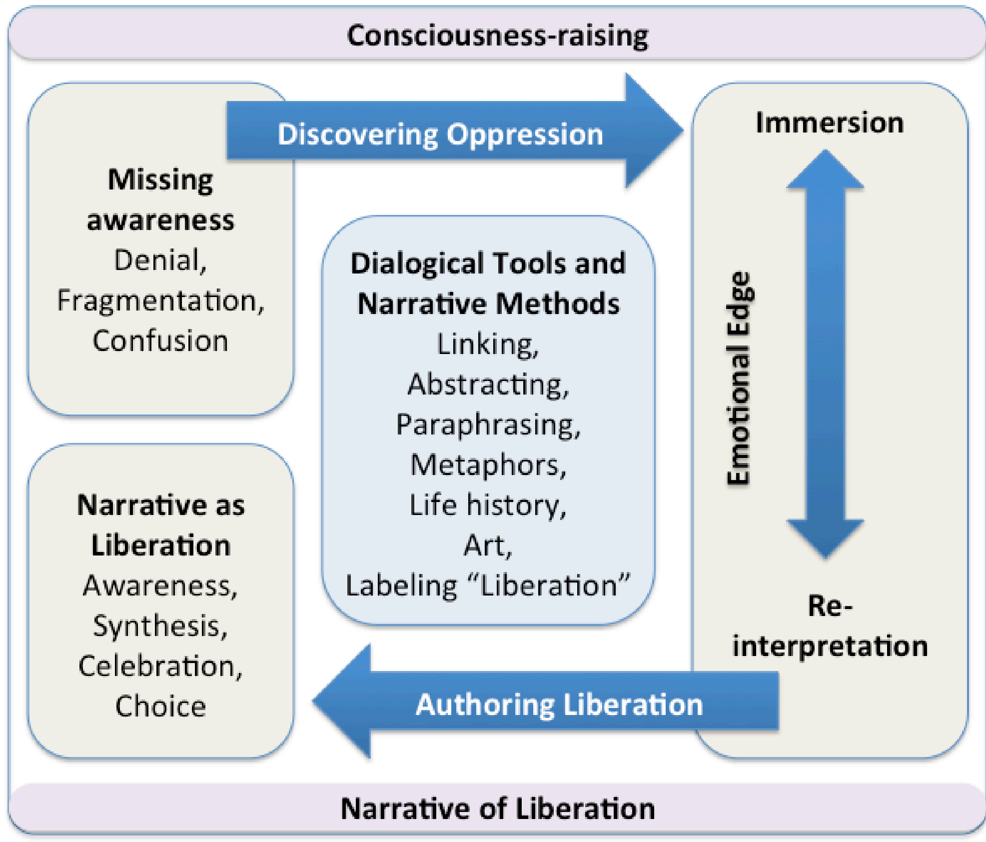


Figure 6.2 Relation between consciousness-raising and narrative of liberation

The narrative of liberation can be then seen as the process of creating the alternative narrative, by focusing on aspects of strength in the coachee's story, and by re-interpreting the stories of oppression as ones of resistance, the coachee is invited to re-author his/her narrative to new meanings and possibly different endings. The process flows from re-interpretation to immersion in the alternative story, and is supported by similar tools and methods to the ones used in consciousness-raising. Ultimately, this process aims to support the coachee's awareness and holistic understanding while encouraging the celebration of the coachee as a hero of his/her story, and most importantly, establishing the coachee's power to choose how the story is interpreted and how it may evolve in the future. While the group chose to call the process 'naming oppression', what

happens in fact is that oppression is named and exposed, only to be renamed as resistance and liberation.

The group's experience with both interventions seemed to confirm that a narrative perspective, when used as part of coaching for emancipation, is liberating, a view that coincides with how Abels and Abels (2001) described the use of the narrative perspective in social work: "It [The narrative perspective] strives to liberate the person from being the problem, or being saturated by the problem. It furthermore is liberating in that it expands the participant's ability to recognize the limitations that have been placed on him/her by social forces. It liberates them by helping them find ways to rewrite their stories. It is liberating in that it offers a broader view of their historical subplots. It is liberating to the worker because it supports the idea that s/he does not have to have the answers to all problems, and is not an expert. It is liberating because it deals with the person's entire lived experience in the landscape of their lives. It recognizes the importance of providing the client with new knowledge, and that in itself is liberating" (P. 188).

The findings in this chapter pointed to the area of dealing with strong emotions during consciousness-raising as one that requires further exploration. The use of artistic expression in the narrative of liberation was also highlighted as an area where the group felt the need to experiment further. A third area that may be of interest is the impact of culture on the process of narrative creation. As different cultures have different storytelling traditions (Pellowski, 1990), it may be the case that the methods and outcomes of narrative processes differ across these cultures.

In the next chapter, the focus moves from the narrative/emotive process of naming oppression, to the critical/cognitive process of renewing beliefs.

7. RENEWING BELIEFS

In this chapter, I present the findings related to the second process identified by the inquiry group. The process of renewing beliefs aims to help the coachee to understand the reasons behind the current reality, and to critically reflect on the assumptions that have been created by that reality or are playing a role in maintaining it, with an aim to find new meaning structures that support a new reality. It relates to two blocks of the initial coaching model:

A. **X-Role Analysis**, supporting the coachee's gaining of critical awareness of the impact of society on his/her beliefs about self and others.

B. **Critical Self-Reflection**, supporting the process of critically reviewing taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions on self, others and the world.

Figure 7.1 shows the two blocks as part of the initial coaching model. The reflective questions presented in chapter six were used in helping the group to analyse their experience. The structure of this chapter follows the same flow presented at the beginning of the previous chapter.

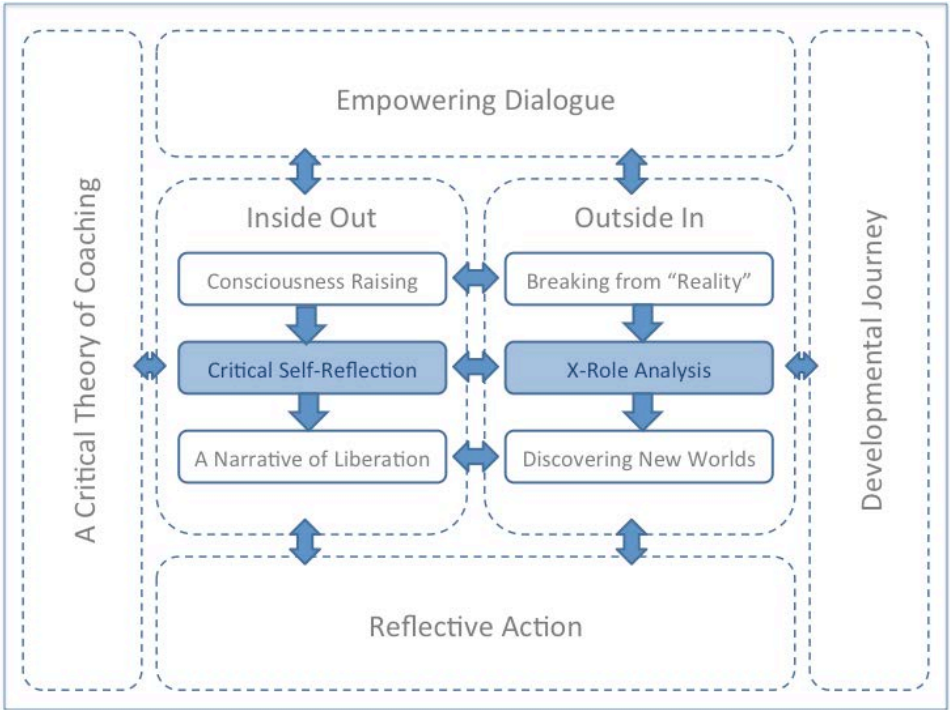


Figure 7.1 Blocks of the initial coaching model related to renewing beliefs

A. X-Role Analysis

The objective of X-Role Analysis was defined in the initial coaching model (Chapter 3) as: To become critically aware of the impact of society on one's beliefs about self and others. This block started off as one of the most challenging for the inquiry group to integrate into their coaching practice. During the training on the initial model, coaches expressed concerns that the coachees' perception of coaching was that it was inward looking, focused on the individual and his/her immediate circles. Exploring the individual's experience from a social perspective seemed to be a more challenging intervention to start and to explain to the coachees. As an *outside-in* approach, x-role analysis brings a dimension that is not commonly used in coaching. X-role analysis was one of the least used interventions during the first action cycle, but was used much more consistently in the following action cycles. During the reflective workshops the group identified three key themes that described their experience with x-role analysis: The first theme looks at the aspects that point the coach towards using x-role analysis interventions; the second theme analyses from the group's experience the emancipatory aspects of x-role analysis; and the third theme discusses the role and development of coaches in relation to supporting x-role interventions.

1. The need for X-Role

The group noted that while coachees became aware of their oppressive conditions, they explained their conditions in two contradictory, but complementary, ways:

a. **Self-blame**: Many coachees reverted to blaming themselves for their conditions. They expressed a view that it must be down to their own shortcomings and bad choices that they were suffering in their lives. For example, Nadine reflected on how her coachee was interpreting the struggle she was going through without reference to it being related to any gender, bodily, or familial dimensions:

> *She didn't bring up society; her problem was seen as internal, having to do with the specificity of her case. But should I ask about what is behind the situation, her physical problem and her status as single at this age? (Nadine, C1).*

b. **Fatalism**: Other coachees – and in instances the same coachees exhibiting self-blame – seemed overwhelmed by the power of their social conditions in deciding their fate. They argued that their suffering was down to their 'bad luck', or the unavoidable and deterministic ruling of a bigger power. Some coachees tried to find some consolation in their religious beliefs; if God has chosen this life for them then it must be for a reason, and there is little they can do about it. For example, Sarah's coachee kept coming back at the start of every session, voicing despair and disbelief that things could change:

> *He needs to look at himself from the outside, and to consider the impact of being an orphan, with a family to look after. This block [x-role] seems very crucial with this point (Sarah, C3).*

In these two cases, the group found that an x-role analysis intervention was very useful, in terms of shedding light on the role of society in shaping the individual's thinking, choices and external options, and in helping the coachee to consider his/her ability to react to the social messages and forces in a different way. X-role analysis is also helpful to the coach, as it exposes many implicit taken-for-granted assumptions that the coachee holds, and that can be tackled through critical reflection. In the case below, Nadine notes how her coachee started talking about how society sees him as a foster child, but then expressed how he believed most of it, even in terms of 'having dirty genes' and being 'biologically evil':

> *Until last session, the topic hasn't been discussed. I said I feel we need to talk about you being an orphan, is that ok? He said yes. I started first by him, how he sees himself, and then how he thinks the society sees him and what he believes from that. I felt it was very important to tackle the elephant in the room. I was shocked from how much he believed the stigmas society puts on foster orphans. Society's beliefs become personal ones, hard to change (Nadine, C3).*

Another key need for x-role analysis was reported in relation to the analysis of power. Many coachees were in situations where they seemed to be helpless and often overrun in family and work relationships as well as in the public space (for example, sexual harassment of women in the streets). The group reported that in such cases, and before any actions may be considered, the coachee can benefit from an examination of the power dynamics; understanding his/her own power and reflecting on how this power can be used for his/her benefit.

2. Emancipatory impact of X-Role Analysis

The group reflected on the impact of x-role analysis, and how it supported emancipation. They identified that the key impacts are: discrimination between personal and social constructs, identification with a wider cause, and effective planning of resistance. As discussed in the previous section, most coachees appeared not to be aware of the impact of society on their thinking. While many coachees explicitly talked, and often complained, about the external impact of the social conditions on their lives, they were hardly aware of how society has shaped their own ideas, interpretations, beliefs, choices and behaviours. Through x-role analysis, coachees were learning how to understand their beliefs, choices, and behaviours as results of social processes as well as individual processes. An example of this view is depicted in figure 7.2.

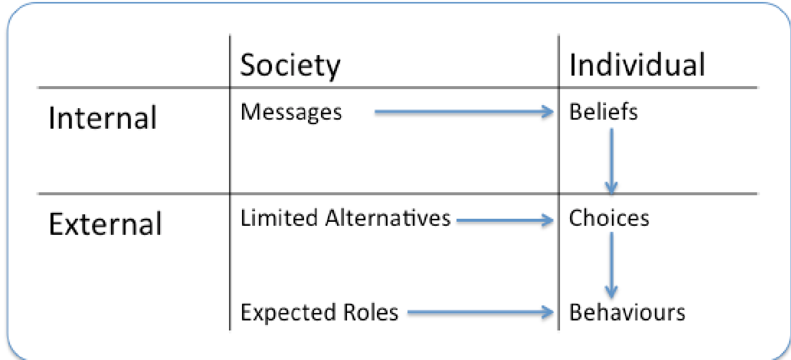


Figure 7.2 Discrimination between social and personal constructs

In the above model, individuals form beliefs that are partially affected by the social messages they receive including social values and ideologies. They make choices based on their beliefs, but also within the limited alternatives offered by the society, and they behave in certain ways that may be affected by the limited roles that are socially expected from them. According to the coaches, many coachees could only see the individual dimension in figure 7.2, and x-role analysis helped in making them aware of the social dimension, which in turn supported the process of reforming those beliefs, choices and behaviours. The group repeatedly noted that x-role analysis was often followed by critical self-reflection – discussed later in this chapter – as coachees became more prepared to reflect on their assumptions after having realised the social impact on their thinking. For example, Vana notes how her coachee became aware of the different rules she sets herself, and how these rules emerge from the way society treats females:

> *She talked about the restrictions she is putting on herself and the restrictions the people around her and the society are forcing on her. She talked about how she feels restricted as a girl; she can't laugh, can't wear what she wants, and can't be late. For her it's illogic, she hates being a girl, Egypt is so patriarchal and she hates it, but she doesn't know what to do about it (Vana, C1).*

The second impact of x-role analysis was a move away from the pre-occupation with the individual's problems towards some identification with groups of people suffering from the same oppressive conditions. The group suggested that coachees became more aware that their stories have common aspects with many other individuals affected by the same social factors. The group argued that this discovery seemed to provide a level of emotional support to the coachees, as they felt solidarity and belonging to a wider group. Linking this discovery to the narrative of liberation (Chapter 6) opened a potential for coachees to celebrate a bigger cause to fight for. For example, female coachees were empowered by the thought that their stories involved an aspect of fighting against gender discrimination in its wider sense, rather than only seeking their own well-being. This broader cause gave their narratives a heroic aspect. Their narratives started with statement like "*I am an Egyptian woman living in a country of men.*" Their approach to issues like sexual harassment became different; it became not only about protecting themselves, by avoiding being in the street, but rather about fighting it, in order to protect all women. In the case of Vana's coachee below, a victim of domestic violence, talking about the social issue rather than the individual issue allowed her more strength and disclosure:

> *She told me about how she had the courage once to talk about how the society rejects HIV patients, and then she talked about how the society also rejects and mistreats girls and weak people. I felt like she was referring to her brother by the world "society". She seemed strong, telling me how she feels about this, without using her personal story. Talking about the society is a reflection of personal experience but it is so liberating, as it is not as direct and personal, it is everybody's story, so the person could express her true feelings more freely (Vana, C2).*

The third impact of x-role analysis, as identified by the group, was enabling effective planning of resistance. The group suggested that x-role analysis acted partially like 'knowing your enemy', in the sense that it exposed several dynamics that were affecting the individual's choices without him/her being aware of them.

By making these dynamics visible, coachees became able to reflect on them and to understand their feelings towards the different messages, options and roles suggested to them by the different circles, and across the different dimensions. This understanding was evaluated as an enabler for reflective action, discussed in the next chapter. The group also suggested that 'power analysis' (One of the tools presented under x-role analysis, chapter 3) was important to enable effective resistance. Power analysis was used only few times during the different research cycles and was directly connected to the planning and evaluation of reflective action. As coachees generalised their understanding of the social dynamics, they felt more in control of their actions, able to analyse and predict – for example – how their parents' reactions relate to wider power relations and socially constructed roles of parenthood, as appears in the quote below:

> *She was talking about people from different cultures, styles of living and environments. It was her first time to generalise her problem and to get out of her personal issue to talk about the society's impact on her issue. I felt it is a good sign that she is moving on, and that her analysis might help her in her coming relations (Vana, C2)*

In the meantime, the group expressed a number of concerns over the identification with a wider cause. First, there was a fear of generalisation and rationalisation of the problem, to the extent that the coachee may be tempted to focus on the 'political' aspect of the problem while ignoring the personal dimension. This concern was also very relevant regarding the social discourse, taking place in Egypt at the time of this study, where the political change was forcing itself into all discussions, and taking over the idiosyncratic aspects of personal stories. For example, any situations involving interactions between Muslims and Christians, regardless of their specifics, were being analysed from a religious majority/minority perspective. While, there was no evidence of such 'generalisations' affecting the coaching process, the group felt that it was important for the coach to be aware of the possibility of it taking place as a by-product of x-role analysis. The group recommended that coaches should always ask how the uncovered dimensions impact the coachee's daily life, thus ensuring a link is continuously established between the political and the personal.

Another concern that the group raised was around the deterministic nature of x-role analysis. The fear was that the coachee might see the impact of society as all

pervasive, and that this might cause frustration and submission to the inescapable destiny dictated by the society. The coaches' experience however, seemed to suggest the contrary; the more the coachees were able to understand the dynamics driving their choices, and to break down their experience of oppression into circles (e.g. family, work) and dimensions (e.g. gender, physical appearance), the more they were encouraged and confident in their ability to change their conditions. However, this does not mean that such concern is invalid, as frustration may also happen if x-role analysis is introduced at the wrong time in the coaching process. For example, during a supervision session in the first action cycle, one coach reflected on her concerns about her coachee's ability to maintain hope, arguing that understanding the social dynamics at that point was only going to confirm her feelings of helplessness. In that case, it was decided to focus on the coachee's emotional fitness, discussed in chapter five, and not to engage in rational analysis until such time the coachee is ready to use the new understanding for her benefit. In Sarah's case below, she felt that the need to clarify to her coachee at the end of an x-role analysis intervention that the fact that society is behind a lot of his beliefs does not mean that he cannot change these beliefs.

> *We discussed the roles he played, and the roles he is depriving himself from because of his misconceptions. Allowing him to understand that he is a victim of an accumulated setup was significant, yet I had to end up explaining how the existence of this setup doesn't mean that he should keep victimising himself, and that it's all still in his hands to make the change (Sarah, C3).*

3. The role of the coach

The group identified two interventions that needed special attention regarding the coach's development, role and views: x-role analysis and breaking from reality (Discussed in the next chapter). In the case of x-role analysis, the first question was about the coach's understanding of the social dynamics relevant to the coaching context. The group argued that it is often the case that the social messages and the delivery mechanisms of these messages are deeply embedded in the nature of the society to the extent that they can pass undetected. For example, the names used historically to describe some social groups, the patronising power that is granted to religious teachers, or the well-established traditions giving more rights to one group over the other. In such cases, both the

coach and coachee may fail to critically examine the impact of these messages on the coachee's ideas and behaviours. What makes the problem more complicated is that the social dynamics are different from one context to another. For example, rural and urban societies have very different roles related to gender, religion and ethnicity.

The inquiry group suggested that coaches needed to educate themselves into the mechanisms by which society embeds its values and expected roles into the day-to-day experience of individuals. Coaches also need to be aware of the relevance of specific dimensions to specific social circles. For example, being an abandoned orphan, being a virgin, or being married to a policeman are much more relevant social factors in some societies than others. The need for coaches' education also raised a question on the degree of education that needs to be provided to the coachee as part of x-role analysis interventions. According to the coaches, most coachees relied primarily on their daily experiences to reflect on social messages and roles. Some coachees used popular knowledge from movies (e.g. on racism), and some benefited from the political debates taking place in Egypt at the time of the research, to open new perspectives on understanding their conditions. The group suggested that coachees who are less exposed to such topics might benefit from watching selected documentaries, movies, or reading selected books that expose some of the ways society drives people's beliefs and choices. A number of titles were discussed as examples, but this approach was not tested in practice. Another possibility suggested by the group was that the coach provides some examples and background knowledge on the topic. Most conceptual explanations that were reported by the coaches were provided as part of the 'power analysis' interventions. These ideas related to the education of both coach and coachee represent areas for further research and experimentation in practice.

The conceptual nature of x-role analysis raised another question around the coach's own experience and views. Coaches are either affected by the same social dimensions as the coachee or not, and both scenarios have implications on the coach's role. For example, a male coach may not be able or willing to support a female coachee in understanding the gendered messages of the society, or the limited options provided to females regarding their career choices. Meanwhile, a female coach may be also unable to support a critical examination of some messages that are affecting her in the same manner (For example, the unequal

treatment of the idea of virginity in males and females). The impact of the coach's beliefs on the criticality process in general has been discussed in the initial coaching model (Chapter 3), but was emphasised by the group in relation to x-role analysis, as the intervention is usually one that is normally suggested and driven by the coach. The group suggested that an x-role analysis workshop for groups of coaches might be beneficial, in order to help the coaches reflect on the social dynamics affecting them, and to explore their feelings towards these dynamics and their ability to support their coachees.

Discussion

The group's findings suggest that, in the context of oppression, x-role analysis brings a perspective that is often missing in coaching, which is the analysis of how the society shapes the individual's thinking and limits the options available for him/her, based on the specific roles that the individual is expected to play. Coaching has been critiqued for being too focused on the individual domain (Schultz, 2010; Swan, 2010; Western, 2012), while the group's experience suggests that such focus may allow social pressures to go undetected, and reinforce the individual's feeling of self-blame and fatalism. Moane (2010) reports an empirical study where participants of a course reported that social analysis, creating connection between personal patterns and the social patterns associated with oppression provided insights into personal issues and helped them to stop blaming themselves.

X-role analysis seemed to bring multiple benefits: exposing beliefs and behaviours to critical analysis, creating an empowering sense of solidarity with wider groups, and supporting better planning of actions of resistance. These benefits are generally in line with the outcomes of social and gender role analysis in feminist therapy, where research suggests that it supports increased awareness of the root causes of the difficulties the person is facing, questioning of traditional social roles, improved ability to adopt different roles and increased involvement in social action projects (Israeli & Santor, 2000). Meanwhile, several studies warn that the awareness of the social impact on the personal domain has a price, as learners report finding conversations and interactions with their social circles more problematic, because of their increased ability to identify oppressive messages in these interactions (Israeli & Santor, 2000; Magnet & Diamond, 2010). Also, the

concerns discussed by the group about the generalisation and politicisation of issues remain important to consider, the personal and political need to be in a constant dialectical relationship, with personal experience being critically examined before it is used to generate knowledge about the world, and non-personal knowledge being incorporated to re-interpret experience, as Freire (1970) argues: “One cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity. Neither can exist without the other, nor can they be dichotomized” (p. 50).

The social analysis that takes place in x-role interventions implies some requirements for the training and development of coaches aiming to use them. Coaches need to develop an understanding of the ways oppressive messages infiltrate into socially defined roles; they also need to be aware of the specific importance of different aspects of identity in the cultural context of their coachees; and they need to reflect critically on how they are affected positively or negatively by x-roles. The coaching literature does not discuss much the need for social education of coaches, with few exceptions such as Western’s (2012) call that coaching pedagogy should encourage critical thinking, questioning normative assumptions, structural power relations and diversity issues. Meanwhile, more specific requirements are discussed in other fields. For example, (Evans et al., 2005) argue that the education of feminist therapists seeks to create connections among personal, political, and social realities and that issues such as gender role socialization, privilege, power, bias, oppression, and discrimination are considered central to counsellor training. The development of coaches is discussed further in chapter nine.

B. Critical Self-Reflection

The objective of critical self-refection was defined in the initial coaching model (Chapter 3) as: To critically review taken-for-granted beliefs on self, others and the world. This block was reported as the most used across all coaching sessions. The group suggested that an element of critical reflection should exist in every session. The group identified four key themes related to critical self-reflection: The first theme looks at the nature of beliefs and assumptions that were expressed by the coachees; the second theme analyses what takes place during critical reflection, in terms of how assumptions are tested and reviewed; the third theme notes the emotional stress that some coachees experienced as part of

exposing their belief systems to critical analysis; the fourth theme discusses what comes out of critical self-reflection, in terms of its developmental and practical outcomes.

1. The nature of beliefs

The experience of the group suggested a far more extreme picture than that assumed during the training phase and the initial group discussions. The initial assumption was that living in oppressive environments would result in a set of taken-for-granted assumptions that restrain the individual's view of self and others, and the individual's ability to act in the world. The group's experience confirmed this assumption, but went beyond it in terms of several aspects.

First, the overall awareness of the coachees that their thinking and behaving was based on assumptions was generally very low. For many coachees the coaching experience was the first time they had reflected on what they believe and how they think, as Sarah points out:

> *It was clear how the fact that he doesn't talk much about his personal life to anyone helped his assumptions to be further embedded in his mind. They were never challenged, never questioned, as he never expressed them (Sarah, C3).*

A second common feature was that the nature of assumptions explored often appeared to be rather simplistic, as if these assumptions have never been challenged, but were rather being continuously enforced by social messages. Many coachees exhibited a wide array of uncritically examined beliefs that spanned across various aspects of their experience. The inquiry group challenged their own evaluation of this finding, for fear of being judgmental. Eventually, it seemed that many coachees showed a limited ability of critical reflection. Many of the beliefs expressed included generalisations, such as 'all managers must be tough and hated' or 'all men beat women':

> *She said that all men beat women, we discussed it, then she rephrased, saying that maybe not all of them but even those who do not, will use this power when they need, or they do not beat women just 'as a favour', because they consider women as weak creatures they don't want to hurt. In all cases, they see it as a man's right and decision (Vana, C2).*

Other beliefs emphasised dependence on authority figures, for example the lately deceased Coptic Orthodox Pope (Shenouda III) who was seen by a coachee as '*Our*

[Christian's] sole protector, without him we have no one to talk to'. Assumptions about family were generally exaggerated, in some cases '*I must do all what they want*', and in others '*I cannot talk to them about anything at all*'.

A third finding was that, in many cases, coachees' beliefs had direct negative impacts on their self-image, and imposed direct limitations to their daily choices. The group identified this as an opportunity for generating discussions that were of high relevance to the coachees, as facilitating critical reflection on their assumptions seemed to be tackling some of their immediate concerns, as the following reflections suggest:

> *She discovered that she prejudges herself as a loser and her colleagues as monsters (Vana, C1).*
>
> *He wants to talk to his mum and sisters, but he thinks it will be a burden to them, so he's now thinking that having a wife might help fix this relation with his mum (Sarah, C1).*
>
> *We talked about taking off her veil. It is always more powerful and real when it is a personal concern. She was the one who asked the question and it seemed that it was a personal dilemma she needed to crack (Vana, C2).*

A fourth comment made by the group was around the trigger for critical self-reflection. In most cases, critical reflection was triggered by discoveries from consciousness-raising, discussed in the previous chapter, or x-role analysis, discussed earlier in the current chapter. Meanwhile, some coaches suggested that critical reflection was also triggered by a discussion around the coachee's goal; where the suggested goal from coaching had revealed embedded assumptions that needed to be examined before coaching could progress further to explore that goal. Examples of such goals included '*I want to be married [or with someone], I cannot be alone*' and '*I must do something big because God will judge me based on my talents [According to the Christian Parable of Talents]*'. In the latter example, the coach reflected in her notes:

> *It's not that this belief must be questioned or understated, but it's important to explore how it could rather help him instead of being a burden (Sarah, C1).*

The fifth finding of the group was that despite the spread of unchallenged assumptions and beliefs across a wide variety of topics, it was still possible to identify some big umbrellas of assumptions that act at a higher level and are heavily impacting the coachees' experiences. The group referred to the

assumptions relevant to specific topics as 'mini assumptions', for example: 'aborted orphans can have criminal genes'. On the other side, the group identified what they called 'macro assumptions' that are more generic in nature and affect many specific assumptions. Examples of the latter include assumptions related to self-worth (Am I essentially valuable?), guilt (Am I good?), and independence (Can I survive on my own?). Macro assumptions serve as frames of reference upon which many beliefs and behaviours can be built, but are also reinforced by each of these beliefs. As coaches started conceptualising assumptions into a mini/macro hierarchy, they felt more able to facilitate critical reflection. They also argued that using critical reflection to examine mini assumptions might not result in real change, as old beliefs might re-appear in new forms, being rooted in the untouched macro assumption, like branches of a tree, connected to a deeply rooted trunk. Nadine expresses this concern in one of her reflections:

> *I was working on mini assumptions and was not aware of the big frame that links them all. I think it might cause a relapse if we do not tackle the root. I think she needs criticality on a higher level in order to be free from the bigger assumption of loneliness (Nadine, C2).*

2. Validating assumptions

The group discussed their experience in facilitating critical self-reflection, in order to identify the key steps that were involved in the process and the practical lessons they got from it. The group's experience suggested that the cognitive process of critical analysis was relatively easy to facilitate when applied to external or social views (For example: The society's view of marriage, political views on current affairs and so forth). While these discussions showed the potential ability of coachees to engage in critical thinking, they did not seem to have much impact on the individuals' issues. Meanwhile, using the same thinking process to reflect on the coachees' own assumptions about self and others seemed to be much more challenging. Most coachees showed a lot of internal resistance to examining and reviewing their assumptions about themselves. Nevertheless, most coachees remained committed to the process of critical reflection, despite resisting its outcomes. The group argued that such commitment was down to the fact that the beliefs they were reviewing had a direct impact on their lives and that they were ones that needed resolution for them to be able to progress. Nadine describe her work with one coachee:

> *We could deal with [assumptions] having to do with what he believes about what society says, but couldn't work on all the assumptions he was living with. I think that, out of what society says about orphans, he now has his own assumptions about himself and it was hard to shake them. What made a difference was their effect on his life, rather than him seeing whether they are right or wrong. Criticality seems to be of relevance when it is not done on the level of validating assumptions but focussing on how they are affecting the way of living; I was using criticality on an intellectual level, and it is more about the personal level (Nadine, C3).*

The main steps of critical self-reflection involved an external validation against facts, and an internal exploration of hidden alternatives. The group suggested that the role of the coach was to use questions that raise doubts around the foundations of the discussed assumptions. From an external perspective, raising doubts involves questioning the facts surrounding the assumption and asking whether the coachee's experience supports that assumption. For example, evaluating the coachee's achievements as opposed to her low confidence in her abilities, analysing the reactions of people to behaviours that the coachee thought were objectionable, or checking the validity of one situation to be generalised as an all-encompassing fact. Another important aspect is to question all statements of absolute reality or unquestionable action. This questioning does not need to take place in a direct intervention, but would form part of every discussion, as Sheren does after a talk with her coachee about his family and his career:

> *I asked: do you realise how many times you said 'must' in this discussion? (Sheren, C2).*

From an internal perspective, the group used the term 'hidden alternatives' to describe other possible interpretations of the coachee's experience. The role of the coach was seen as probing into such interpretations, by asking whether there were alternative ways for the coachee to understand his/her experience, and hence using this new interpretation to re-examine the coachee's beliefs. For example, questioning whether a behaviour is being self-enforced or enforced by the society, probing into hidden drivers for a behaviour that are different from what the coachee initially communicated, or challenging the way the coachee explains other people's positions or actions in terms of both meaning (For example: Is he telling me this because he hates me?) and intensity (For example: Does their critique justify the amount of stress it caused me?). Similar to external

validation, internal alternatives can be sought in all conversations, and as part of other interventions, like how Vana intervened below:

> *She was talking about when people critique her behaviours and was describing a situation. So I asked: What else could this mean? She said: maybe it's me who takes everything negatively (Vana, C2).*

The group also noted that deeply embedded assumptions might require several cycles of critical reflection. Many coachees showed signs of having reviewed a certain belief and the coaching discussion moved forward, only to come back to the same belief in the same or in a following session. The group recommended that, instead of moving quickly from one assumption to another, critical reflection should be kept focusing on tackling one assumption at a time, until such time the coachee is totally comfortable with the final resolution. For example, the following quotes were from the notes of one coach on the same coachee over two different sessions:

> *After talking, she said: No, I might not be [Lazy]; the problem is that I believe all that my father says about me (Sheren, C2).*
>
> *It's very clear that she is resisting the idea of believing something else about herself than what others (mainly her father) tell her. Every time she goes back to the same point and says the same things. This time it seems that she started doubting (Sheren, C3).*

The group argued that a key step at the end of critical self-reflection is what was called 'tying knots over discoveries', which is a step of confirmation and articulation of the revised belief, linking the revised belief to practical implications in the coachee's life, thus creating a reference point for the coachee that he/she can use in the future when they are experiencing in relapse or reviewing their beliefs against new experiences. For example, looking at one coachee's beliefs about dependency, where the coachee reaches a revised view that it is not in her best interest or the interests of others to establish dependent relationships with them. The coach is then encouraged to spend enough time at the end of the session, reviewing with the coachee how this new belief emerged, and linking it with as many situations as possible, including possible future situations, seeking confirmation against each situation that this belief is valid, and asking the coachee to summarise the belief in a form and language that she feels she can refer back

to in the future. As Fady notes, this process provides protection against falling back into the same behaviours under the stress of the situation:

> *It is key to tie knots on discoveries, if we don't do it; we get relapses (Fady, C3).*

The group discussed the identification and analysis of 'macro assumptions', the bigger umbrellas or frames of assumptions that link the coachee's beliefs on a set of topics. The core of this discussion took place in the third reflective workshop, where many coaches were starting to relate different discussions they had with their coachees, and to discuss the link between these different discussions in terms of the macro assumption that is behind many of them. However, some coachees were showing early signs of being able to group their diverse experiences into bigger frames, like Vana's coachee below, who started analysing many of her beliefs in terms of her gender role:

> *She realised that she is acting in the same way society would accept and that she became part of the patriarchal society's unconscious (Vana, C1).*

Facilitating critical reflection on macro assumptions revealed a number of challenges: First, the discussions were more conceptual in nature, and linking macro assumptions to practical examples was more difficult. Second, the interventions of the coach seemed to be more visible, as opposed to facilitating critical reflection on specific assumptions, because the coaches had to create links between the coachees' different stories and beliefs. Third, macro assumptions – by definition – are more embedded in the coachees' belief systems, hence they are harder to tackle, and harder to evaluate the degree to which they have been critically reviewed. Discussions on this topic suggested that further exploration is required. The following lines are from Sarah's notes on two consecutive sessions with the same coachee. They show how critical reflection needs to tackle the same macro assumption from many perspectives and in waves of questions, examining specific assumptions, and then linking them into bigger wholes:

> *He has a whole set of assumptions and beliefs that are refraining him from moving forward, assumptions about motherhood, families, relationships and guilt. My interventions were mostly about trying to help him see if they were true; by discussing his understanding of the general concept; then how he reflects that on his personal case, trying to differentiate between how he feels, what he thinks, what he knows is true and how he is behaving, trying to create links between many things he mentioned in this session and the one before,*

> *asking about how he sees himself, and hence how his family sees him (Sarah, C3).*
>
> *We tackled the main concepts/assumptions that seemed to be guiding his life: the "I am supposed to do that" and the dissonance he faces between what he is 'supposed to do' and what he actually does. We spoke about what he personally thinks and believes, and what the society imposes on him and how to differentiate between both. There was a lot of dissonance that needed to be set. He talked a lot about his assumptions and the main concepts that he knows are leading his life, many of which, in a confusing and discomforting way (Sarah, C3).*

3. Managing the stress of criticality

The group discussed the emotional stress created by critical self-reflection. As mentioned earlier, coachees were keen and committed to having critical discussions regarding their lives. Meanwhile, many signs of resistance were revealing that this type of discussion took them out of their comfort zone, as it was forcing them to reconsider beliefs that were never challenged before. The group suggested that critical self-reflection should not be the only intervention to use in any coaching session, and that the suggested model included other interventions that might balance the stressful impact of critical self-reflection. The group also stressed on the importance of maintaining an empowering dialogue throughout the critical discussion, by balancing the role of the coach as a facilitator of critical reflection, and as an empathic and understanding listener.

> *It was important to be critical, yet; do that in a way that shows that I'm listening, I understand, and that does not necessarily mean that what he's saying is right. I understand where his assumptions are coming from, but he now has to review them (Sarah, C3).*

In some cases, it seemed beneficial to avoid or park critical interventions during a whole coaching session. According to one coach, this was important for a coachee who needed a positive break, despite her willingness to continue challenging herself in a critical way:

> *This session was about her story and her achievements. There were points to tackle as critically but I abstained, to make her only focus on positives (Nadine, C3).*

In other cases, critical discussions led to a 'neutral zone'. In one case, the coachee realised that her current views were no longer valid, but could not reach a revised

view. In another case, the coachee stated a revised belief, but felt emotionally incapable of acting based on that belief. In both cases, coachees decided to postpone the resolution of the discussed topic to a later time when they would feel ready to do it. Reflecting on these cases, the group praised the ability of those coachees to evaluate their emotional ability and to decide on the best course of action, as Vana notes:

> *Sometimes realising that I am not capable of making a decision, and postponing it, is a good sign of development, especially when I am tempted to relapse back to my comfort zone (Vana, C2).*

Instead of starting from the coachee's story, a number of coaches experimented with working from a list of generic assumptions that they presented to the coachees and asked them about their views regarding these assumptions (This exercise was suggested in the initial coaching model, Chapter 4). The general comment was that the exercise felt academic, but was actually fun and less stressful, as it helped the coachees be less defensive about the assumptions discussed, as they were discarding other assumptions from the list while knowing that many other people would endorse these as their own, so the whole exercise seemed less personal and hence less stressful. For coachees who had not been previously exposed to the concept of critical reflection on assumption, such exercise could serve as a good introduction, but would not probably replace other critical interventions, as Nadine observes after using the list of generic assumptions:

> *It felt academic, but it felt nice for her, to understand we all live with assumptions (Nadine, C3).*

Another way of handling the stress generated by critical self-reflection was suggested during the second reflective workshop, but was not tried during the action cycles. The idea was to make critical discussions positive and fun activities, by finding ways to transform critical reflections into cognitive games that generate a curious investigation of the validity of the discussed beliefs (Reference was made to a training exercise used during the training phase of this research). Another idea was related to the 'caricaturisation of beliefs', whereby a stated assumption may be discussed in an exaggerated or satirical way (For example: 'my father knows all answers' may be exaggerated as a caricature of the wise father and the ignorant son). The benefit of this method, as suggested, is to emphasise

and magnify the issue in the discussed belief, and to do it in a way that is less emotionally stressful as the evaluation is happening on a level that is a funny exaggeration of the lived experience. Using this type of images during critical reflection may also leverage the person's creativity in reviewing his/her beliefs using different analogies.

4. Developmental and behavioural outcomes

The group tried to develop some criteria to evaluate the outcomes of critical self-reflection, whether these outcomes are developmental (Improvement in the coachees capability) or behavioural. The first sign of development, as identified by the group, was when the coachees started proactively leading the process of critical self-reflection, either by explicitly asking to work on their beliefs as a goal for the coaching session, or by taking the lead throughout the discussion in raising questions about their assumptions and the social norms that surrounded them. The coachees who exhibited proactive self-criticality also showed clear signs of progression during their coaching journeys, reaching resolution of internal questions and dilemmas, or changing their behaviours in a way they could not do before. The following quotes are from the coaches' journals, following sessions where the coachees showed advanced levels of proactively leading the process of critical reflection:

> *When the coachee comes with the intention and desire to work with criticality, it shows a level of development, that they are aware and want to be freed from assumptions (Nadine, C2).*
>
> *It was her who was criticising different ideas, and I felt that she brought them up because she wanted to go deeper into those stories. I felt that this was one of the strong moments in all the sessions. When the person is the one who decides to criticise her own life, it is more powerful, true and lasting (Vana, C2).*
>
> *She was self-critical and I think this was a clear development in her journey (Vana, C3).*

A second sign of development was related to the nature of the revised beliefs and assumptions. The initial beliefs of many coachees were based on a form of duality; ideas, people and behaviours were classified as good or bad, right or wrong, mandatory or forbidden, and so forth. During the process of critical reflection, coachees evaluated both sides of this duality, and were often able to develop a

higher level of beliefs, that is neither their current belief nor its opposite, but rather a belief that transcends this duality to a more holistic interpretation, like Vana's coachee below:

> *She was trying to evaluate whether she was really a dreamer as he used to make her feel or was she a realistic person. At the end, she reached a statement about herself; that she is a realistic person, but one who does not let obstacles prevent her from reaching her dream, an optimistic realist, and she likes that about herself (Vana, C2).*

A third sign of development was related to the coachee's ways of knowing; the improved ability to critically examine more sophisticated and varied questions in his/her life, without the need for the coach's support. The group identified such improvements as possibly the biggest wins from critical self-reflection interventions, providing the coachees with a sustainable ability for self-development. As Nadine reflects, it is like giving them the key to unlock their world of beliefs:

> *Ways of knowing are like keys she could use for herself to unlock her assumptions (Nadine, C3).*

The coaches noted how their coachees were developing their ways of examining their ideas, and were offering feedback to the coachees regarding the process of the reflection. For example, the quote below is taken from a session during the second action cycle:

> *We talked about taking off her veil, she said: "Veil is one of the religious obligations, but no one cares or asks about prayers and fasting the way they ask, urge and judge about veils, so it is not just a religious matter. I feel that taking it off wasn't an aim in itself; I needed to prove that I am capable of taking such a step; I also needed to feel beautiful. I didn't listen to anyone" (Vana, C2).*

Meanwhile, being self-critical or self-aware was not deemed a positive sign on its own. In some cases, coachees were cognitively capable of engaging in critical reflection, and seemed to be aware of the flaws in their beliefs. However, these coachees were seen as not assuming responsibility over their lives; their awareness was not enough to enable them to act freely towards their assumptions, presumably because of the emotional price associated with claiming this responsibility. These coachees were assessed from the beginning of the coaching journey as showing a high degree of cognitive awareness, but were

strongly resisting the outcomes of their thinking, stating that while they knew what needed to change, they could not live with the implications of change. In these cases, the impact of critical reflection was minimal, and development could only occur through other interventions focusing on providing them with the emotional power and will to act based on their beliefs. These cases sometimes presented a challenge to the coaches, for they felt that the apparent maturity in the coachee's reflections were not materialising into concrete outcomes, like what Nadine experienced with one of her coachees:

> *She was the one questioning why we follow certain societal or religious rules that are wrong, yet we have to abide by them. But then, the normal question was: So now you know that, you are aware of the messages, then, are you free from their impact? (Nadine, C2)*

Hence, the group argued that critical self-reflection could only be fully evaluated by examining its impact on the coachee's life. The success of critical reflection would be validated in the coachee's ability to engage in new thoughts and actions that reflect the renewed beliefs. Common interventions that followed critical self-reflection were reflective action, and discovering new worlds, both are discussed in the following chapter, as part of the process of fighting back.

Discussion

Critical reflection played a central role in most of the coaching journeys experienced by the group. Many coachees initially showed signs of limited awareness of their belief systems and how they affect their interpretations and behaviours. Assumptions were hardly challenged, and were often negatively impacting their self-image. These features share many elements with the description of the unformed ego (Bachkirova, 2011) and the socialised mind (Kegan, 1982). In these developmental stages, the person's ideals and values are driving his/her actions, but they cannot be observed or reflected on. Cultural norms and expectations are accepted and cannot be examined, as they form part of the person rather than an object of the person's consciousness (Drath, 1990).

The group's notion of macro assumptions can be compared to Mezirow's (2000) concept of frames of reference, which he defines as "The structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions" (p. 16). Frames of reference are composed of two dimensions, habits of mind, which are

broad and generalised assumptions similar to the group's description of macro assumptions, and points of view, which are more immediate and specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes and judgments. The coaches suggested that while most critical reflections originate at that specific level, linked to the coachee's specific experiences, real change takes place when the broader assumptions become visible and are critically reviewed. Meanwhile, the group's experience also suggests that working directly with macro assumptions is not effective, as the process of critical reflection may become too rational and irrelevant for the coachee. Instead, critical reflection needs to be grounded in experience, and to emerge from dilemmas that are relevant for the coachee at that specific time; the idea of grounding critical reflection in real and relevant experience is central to Freire's (1970) method of identifying generative themes to drive the content of the discussion.

According to the group, the process of critical reflection is like a force field, where the coachee is motivated by the relevance of the examined assumptions to the immediate dilemma, and at the same time is deterred by the emotional price of acting upon the renewed beliefs. As Brookfield (1991) notes: "Critically analysing assumptions is one of the most difficult of all capacities to model, since it entails a willingness to scrutinise one's existing givens – an activity that can frequently be threatening and anxiety producing" (p. 245). The group's view is that critical reflection needs to be approached as a journey, moving from one point to the next, tying knots over discoveries. Meanwhile, the transformation in the coachees' ability to engage in critical reflection is one of the most encouraging outcomes of the study. In relatively short periods, many coachees showed increased proactiveness to self-reflect and a noticeable improvement in their critical capacity. Their behaviours seemed closer to the formed ego defined by Bachkirova (2011), or the self-authoring mind defined by Kegan (1982). Their ability to resolve the duality in their arguments by defining higher-order synthesising beliefs suggests an improved capacity for dialectical thinking (Basseches, 2005).

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the group findings related to the process of 'Renewing beliefs'. In this process, the group combined two

interventions from the initial coaching model, namely x-role analysis and critical self-reflection, the two types of interventions complement each other and have both cognitive and emotional dimensions. Figure 7.3. depicts a high-level view of how the process of renewing beliefs combines these interventions. The figure proposes a theoretical model for understanding how the different levels of the coachee's experience are approached as the object of critical analysis. These levels include the actual situation or experience, the web of interpretations and assumptions that relate to that experience, and the broader and less visible macro assumptions that provide a frame upon which all interpretations are validated.

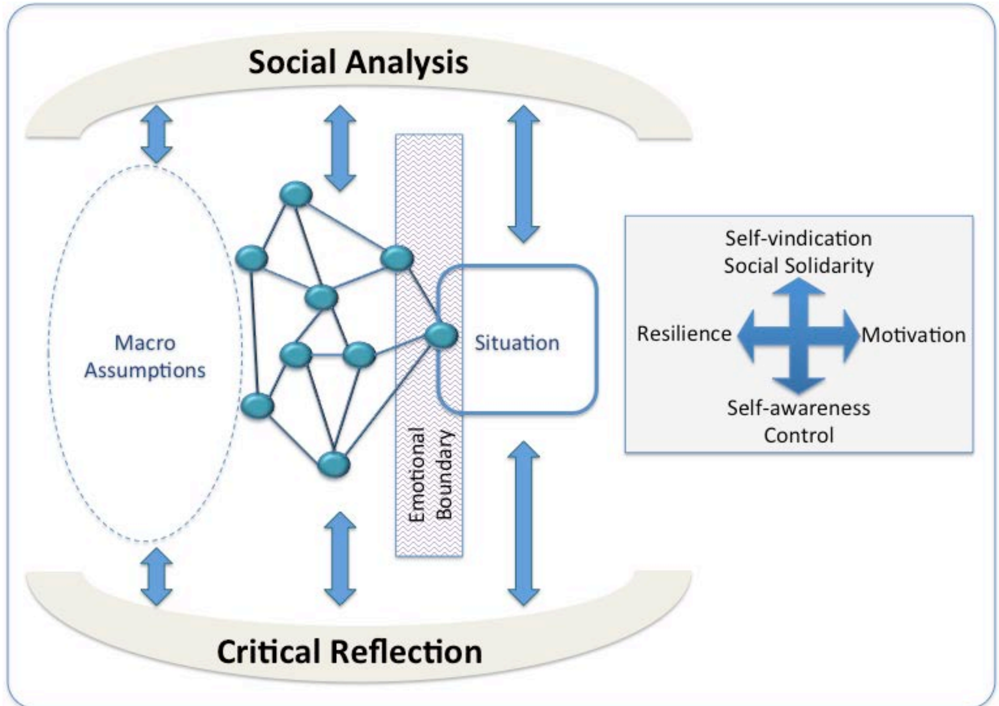


Figure 7.3 High-level view of the process of renewing beliefs

The experience is approached in two complementary ways: (1) From the outside-in perspective, using x-role analysis interventions, the coach helps the coachee to analyse how the situation is framed within power dynamics, expectations and choices that are defined by the society, and how different interpretations, assumptions and macro assumptions are affected by the continuous flow of messages that reinforce specific roles and identities for each individual. (2) From the inside-out perspective, using critical self-reflection interventions, the coach helps the coachee to expose the assumptions and interpretations behind the way he/she engages with the situation, and to critically examine these assumptions for validity, seeking new or improved interpretations. During this process, the

coachee moves across a web of interconnected beliefs, tying knots over discoveries, in order to ensure that new discoveries are not quickly lost. In many cases, critical reflection on the web of assumptions reveals a higher level of broader macro-assumptions that are in turn analysed and validated.

The group's findings related to the process of renewing beliefs suggest a number of key considerations that are summarised in the four-way arrow in figure 7.3. Using social analysis (Up) helps coachees avoiding self-blame, as they come to understand the impact of the society on their experiences and beliefs. It also helps them develop a sense of solidarity with a wider cause, identifying with other groups suffering from the same oppressive conditions. In the meantime, too much focus on this dimension may lead to over-rationalisation and politicisation of the issue, and may suggest a deterministic view of a reality fully governed by the social system. Hence, using critical self-reflection (Down) enables the coachee to maintain and improve the level of self-awareness, as many coachees initially seemed unaware of their own beliefs. It also helps the coachee to feel in control of his/her own beliefs, as one of the key outcomes of critical reflection was the increase in the coachee's proactiveness and ownership of the process, thus transforming every experience and thought into an object of reflection.

On the horizontal dimension of the four-way arrow, the group suggested that the more the process addresses macro-assumptions (Left), the more the coachee's renewed beliefs become resilient, because specific interpretations and assumptions derive their power from the broader beliefs. If the process focuses only on critically examining beliefs related to a specific situation, the new discoveries may not be sustainable in new situations. Meanwhile, it is also suggested that keeping the critical discussion grounded in the situation (Right) is very important, because it keeps coachees motivated and committed to the process, as they can establish the relevance of the critical discussion to the immediate concern. Therefore, the process of renewing beliefs needs to balance movement in all four directions, combining social and personal analyses, and movement to the depth without losing the connection with practical concerns. The process of renewing beliefs may lead to actions based on new discoveries, which is the focus of the next chapter; presenting findings related to the process that the group called: "Fighting Back".

8. Fighting Back

In this chapter, I present the findings related to the third process identified by the inquiry group. The process that the group called 'fighting back', aims to support change in the coachee's life, through taking actions to break from the cycle of daily oppression, opening new possibilities for change, and taking actions to resist oppression and drive improvements in the coachee's lived conditions. The process involves both internal and external steps in terms of changing the coachee's internal world of ideas and perceptions as well as the external world of relations and actions in the world. Coachees start by taking internal steps to prepare themselves to engage in external action. During and after the action, they are encouraged to reflect on it and learn from it, in order to prepare for more actions to follow. As shown in figure 4.8, the process of fighting back, relates to three blocks of the initial coaching model presented in chapter three:

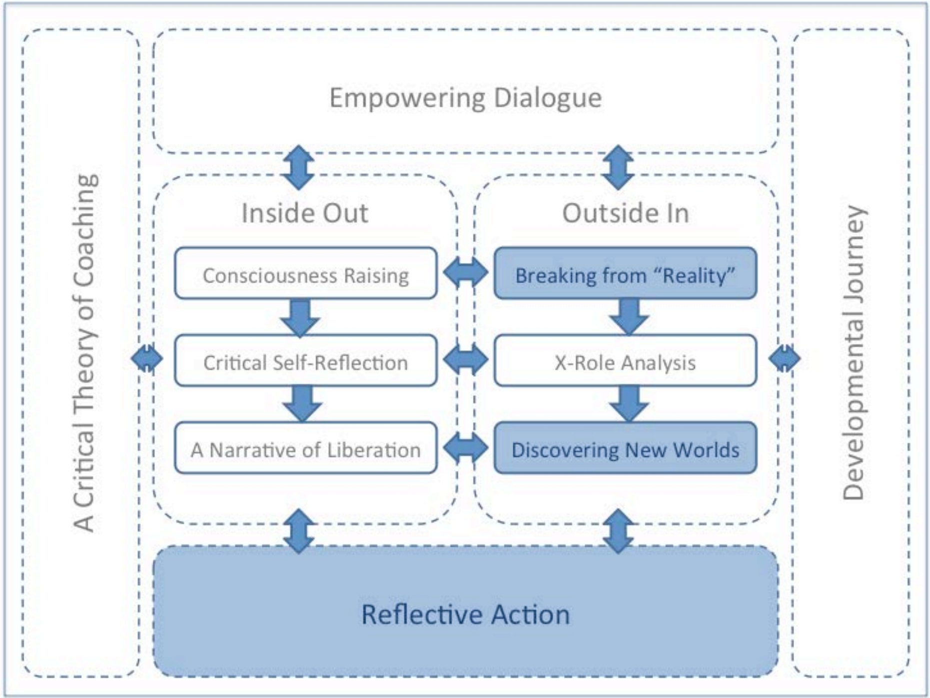


Figure 8.1 Blocks of the initial coaching model related to the process of fighting back

A. **Breaking from Reality:** supporting actions by the coachee to separate him/ herself from the daily cycle of oppression, in order to be able to see it and evaluate it from new perspectives.

B. **Discovering New Worlds**: supporting the process of generating new possibilities through engaging the coachee in thought and lived experiments that open new perspectives and alternatives to the current condition.

C. **Reflective Action:** supporting the definition and implementation of external actions that the coachee to trigger change in the coachee's life, and the complete management of that change, from planning to evaluation and learning.

The reflective questions presented in chapter six were used in helping the group to analyse their experience. The structure of this chapter follows the same flow presented at the beginning of chapter six.

A. Breaking from Reality

The objective of the breaking from reality block in the initial coaching model (Chapter 3) was defined as: To break from the daily cycle of oppression, to open space for change. Similar to x-role analysis, discussed in the previous chapter, coaches assessed this block as one that fell outside the common practice of coaching, usually perceived to be focused on the coachee's self and reality rather than breaking from it. Breaking from reality was the least reported block to be used throughout the coaching experience. However, it was one of the most favourable interventions that coaches said they would like to develop its theory and practice in the future, as Nadine expressed in the third research cycle:

> *Breaking from reality needs a lot of energy and it is a different layer of the coaching journey, it needs a research in itself (Nadine, C3).*

Coaches' reflections and discussions on breaking from reality revolved around three themes that are presented in the following sections. The first theme examines the conditions required for the breaking from reality intervention to be effective, from both the coach and coachee perspectives. The second theme includes the practical considerations of breaking from reality that the group discovered through their experience. The third theme presents discussions of the concerns that the group members had about breaking from reality.

1. Conditions for breaking from reality

Members of the inquiry group often reported 'Breaking from reality' as "*most needed but most challenging*". This problematic nature of the intervention drove most of the group's discussions around it. The group looked at the block from the perspectives of both coachee and coach, trying to understand more the conditions that improve or hinder the readiness for tackling breaking from reality as part of the coaching process. According to the coaches, many coachees appeared to be completely immersed in their realities, unable to avoid thinking or talking about their problems and issues even for very short times, also unable to consider their situation from an external or neutral stand point. For these coachees, the group suggested that breaking from reality could possibly allow them a moment of peace that might help them in reconsidering their situation while feeling more empowered and able to see it with a fresh pair of eyes. For those coachees who were heavily overwhelmed and restrained by their daily experience, the group suggested that breaking from reality might be a prerequisite for critical reflection, discovering new worlds, and action. However, assessing that a coachee is restrained by his/her immersion in reality is not an easy task, as expressed by one of the coaches:

> *I suggested breaking from reality, it was irrelevant, I made an assumption about her immersion in her current oppressive conditions and it was a wrong assumption. I also wanted to get anything out of the session, as we seemed to be going in a closed circle (Fady, C1).*

In the meantime, the group argued that being immersed in one's reality makes it even more difficult to consider or commit to such intervention. Breaking from reality was challenging because it was out of the comfort zone of the coachees, as they got used to living within the confined boundaries of their own daily experiences. Coaches reported that many coachees expected the coaching process to flow within the same boundaries, talking about their daily struggles, emotions, fears, and issues. One coach argued that talking with her coachee about spending some time away from her daily reality was like using muscles that the coachee had never used before. The dilemma here, as expressed by the group, is that the more the coachee was unable to break from reality, the more it was a sign that such intervention was needed to enable any positive development, as Nadine expresses:

> *The more varied oppression is, the more we are inside it, the more we need to break and find some liberation space (Nadine, C2).*

From the coach's perspective, breaking from reality is also a challenging intervention. The group noted that while they felt the need for the coachee to consider breaking from reality, they were struggling to approach it in a way that results in an effective action. It seemed that using a simple facilitative approach of asking about what could be done was not yielding the desired outcomes, as can be seen in the following accounts:

> *I asked him what does he do for a change, what does he want to do, what does he dream of doing? It led us to nowhere, he is so consumed in his reality, and though we spent some time in this element, it didn't seem to be of much help. I did not know what else to do, I asked the question directly, told him why it might be important to find such an "escape", but that was beyond what he could think of at this point… (Sarah, C3).*
>
> *Where does it fit in the journey? It is virtually impossible to propose something, when he comes with an aim he only wants to discuss (Nadine, C3).*

The group suggested that the coach needed to make an effort to prepare for breaking from reality discussions. Such preparation would involve an understanding of the feasibility of the different actions suggested within this block. For example, one of the possible actions for breaking from reality is immersion in art. The initial coaching model (Chapter 3) does not provide specific details on how this could be done. Dependent on the coachee's location, social circles, preferences, access to the Internet, time of the year, and many other factors, some options may be more feasible than others (for example: visiting an exhibition, or attending a drawing workshop). This preparation can help the coach facilitate the discussion around the agreed action. Another example is expressed in the following quote:

> *Travelling and sports seem very feasible to her; as she already expressed some interest in doing them, so now it's my job to show her the options, alternatives and unlimited variety of such activities that could help her get out of her daily restricted life (Sarah, C1).*

The group argued that because breaking from reality was – by definition – outside the coachee's daily experience, the coach needed to support the intervention by providing different options and alternatives for action. The coach could not use an entirely facilitative approach, but would need to find ways to explain to the

coachee how a breaking from reality action is integral to the process of fighting back, and how he/she may become more capable of tackling the current issues if he/she manages to break from the cycle of daily immersion. The following quote supports this argument:

> *If the coachee never suggests a breaking from reality action, the coach should interfere, because the coachee will rarely see breaking from reality as a suitable action rather than a luxury, or will not be aware of it as an option to start with (Nadine, C2).*

2. Practical considerations of breaking from reality

The group reflected on their experience with supporting breaking from reality actions, focusing on the practical lessons of this experience. In the final reflective workshop, the group reviewed all the practical lessons that were noted throughout the research process, and concluded that while most of these lessons might be useful, the overarching learning for breaking from reality is that it must be approached with an experimental spirit. There did not appear to be one right way for facilitating this process, and coaches may need to explore a number of different approaches before finding what works for their coachees and what is more feasible for their own skills. The first practical question was whether the existing hobbies or activities of the coachee could be seen as breaking from reality, or could be used as starting points for the intervention. A number of coachees had such activities:

> *He spoke about the spiritual retreats he goes to, how this time-off helps him see things better and reflect on his life. By the end of the session, he had made a self-promise to do one ASAP, even though it may clash with his job (which was why he stopped) (Sarah, C1).*
>
> *He does a lot of it himself, in photography. He showed me his activities through the photos during the session. Does this mean that his breaking should be more towards silence, or discovering new things in his surrounding? (Nadine, C3).*

The group saw activities such as spiritual, artistic and sporting activities as good starting points for exploring the coachee’s motivation behind engaging in such activities. In some cases, it seemed that the coachee has engaged in a certain activity for the specific aim of resisting his/her current reality. In other cases, it appeared from the discussion with the coachee that such activity was part of his/her social reality (for example: an unmarried female coachee going to the gym

to lose weight in order to become more valued by male suitors, or a young coachee who was spending a lot of time on an artistic hobby as a reaction to being forced by his parents to drop it as a possible professional career). Hence, the group argued that the type of activity could not be used to judge its suitability for breaking from reality, as most of the activities suggested within this block have forms that have also been gendered, affected by class cultures, and made to serve the dominant ideology. In this sense, the coach should help the coachee to critically consider these activities and whether they are achieving their intended purpose. Meanwhile, current hobbies and activities that are helping the coachees to break from their daily oppressive realities are important to be encouraged and used as capabilities to be leveraged during the coaching process, as well as successes to be celebrated in the narrative of liberation, discussed in chapter six. Next, the group considered the practicality of doing breaking from reality activities within the session, as expressed by Nadine's question:

> *We need to think of appropriate breaking from reality that can match in different cases, for example in case of emotional blocks or loops. I think not just using it as form of action between sessions, how can it be done as a form of a coaching session? But it needs a lot of preparation! (Nadine, C2).*

Some coaches suggested the possibility of using theatre exercises, drawing or music inside the coaching session, but also questioned whether such a short intervention could achieve the desired outcome. Some coaches tried to experiment with a number of small changes in the coaching session, like attending an artistic event with the coachee on the same day of the session, or changing the place of the session, as Vana reports:

> *We went to a nice place and she liked it, in the second part of the session we stayed in a library and it was her first time to visit such a place. It is not a huge "breaking from reality" but it was nice and helped in her mood through the session (Vana, C2).*

However, the group's experience suggested that a powerful breaking from reality could only be achieved when the coachee is completely immersed in an experience that is largely separate from the coachee's daily routine. The group suggested actions outside the coaching session, involving things like travel, nature retreat, multiple-days drama workshop, and charity work (example given was working with disabled children in a slum area in the outskirts of Cairo). Another practical learning was that for breaking from reality actions to have a higher

chance of success, they need to tap into the coachee's natural skills (i.e. not require too much learning that would act as a barrier to being immersed in the experience). A recurrent example of this was the coachees' comfort with reading and writing (Not in terms of literacy, but as a general preference to read books and to express themselves in written words).

While the group argued that actions that tap into the coachees' existing skills are favourable, they also saw that the content of breaking from reality needed to be as far as possible from the coachee's current experience. For example, a coachee struggling with family issues would not benefit from an activity that touches the area of close relationships, even if it was in a dramatic or artistic form. The group argued that all such intervention would do is to open a door into reflecting back on the currently lived experience, rather than to help the coachee to be separate from it, as was experienced by Vana in one of her sessions:

> *I prepared a part from a book "Veronica decides to die", a part about madness. I asked her if she wants us to read this part, and while reading she was asking questions. She wanted to talk about her last relation and she led us directly to it through a very small sentence in the part we read, so we had a usual session talking about her. The mistake was that there were many similarities between the main novel character and her, so it was easy to get back to her life without really getting out of it, also that she does not like reading. To break the reality you need to get beyond the current reality with something interesting to the person, and understand when the person can't go further than a wound that still hurts (Vana, C2).*

In the group's experience, breaking from reality was fun, even just to talk about it with the coachees. The discussion about doing things completely outside the lived experience seemed to generate a positive energy. The group suggested that one of the factors that make this discussion more powerful is relating the proposed actions to the coachee's dreams, by choosing a physical, artistic or cognitive activity that shares some traits with aspirations that the coachee expressed. For example, creating something with their hands, doing something with a watching audience, or doing something that requires extreme effort.

> *I wanted her to talk about anything else apart from the work and the thesis, so I asked, when was the last time you did something different/new? Right before I finished my question, she hopped off her seat and said 'last week, …'. She seemed to be a totally different person; relaxed and excited. When I saw her*

reaction I grew more certain that this is exactly what she needs more of (Sarah, C3).

3. Questions and doubts

During the reflective workshops, the group had a number of critical debates around the concept and practice of breaking from reality. This was reflected in a number of questions that the coach needed to be aware of as he/she uses the intervention. The first question was on the difference between breaking from reality actions and the sort of leisure activities and hobbies that the coachee might be doing as part of maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Many of the activities suggested within the breaking from reality block are also ones that some coachees were doing from time to time as their normal way of keeping their work-life balance, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, or learning. For example, practicing sports, as shown in Sarah's quote below:

> *She spoke about how she enjoyed doing sports as an activity that distracts her from her daily life; and that this was one thing she put in mind to do after last session. And she did. Not as frequently as she wished to, but she had it in mind the entire time (Sarah, C1).*

In such cases, how can the coach validate whether such activities have an emancipatory impact, in the sense that they are helping the coachee to break from the daily reality of an oppressive environment? The group's discussion referred to the way reflective action – discussed later in this chapter – works, as the answer to this question would need to come from the coachee, through reflecting critically on the impact of these activities on his/her life, and whether they just act as a balance-keeper or stress-relief, that eventually helps maintain the status quo rather than open a way for changing it. This question is particularly important with those coachees who have developed a tendency to avoid confrontation with their oppressive conditions. The group asked, critically: can breaking from reality become just another escape route? Sarah reflects on one of her coachees:

> *As an artist himself, he's someone who can very easily and passionately seek any kind of 'reality-breaking', watching movies/documentaries, listening to music (other than those he plays and sings), which could help distract him from his day-to-day life. Now as I reflect, it's funny how the tools that could be used as reality breaking for so many people are his main problems to a large*

> *extent. So maybe in the coming sessions, we will have discuss how to reach an action by having him look at it differently (Sarah, C1).*

In the above example and other cases, the group first argued that maybe some people do not need to break from their reality as much as they need to confront it. However, another strong argument was that 'reality' in the lives of these coachees was just a different mix of experiences that balance each other, some creating oppression and stress and some releasing the pressure. In this sense, it becomes important to consider breaking from reality as an intervention to break from both aspects of this reality, thus introducing an imbalance into the daily experience, and allowing for development to take place.

The group reflected on their doubts for the use of breaking from reality with coachees, who are on the other end of the spectrum, coachees whose daily experience is one of only suffering and struggle. The group asked: Would breaking from reality be a form of luxury for those coachees? As Nadine asks:

> *I think for some people being trapped in their routine and daily struggle and severe oppression, breaking from reality can be always suggested, but how can breaking from reality, make someone suffering get outside his world, can it be done in the session? (Nadine, C2).*

The idea of having the breaking from reality actions in the coaching session rather than outside of it was mainly suggested as coachees who were struggling the most seemed the least able to consider such actions outside the coaching session. For many of them, these actions did not only seem like luxury, but also extremely difficult to commit to, in terms of having the energy to act, and to overcome the huge external barriers between them and those actions. For example, female coachees are not generally allowed to travel or participate in social activities without the consent of their male parent/partner, also access to financial resources to do some of the activities was problematic for some coachees. In some cases, coaches elected not to address breaking from reality until there is less struggle, like Sarah's account below:

> *He is so much consumed in his issue and his conditions, it felt like we need to move a step beyond this to the next layer, after which, he might be open to suggestions in this block (Sarah, C3).*

However, the group debated this situation, considering the best strategy for supporting their coachees in their difficult moments. For the group, the idea of

luxury should be challenged on many levels: First, breaking from reality is a means to an end, rather than a goal in itself; coachees need to consider whether they do have a chance of ending their suffering while being completely immersed in it, or whether they could instead try an alternative strategy. Second, the idea of luxury includes in it an implicit assumption of a glass ceiling that suggests that coachees in the worst oppressive conditions may only hope for some temporary relief rather than a radical change in their conditions. The group suggested that just having this discussion with the coachee might be of use, to open this possibility of a 'right' to break from reality. Finally, the group suggested that the practical external barriers discussed above have a real impact, and that the practice of coaching for emancipation will always be required to come up with creative solutions to allow coachees to live such liberating experience despite those external barriers, both inside and outside the coaching session.

Discussion

Breaking from reality is a concept in progress; it goes against the common flow of coaching and the overall trend of personal development, self-work and the therapeutic culture of the current era. While 'clients' expect an increased focus on the self (Swan, 2010), breaking from reality tries to do the opposite, on the basis that such immersion in the self, and in one's reality, is in itself a barrier to seeing and acting freely to change that reality. What makes breaking from reality even more problematic is that it goes against not only what the coachees expect, but also what they think they need. According to the group, the more coachees were immersed in their world, the more they seemed to need a break, and the less they were prepared to consider one. This creates a challenge for the coaches, who find themselves suggesting actions, rather than facilitating their creation by the coachees, which generates concerns around the use of the coach's authority and a question on whose agenda is being followed. The literature offers different views on the idea of coaches offering advice. Rogers (2008) argues against it, on the basis that it creates more resistance and demeans the coachee's right of choice, but she also offers a number of exceptions to that rule. Heron (2001) seems more open to the use of prescriptive interventions, following a clear understanding of their context, levels, agendas, and the way they are delivered. Welman and Bachkirova (2010) argue that there are cases where the use of coach's authority and power is in the best interest of the coachee, but that the

validity of these cases rely on an examination of the values and philosophy inherent in the approach, the coach's awareness of his/her true motivation for using power and the coachee's awareness and consent. It may be argued that most authors see conditions where authority may be used appropriately, following adequate reflectiveness and mutually agreed processes.

Another key question is around the content of breaking from reality actions. The group suggested that there are no simple answers to what gives a breaking from reality action an emancipatory aspect. An existing hobby may be easier to do, but may also be reinforcing the same oppressive structure of everyday life. Taping into the coachee's dreams is empowering, but may also provide a backdoor to the preoccupation with the self, or act as a mechanism for redirecting tension and maintaining the overall balance instead of disturbing it. The group also mentioned many examples of activities that have been domesticated to form part of social roles. Marcuse (2007) argues that art has a revolutionary nature, and that aesthetic immersion can create estrangement from everyday experience, a breaking with the familiar. However, Marcuse also affirms art as alienation when it is used as an escape from the exigencies of social and political struggle (Reitz, 2000). The same duality may exist in all other breaking from reality interventions. A similar concern is voiced in the field of art therapy, as Hocoy (2006) argues that without examining how the social order are embedded in its practices and philosophy, art therapy can reinforce structures of domination, and Junge et al. (2009) ask: "As art therapists are we too often helping people adjust to a destructive society?" (p. 109). The group's notion of approaching breaking from reality with an experimental spirit is proposed as one way to address these concerns. For both coach and coachee, breaking from reality interventions can be explored and experimented with, designed in a participatory way, and critically reflected upon to generate further understanding of whether they support or hinder emancipation. An action research approach to such interventions would be both flexible and self-critical (Hocoy, 2006), and would also have the benefit of allowing a less directive way of suggesting it to the coachee (Heron, 2001).

B. Discovering New Worlds

The objective of the discovering new worlds block in the initial coaching model (Chapter 3) was defined as: To open new possibilities for understanding and

action. The block is linked to many other blocks in the original model; opening possibilities is intended to support empowerment, a new understanding drives a change in the way that the coachee's narrative is formulated (Chapter 6), and the critical reflection on beliefs, discussed in the previous chapter, while the possibilities of action supports the two other blocks discussed in this chapter as part of the fighting back process. Discovering new worlds was one of the coaches' most preferred interventions; they evaluated the creation of new possibilities as one of the most important values that coachees can take out of coaching. One of the sub-groups commented in one of the reflective sessions:

> *We take personal pride in helping the coachees to see their world from the outside*

The group's reflections on discovering new worlds were grouped in three themes presented below. The first theme looks at the positive impact of the intervention is discovering hope; it looks at the empowering effect of discovering new worlds and also discusses the difficulty that some coachees faced in taking this perspective. The second theme focuses on how discovering new worlds was used as part of many other blocks in the model, namely consciousness raising, narrative of liberation, critical reflection and reflective action. The third theme, discussed by the group, was related to the use of discovering new worlds to support the discovery of new emotions, in terms of opening possibilities for emotional reactions towards existing realities.

1. Discovering hope

The group's experience suggested that the fact that this intervention focuses on creating possibilities was important to the empowerment of the coachees. The idea that possibilities exist, and that the coachee was – on a very basic level – asked to freely consider such possibilities, was seen to generate hope and to create a general positive feeling whenever it was used. Fady commented on the use of the block:

> *The coachee finds himself in a positive thought, a solution that arises from the circle of the lived. It gives a space for hope, but this hope is not enough, it needs support (Fady, C3).*

The group experimented with many what-if question formats as well as visioning and role-play exercises. What-if questions ranged from exploring an aspect of life,

such as work, friendship, or life at home, while removing all boundaries and limitations, to exploring similar aspects while imagining all difficult boundaries and worst-case scenarios. Surprisingly, both extreme conditions were reported by the group to have an empowering effect, as they placed the coachee in a place outside the problem, giving him/her freedom to imagine and evaluate different courses of action. Meanwhile, questions and exercises that focused on limitless possibilities also generated positive energy, reflected in the excitement and increase in the coachee's motivation, as evaluated by the coach. Sheren reflected on a talk with her coachee about the new experiences she intends to live:

> *She was very happy because she will get out of her ordinary path. Talking about liberating experiences in the session is really important, it provides a real energy to the coaching process (Sheren, C3).*

Meanwhile, the group suggested that discovering new worlds was also a challenging intervention for some coachees. The first reason for this difficulty was discussed as part of breaking from reality interventions, presented earlier in this chapter, as many coachees were immersed in the demanding matters of their current experience to the extent of not being able to access their imagination, or to consider their situation from an outside-in perspective. Some coaches even reported a personal challenge of asking their coachees to consider such possibilities, as they were overwhelmed with the all-pervasive nature of their coachees' stories. The second reason, discussed by the group, was more fundamental, as it related to the inability and resistance of some coachees to use their imagination, as appears in the quote below:

> *I asked her: Have you imagined how you want your life to look like in few years? Do you have a vision or dream? I felt that the flow of the discussion changed completely, her facial expressions became sad, as if she was experiencing a relapse, she replied: how would my life be; nothing will change, everything will remain as is, and I don't want to have a dream. After the session I kept thinking: what should I do as a coach? How can someone live without a dream? Has she really lost the power to dream? (Sheren, C3).*

In this case, the coachee was committed to the coaching process, and continued to be after this discussion. However, she appeared to have evolved some kind of self-censorship on what she is allowed or willing to imagine, even in a hypothetical way. During the group's reflection, a question was raised on whether this behaviour was meant to act like a protective shield from the frustration of not

being able to achieve what is being dreamt of. Hence, Discovering New Worlds needs to be understood as a process that involves risk taking; for some coachees, it is like taking a leap of faith, to imagine a world that goes against the realistic boundaries within which they have confined themselves. The coach needs to be aware of what Fady referred to in an earlier quote, that hope is not enough; it needs support.

2. Supporting all processes

The group noted that the majority of their experience with Discovering New Worlds interventions did not take place as separate parts in the coaching session, but was often embedded as part of other blocks such as consciousness raising or critical self-reflection. The group commented that the process of discovery emerged naturally in the flow of the discussion, and that its main impact was to support other interventions on different levels. The following sub-sections present the reported uses of Discovering New Worlds to support other blocks and processes in the coaching model.

Consciousness Raising

Looking at the coachee's lived experience, discovering new worlds was used to bring new dimensions of the lived experience that were not previously considered. This can be seen as a new use of this intervention, one that focuses on discovering new dimensions in old worlds. One reported example of such use was during a reflection on the wheel of life, where the coachee first drew the elements that he was easily aware of in his experience, then, Sarah wrote:

> *He kept adding different circles in different levels on what else his life composes of, and what each circle/level means to him at this particular point and what he sees for it in the future. It seemed like a discovery; one that drew him a bigger picture of what really were the elements of his life (Sarah, C1).*

By looking at future possibilities of what exists, coachees were able to contrast their current experience with its potential. This added a layer of criticality into their description of their current world, and thus supported the process of consciousness-raising. The group suggested that the contradictory nature of immersion in the old and the new, in consciousness raising and discovering new worlds respectively, was a key potential that is better explored in an integrated way, as Nadine suggested in the following quote:

> *I think that discovering new worlds' questions can appear best in the middle of being aware of a situation, in order not to be too shallow or a form of escape from looking at one's own life. What if questions work best if the session is focused on the inside (Nadine, C2).*

It may be argued that focusing on the contrast and contradictions between the new world and the lived experience triggers a similar effect to what Mezirow (2000) calls a disorienting dilemma, urging the coachee to seek new understanding in order to reconcile those contradictions. The group also suggested, without reported cases, that discovering new worlds can be a positive intervention to do prior or as part of the narrative of liberation. Exploring layers of the coachee's dreams and possibilities may make the narrative extend from the stories of the past to the stories of the future. A suggestion was also made that going through the narrative of liberation would also be a good starting point for a focus on discovering new worlds; as the coachee tells the story of how she arrived where she is now, she starts thinking about the possibilities of moving forward.

Critical Reflection

The group reported that discovering new worlds questions and role-play exercises were successfully used during critical reflection. The first use of this was to help identify the assumptions the coachee was living by, through exploring many potential scenarios and supporting the coachee in understanding his/her reaction to those exercises. The empty chair technique for example was reported to help in such identification of assumptions, as coachees look from the outside at the way they see and treats themselves and others. What-if questions were also used in this context, as reported by Nadine:

> *Lists of what if questions, having to do more with criticality of her view and reasons behind marriage, like what if you remain single, what if you don't have children. She understands the possibilities, but I don't think she truly believes them, for me it was a surprise that the possibility of remaining single didn't cross her mind. Here the discovering new world was more for criticality's sake (Nadine, C3).*

A second use was to analyse critically the impact of a given assumption. By asking the coachee to consider a possible scenario, where external or internal factors have either increased or decreased significantly, the coachee was able to identify the real boundaries of his/her assumptions. For example, to critically evaluate an existing belief through reflecting on how it would affect potential scenarios:

> *The what-if question was a revelation to him, because he felt that he could leave something he loves simply because people might hurt him by stereotypes of orphans, and to him that was a revelation. I think those types of questions serve well, in criticality or x-role interventions; they create the shock that is needed to shake assumptions or views about ourselves (Nadine, C3).*

During the critical analysis of assumptions, discovering new worlds allowed coachees to examine their views from multiple perspectives, by putting themselves in other people's positions, and putting themselves in other contexts. These thought experiments were reported by the group as more powerful than the use of logical arguments to analyse assumptions. Sarah suggested that the use of imagination allowed her coachee to examine ideas he barely talked about before:

> *It allowed him to see things from a different point of view, or even from the opposite one; something he doesn't get to do, as he never spoke about them to anyone (Sarah, C3).*

Another example was to use discovering new worlds to validate the extent to which a new stated belief would be sustained despite a radical change of circumstances. For instance, doing a role-play where significant others are putting pressure on the coachee to give up his/her new behaviour or idea, or testing the idea of gender discrimination when applied to other contexts, like religious discrimination to test the breadth and resilience of the newly acquired belief. Nadine asked her coachee to imagine her sisters challenging her new thoughts and behaviours, and commented on the impact of this intervention:

> *Some questions like these in the middle of a criticality session can be very liberating, to affirm a liberation of an assumption, and put it in a level that is not only intellectual (Nadine, C2).*

In summary, the group saw beneficial uses of discovering new worlds in identifying assumptions, analysing their impact on the coachee's life, examining them critically, as well as clarifying and validating new assumptions. Brookfield (1991) suggests that the use of techniques like role play can support critical thinking, as it increases the ability to take on other perspectives. It brings to our consciousness the feelings associated with situations that we have not experienced. Brookfield also suggests that asking people to imagine themselves in difficult situations where they are forced to make decisions can help reveal their assumptions, exposing it to the possibility of critical reflection.

Reflective Action

A third use of discovering new worlds, as reported by the group, was to prepare for and support reflective action. Perhaps this is the most direct use that was perceived during the formulation of the initial coaching model (Chapter 3). Discovering new worlds was reported as supporting the coachee to define the scope and purpose of the required change. If what the coachee wants to change is seen as a "new world" that is open to visualise, explore, and reflect upon, the coachee can use this reflection to clarify more precisely the key ingredients in that change, and the key actions that need to be undertaken for the change to succeed. The group offered a number of cases where imagining the world that the coachee wants to explore was helpful in framing a clearer idea about a course of action, one such case was offered by Sarah:

> *The role-play made it clearer where things were going wrong. What-If questions helped him to realize how badly he wants things to change, and that it was truly in his hands. What we were doing was helping him see the other world he wants to be in, a completely different one, a normal one, an easy one to get to, but a world that he was so helpless to know how to get to. So, discussing how he can change his reality by taking it one step at a time, but a consistent step and a determined one, would bring him to this new/normal world (Sarah, C3).*

A second aspect of visioning a new world was reported to support the coachee's will to achieve his/her objectives. Simple questions like: "How would life look like after doing this action?" was encouraging to coachees, giving them more power to commit to their agreed actions. A third use of discovering new worlds was to generate different options for actions outside the coachee's immediate candidate actions. The group noted that coachees would normally think of actions that they have tried or thought about before. Discovering new worlds offered an expansion to the spectrum of choices, by asking them to visualise completely different possibilities. For example, instead of only exploring actions to succeed in a certain career path, one coachee was asked to explore the idea of different careers that had shared elements with the current one. This discussion framed the problem differently, and opened possibilities for new actions. Sheren reported on her coachee's thoughts after the previous coaching session opened an unexplored possibility:

> *I asked [In the previous session]: What do you want to do, regardless of all what people say and what they would say? This session, she talked about her decision to travel abroad, that she was always afraid to consider it, but after our last discussion she decided to do it (Sheren, C3).*

These uses of visioning are similar to techniques used within the solution-focused approach to coaching, like changing the viewing (Cavanagh & Grant, 2010), and future talk (Murphy, in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005). During the reflective workshop, the group raised some concerns about the gap between the imagined new world and the lived one. They wondered if there is a danger of frustration if the coachee wants to apply his/her visualisation into the current unfavourable context. The group saw, as in Sarah's quote above, that the open and imaginative intervention of discovering new worlds needs to be followed by a step by step consideration of how to bridge the gap between the imagined world and the lived one, which leads into careful planning of actions, and would probably result in the redefinition of a feasible outcome.

3. Discovering New Emotions

Similar to other parts of the group findings, the initial coaching model was assessed as missing the emotional dimension. The group reported a number of cases where the use of discovering new worlds was not primarily a thought experiment generating new ideas, but rather an emotional experiment, opening possibilities for new emotions. During the second action cycle, Nadine wrote in her reflective journal:

> *I think it is important, if you are stuck in a certain emotion to allow an outside in approach and open new possibilities. I think this technique is important, when the coachee has a high level of awareness of problem, assumptions, and self, because, they will always look at things from their own eyes, and I think breaking from that and seeing themselves from an outside perspective might be very liberating (Nadine, C2).*

The group realised that using discovering new worlds could help coachees to clarify and understand how they feel about different situations and people. Of particular relevance were feelings of loneliness and relatedness. The group noted that role play interventions, and empty chairs technique, could be powerful tools in helping the coachee understand more how these emotions affect and are affected by the existence or inexistence of certain relationships. The group also

reported that such interventions played a role in relieving hidden emotions. For example, the empty chairs technique was used to explore one [orphan] coachee's [broken] relationship with her uncle. The intervention helped to release strong emotions that were – according to the coach – kept outside the coachee's reach. This emotional relief enabled a progression into acting to restore and improve the broken relationship.

One of the situations that were often explored in discovering new worlds was the worst-case scenario, the case where all the external factors were to play against the coachee. The group reported that having coachees go through this scenario had an emotional by-product, in terms of improving the coachees' emotional stability during the process of fighting back. When the coachee goes through this scenario in his/her mind, they become more prepared to face their fears. Vana reflected on a discussion with a coachee considering leaving Egypt to escape religious discrimination:

> *We discussed the option of immigration, and the option of staying in Egypt; also we discussed the worst-case scenarios he is expecting. Worst-case scenario is a great technique, it makes the picture clearer and it shows that the situation is not that scary (Vana, C1).*

Along the same lines, some coaches used discovering new worlds to prepare their coachees emotionally for the possibility of separation from a significant other. By opening the possibility of living without the person, in an imaginative mode, coachees started to develop the idea internally in a gradual way, and in some cases, returned in the following session much more open to consider the possibility, and to evaluate the way they used to completely depend on that relationship.

Discussion

Discovering new worlds interventions were experienced as empowering, creating possibilities, and generating hope. In many cases, they acted as thought experiments, where coachees were able to test the boundaries of their current beliefs and future dreams. Meanwhile, for coachees who have struggled with fear and frustration for extended periods, discovering new worlds may bring a sense of insecurity that they feel the need to protect themselves from. Dreaming and using imagination may appear as risk taking, for why the coachee would invest in

creating possibilities that might all prove to be impossible. We can consider this question from the perspective of Gestalt coaching, as its methods include the use of memory and imagination, but with a sharp focus on being in contact with what already exists for the coachee in the present (Bluckert, 2010). Gestalt coaching emphasises venturing into new behavioural territory, taking personal risks, and discovering new meaning through experiments that act as opportunities to increase awareness and undertake alternative action towards desired goals (Siminovitch & Van Eron, 2006). Meanwhile, it does not fight resistance to engage in such process, but rather understands resistance as a positive force that serves a protective function for the client. Therefore, for Gestalt coaches "resistance must not be overcome or eradicated, but rather brought into awareness and worked through in a way that enables the client to recognize its constructive function and to re-channel its energy as a support in the current situation" (Siminovitch & Van Eron, 2006, p. 51). In the cases mentioned by the group, where there has been resistance to discovering new worlds, this resistance may point to what Gestalt coaches call unfinished business (Bluckert, 2010), which helps the coach to focus on what is preventing the coachee from moving forward.

C. Reflective Action

The objective of the reflective action block in the initial coaching model (Chapter 3) was defined as: To integrate learning and action. In the first reflective workshop, the group highlighted reflective action as one of the most problematic and challenging blocks. Coaches reported being "stuck", with their coachees unable to come up with actions, and exhibiting very little confidence in their ability to change their external conditions. In the following reflective workshops, as the overall coaching process was starting to generate more empowerment, criticality and possibilities, reflective action became one of the most important aspects of the coaching experience.

The group's reflections and discussions during the reflective workshops are presented below, broken into three themes. The first theme covers the difficulties that the group encountered in helping the coachees to formulate and undertake actions. The second theme covers the group's discussions on the centrality of action in the process of development; how coachees experienced learning as actions and learning from actions. The third theme focuses on actions as

emancipation; it covers the specific aspects of supporting actions of resistance in oppressive environments.

1. The Difficulty of Action

The group's experience suggested that many coachees were initially unable to define actions that they could take them forward towards their goals. Coachees came to the sessions loaded with problems and issues that they were sharing, but when asked about what can be done, they would often answer: "I don't know" or "you tell me". Coaches struggled with this almost unanimously during the first research cycle (One to two coaching sessions), but this behaviour continued in some cases across all research cycles. Nadine reflected on her feelings as a coach:

> *Is the question "what do you feel/think you want to do next?" a valuable question? Can it be always answered? What if there is no answer? Does that mean the session was not rich enough? When I receive no answer, I am stuck (Nadine, C3).*

The group reflected on the barriers preventing their coachees from defining a course of action. First, with some coachees, there was some degree of fatalism, a feeling that things cannot change, and that one can but go with the flow.

> *She didn't have a plan, whatever happens she said (Fady, C3).*

While some coachees, like the above example from Fady, were showing signs of surrender, other coachees went even further by talking about self-destructive actions, such as isolating themselves from everyone, only minding their own business, or even punishing themselves in various ways. Reflecting on such cases, the group suggested that such behaviour might have been intended as a way of self-victimisation, resisting the idea of positive action in order to maintain the sympathy of the coach. In a sense, those coachees seemed afraid of the idea that there is something they could do to improve their lives. Vana reported one of those extreme cases:

> *He was refusing his feeling of turning to a positive direction and he told me this in a direct way. I think that he was insisting to take me into a dilemma just to impress and shock me and to have my sympathy (Vana, C2).*

Other coachees, when asked about actions, decided few actions to take. However, the coaches noted that their coachees were more able to define actions that were not directly related to the core problem they were bringing to coaching. In this

case, actions were used as a diversion from the real issue, as appears in the following quote:

> *She would like to be braver, she first talked about being braver in her work, but then she said that she is afraid to be just brave in her work and still the same in other places in her life. I think she was talking about her aim to be able to defend herself in front of her brother, but she is not sure that coaching will help her (Vana, C2).*

The group suggested that the ability to agree meaningful actions is a sign of progress. Defining actions was seen to require a level of readiness in the coachees that was not always possible at first instance. The coachees' readiness for actions related, in the group's view, to their degree of self-confidence and self-belief. Readiness for action was also related to the stage of transition that the coachee was in. In the initial coaching model, reference was made to Bridges' (Bridges, 1980) model of transitions. During practice, the group found this model to be very useful in understanding the middle phase where the coach needs to just listen to the coachee's expression of confusion, before being ready to define actions.

The group stressed the fact that with trust and belief in the coachee, and allowing enough time for the coaching process to start having an impact, coachees started to come up with their own actions, they started to make decisions about the overall coaching process and to drive the process towards a focus on actions, when they became more ready to do that. The following two quotes show the reflection of Vana and Nadine as their coachees started to generate actions:

> *[Her list of] actions seemed too much, but I trust her that she will do it, as she seemed to have a real will. I learned not to rush the person to want the change (Vana, C2).*
>
> *I thought the action was small, but for the first time, I felt that it was her choice. Sometimes I think, she can take more steps, yet, it should come from her, and even when I try to suggest, she doesn't do it (Nadine, C3).*

When coachees were generating actions, the group reflected on another difficulty related to their role in validating these actions. Examples varied significantly, from coachees suggesting actions that seemed too small, through coachees suggesting actions that seemed more like distractions, to coachees suggesting actions that seemed too big. The main question the group discussed was around the role and

authority of the coach. Nadine's question in the first research cycle resonated with the experience of many coaches:

> *What if [the coachee] thinks of an action that I think is too early or too big, how can I communicate that, without advising? (Nadine, C1)*

The group argued that the coach has a critical role in challenging the actions proposed by the coachees. An agreed action needs to be 'reasonable', in terms of being reasonably achievable, reasonably sized (not too small or too big), and relatively related to the goal or problem being discussed. While the coach would not be able to make such judgments on the proposed actions, he/she is responsible to facilitate a critical discussion where the coachee evaluates the actions against these criteria.

Another dimension in evaluating actions was related to their content. In some cases, the coachees' initial goals from coaching, and hence their suggested actions, were evaluated by the coachees as being reflective of internal oppression. For example, seeking to please a person that the coachee thinks he/she is dependent on, or trying to adapt to social norms. Again, the main issue debated was on the ability of the coach to make such a judgment, and the role of the coach in challenging such goals or actions without forcing his/her own agenda on the coachee. The group's experience emphasised the importance of giving enough time during the coaching session to reflect on the proposed or the achieved action. They saw reflecting on as a developmental intervention that is as important as the action itself.

The group also suggested that actions needed to be challenged in terms of their meaningfulness. Many coachees linked their happiness with achieving a certain external objective, such as succeeding in a career move, or achieving their weight-loss goal. In such cases, the coach has an important role in questioning the impact and meaning of failing to commit to the action, or doing the action but failing to achieve the objective, and whether this link between the action and the coachee's happiness is in itself an assumption that needs to be critically examined.

In summary, the group's experience suggested that the problematic nature of defining actions could be used as an integral part of the coachee's development, and that the role of the coach in critically challenging the suggested action (or inaction) is key to the emancipatory process.

2. The Centrality of Action

The second theme that the group discussed was around the centrality of external action. In many instances, the coaches reported a coaching session that they evaluated with words like: "very rich, full of discoveries, deep discussions". In the meantime, these coaching sessions ended without clear actions that the coachee could implement outside the coaching session. Coaches asked, as did Nadine in the following quote:

> *Do I need to work on [reflective action] every session? Or would the session's reflections and findings sometimes be sufficient? (Nadine, C3).*

The group reflected on their own biases. They suggested that by nature, they seem to be more inclined towards changing people rather than changing the external world. As coaches – the group argued – we are more interested in the internal human condition, rather than the social and political conditions surrounding our coachees. This bias in the coaches may have implications on the coaching process, in terms of resulting in more focus towards the coachee's cognitive and emotional development and less focus on actions.

As the coaches gained awareness of their own bias, they started to focus more on supporting the definition, implementation and evaluation of actions. The group's perception of coaching was expanded, from supporting the coachee's development, to supporting the coachee's emancipation, in terms of both his/her internal beliefs and his/her external conditions. The group defined a statement that aimed to explain what they think:

> *Coachees want to change their lives, and there will be no change without action, a real change in the external condition.*

In the last reflective workshop, the group decided to amend this statement. In their experience, as will be discussed in the following section, many of the rich discussions and discoveries that took place in the second half of the coaching experience originated from reflecting on actions. Coachees saw successes and struggles in defining and implementing actions that could change their conditions. By reflecting on these successes and struggles, coaches were learning and developing. The group noted:

There is no growth without action.

The aspects of growth through action are discussed in the following section.

3. Growing through Action

During the second and third reflective workshops, the group identified the power of reflective action in supporting the development of the coachee. Reflective action was identified as an intervention that drives the coaching journey as well as being one of its outcomes. The group expanded the definition of action, from being initially confined to pre-planned actions, to including actions that are undertaken by the coachee and retrospectively reflected upon; in the group's words: "Not all actions imply planning, but all actions can be the subject of reflection". The group noted that coachees are continuously involved in action, whether or not they are aware of it, and that critically reflecting on actions and on self-awareness of one's actions can make emancipation more grounded in reality, as opposed to taking place on a cognitive level. The two examples below, from Nadine and Vana, show discussions that used the presence and absence of actions, respectively, as starting points:

> *I asked her to think about the steps she already took to change, which ones worked and which ones didn't (Nadine, C2).*
>
> *I asked her to reflect on situations where she didn't stand up for herself and felt that she needed to (Vana, C1).*

The group's experience with actions showed that there are three distinct types of actions that were the most common to be agreed with the coachees. Each type of action involved a different type of reflection and learning. The first type of action could be named: "learning actions". Learning actions included cognitive tasks agreed with the coachee, such as making lists of aspirations, reflecting and writing about the coachee's feelings towards current relationships, or rethinking a belief that was identified during the coaching session. This type of action was more common towards the beginning of the coaching journey, and besides the actual content of the action, was deemed useful in terms of building the coachee's confidence that he/she could commit to a planned action, or otherwise open an opportunity for understanding why such commitment was not possible. The group noted that some coachees needed time to affirm their findings, and they considered the cognitive effort needed to affirm that finding as an action in itself. Nadine, reflecting on her initial scepticism of this type of actions, wrote:

I am learning to accept that affirming a finding, a thought, an assumption, an already thought of action, is a kind of action; I need to acknowledge that (Nadine, C2).

The second type of actions identified by the group was similar to actions that are commonly discussed in coaching literature; it involved taking steps in study, career, learning new skills, or managing relationships, the coaches' role in supporting reflective action involved goal setting, planning, evaluation, learning from action, motivation, and so forth. Although this type of action was not directly targeting a change in the oppressive condition, the group reflected on the aspects of reflective action that seemed to be affected by the context of oppression. The group noted that some coachees tried to avoid confronting the key issues they brought to coaching. They were willing to discuss their issues during the coaching sessions, but would only commit to actions that did not seem to tackle these issues, at least not in a direct way. Coaches argued that it was important not to force their own suggestions. They said: "a true action can only be the [coachee's] decision, it must evolve naturally". In the meantime, the coach needs to keep asking about how comfortable the coachee is with the current level of actions, and whether they feel capable of doing more. A second aspect was around negative expectations. Some coachees showed high degrees of expecting the worst to happen, in terms of both external and internal factors that would result in negative impacts on their lives. The group suggested that the process of reflective action, irrelevant of the type of the action agreed, could help the coachee to fight his/her fears and to focus on the defined action; this is reflected in Vana's quote below:

He decided to "try" not to expect the catastrophe while still nothing has really happened. He will continue "trying to find a job" but with less stress as he really has nothing more to do. He was initially talking about the difficulty of doing that, and that's why he was stressing on the word "try", but I felt that his mood changed by the end of the session and that was his request from coaching as a process, to have an aim and focus on it (Vana, C2).

The third type of action identified by the group was the most relevant to coaching for emancipation. This included what the group called "actions of resistance"; actions that were directly targeting a change in oppressive conditions perceived by the coachee. Actions of resistance were more common towards the later parts of the coaching journeys. The group noted that it was often the case that

coachees committing to actions of resistance were showing relatively higher degrees of determination and confidence. They suggested that coachees went through a build-up process before reaching the point of action, a process that was often taking place in the background, and that was only brought to the forefront when the coachee felt ready to commit to the action. Compared to a general lack of self-confidence and determination at the beginning of the coaching journey, the group saw actions of resistance as signs of development, regardless of their success. Sarah reflected on a session where she saw that change happening with her coachee:

> *He said he wanted to [do the action]. I was asking direct questions on how he will make it happen. He seemed relieved, he said: "It's me, I feel that it's possible, I just need to find the right time to do it, but I will, because I want to". That was promising (Sarah, C3).*

The group noted that once the coachees committed to actions of resistance, much of the coaching process became centred on these actions. The idea of resistance was translated into a series of actions over many months, like steps that build on each other. Some of the actions of resistance initially considered by the coachees involved a high degree of confrontation with their realities (For example, learning self-defence, leaving the house, taking off Islamic veil). These actions were not necessarily solving the coachee's problem, however, the group argued that considering these actions and taking some practical steps to do them was intended as a way to break the psychological barrier of fearing to act. Coachees, like the one in Vana's quote below, were able to progress from that initial idea to other forms of action that were deemed more effective:

> *She said that she will be stricter and stronger in her rights and won't allow her brother to control her personal life. She took the contacts of the shelter, but I felt that she wouldn't call them or think about it again. I think that her greatest achievement and challenge will be forcing her brother to respect her while she is in the same place with him. I learned that a person could feel the spirit of challenge if she discovered new capabilities in her personality and that this might urge her to start testing these capabilities (Vana, C3).*

Over the course of actions, coaches supported their coachees in reflecting on, and learning from, their fears, successes and failures. In terms of dealing with fear, the group suggested that, in their experience, it was important to help the coachee to visualise the action, and to consider the different scenarios, other people

reactions, and his/her response to their reactions. This detailed visualisation helped the coachees to 'size' the impact of their actions more realistically. In terms of successes, the group stressed the importance of celebrating successes and small wins. As Fady noted:

> *Feeling the achievement gives (her) more confidence and makes her try to achieve more things (Fady, C2).*

Many coachees were getting energy out of their own successes, proactively defining new goals, challenging themselves with harder actions, and despite the initial doubts of the coach, fulfilling them. The group suggested that the coach's role during this stage may only be needed in terms of supporting learning from action, providing emotional support, and celebrating success.

> *He surprised me, because he did what he said he wanted to do, though I felt it was too big to be done from the previous session. I learned to trust my coachees when they come with actions, and even if they fail, next session will be a rich discussion on why it did (Nadine, C3).*

Discussion

The initial coaching model placed an emphasis on action, and the group's experience strongly reinforced the centrality of action to the coachee's development. The definition of actions was expanded from being confined to pre-planned actions that are discussed in the coaching session, to any form of action that the coachee engages in, with the will to improve his wellbeing and conditions, and that can be subject to the coachee's reflection. Meanwhile, the definition and implementation of actions revealed many issues that can be grouped in the four categories shown in figure 8.2 (Adapted from a discussion in the last reflective workshop). The four categories are arranged in a two dimensional matrix, dependent on how far the coachee, while defining the action, is showing signs of certainty versus doubt, and hope versus despair. Each of the four categories requires a different intervention from the coach. For example, a confused coachee may be passing through a transition phase (Bridges, 1980), and needs empathic listening and emotional support. Coachees talking optimistically about actions that are not addressing real issues, or are reflections of what others want them to do, may benefit from interventions that clarify the issue and support criticality. Coachees stating with conviction that there is no hope, may require support in reflecting on their emotions of anger or despair, to understand

what is behind these emotions, also for the coach to focus on interventions that help improve hope on cognitive and emotional dimensions (Worgan, 2013), such as reframing (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005). Even coachees who exhibit a sense of confident hope may require challenging, to ensure they are defining them in a way that optimises their chances of implementing them and learning from them.

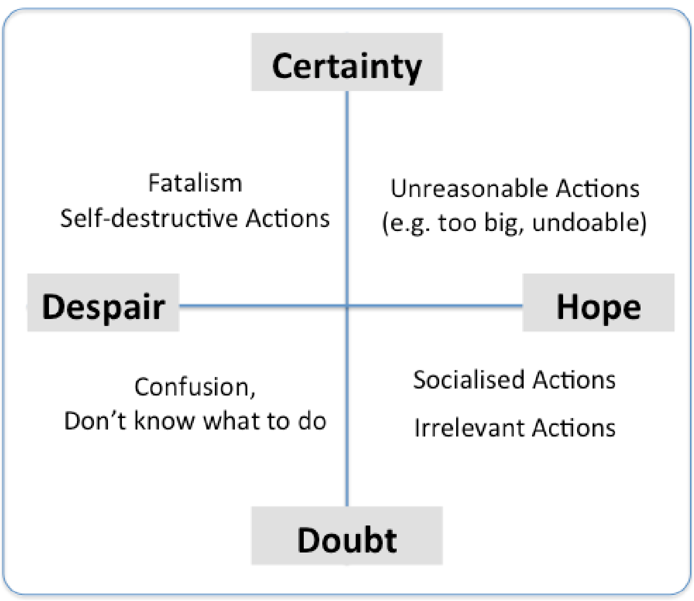


Figure 8.2. Categories of problematic actions

The group reported that reflecting on actions was central to the coachee's learning. The problematic nature of implementing the different actions meant that they helped exposing further issues and barriers. Although coaching may be generally seen as an experiential learning process (Cox, 2012), there is limited research on how actions emerge in the coaching process and how reflecting on and learning from actions can help generate further actions. Coveivera and Cronshaw (2004) argue for the use of action frame theory to systemically analyse the actions of coachees in order to help them understand the conditions, means, results and consequences of different actions. While Griffiths and Campbell (2009) suggest that when coachees try to apply new knowledge into actions, this process is intertwined with the processes of learning, as actions fuel further discovery and provide stimulus for questioning, he also suggests that such process is usually followed by the integration of actions into the coachee's life. Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning is frequently referred to as a useful framework for understanding the process of experiential learning, however Moon (2013) highlights many issues that relate to such models: First, there is a difference

between the everyday process of learning from experience, and the deliberate engagement with experience to support learning; and second, experience is complex, it is always constructed and reconstructed, and the knowledge we take out of experience is always affected by our world view. A third dimension that needs to be considered is the difference between experience that happen to us, and experience that emerges from our pre-planned actions, of particular concern here is to make sure that the coaching process challenges the coachee's interpretation of the action, in order to avoid what Cell (1984) describes as our tendency "to experience what we believe we will experience" (p. 178). Hence, the coach needs to be aware of actions that generate a mere confirmation of what was assumed before the action.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the group findings related to the process of 'Fighting back'. In this process, the group combined three interventions from the initial coaching model, namely breaking from reality, discovering new worlds and reflective actions. The three processes involve some form of action, as opposed to the two processes presented in chapters six and seven, which are more reflective in nature. Figure 8.3 depicts a high-level view of how the different forms of actions in the process of fighting back relate to the different aspects of the coachee's journey.

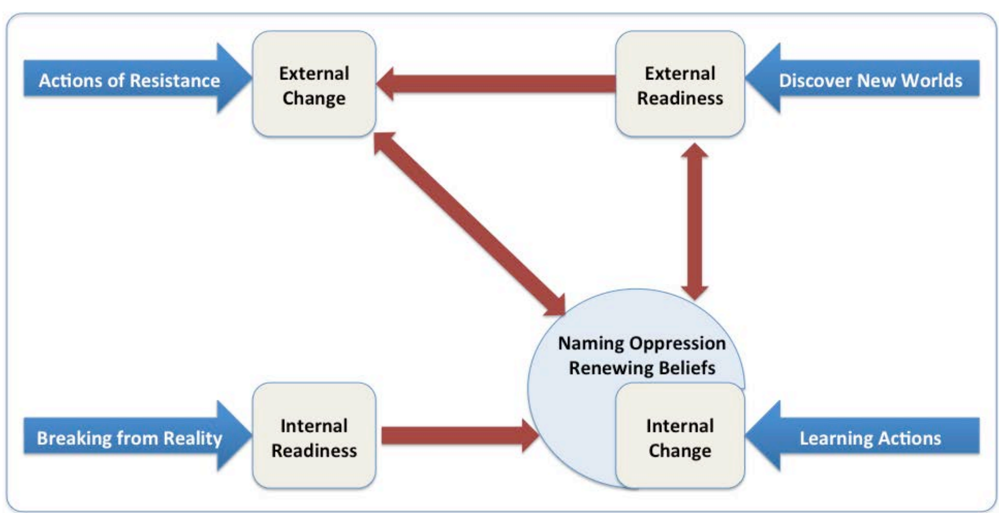


Figure 8.3. High-level view of the process of fighting back

The figure shows four quadrants of impact in the coachee's world, in counter-clockwise order: the coachee's internal readiness to engage in the process of

change, the internal change largely facilitated by the processes of naming oppression and renewing beliefs, the readiness to engage with the coachee's external world, and the actual change of that world. Breaking from reality is mainly useful when coachees are completely immersed in their reality to the extent they are unable to engage properly in the emancipatory process. In such case, separating oneself from the daily experience may provide the necessary cognitive and emotional readiness to re-engage with the process. The second quadrant, internal change, is usually supported by a set of learning actions that are more common towards the beginning of the coaching journey. These actions support the coachee to gradually build self-confidence and commitment to the change process. Griffiths and Campbell (2009) noted a similar phenomenon through interviewing some coaches and their clients, where various forms of action were designed to stimulate reflection. The third quadrant, external readiness, is supporting by discovering new worlds interventions. While the main purpose of such interventions is to prepare the coachee to implement actions, there are many benefits to these interventions that also the support the process of internal change; discovering new worlds creates hope and empowerment, and supports consciousness-raising and critical reflection. The final quadrant is the desired external change, which is supported by what the group called 'actions of resistance'. According to the group, defining and implementing actions are challenging tasks for most coachees, which emphasises the importance of working through all four quadrants rather than only focusing on external solutions. Meanwhile, the group strongly suggested that there is no growth without action. Reflective action was the main driver for learning for much of the later phases of many coachees' journeys; hence external change also supports internal change.

Fighting back is the third and last process in the coaching model. In the next chapter, I take a step back from the model and reflect on the developmental journeys of the different actors in this study, the coachees, the coaches, and myself.

9. The Developing Actors

In the previous four chapters, I have traced the development of the theoretical and practical framework of coaching. In this final chapter of the analysis, I present reflections and findings that look at the overall journeys of the people involved in the study. I use the term “developing actors” to describe coachees, coaches and myself, and to reflect the nature of our developmental journeys. A holistic view is important on many levels: First, it provides a theoretical understanding of the journeys of the coaches and coachees and how they relate to each other. Second, the inquiry results strongly suggest that the coaching framework needs to emphasise the coaches’ development as a core dimension that is as important as the theoretical and practical dimensions. Third, reflecting on my own journey and my interaction with the inquiry group provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the inquiry. The interactions between coach and coachee, coach and supervisor, and between co-researchers in the group were the main driving force behind the change that each of the actors experienced. Figure 9.1 depicts the pattern of the reflections behind this chapter.

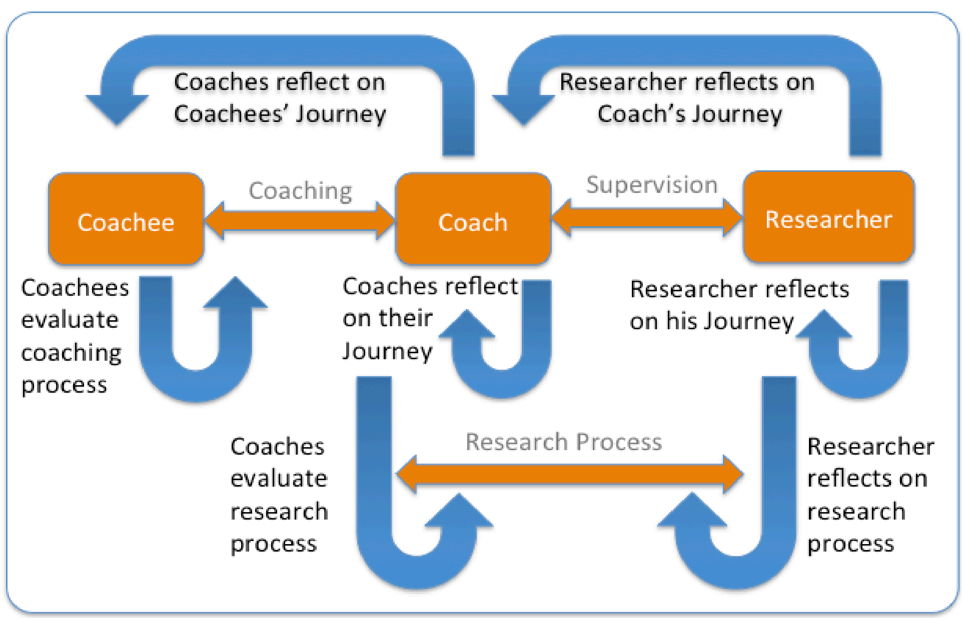


Figure 9.1 Reflections on the overall journeys

The orange blocks show the three main actors in the study; namely the coachees, the coaches/co-researchers and myself as the initiating researcher and coaching supervisor. The orange arrows show the three processes that were taking place

during the study, namely the coaching process (between coachee and coach), the supervision process (between the researcher and individual coaches), and the research process (within the research group including the researcher). The blue arrows show the reflections discussed in this chapter. First, I begin by presenting the coachees' evaluation of the overall coaching process. This was done through asking the coachees to fill feedback forms at the end of the coaching journey. Next, I present the reflections of the coaches on the overall developmental and emancipatory journeys that they saw their coachees going through. Discussion of the coachees' journeys was an integral part of all the reflective workshops, mainly done through presentational forms, by drawing or telling abstracted narratives that summarised how the coaches appreciated their coachees as developing actors. In the third section, I move the focus to the coaches' journeys. I use the self-reflections of the coaches during the reflective workshops, as well as my notes and my own reflections following the supervision sessions. Next, I present a reflection on my personal journey, with the different roles I had to play as part of this study, looking at how this journey affected my own development and my approach as a researcher. In the fifth and final section of the chapter, I present notes, evaluations and findings related to the research process. The group was asked to evaluate the research process and methodology at various parts of the study, focusing on issues like validity and participation. I discuss these findings in terms of their implications on co-operative inquiry and action research in general.

A. Coachees' evaluation of the coaching process

As Coachees finished the coaching journey, they were asked to provide feedback. A questionnaire was provided (Appendix H) that asked about several aspects of coaching relevant to the model. Respondents were asked to rate how far these aspects were present in the coaching process and how far each aspect was important to them. Five coachees filled the feedback form in writing, other coachees preferred to offer a verbal account of how they evaluated the process. In one case, the feedback form was used as a coaching tool, helping the coachee to reflect on her own growth and how she can support herself in the future. Appendix H includes graphical representations of the average scores across the respondents, where a score of four means fully present/very important, and a score of one means not present/important at all respectively. The questions are

first organised descending according to their presence, then according to their importance as rated by the coachees. Appendix H also includes a scatter plot of all the average scores across presence and importance. The three figures in appendix H were presented to the research group in the final reflective workshop. The group discussed several implications of the coachees' feedback. In general terms, it appears that the overall scores are tending towards the higher end, suggesting that coachees saw the majority of coaching aspects as both present and important. A visual comparison of the scores between presence and importance shows that there is some kind of relation between the two dimensions, although not very strong. The group discussed four categories of questions that were deemed to offer an insight into the coachees' evaluation. First, the group looked at the aspects judged as being highly present in the session and highly important for the coachee:

- Asking questions to help you grow and to open new perspectives
- Helping you to see signs of development through the journey
- Listening attentively, Being fully present in the session
- Summarising and paraphrasing what you say
- Understanding what you want to say
- Helping you to understand how you think and make judgments
- Respecting your views, while helping you to review and critique them
- Respecting your right to draw your own future
- Reflecting on your decisions and actions to understand their causes

The second category of questions, were related to aspects that were scored by the coachees as highly present, but not as highly important, these were:

- Helping you to think critically
- Helping you to notice and understand your feelings
- Discussing the social factors that affect your thinking and your life

The third category looked at were the aspects that were scored by the coachees as highly important, but not as highly present, suggesting they wanted to see more of those in the sessions:

- Helping you to clarify your goal from coaching
- Helping you to drive your own developmental journey
- Not imposing my own beliefs and values on you
- Abstaining from giving you advice or ready-made solutions

The last category included those aspects that had low scores on both sides, suggesting those aspects were judged by the coachees as neither highly present nor highly important:

- Helping you to understand your assumptions and beliefs
- Helping you to reflect critically on your beliefs
- Discussing topics outside your immediate personal circle

Notwithstanding the fact that these answers represented only five coachees, the group was slightly shocked by the results. First, the items mentioned in the third category (More important than present) reflected a need for the coaches to provide a higher degree of empowerment in thinking and decision-making. This is also clear from the two factors mentioned in the first category as highly present and important (Respecting your views, while helping you to review and criticise them, Respecting your right to draw your own future). This feedback seemed like a revelation for the coaches, as they were often under the impression that the coachees were too weak to make their own destiny, and many coaches, throughout the process, have voiced their concerns that their coachees were disappointed because they were not providing them with the advice they were seeking. What these scores were suggesting was the opposite; coachees actually wanted to be trusted more and encouraged more to make their own decisions.

A second important finding from the results can be seen in the difference between the aspects mentioned in the first category (Highly present and highly important) from one side, and the aspects mentioned in the second and fourth categories (Not highly important) from the other side. The former appears to be centred around core coaching practices; such as listening, understanding, reflecting, as opposed to the items in the less important categories, which are more akin to the critical and social aspects of the coaching model. These results suggested that the critical and social dimensions, while still relevant, were not at the core of what these coachees appreciated in the coaching process. What mattered to them most were the presence, attentiveness and understanding of the coach.

B. Coachees' journey, as seen by the coaches

During the three reflective workshops, the coaches were asked to express their overall view of their coachees and the journey they were going through. This

expression was done in a presentational form, using images and narratives, as opposed to the rational analysis of the reflective journals and research forms. In the first reflective workshop, coaches were asked to draw images representing their coachees, and to go around the meeting space, presenting themselves briefly – as their coachees – to other coaches, while using pseudo-names and abstracting personal data. This exercise was filmed. Some of the statements used by the coaches to describe their coachees (in the first person) were:

> *I always need someone to give me a push; I cannot achieve anything on my own (Miral).*
>
> *I have a loud laugh; I love my laugh, although I'm never able to do it, even at home (Vana).*
>
> *I'm afraid of the fact that I don't have an idea of what I want of my life (Nadine).*
>
> *It's like I'm sitting looking at all my dreams fade away (Marianne).*
>
> *People think I'm weak; I want to show them otherwise, but without making them angry with me, because I don't want to feel guilty about it (Nadine).*
>
> *I afraid of staying in the country, I love it, but I have to think about my son (Vana).*
>
> *I'm completely broken, I will talk, but I don't believe there is a way out (Marianne).*

In general, the presentations and drawings of the first workshop were portraying coachees who had negative narratives about themselves; they were not in control of their lives, and they did not believe that this was something they could change. Many coachees were talking about how others were seeing them negatively, and they were often agreeing with those views. Many of them knew that something needed to change, but they were rather helpless about changing it.

In the second reflective workshop, the coaches were shown the material that was filmed during their first presentations of their coachees. They were then asked to talk freely about how seeing how they described their coachees made them feel. The first reaction of most coaches was one of surprise at the amount of progress that their coachees had gone through in the two months period between the two workshops. The group noted that what seemed very far away just two months ago was starting to happen; their coachees were becoming more empowered and

more positive about the outcomes of their journeys. It was suggested that maybe by virtue of being on the edge of breaking that those coachees were even more ready for a radical transformation than those living in their comfort zone. They wanted to change badly and in quicker steps. However, at this stage of the coaching journey, many coachees were also starting to experience relapses, as the change they were going through was exposing the deeper layers of constraints that were holding them back.

In addition to seeing the progress, coaches started noting common elements in their coachees' stories that transcended their specific stories. For example, they noted the many times the negative impact of coachees' parents was mentioned. They also saw that for the coachees who were 20-30 years old, many were struggling with the type of university education they had. In Egypt, going from high school to a specific undergraduate education is a key milestone in almost everyone's life. Most universities are public and free, but the undergraduate specialisation (e.g. engineering, business…) is decided for everyone through a national exam that allows students with highest grades to choose their specialisation, while everyone else gets the remaining places in different schools. This is a time where parents usually exert all kinds of pressure on their sons and daughters to choose specific specialisations that are more socially appreciated. As a result, even ten years later, most coachees were talking negatively about having been forced to choose a certain programme of study – and eventually a career – that was not their own choice. The group commented on how many stories seemed similar, although they were stories of people from different backgrounds, ages, religions, and social classes. At the end of the discussion one coach commented:

> *You can summarise all the stories in terms of them being stories of normal people living in a country like Egypt, it seems that everything we live is oppressive (Nadine).*

In the third reflective workshop, the group was asked to formulate the coachees' journey in a single narrative, like a fairy tale. This was done in a group theatre format, where each coach improvised a part of the story, to be completed by another. This exercise was done outdoors, in a garden setting, with the group sitting in a circle under the light of the stars. The resulting story is presented in the following lines:

Once upon a time…

In a land of oppression, where houses are full of walls of protection, and sounds across the air, from everywhere, shouting: "you cannot". In a land where men overpower women, where everyone is expected to obey what older people say, family rules are to be followed, and father is king.

In this land, a hero was born; her name was "Coachee". She grew up as a "nice" person who obeys the rules, and does what is expected from her. Step by step, she was becoming the girl that her society wanted her to be, but she was not happy; deep inside, she knew something was wrong.

Outside the high walls, existed other places, full of opportunities and possibilities, but to these lands, she never went, of their presence she knew nothing. External pressures hit her like waves, allowing no space to imagine or question, and when she looked around her, everyone was also hit by the same waves, and no one was really swimming against the current.

She was pretty, but she did not know it, she would go into the forest to chase her dreams, only to find people who would tell her: "forget it, it will never happen, you are not good enough for it". She did not want to believe that, but she was afraid they would reject her if she did not. So day-by-day, she started to believe what everyone was saying. She stopped thinking about what she did every day; she started memorising a "perfect" answer that explains how everything is just "perfect" as it is.

Like all girls in this society, she lived inside the prison of her body, continuously reminded, and reminding herself, of her limitations. This was the spell she was under; she looked into the mirror, and saw an ugly and undeserving being. This was her curse, not knowing her true free nature. When she looked to other people, she also saw monsters. She was afraid of others.

However, and while she believed the mirror and the spell, she wanted some really small pleasures. She thought she did not deserve any, and was even feeling guilty about her greed, but she still wanted them. So this is what drove her to find the wizard called "Coach". She wanted to ask that coach about how to get those really small pleasures and whether she was entitled to them.

On the way to the wizard she wondered: "Is there really hope?" She felt the road was long and difficult, and many times she thought about walking back to her home and the cursed mirror. On the road she started remembering all her fears, all her

failures, and all the chains that she already had with her current life. Some chains were long commitments that she was forced to take (marriage, parenthood, career), some chains were abusive relations that seemed to become a norm even when people change (the step-mother archetype). She remembered all the other times she went to other types of wizards: priests, therapists and many others with no success. She thought about the punishment that awaited her because she went to the wizard, and the amount of resistance she would face. Despite all this, she went, and reached the door of the wizard called coach.

In the wizard's house, it was wonderland, she saw pictures of her successes, and she found mirrors that reflected her beauty. The wizard seemed to trust her, while no one ever did. He let her into a room with a window on her old city; from above she could see all the walls that were locking everyone inside them. In another room she actually looked at her own mind, she touched the thoughts that were locking her like a spider web. In a third room, she watched herself in relationships, and was able to play with what the different characters were saying and doing. She liked meeting the wizard, and at first instance she thought: "I could just do this every now and then, even if nothing really changes". But something had already changed that made everything possible; the coachee suddenly realised that the key to change might be in her hands. In fact, it didn't really matter why she came in the first place, whether driven by hunger, boredom, or despair, what really made the difference is that she decided to start the journey.

Over the course of the following visits, they both talked and shared a lot, what made this specific journey different was that it was a shared one. As the journey approached its end, the wizard started wondering what would happen to the coachee when she is back on her own in the dark land of oppression. It was clear that, for her to succeed, the coachee needed to lead her story, knowing that it would not be without pains or failures, but determined to reach her dreams. She had discovered many new things, but there would be more to discover, like peeling an onion. For this to happen, the coachee was sent back several times to her old land, trying herself out in seeking change, while still enjoying the fading presence of her coach.

Before goodbyes they talked about new circles of support. The wizard gave the coachee some tools and tricks for the coachee to use by herself. The wizard even showed the coachee the inside of his workshop, breaking the myth and glamour of magical powers, showing the coachee how she had been the real hero throughout

the story. On the last day, they celebrated the journey, honouring both its ups and downs, and from that day, the coachee has been in a journey … ever after

When the group finished the fairy tale, there was a sense of accomplishment, and many coaches commented that bringing all their stories together made them feel the journey that their coachees went through. At the heart of that journey is the move from myth to reality, from the obscure world of oppression, full of spells and inaccessible codes that separate the individual from his/her experience of self and the world, to a world where even the 'magic' and power of the coach are decoded and the coachee is celebrated for being the only 'actor' in the story. Beyond the content of coaching, the coachee has to make two critical moves to make this journey possible; the first move is to commit to the coaching journey despite all the daily pressures and the possible failures, while the second is to leave the comfort of the coaching relationship, and take action to change his/her world. These two moves may be the most challenging in the journey of emancipation.

C. The coaches' journey

It is my view that – besides the coachees' development – the development of the participating coaches was one of the most important aspects of this study. The individuals who participated in the research group were not professional coaches; they were mainly people who were deeply interested in helping other individuals, who had some experience in human development, were committed to the process, and most importantly, they were living in the same oppressive environment as their coachees. During the course of the study, the coaches had to face lots of questions about their own lives, as well as about their ability to help others in their journeys of emancipation. They came to identify themselves not only as actors who can play a role in fighting oppression, but also as actors in their own journey of development and emancipation.

In all reflective workshops, there were times dedicated for coaches to share reflections on their own development, but there were also other unplanned times, where one of the coaches would ask the group to stop the discussions on the coaching model, and would share personal questions or feelings. There were instances of strong emotions and tears. Coaches also used the online group we

had to post self-reflections between workshops. On an individual basis, supervision sessions between each coach and myself also included elements of reflections on their personal journeys. The following sections summarise the coaches' experience as expressed in these different contexts. The experience is broken into four areas: learning about the world, learning about self, learning as coach-practitioner-researcher, and finally learning in the group. Quotes are not attributed in this section because of their personal nature.

1. Learning about the world

During the course of the study, coaches discovered the concept of oppression as a framework for understanding the world they were experiencing. This understanding took place over multiple phases: First, during the training phase, where the general dynamics of oppression and emancipation were discussed, the coaches seemed to be exploring a new vocabulary that was not commonly used in their ways of understanding the world. Discussions during the training showed that while they were able to relate to the symptoms of oppression (for example, subjugation of women, religious discrimination, and so forth) as being relevant to their personal experience, they were not linking these experiences in a systemic view of an oppressive environment that is active and self-generating. Their interpretations of the painful outcomes of oppression were focused on individual incidents and psychological wounds, with little reference to a bigger picture.

The second discovery took place during the phase of selecting the coachees, and after the first coaching session. Coaches reported being shocked at the amount of demand that was being exposed to them, and the wide array of stories that their coachees were telling about symptoms of oppression in their lives. The group expressed fears and doubts in their ability to face this challenge. In the meantime, they were still looking at each case separately, and trying to find specific issues in each coachee's story that would explain why they were suffering from these situations in their lives.

In the first reflective workshop, a number of coaches were questioning whether oppression exists, and who is to blame for it, the society or the oppressed? The majority of the group was defending the view that an oppressive environment works to deprive its individuals from their ability to discover and fight oppression. In this debate, the coaches started theorising for themselves a framework

(discussed in chapter 5) that was aimed at explaining their experience. They were examining different examples, analysing contradicting views, and trying to reach a shared conclusion that would satisfy all their questions. In the following months, this understanding kept becoming broader, encompassing different dynamics and connecting stories that had been unrelated. This was often reflected in quotes from their reflective journals like the following examples:

> *I am discovering the existence of oppression in everything*
>
> *I celebrate every time I uncover a new meaning of oppression*
>
> *I now always search for the other side of the story*
>
> *I have no doubts now in social oppression, shared themes are very clear*
>
> *What we're doing is a real research in the deep ocean of oppression; it's so heavy and rich*

The third discovery came through the second half of the coaching journey. Coaches had moved from an individualistic perception of the symptoms of oppression to a form of social theory that looks at the dynamics of oppressive systems. But as their relations with their coachees were developing, coaches started to appreciate the ability of each individual to make his/her unique story inside and despite those oppressive systems. Coaches discussed the view that reality has so many facets, and that a situation of oppression cannot be interpreted using simplistic models. Discussions during the reflective workshops became relatively more sophisticated, as the coaches' understanding progressed from a social interpretation of everything to a multi-layered understanding of individuals interacting reciprocally with their societies. They reported an increased acceptance, understanding and empathy with others. They also reported an increased level of trust in their coachees and their ability to change their lives with little reliance on external help. They opened windows of hope in the closed chamber of social oppression, as two of the coaches commented:

> *I am amazed at the value and richness of the coachees. Despite oppression, there are still a lot of good answers inside their hearts. I celebrate hope. There is always resistance inside oppression.*
>
> *I am surprisingly celebrating hope, I never liked the word, but now I believe in it. I saw the real power in my coachees, and how deep they are, even in their times of weakness.*

In the final workshop, coaches reflected on how this project has helped them to review their understanding of the world, and how it shaped their view of how to make the world a better place. They saw coaching as a mechanism of fighting oppression from the grassroots, but understanding that it can also be a mechanism of affirming oppression, if the coach fails to recognise the individual and social dynamics of living in oppressive environments. Their theory has progressed from analysis to action. As the political discourse in Egypt was prevalent throughout the duration of the research, the coaches created links between their work and the change of the country. What was taking place in Egypt was suggesting that oppressive structures are hardly threatened by changes at the top of the political system, because they have contaminated every social layer down to the individual. Hence, a process of political change starts with liberating the individual, as one coach wrote:

> *A revolution starts with small steps like the ones we're doing with our coachees.*

Western (2012) agrees that although coaching works individually and confidentially, it also has a collective impact, as it can work to accumulate, disperse and shape data and language, texts, information and emotions. Coaching has shared elements with the way new social movements are organised: more informal and self-organising, and less hierarchically structured.

2. Learning about self

One of the differentiators of coaching in oppressive environment is the fact that the environment affects both coach and coachee. The coaches in this study were no exception. Throughout the study, they shared their own stories with the group, and reflected on how their own experience of oppression was affecting their role as coaches. Many of the coaches used the supervision sessions to reflect on their own feelings and reactions to the coachees' stories; these reflections led to new understandings about themselves.

One coach shared with the group her story of surviving cancer in her early twenties, only to discover that a girl with a medical history is considered not fit for purpose in a society where girls spend their lives preparing to be good "products" for marriage. She described her daily life of having to stand the blame and bullying of others as sometimes more painful than cancer. Another coach, working in the

media, shared her daily frustration of working in an environment of censorship and state propaganda. A third coach talked about his experience as a religious minority. A fourth sent me a message saying: "*Add to your research: In oppressive societies, a girl gets sexually harassed in the street, then she goes home only to get beaten by another man at home*". The coaches' stories were similar to the ones that their coachees were sharing with them.

Another dimension shared between the coaches and coachees was the political situation in Egypt during the period of the research. Almost every reflective workshop coincided with big demonstrations, many of which were condemning the excessive use of violence of state forces against protestors, especially women. Everyday news was filled with stories of protestors getting killed and activists being arrested. Political choices were narrowing down from the big dreams of the 2011 revolution to a mere choice between military rule and religious extremism. For people who saw in that revolution a hope for freedom, that hope was fading, and it was affecting the coaches as much as their coachees, as one of the coaches expresses in the following quote:

> *Despite all my efforts to avoid falling into frustration and not being able to move, what is happening in the country ends up affecting me, and I find myself imprisoned in what is taking place. Every time I think: I must resist this, but once anything new happens, I feel paralysed.*

Despite the presence of the shared circumstances from the beginning of the journey, it took a while for coaches to start talking about the similarities between the coachees and themselves. It was not until the second reflective workshop that some coaches started talking about going through their own liberation as a by-product of coaching others. The feelings of isolation and idiosyncrasy of their experiences were being diluted in the realisation that these experiences were shared with many others. Some coaches expressed new feelings of being in peace with themselves, as a result of this realisation, as noted in one coach's closing statements:

> *For long I have been searching without success for the meaning of the words: "Reconciliation with self". Until I joined this [research] group, and everything turned to be different. My everyday life is now very different. I am very thankful you fought for a year to give us this new Life.*

From a cognitive process point of view, the research project enabled the coaches to adopt what they considered deeper ways of learning about themselves and the world. The critical nature of the group discussions, from the start of the initial training, helped each coach to uncover beliefs that were taken for granted, and uses of language they discovered were offending to others (For example: The way some Islamic circles call Egyptian-Christians as Nazarenes instead of Copts). Coaches reported spending more time in self-reflection, becoming more analytical and critical of their ideas and feelings, and looking deeper inside themselves and beneath what others are showing, before making judgments about any social interactions, as one coach recalls:

> *I was struck by the amount of prejudgments and ideas I had about the coachees, that I now know were not true.*

Although the study was mainly targeting the coachees, there were strong indicators that both coaches and coachees could benefit from the relationship. The shared oppressive environment provided even stronger grounds for such mutual benefit, and the reflective practice of coaching allowed the coaches to explore new ways of critically reflecting on their own lives. Finally, the safe environment of the research group allowed some of them to find their voice, and to talk about their experiences with oppression. One coach shared a reflection on how this journey affected her:

> *It narrowed the gap between the inner and outer me, I feel more genuine and comfortable with myself. I am more in control and more aware and this is empowering. I'm liberated in my thoughts and feelings. My limitations have been stretched; I'm growing.*

3. Learning about role as coach/practitioner

From the very beginning of the study, coaches had struggles and doubts around their roles as coaches. The first struggle that some coaches reported early on in the process was around their role as "saviours". Many of the coaches were coming from the background of working with marginalised communities in Egypt. They had assumptions about their responsibility for the destiny of the people they serve; they saw themselves as indispensable to the lives of those people. As they tried to reflect on their experience with their coachees, they questioned these assumptions, and were challenged to rethink their role as facilitators of their coachees' development, rather than owners of it. They learned to separate the

coachees' journeys and their own values and objectives. They learned that their coachees are entitled to own their dreams and expectations, and to be responsible for the path they choose. The coaches reported being much calmer in their practice as they came to terms with the guilt of not being responsible for saving their coachees. They learned to manage their emotional attachment with the coachee, to find a balance between empathy and keeping the right distance, and to separate between their role as coaches and other personal interactions they have with the coachees outside the coaching session. It is important to note that Egyptian culture is generally one where most relationships are emotionally charged, and where boundaries between professional and personal interactions are often vague. Even towards the end of the journey, coaches were reflecting on feeling worried about their coachees' future, and feeling uneasy about letting go of them. One coach shared a note she had written on her struggle:

> *A Saviour - Or so I thought...*
>
> *I had the vision of being a saviour to other people. Now I realize new things: It is OK to offer help yet extra focus is needed to determine which kind of help should be offered; maybe helping others might be by empowering them, not taking responsibility on their behalf. It is OK if I couldn't help someone; this doesn't mean I'm a bad person, it simply implies that maybe this is not my role at this time with this person and it is somebody else's role, or simply that this person needs to grow without me. I need to remove my existence and importance because it's more about what's best for this person not what makes me feel happy.*

Learning to remove the helper from the centre of the helping relationship is vital in the context of oppressive environments, as the coachee's vulnerability may invite the coach to step in and take control of the coachee's journey. It is therefore vital for the emancipatory coaches to learn how to deal with that tension. A second struggle that almost all of the coaches faced was around self-doubt. Feeling overwhelmed by the coachees' stories, and the different dimensions of oppression that were being exposed, the coaches started doubting their ability to make a difference. They questioned the proposed length of the journey (six sessions over six months), and questioned the possibility of breaking the closed circle of daily oppression. One of the coaches shared her feelings after the first reflective workshop:

> *I felt perplexed; I know that, deep down, I have this idea of fixing the universe, making everyone happy, stopping wars, and then going to sleep happily and waking up to start enjoying my life. So I had my doubts about the whole coaching project, would it really affect anything positively? This moment of doubt was very important, I was thinking about dropping from the project. But after I reflected on my feelings, and while knowing that it will not actually fix the universe, I decided that I will throw all my seeds - whatever grows will grow, whatever dies will die, whatever the birds eat will be eaten, and the soil shall choose its destiny.*

The conclusion that this coach had reached is exemplary of the type of learning coaches had to acquire in order to continue working with the challenges in that environment. They learned that there would be no clear victorious outcomes that could be guaranteed, and that their role as coaches in oppressive environments implied a level of acceptance to work with their coachees without a pre-condition that such outcomes could be reached. On another level, self-doubt was related to the coaches' discovery of how they were also affected by the oppressive environment. Several coaches reported having difficult moments inside the coaching session, as they were listening to the coachees talking about issues that the coaches could identify with in their own life. This realisation made some of them lose confidence during the session, questioning their ability to help the coachee while they suffered from the same issues, as one of the coaches put it:

> *I hesitate a lot every time I realise that I am doing coaching with an emancipatory purpose, while I don't feel emancipated myself.*

A third struggle of confidence was related to the professional capacity to act as coaches following a specific model. Coaches were watching themselves doing the coaching, and wondering whether they were doing it right. The reflective journals of the first action cycle showed a considerable attention to the details, probably driven by the fear of making mistakes. One coach said that she realised everything she was doing in the session had an impact on the coachee, and this made her more concerned about not doing everything right at the right time. This level of doubt decreased significantly from the second reflective workshop, where the coaches started talking about their practice in a much more confident way. The above doubts seem to fall broadly within the doubts identified by de Haan (2008; 2008) through the analysis of critical moments as seen by new and experienced coaches; these doubts include: *do I have something to offer? Am I good enough? Am I doing it right? What is going to happen? Will the client be able to handle it?*

And where are the boundaries? In the case of this study, the context of oppression adds to these generic doubts the complexity of a challenging environment, a vulnerable coachee, and the possibility of a coach who is wounded by the oppressive environment.

As they were developing as coaches, it appeared that the group's most important learning was not about the right way of coaching, but rather about the freedom and flexibility that defy any single definition of a right way. They learned that their views and opinions do not matter much, and that positive help could be provided without giving their own advice or opinion in the discussed topic. They learned that coaching doesn't follow any predefined pace, development takes time, but coachees can also move and be impacted very quickly. They learned that development might involve periods without a clear end goal, and that what maintains the coaching process at such times is the discipline of the process itself rather than the content of the coaching. The group almost anonymously agreed that working with a coaching model is very empowering to the coach, but as the coaches were becoming more accustomed to the use of the developed model, they were also learning that coaching is not a set of tools and processes that can lead to a predefined outcome, as one of the coaches noted during a reflective workshop:

> *I learned that there are no rules, despite the tools; it's all free form in the session. In coaching, you have to expect the unexpected; anything can happen.*

With such flexibility in terms of methods established, the coaches started to explore their personal practice and how they could define their own version of a coaching model. At the end of the second and third reflective workshops, I asked the coaches to take individual time to write down how they saw their personal coaching models. The outcomes of the exercise were variations on the theme of coaching for emancipation, with focus placed on different elements of it. For example two coaches focused on empowerment as the key ingredient for emancipation. One coach defined her model around being there to support the discovery, the journey, and the celebration of the coachee's success. Another coach focused on helping coachees to develop in whatever directions they want, while making sure that their decisions are not dictated by social pressures. A fifth emphasised the dimension of attentive listening, helping coachees to discover how they build their internal world from the dynamics of their social experiences.

Another coach focused on the discovery of the circles of oppression that coachees are living in, the realisation of freedom towards ideas and choices, and the commitment to liberating actions; all through multiple and flexible interventions that change with every coachee. Another coach broke the journey into "discovering the reality you're in, the reality you want to create, and the tools that can help you create it". Another coach focused on the coach's philosophical position, believing in the freedom and power of every human being, and the use of a process of critical reflection to validate whether the coachee's current life and beliefs are supporting his/her freedom.

The coaches also expressed hopes for future developments of the model into new areas, and suggested that these could be good areas to explore in their future practice, and many of them wanted to continue with studying the theoretical foundations that could help them progress the model into such areas. For example, one coach expressed interest in adapting the model to work primarily with feminist issues. A number of coaches wanted to explore how the concepts of coaching for emancipation could be used with younger age groups like early and late adolescents; a member of the group went on to study the developmental theories that could be more relevant for those age groups. One coach was interested in exploring a bigger role for art inside the coaching model, and went on after the study to develop a two-days "breaking from reality" art workshop. One coach suggested that in her view the coaching model could be equally used in more liberal and democratic environments and still be very effective because internalised oppression exists everywhere.

Finally, the group agreed that what mattered most to their development as coaches was the commitment to reflective practice. Many coaches told stories about how they discovered things that were taking place or had been missed during the coaching sessions, only after filling or reading their own post-session reflective journals. They also noted that reading older reflective journals, and reading journals related to coaching sessions with different coachees, were revealing things about themselves that they could not have discovered otherwise.

4. Learning in the group

One of the implications of the design of the study was that the coaches were learning in a participatory environment. In Egypt, most of the adult-learning

programmes follow a lecture-based format, with a knowledgeable instructor doing most of the talking. The coaches reflected on how being in a group has helped their development. Most of the coaches expressed how their level of motivation and their commitment to the study were positively affected because they knew that their experiences would be shared amongst the group. They saw the reflective workshops as a form of celebration of their development as coaches; they used words like "This group is what I wait for between our meetings" and "When we meet, it feels like I am going to a wedding of a friend, meeting people I love to celebrate". After the second reflective workshop, one of the coaches sent the following note to the group members:

> *After the [reflective workshop], I was unable to sleep, I had a feeling similar to being newly in love. I was thinking about what we said, and caught myself smiling widely. I don't know why this time was different, probably because we went to more depth; we are immersing ourselves in the model and living it. I noticed that this time we talked less about ourselves, and talked more about the coachees and the process. Last time we had our doubts. This time, our collective experience is growing. It's promising to see us developing in this way.*

For some coaches, the idea of celebration went beyond their experience of coaching, as they started bringing into the group their own stories of success in other parts of their lives. For example, one coach sent a message to the group, following a breakthrough success she had in her career:

> *Yesterday was a great day for me, not because of what I created, but because for the first time I feel being appreciated for what I do. I wanted to tell you that this is because of your support.*

In terms of learning about coaching, they realised that their experiences took new meanings and perspectives as they were being shared with the group. They talked about the impact of following a structured approach for analysing their experiences together, and asserted the importance of getting together and talking about their practice as having two main outcomes: first, exposing the hidden dimensions in their stories, and second, providing them with a level of support that was helping them to deal with their own frustrations and doubts. They used to call the room where the reflective sessions were held "*The room of hope*", as to reflect the fact that it was in that room that they learned to confront the shadows

of frustration and the loss of hope in helping their coachees to break the cycle of oppression. As one of the coaches noted before the second workshop:

> *I'm really looking forward to the three long intense condensed days we'll have in April. Since December, these sessions have been the highlights of my weeks, the discussions, experiences and sharing, the richness of this practice. I go to these sessions feeling: "If only everyone else I know thought like this and had this passion I see in that room, this society wouldn't be an oppressive one and Hany will have to find another oppressive society for the PhD".*

The coaches noted that the generation of hope followed a process, whereby they would come at the beginning of each reflective workshop, loaded with the negative weight of dealing with oppressive environments, and then they would spend the following days deconstructing their experiences and transforming them into liberating discoveries. This view may be best expressed through the words of one coach sharing a dream she had about the group:

> *I had a dream about us, we were fighting forces of evil, and then we discovered that every time we tell each other liberating discoveries, we make them weaker. They were like dark clouds in the sky, and the more we talked and shared our discoveries, the more the dark clouds disappeared.*

The reflective workshops represented three dimensions for the group: a research workshop, a coaching peer supervision meeting, and a form of group coaching where the coaches were able to explore their personal development. The three dimensions were intertwined and hardly separable. Their coaching practice provided the raw materials that were processed in the group to generate new knowledge about the world, about coaching and about themselves. At the same time, their personal development was helping them to go back to their practice; feeling enriched, supported and motivated to facilitate the development of their coachees. One of the coaches told the group about her visit to the Albertinum museum in Dresden (Germany):

> *There was a sculpture by Rodin, called "Inner voice".* Standing in front of it, I was so deeply touched by its beauty, and I couldn't help but think about the research and the group. On the description there were two words that said everything: "naked and vulnerable". I think that the critical reflection we go through is a way of cleaning our inside to reach our inner voice. And once we reach it we find out how clear and pure, but also naked and vulnerable it is in front of the outside world.

Figure 9.2. Inner Voice (The Muse) by Rodin

D. The researcher's journey

Over the course of the study, I played multiple roles: I was the coach, developing and training others on a model of coaching for emancipation, the action researcher, leading and documenting the study, the group facilitator during the reflective workshops, and the coaching supervisor, supporting individual coaches in their practice. Each of these roles instigated questions and doubts that I had to go through, and lessons that I had to learn in my own journey of development.

As a coach, the comparison of my coaching experience across different cultures was one of the main reasons I became interested in this study. However, most of the coaching literature as discussed in chapter 2, did not discuss coaching in oppressive environments. As I was developing the initial coaching model (Chapter 3), drawing on various sources and disciplines as well as my own experience, I had no objective way of validating whether what was being developed would make any sense when applied. I had my fears and doubts, but decided to use these doubts positively by making them increase my criticality and vigilance as researcher. I kept reminding myself that the model is emancipatory by nature rather than by purpose; emancipation – like development – is what happens to people as they face social and internalised oppression in order to achieve their objectives, rather than being a goal itself.

As the group started meeting their coachees for the first sessions, I had many fears around the type of issues that the coachees might bring to these sessions. Coaching was new in Egypt, and the general culture surrounding it was – in my view – part of the fashionable hype of self-development. I was afraid that coachees would come with different needs and expectations to what the model was intended to satisfy. As I started getting the feedback on the first sessions, I had many conflicting feelings. I was comforted to know that everything the coachees were talking about seemed to relate to living in oppressive environments, but I was also shocked because of the amount of pain and struggles that were being exposed in the coachees' stories. I realised that we were dealing with a real need, and that we were going into a close encounter with the nature of oppression. This realisation created in me another type of fear: Will we be able to help these coachees? Will the developing coaching model be capable of meeting the demands of this environment?

During the action and reflection phases, I felt I was getting closer to the coachees; without ever meeting them, I felt I knew them for a long time, and through the reflections of the coaches, I was regaining hope that people affected by oppression can resist its impacts, and that coaching has a role to play in facilitating this process. I was happy with the development in the coaching model, but at the same time, I was becoming freer towards its specifics. I realised that fighting oppression cannot be seen from the perspective of a single approach. Instead, all approaches involving emancipatory purposes need to be seen as interconnected and overlapping. I started to develop the view that a model of coaching for emancipation is only valid when it integrates with and contributes to an overall framework of emancipatory work, that may include other coaching, educational, artistic, social and political approaches. As the journey was approaching its final stages, my questions as a practitioner had moved towards the next steps that would help to integrate coaching into the bigger picture of an emancipatory framework.

As a researcher, I started off this study trying to control every aspect of it. I was checking with the coaches on daily basis how they were progressing with recruiting coachees, having their coaching sessions, adequately filling the research forms and so forth. It took me around two months into the first action cycle to realise that participatory action research cannot be managed as a designed

experiment. My co-researchers had different ways of doing their work; they followed their own pace and used their own ways of recording and expressing their experiences. This felt somewhat threatening, compared to my previous experiences, where I used to own and manage the project completely, and I used to find some level of assurance in this level of control. In this case, the ownership was shared, and the coaches were contributing heavily to setting the pace and language of our cooperative inquiry. What I learnt – having overcome the initial panic of loss of control – was that the unique pace and language of each co-researcher is not something to just accept as a by-product of the participatory approach, but it is one of the most important things that validate the process. The outcomes may not be as "efficient" as initially designed, as the process broadens to encompass every individual, but the resulting diversity and tension ensure that the outcome is more validated. One of the key difficulties for me as researcher was to make a rational decision on where and when to stop. In terms of scope, the coaches were bringing new questions and experiences every time we met, and each experience was opening possibilities for further research. I started thinking about the wide gap of available research between developed and developing countries, and dreaming of a day I could pursue each of the research questions that were emerging from this study. In terms of timing, though many of the coaching journeys were reaching a natural closure by the last reflective workshop, some were still progressing. More importantly, over the course of nine months, the group had evolved into a coherent and collaborative group of co-inquirers, which presented a temptation to extend the time of the research in order to get the most out of this setup. My emotional involvement in the research process, the emerging research questions, and with the inquiry group was making the decision about scope and timing more problematic, and required discussions and reflections with the group and with my research supervisors.

As the group facilitator, the main question for me was around the dynamics of power during the reflective workshops. I was aware that I was the creator of the initial coaching model, and the only member of the group with an academic interest in the outcomes of the study. These two features provided a basis for a possible power leverage that would prevent my co-researchers from finding their own voice. To face this possibility, I dedicated some time during the initial training to talk about the participatory aspect of the study and the design of the reflective

workshops. During the workshops, I intentionally avoided being part of the sub-group analysis of the collected data, and tried to only intervene in the group discussions to maintain the time, summarise the discussion and ask the group on the next idea they wanted to discuss.

Meanwhile, what changed the equation of power was primarily the level of commitment and dedication to the study that the coaches have shown. Although they only joined the study during its implementation phase, as opposed to being part of all the preparatory work, the coaches appeared to be as committed as I was to the overall project. They challenged their physical and mental boundaries, spending long hours filling the research forms and the reflective journals, being active on the online group, and actively contributing to the reflective workshops. The coaches had a source of power in terms of the direct relationship they had with their coachees. This made them feel a sense of responsibility for the outcomes of the study, and helped balance the power dynamics to the extent that their commitment represented for me a source of hope and motivation.

As the coaches' supervisor, my experience during our monthly calls also had its struggles. Up to the time we started having the first supervision calls, my involvement in the study was on the theoretical level; I was working with concepts, models and processes. When the supervision calls started, they created a personal space that brought me, the coach and the invisible coachee together in one room. Reflecting back, I believe I needed to be more psychologically ready for being in that personal space. The coaches brought the issues of their coachees, but also their personal issues into the supervision sessions. I often found myself losing energy and hope after supervision calls. This was magnified with the number of calls I had to do every month. I sought supervision myself, and on reflection, I realised that many of the coachees were expressing feelings of despair and loss of confidence, these feelings were in turn reflecting themselves in the coaches' views, and eventually finding their way to my own feelings. On every level, there was a hidden sense of self-blame, for not being able to make things better. It was like a self-fulfilling prophecy, where the coachees were saying: "we cannot be helped", and the coaches, then myself, would start feeling that: "we cannot help you". There was a parallel process taking place; as described by Hawkins and Smith (2006), where the pattern of the relationship between the coachee and his/her world, was enacted in the relationship between

the coachee and the coach, then between the coach and the supervisor, with no conscious awareness of what was happening. This realisation enabled me to approach supervision differently, and also to clarify that process to the coaches.

During the supervision calls I also realised the degree of development that the coaches were going through. Although not initially thought of as an outcome of the study, the development of the coaches gradually started to represent itself as a key dimension in coaching in oppressive environments. The same also applied to the different roles I was playing in this study, as practitioner, researcher, facilitator and supervisor. I now believe that a person who actively engages in changing an oppressive environment cannot do so without being subject to change him/herself.

E. The research process

In the last section of this chapter, I look at the overall study from a methodological perspective, with two aims: First, to evaluate the relationship between the process and the contents of the study, i.e. how the contents of the study affected its process and vice versa. Second, I look at the impact of the methodological choices that were made on the people who were part of the study.

1. Relation between process and content

A key aspect of action research is that the research takes place at the same time as the development and implementation of action. It is important to evaluate whether the presence of the inquiry affected the way coaching was happening, and whether the experience of coaching affected the way the inquiry was being conducted. Both the inquiry approach and the coaching model had a critical aspect. Over the course of the study, it seemed that the critical nature of the research and the critical aspects of the coaching model were feeding on each other. Coaches were bringing stories of oppression from their coaching experience, and using these to raise critical questions and doubts in the overall outcomes of the study. They had doubts over the usefulness of theoretical research in the all-pervasive nature of oppressive environments, and doubts in their ability as co-researchers, given the amount of internalised oppression they were discovering in their own beliefs. In the meantime, their critical discussions

during the reflective workshops, for example around the social dynamics of oppression in Egypt, were in many cases transferred into the coaching sessions, opening new areas of critical reflections with their coachees. There was a dialogue between the questions of the inquiry and the questions that the coachees were seeking to answer, in a way similar to how Scholes-Rhodes (2010) describes how her curiosity, and passion as researcher help her as coach to bring attention to her clients and to support them in discovering emergent possibilities.

Many other aspects were transferred across and shared between the inquiry and the coaching. Hope was one of these aspects; the reflective workshops served as pillars of hope for the coaches, helping them to refresh their belief in what they were doing with their coachees, and the signs of hope they were seeing in coaching were brought back to the reflective sessions, renewing their hope in the goals and outcomes of the inquiry. One of the key drivers of hope was seeing the outcomes of the inquiry accumulate through the consecutive cycles, being able to appreciate and reflect on the development happening from one phase to another was a motivation to continue going, as one of the coaches noted:

> *The fact that a process can generate this is a big discovery. Seeing the outcome building up and relating to it, the concept of hope became real - it was always theoretical, but I saw it, I saw development happening.*

Empowerment was another mutually affecting aspect. The more the coaches were being empowered as co-researchers, the more they felt empowered as coaches, and able to support the empowerment of their coachees, and the more they came back to the reflective workshops with stronger voices and confident contributions. Coaching itself, as the topic of the inquiry, became an integral part of the inquiry process; the group members were using different time slots during the reflective workshops, as well as separate dedicated meetings outside the workshops to coach each other through their personal development.

The relation between inquiry and coaching was also prevalent in the pace of both. The inquiry was designed over three action phases, each followed by a reflective workshop. This design helped the coaches organise the coaching pace with their coachees, moving – to an extent – through distinct phases of coaching that are organised around reflecting where the coachee is, right before the end of an action cycle, and renewing the goals of coaching, at the beginning of the following action cycle. From the other side, the process of coaching was reflected in the

reflective workshops, organising the focus of each workshop around the dominant topics that were relevant to the development phase of most coachees. These phases can be moderately approximated to the three processes covered in chapters 6, 7, and 8 respectively (Naming oppression, renewing beliefs, and fighting back). Although all three processes were present throughout the three workshops, the focus of each workshop was on the process that most coaching cases were going through.

2. Impact of inquiry process on the participants

The inquiry process impacted the coaches in a variety of ways. The most noted aspects of the process in the coaches' reflections were structure and empowerment, both aspects were also seen as linked. In terms of structure, the coaches noted how each element of the inquiry process helped them to develop their practice: the organisation of the study in action/reflection cycles, the use of reflective forms, the monthly supervision calls, and the organisation of the reflective workshops. This whole structure was driving their learning and practice as much as it was generating theoretical and practical knowledge. For the coaches who were already active in developmental work, being part of a structured process provided them with a view on how they can improve other types of activities they were part of, as one of the coaches expressed:

> *It mattered to me being part of a structured process. This is not my nature; I work on the ground and usually get stuck.*

This coach, a dedicated activist, has seen many failed examples of trying to generate change in the society - no matter how much effort was put into the initiatives she was working on. Being part of the inquiry helped her realise how an action research approach may provide better opportunities for making change happen, as the structure of such approach ensures continuous learning for the participants, and continuous evaluation and evolution of the undertaken actions. It also generates knowledge that can be used across multiple initiatives with similar purposes. These views are echoed in many co-operative inquiry and participatory action research projects. For example, Hills (2001) describes a co-operative inquiry to improve nursing students practices, she identifies three empowering processes that encouraged transformative change: creating collaborative relationships, engaging in critical dialogue, and reflecting-in-action.

Similarly, the structure of the current inquiry was reported as being empowering, as another coach commented:

> *It mattered a lot the process that we followed. It was empowering because it took us through a clear structured process, learning by doing. The fact that we were doing the reflections, we were evaluating; this whole process was very empowering.*

For this coach and many others, the inquiry process started with lots of doubts about their ability to form part of a research group. They expressed their self-doubts, and words of encouragement were doing little to change those. The key aspects that ended up helping them become more empowered as co-researchers were related to the way the process was structured. By breaking down the process into several steps, with full clarity over the path, and by giving them responsibility and ownership of many of these steps, increasing this responsibility over time, they found themselves leading the inquiry process. In every reflective workshop, as the outcomes of the previous workshop were being presented, there was a sense of pride in the room, as the coaches were realising their ability to generate knowledge from their practice. One of the co-researchers commented in the final workshop, remembering her initial fears:

> *Several times I would tell myself, you are not good enough to be part of this, but week-by-week, I managed to get over my shadow, my doubts, and do things.*

In addition to structure and empowerment, two coaches commented on the impact of the inquiry on their epistemological views; for them, they only originally believed research to be around measurement and quantitative analysis. Being part of this study, they discovered that scientific knowledge could also be sought in interpretive forms. The importance of this was not on the philosophical level, but rather in the sense that it gave a new value to the knowledge they were generating in their work with others, using narratives, arts, and dialogical methods. The concept of validity was important to them, because the issues they were working with were largely subjective and contextual. In that environment, knowing how to validate interpretive knowledge may be the only way to make reasonable judgments.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented reflections on the holistic developmental journeys of coachees, coaches and myself as researcher. It appears that each of the participant groups have gone through three main moves that are depicted in figure 9.3, namely from confusion to clarity, from fear to hope, and from control to freedom.

	From Confusion to Clarity	From Fear to Hope	From Control to Freedom
Coachee	I understand how oppression affects my life	Being on the edge of breaking, helps me create possibilities	I learned to want the coach to trust me
Coach	I understand how oppression affects my coachees' lives	Though oppression is pervasive, resistance is possible and outcome is emergent	I'm not a saviour. I am freer towards my coaching practice and the coaching model
Myself	I understand how coaching for emancipation fits in a bigger picture	Oppression is huge, but coachees are great fighters, and coaches are developing	The research process is emergent, the coaching model is flexible

Figure 9.3. Developmental Journeys of Coachees, Coaches and Researcher

In the first move, the actors started the journey with a fragmented or incomplete understanding of oppression and how it affects the experience of people living within its boundaries. During the study, each actor developed a more holistic understanding of how his/her role is affected by oppression; the coachees analysed their experience and their beliefs from a social lens, the coaches built an understanding of coaching in oppressive environments that incorporated social and individual perspectives and also took into consideration how oppressive environments affect the experience of the coach, and I reflected on this newly generated knowledge, linking coaching to other approaches that seek to address oppression. It can be argued that we all went through a process of conscientisation (Freire, 1970) or transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981).

In the second move, from fear to hope, we all started with doubts about our ability to face the challenges of our roles, whether they concern our own

development or helping others to develop. The discovery of the dynamics of oppression was at first overwhelming, but was transformed within few months into real hope in the possibility of resistance and emancipation. The commitment and dedication of both coachees and coaches provided evidence that even the hardest oppressive structures can be challenged. In the meantime, we understood the process of liberation itself as emergent, in the sense that the possibilities inherent in it cannot be predetermined.

In the third move, from control to freedom, we start with a preoccupation of following rules; coachees wanted their coaches to tell them what to do, coaches wanted to adhere completely to the coaching model, and I felt the need to follow a precisely structured process for the inquiry. Over the course of the study, we learned to trust our intuition, and to accept the freedom of stepping outside these guidelines. Coachees voiced their need to be trusted to make their own decisions, while the coaches learned that their role is not to save the coachees but to be present for them to facilitate their learning. Coaches became more confident in their practice and learnt to approach the model as an enabler rather than a set of steps to follow. Similarly, I learned to approach both coaching and inquiry in more open way, seeing the value in allowing the diversity and creativity of individuals to reshape the structure. All three moves were empowering, and all were generated in an environment that combined trust and criticality.

In the next and final chapter, I discuss the overall conclusions and implication of the study.

10. Conclusion

This study aimed to develop a theoretical and practical framework of coaching for emancipation. It involved a critical review of the literature (Chapter two), the development of an initial coaching model (Chapter three), and a co-operative inquiry with a group of coaches in Egypt, the results of which are presented and discussed in chapters five to nine. In this final chapter, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, while presenting a holistic view of the proposed framework. In the remainder of the chapter, I reflect critically on a number of questions concerning the overall study: First, I discuss the idea of coaching for emancipation, and whether it could be a useful addition to both the coaching discipline and the practice of emancipatory approaches. Second, I reflect on the limitations of the current study and discuss the key methodological lessons learnt from the way the inquiry was conducted. Finally, I discuss the future of coaching for emancipation and suggest a number of areas for future research.

A. Revised framework and its implications

This study has theoretical and practical implications, contributing to the way we understand the processes of emancipation and development in oppressive environments. The findings of the study are organised in the framework depicted in figure 10.1.

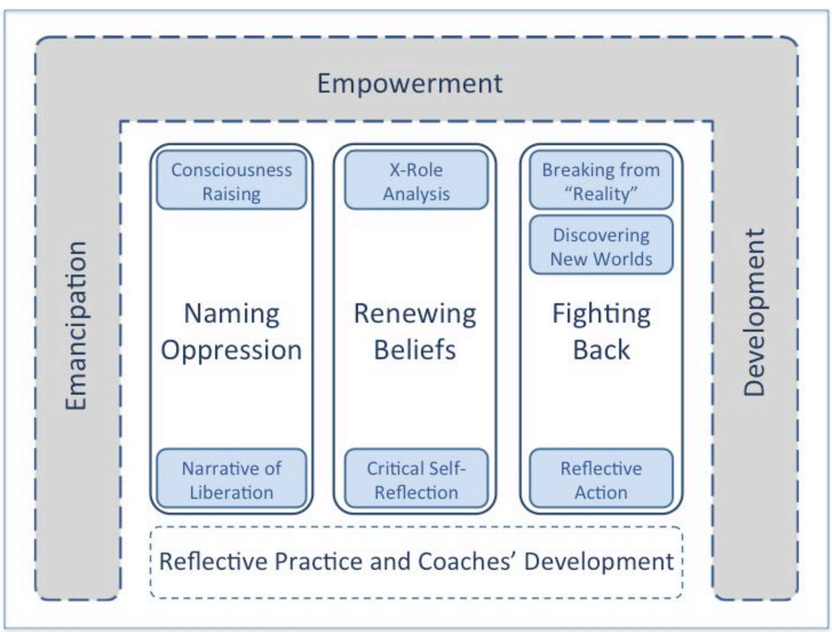


Figure 10.1 Revised model of coaching for emancipation

The proposed framework includes three aspects that emerged from the study: First, coaching for emancipation is founded on a critical theoretical understanding of the dynamics of oppression and emancipation, development, and empowerment. Second, coaching for emancipation is enabled by three processes that the group called: Naming Oppression, Renewing Beliefs and Fighting Back. These processes include the blocks of the initial coaching model (in the light blue boxes). Third, emancipatory coaches need to be continuously engaged in a process of reflective practice that drives their own development. I discuss below the implications of each of these aspects on the theory and practice of coaching. I also discuss how the study findings relate to theories of oppression, as well as other emancipatory approaches.

1. Coaching for emancipation is founded on a critical theoretical understanding of the dynamics of oppression and emancipation, development, and empowerment

I have argued in chapter two that coaching theory could benefit from a critical perspective that addresses the impact of oppressive environments on coaches, coachees and the coaching process. This view is shared by some coaching theorists such as Schultz (2010) and Western (2012). The theoretical framework of coaching for emancipation includes three interconnected areas, as discussed in chapter five: the experience of oppression and the journey from oppression to emancipation, coachees' development in the context of oppression, and the role of power and empowerment in the coaching process.

One of the key outcomes of the study was a better understanding of the dynamics of living in oppressive environments. The study suggests that oppression is experienced as a complex web of daily interactions that affects the entire social and psychological experience of the individual, depriving him/her from the concept of choice, and fostering senses of helplessness, unworthiness, self-blame, and grief. This view echoes the description of Habermas (1987b) of the invasion of the lifeworld, and the psychological features of the oppressed described by several authors including Freire (1970), Bell (2007), and Hegazy (2013). While confirming previous theories of the impact of oppression, the current study offers a theoretical view of the journey from oppression to emancipation. It proposes that both oppression and emancipation are neither individual nor social phenomena, but that they are both the subjects of a continuous exchange

between the individual and his/her social world, whereby the individual internalises, resists or changes the oppressive structure. Oppression flows primarily from the external/social world to the internal one, while emancipation originates internally and seeks to produce change in the external world. When moving through emancipatory journeys, coachees go through cycles of naming oppression, building hope and self-belief, developing critical awareness, facing social resistance, failing and losing hope, finding alternatives, breaking the cycle of oppression through actions of resistance, and transforming their narratives into ones of liberation. As depicted in table 10.1, these phases have many shared elements with Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning.

Phases in the journey from oppression to emancipation as seen in the study	Phases of meaning making in the theory of transformative learning
Deprivation from choice, helplessness, unworthiness, self-blame, and grief	1. A disorienting dilemma
Naming oppression	2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
Building hope and self-belief	
Developing critical awareness	3. A critical assessment of assumptions 4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation is shared
Facing social resistance, Failing and losing hope	
Finding alternatives	5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions *8. Provisional trying of new roles*
Breaking the cycle of oppression through actions of resistance	6. Planning a course of action 7. Acquiring knowledge and skills 9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
	10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective
Transforming narratives into ones of liberation	

Table 10.1 Comparison between phases of emancipatory journey and ransformative learning

The phases proposed by the study differ from Mezirow's phases in a number of ways:

- Learners in the journey of emancipation start from a position of helplessness. They do not believe in their ability to change their conditions. They often experience emotional stress that drives their need for change, which may have a similar triggering effect to Mezirow's disorienting dilemma.
- The study emphasised the need for building hope and self-belief, and the centrality of emotional strength to the change process. Without this stage, the outcomes of critical awareness are resisted and the process does not lead to action.
- Mezirow's phases are only focused on the individual. However, in the context of oppression, the process of emancipation involves reactions from the society to the individual's newly acquired beliefs and behaviours. These reactions are often negative, and may lead to relapses. The study also suggests that the process is not linear, and that relapses are expected in many stages. This coincides with critiques of Mezirow's original phases, and have been acknowledged by Mezirow as a possible adjustment to his theory (Taylor, 2000).
- The study does not refer to a possibility of reintegration as an end state. It suggests instead that the journey of emancipation proceeds into continuous actions of resistance, and an evolving narrative of liberation, where the individual engages with the oppressive conditions of his/her environment, exposing further layers of oppression, but from an improved position of agency and self-authorship.

The above differences, mainly related to the impact of oppressive environments, add several tasks to the work of emancipatory coaches, as opposed to those facilitating transformative learning in non-oppressive environments. First, emancipatory coaches need to facilitate the processes of building hope, self-belief, and emotional strength. The group have argued that coaches need to believe in the possibility of change, and that in every story of oppression, there is a space for resistance. Second, they need to understand that relapses are expected, and to help prepare their coachees for social reactions. The group highlighted that society often tries to contain new ideas and behaviours by incorporating them into oppressive structures, thus making borderlines between

oppression and emancipation more subtle, requiring critical awareness in daily choices. These considerations may also be relevant to educators and other human development practitioners in oppressive environments.

The second theoretical aspect that underlies coaching for emancipation is the concept of development. The group did not see development as a target in itself but rather as what is required in order to cope with the complex nature of the emancipatory journey. The study proposed a theoretical framework (Figure 5.3) that aggregates multiple external (goals and social conditions) and internal (cognitive and emotional) dimensions, and lists several criteria for each dimension that may be used to explore signs of development. During a coaching journey, coachees may show movement or progress in any of these criteria, revealing a developmental shift. Many of the developmental signs suggested in the framework relate to existing theories and models, such as congruence in Rogers' (1961) personality theory, Basseches' (2005) dialectic thinking, and Baxter Magolda's (2004) evolution of contextual knowing. Both Kegan (1982) and Wilber (2000) note that development happens across many lines, and that the social context plays an important role. Meanwhile, the study extends this view in the following aspects:

- It suggests that oppressive contexts have negative impacts on both cognitive and emotional development, as many coachees initially exhibited thinking patterns that resembled the descriptions of lower levels of cognitive development in the above models, as well as high levels of emotional unawareness and vulnerability.
- While the study agrees with Wilber (2000) that developmental lines are independent, in the sense that one may be more developed cognitively than emotionally or vice versa. The findings of the study suggest that coaching for emancipation implies co-dependence between these lines, whereby the individual's development in one dimension acts as a prerequisite and an enabler to other dimensions. Most particularly, the emancipatory journey has strong emotional demands that often act as barriers to change. Hence, coaches should assess the need to support a process of building their coachees' emotional fitness, gradually removing feelings of fear, self-blame and victimisation.

The above considerations should not lead to reductionism, whereby the individual's development is only seen as dictated by the oppressive conditions. They suggest that theories developed in non-oppressive contexts need to extend their appreciation of the significant impact of living in oppressive environments.

A third aspect that is key to a theory of coaching for emancipation is power. The study suggests that many coachees appeared initially as powerless, they did not believe in their ability, did not feel in control of their lives, and could not make sense of their experiences. Some coachees were seeking sympathy and driving the coaching relationship towards a victim-saviour form. The study suggests a number of ways where coaches can support their coachees in becoming empowered through the acquisition of self-efficacy, agency, and clarity. Coaches can support empowerment by reflecting hope, appreciation and respect in the coaching dialogue; by using goal setting and imagination, celebrating achievements, and by helping the coachee to uncover the cycle of oppression, and to reconstruct a holistic view of his/her experience. Other behaviours can be empowering when introduced in the right conditions, like gradually increasing the involvement of the coachee in the decision making of the coaching process, coaches' self-disclosure, and follow-up calls outside the coaching sessions.

The study suggests three main principles that relate to moving from powerlessness to freedom in the context of coaching: The first principle is that despite the importance of creating an empowering environment in the coaching session, it can sometimes act as diversion from the process of resisting the oppressive condition, due to becoming content with the positive environment of the coaching relationship. This coincides with how Foucault (2012) argues that power produces its resistance; resistance gets its strength from being defined as opposition to domination and oppression. Hence, it is important not to overprotect the coachee from the effects of oppression, in order to maintain his/her chances for initiating acts of resistance. The second principle is to continuously adjust the right balance of empathy and appreciation from one side, and confrontation and criticality from the other side, dependent on the coachee's ability to handle the latter. The importance of criticality is emphasised by Deleuze (2006) who draws on the work of Foucault and argues that the individual can overcome the pervasive nature of power through processes of critical self-reflection where the self is looked at as *Other* and critically analysed in terms of

how the social context is defining its current boundaries. The third principle is that during both appreciative and critical moments, the coach needs always to see the coachee as the only person who can assume responsibility over his/her life. The value of the coachee's self-responsibility takes precedence over empowerment and resistance. In his later work, Foucault (2000) argues that resistance and liberation from power – while important – do not mean freedom, as new structures of power will continue to replace the removed ones. What can prevent this reoccurrence are practices of freedom, which are built on self-formation. These principles are complementary and need to be balanced throughout the coaching process, providing a safe environment for the coachee without avoiding confrontation with his/her external conditions.

2. Coaching for emancipation is enabled by three processes: naming oppression, renewing beliefs and fighting back

In the process of naming oppression, discussed in chapter six, the coachee uses narratives to understand, externalise and re-author his/her life, starting from consciousness-raising and the discovery of oppression in the lived experience, to authoring a narrative of liberation. Many coachees initially exhibit symptoms of missing awareness, such as seeing self through others, denial, fragmented stories, and mixing ideas, facts and feelings. These symptoms resemble the defense mechanisms of isolation, introjection and denial (Freud, 1968). Discovering oppression takes place through immersion in the lived experience, followed by a change of the way that experience is interpreted, moving from self-blame and fatalism to the identification of external oppression. Coachees experience this shift in meaning making in different ways and at different pace, and some of them experience multiple relapses to self-blame and fatalism. This experience is emotionally dense and needs the support of the coach. Meanwhile, emotional stress can also be useful in driving this process forward. The increased awareness of the lived experience ideally continues to expose new layers of discoveries, and eventually becomes self-generating without the need for coaching interventions. In the second part of the process of naming oppression, the coachee is invited to author a narrative of liberation. Narratives help coachees create links between their fragmented experiences, linking past and future. The most important aspect of narratives is how they provide possibilities for transforming stories of oppression into ones of liberation; as the heroes of their stories, coachees explore

how all their stories are filled with aspects of resistance, and moments of victory that they can celebrate. Narratives of liberation are empowering and emotionally liberating, because they are told in the coachee's words, and they open possibilities for the coachee to re-author both his/her past and future. The study findings agree with other theories on the liberating power of narratives in therapy (White, 2007), coaching (Drake, 2010) and social work (Abels & Abels, 2001). Meanwhile, they challenge Drake's (2010) view of the prerequisites for effective narratives, and suggest that narratives can be used to support emancipation regardless of the individual's initial self-awareness or ego strength.

In the process of renewing beliefs, discussed in chapter seven, the focus is on using critical analysis and reflection to understand and challenge the structures leading to the coachee's experience of oppression, whether they are social structures or deeply held assumptions and beliefs. This process combines the outside-in perspective of X-role analysis and the inside-out perspective of critical self-reflection. From the outside-in, coachees reflect on how social systems and power relations shape their thinking, choices and behaviours. This understanding is vindicating for the individual who is struggling with self-blame; it also results in an empowering sense of solidarity with a wider cause, and supports a more informed planning of actions of resistance. These results are in line with the reported benefits of social and gender role analysis in feminist therapy (Israeli & Santor, 2000). Social analysis needs to be balanced, and is often followed, by the inside-out critical self-reflection. Without such balance, coaching risks driving rationalisation, politicisation and determinism. The personal and political need to be in a constant dialectical relationship, where each is used to re-interpret the other.

The study offered a landscape of the internal world of assumptions of individuals living in oppressive environments (Figure 7.3). It suggests that individuals may often be unaware of how their interpretations are formed by their assumptions and belief systems, and hence many of their assumptions may be of a simple unchallenged nature. While these assumptions may have a negative impact on the coachee's self-image, they are protected by strong emotional boundaries and challenging them may often cause resistance and stress. By linking into specific situations, coachees see the relevance of assumptions to their daily experience, and they become more committed to the process of renewing beliefs. Meanwhile,

critical reflection becomes more effective – though less relevant to the coachee's immediate concerns – when it goes beyond specific assumptions to analyse broader frames of macro-assumptions. So the process of renewing beliefs has both cognitive and emotional requirements, combines both social and individual perspectives, and needs to link both immediate practical concerns and conceptual macro assumptions. This view contributes in part to a response to van Woerkom's (2010) critique of the four traditions of critical reflection identified by Brookfield (2000), she argues that most literature expresses normative ideals for critical reflection as liberating, rather than provide theories about learning processes that are based on empirical research, that the role of emotions and unconscious is underdeveloped in conceptualizations of critical reflection, and that research does not explain the conditions under which people are more capable of critical reflection. Van Woerkom (2010) suggests that research about critical reflection needs to use methods that allow for the appreciation of the role of emotions and implicit learning. The use of coaching in this study provided a good context to examine how these dimensions work together, because it opened a space for exploring emotions and intuition in addition to rational arguments.

In the process of fighting back, discussed in chapter eight, coachees undertake three types of actions: breaking from the reality of daily oppression, discovering new worlds where new behaviours can be implemented, and engaging in reflective actions of resistance and change. The process of fighting back is underlined by the beliefs that there is no growth without action, and that actions are neither naturally emancipatory nor oppressive but rather bare the possibility of supporting or hindering emancipation dependent on their context. Breaking from reality is important when the coachee is immersed in the daily experience of oppression to an extent that prevents learning. It is challenging because such coachees are the least prepared to engage in actions not related to their immediate concerns. In addition, the practical difficulties of breaking from reality actions make them even more difficult. Hence, coaches need to evaluate how to use their authority to facilitate this process. Most effective breaking from reality actions are those that tap into the coachee's natural skills and relate to his/her dreams but are far – in terms of content – from the coachee's experience. Discovering new worlds seeks to create new possibilities, which generates hope. It relies in part on imagination and creativity, which is at times challenging for some

coachees because of their personal preferences or the pressures of the oppressive conditions that deny the person the right to dream. Similar to many other interventions, the emotional aspect of discovering new worlds is important to consider, it can help coachees clarify and understand how they feel about different situations and relationships. Reflective action is one of the most important outcomes sought in coaching, for it is only when coachees believe they can act and learn from their actions that they can face the world as free human beings. Actions can support learning or aim at resisting oppression or improving aspects of the coachee's life. Facilitating either aim depends on the coachee's readiness and the transition phase he/she is going through. The coach needs to intervene differently based on the signs that the coachee is showing while defining actions, in terms of certainty versus doubt, and hope versus despair.

The inquiry findings have shown that all the interventions within the three processes are interconnected. As shown in figure 10.2,

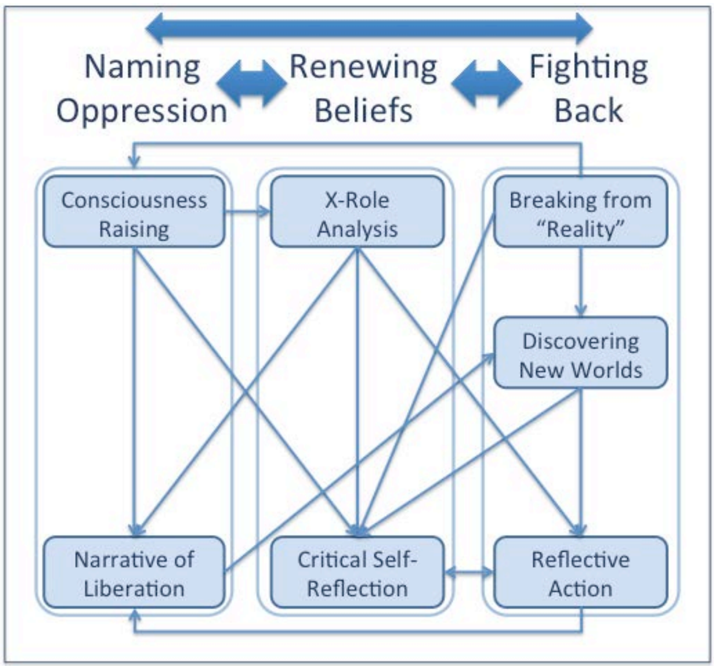


Figure 10.2. Interconnectedness of different blocks in the model

Each block can support other blocks within the same process and across the other two processes. A key notion about the proposed framework is that it goes beyond the primarily western ideals of rationality and autonomy. The three processes provide access to different dimensions of the experience, balancing rationality of critical reflection and the emotional expressive nature of narratives, focus on

individual experience and wider social analysis, understanding historical factors and imagining the future, immersion in the lived reality and detachment from it, and the continuous interplay between action and reflection. As different individuals and cultures may have different preferences within these dimensions, the process of emancipation needs to both leverage these preferences and challenge them, thus opening new ways for the individual to re-interpret and rebuild his/her world.

3. Emancipatory coaches need to be continuously engaged in a process of reflective practice that drives their own development

The experience of the coaches in this study have shown that the process of coaching for emancipation involves a complex web of decision points for the coach, regarding timing and appropriateness of interventions, understanding the meaning of coachees' behaviours, using authority, and dealing with emotions. These decisions are all made in the moment, as they are difficult to plan ahead. Coaches have many moments of doubts, and are emotionally affected by the feelings and beliefs expressed by their coachees, as much as they may affect their coachees by their own feelings and beliefs. This complexity emphasises the need for a continuous reflective practice that may be supported by appropriate supervision. Reflective practice may be a common requirement in all types of coaching (Hay, 2007), but is essential in coaching for emancipation.

A key difference in the experience of coaches working in oppressive environments is that they may be heavily affected by the oppressive environment and may share some of the struggles exhibited by their coachees. Therefore, emancipatory coaches are also on a journey of development and emancipation. As discussed in chapter nine, the coaches in this inquiry have shown developmental moves from confusion to clarity, from fear to hope, and from control to freedom within the duration of the study. Facilitating emancipatory journeys requires the coaches to develop awareness of their beliefs and how they affect their interpretation of the coachees' stories and affect their reactions. Coaches also need to develop an understanding of the processes of socialisation and identity formation in the cultural context of their coachees, and may see a need to educate themselves in social and cultural dynamics, and to improve their critical thinking skills. Coaches need to be mindful of the power dynamics taking place in the session, and to make continuous judgments, as many interventions, ideas and behaviours can

equally support or hinder emancipation, depending on their context, this adds a need for coaches to move from retrospective reflectiveness to reflection in the moment, as described by Schön (1983; 1987).

B. Coaching for emancipation: a critical evaluation

I presented in the previous section a theoretical and practical framework of coaching for emancipation. As I am arguing that coaching for emancipation is a useful approach to support the emancipation and development of individuals living in oppressive environments, I find it necessary to reflect critically on this claim through three holistic questions regarding the proposed framework: Is coaching for emancipation a form of coaching? Is it distinct from other coaching genres? And can coaching be emancipatory?

Wildflower (2013) traces the origins of coaching, suggesting that it has roots in the growth of the self-help tradition in the United States of the 1930s as a response to the Great Depression, and the human potential movement in the 1960s, coinciding with the births of the civil movement and the new left. The focus on the potential of individuals came partially as a response to a general disbelief in the socioeconomic systems. At the time, human potential approaches were criticised as being inward looking and isolated from the social and political struggles, and for fostering a culture of narcissism (Lasch, 1978). Wildflower (2013) argues that in later years the chasm between individual and social/political movement has partially closed, although I would argue that this might be a result of the latter diminishing rather than the integration of both. A big moment for coaching was arguably Gallwey's (1974) 'The Inner Game of Tennis' which inspired in part the Grow model, made popular by Whitmore (1993, 2009). While coaching emerged in the following years primarily as a goal-oriented approach used in business environments, Whitmore (2009) argues against the presence of one way to coach and suggests that coaching can be exchanged with any other word but "the underlying principles of awareness, responsibility and self-belief are common to all [approaches]" (p. 171). In the past two decades, a significant number of coaching approaches emerged, drawing from different theories, and aimed at achieving different purposes, leaving the question of a unique identity of coaching unresolved (Bachkirova et al., 2010).

Coaching for emancipation uses the language and tools shared by other coaching approaches, such as developmental coaching (Bachkirova, 2011) or life coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2010). Meanwhile, integrating emancipatory coaches seamlessly into the wider network of coaching practitioners may face some challenges: First, Western (2012) argues that the coaching fraternity is more inclined to a positivistic and individualistic discourse, where critical approaches are not very welcomed. Second, the adoption of coaching for emancipation by businesses and other organisations – which has driven the rise of coaching – may prove problematic due to its critical nature. Third, in the context of oppressive environments, the boundary between a helping profession and social activism becomes somewhat blurred. If coaching for emancipation bridges the chasm between individual and social change, it would be rarely welcomed by those who benefit from the existence of oppression. As a result, coaching for emancipation may have to be often practiced outside the 'normal' contexts and boundaries of coaching as defined by its more usual application in western countries. In this sense, it shares common ground with other emancipatory approaches in education, psychotherapy and arts.

Coaching for emancipation differs from other genres of coaching in a number of ways. I have identified in chapter two that coaching approaches focus on the individual, with little attention given to the social context. Coaching for emancipation proposes that the experience of the individual takes place in the interaction between the individual and his/her social context. It acknowledges the presence of oppression and seeks to expose its dynamics, and sides with the coachee in resisting the impact of living in oppressive environments. These features are evident in every part of the proposed framework of coaching for emancipation, from the underlying theory, to the processes of naming oppression, renewing beliefs and fighting back. Another difference is the openness to break, albeit temporarily, from the 'reality' that is formed by the oppressive system, as opposed to approaches that confine themselves to understanding and improving the lived experience. Most coaching genres assume a resourceful individual who exercises free choice in his/her life. Coaching for emancipation is aware of the power dynamics in the coaching relationship, and acknowledges the vulnerability of the individual, but without pathologising, as it is built on the belief that such vulnerability is caused by the oppressive

environment, and that the individual possesses the power to emancipate him/herself with the help of coaching.

In chapter one, I defined emancipation as the process of restoring one's humanity through liberating oneself from the conditions and consequences of oppression. Western (2012) argues that: "If coaching is not an emancipatory project then by default it becomes an instrumental project" (p. 28). He strongly believes in the power of coaching to open emancipatory possibilities. The question here is whether a discipline that has been mainly used in western environments, and has found its biggest application in business settings, can support an emancipatory purpose. I believe it can, because coaching at its most fundamental level supports processes of articulating, reflecting and learning from experience (Cox, 2012), which are also key enablers of emancipation and development. The initial coaching model presented in chapter three, like many emancipatory approaches, was partially built on theories and practices that are products of western science. This can be understood as a result of the scarcity of published research outside the developed world. Meanwhile, the development of a theory of coaching for emancipation needs to meet several conditions in order to remain true to its emancipatory purpose. This study has tried to meet some of these conditions: (1) it made its use of these theories as critical as possible, highlighting limitations where relevant, and focusing on the use of theories and methods that are relevant to oppressed groups such as critical theory and feminist theory; (2) the initial model also included inputs from Latin America like critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), liberation psychology (Watkins & Shulman, 2008) and theatre of the oppressed (Boal, 2002), and (3) most importantly, the study took place with coaches and coachees living in oppressive environments, within a critical and participatory process, that allowed their experience and voices to become the primary source for the theoretical and practical development of the framework. In the next section, I discuss in more details the limitations of this study, and their implications on the proposed framework.

C. Limitations of the current study

The conditions pertinent to the validity of the cooperative inquiry were discussed in chapter four. I have shown that the research purpose, design, procedures and environment met Heron's (1996) conditions of validity. I have also discussed how

the research design tried to meet the four criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that contribute to the trustworthiness of qualitative research: Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. In this section, I discuss four main limitations that need to be considered when evaluating the outcomes of the study; these are the limitations of the historical moment, culture, age and gender of the participants, and voice of the coachees:

The limitation of the historical moment: The study took place in a unique historical moment, one year after a popular revolution ousted a dictator, and one year before another popular revolution ousted a democratically elected wannabe dictator. The so called 'Arab Spring' defined the Zeitgeist or the spirit of the time; revolution was in the air, forcing a discourse of change and identity over the entire region, disorienting dilemmas were many in daily life, forcing people to reconsider the meaning of many things. A year after the inquiry group had its last reflective workshops, that context has radically changed; world media stopped its praise of the Arab Spring as many of its countries fell into cycles of violence and extremism, economic conditions got worse, and many of the authoritarian behaviours of the ousted regimes resurfaced in new forms. Reflecting on the definition of dependability, the research procedures are documented in a way that would allow the research to be repeated. While Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that qualitative research can never be repeated exactly in the same way, because the context is always changing, the context of this study has changed to a degree that may change its outcomes – if repeated – in unpredictable ways. There is therefore also a question about transferability: can coaching for emancipation achieve similar results in countries or societies that are in different stages of change? I believe that this question can only be answered with further research under different settings, such as countries that started their democratisation process many years ago, or oppressive environments that have been stagnant for long periods. Another consideration is that the phenomenon of oppression is not exclusive to places, like the case of Egypt, where it can be seen on many levels at the same time (Political, economic, social, religious, ethnic, and gender-related). The experience of oppression can take many shapes, such as ethnic and gender discrimination in democratic countries and relatively rich societies. Hence, it can be argued that the uniqueness of the historical moment is only one of the many dimensions that make every study different, and that through more application of

coaching for emancipation, shared elements will emerge, as will other elements be identified as more specific to their contexts.

The limitation of culture: The question of culture is around whether the cultural context of the study, as described in chapter one, has implications on the findings and makes them only relevant to that context. Erlandson et al. (1993) suggest that such argument is valid in almost all cases, as all observations are defined by the specific context in which they occur. A claim around the generalisability of findings would be problematic. Bassey (1981) proposes that practitioners who wish to use the findings in other contexts need to evaluate whether their situation is comparable to that described in the study. The meaning of culture in oppressive environments is itself controversial. For example, Abdelfattah (2006) and Moustafa (2006) agree that the concept of cultural uniqueness is often used in Egypt and the middle east as a political and ideological defence by the governing regimes and conservative religious groups to reject changes aiming to the establishment of democracy or human rights, on the basis that these concepts do not suit 'the culture' of the region, and that they represent western products that must be rejected. Similarly, Mokhtari (2012) argues that "For years, Middle Eastern governments missed few opportunities to cast human rights as a foreign and un-Islamic tool of Western culture and political agendas" (p. 195), but he also reminds that this has been aided by the international and western politics of human rights that co-opted, appropriated, and instrumentalised the concept to serve its own interpretations and purposes. So while culture needs to be understood, it should not be used as a pretext to maintain oppression. I have argued in chapter two that the literature on cross-cultural coaching seems to try to adapt to what it considers cultural differences, without being critical of the oppressive realities that use culture as cover. The experience of the coaches in the current study suggest that oppression can be seen as a meta-layer to culture, whereby it may take forms that are specific to the cultural context (for example, in terms of traditions of marriage), but beyond these forms, the dynamics of oppression act in similar ways across cultures, and in different communities within the same wider cultural group. The analysis of the coachees' stories did not reveal specific findings related to the Egyptian culture, but rather seemed similar to the different accounts of oppression from various cultures around the world discussed in chapter two.

The limitation of the age and gender of the research participants: As described in chapter four, most coaches and coachees belonged to a relatively young age group and more than two thirds of them were females. Both male and female coaches had coachees from both genders. The design of the study did not allow a proactive examination of how the different combinations of age and gender might have impacted the coaching process. Female coaches expressed relatively more struggles with the impact of oppression on their lives, but the small number of male coaches could not allow clearer understanding. The age factor is also important; almost the entire research group seemed to identify with the youth of the Egyptian revolution, while older generations in Egypt seemed to be more conservative and less empathising with the idea of change. This might raise questions on whether coaching for emancipation is a practice that meets the needs and language of all age brackets and suggests that further research is needed to explore these questions.

The voice of the coachees: In creating a theory of coaching, the importance of the voice of the coachees cannot be downplayed. However, in this study the voice of the coachees only appeared directly in the feedback they provided, as discussed in chapter nine, and the many verbal feedbacks that were provided throughout the coaching journey, documented in detail by the coaches in their reflective journals and made available to the group for analysis. With the exception of one coach who became at one time a coachee of another coach in the group, the inquiry group was made up of coaches. The study traced how the coaches interpreted and reflected upon their experience to develop a framework for their practice. At the time of designing the inquiry, it was felt that the development of theory in a participative inquiry would be more relevant to the practitioners, and that involving the coachees in the inquiry group would require them to engage with theoretical perspectives of oppression that may affect their coaching journeys. There was also a fear that the power dynamics in a mixed group of coaches and coachees may be problematic for both. Having two separate groups of coaches and coachees could have been possible, but was also discarded for practical reasons, and with the consideration that it would have made the coaches feel less empowered. What the study provides is therefore representative of how coaches theorise their practice drawing on their interpretation of their coachees

stories and feedbacks, rather than how coachees theorise their own experience, which may need to be addressed in future studies.

D. Methodological lessons learnt

> *"Action research is about working towards practical outcomes and also about creating new forms of understanding, since action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless. And more broadly, theories which contribute to human emancipation …"* (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 2)

I have discussed in chapter nine how the research process affected and was affected by the contents of the study and the development of the coaches. I now reflect on the methodological lessons that may be useful for future studies of the same kind. The first key lesson is around the power of the methodology. Looking at how the research progressed, I believe that cooperative inquiry and participatory action research in general, represent powerful approaches for doing and studying coaching in oppressive environments. In the complex and challenging nature of oppressive environments, the participatory praxis provided means for critical reflections to take place and for the group to provide a support mechanism for all its members to be able to generate the sought knowledge while helping their coachees to grow. Cooperative inquiry is not reported as a used methodology in the coaching literature. This study has offered a detailed procedure for using cooperative inquiry that combined many methods and techniques for improving data collection, increasing the depth of group discussions, and generating outcomes in propositional and presentational forms. The high level of engagement and positive feedback of the inquiry group suggests that cooperative inquiry can be an effective methodology for coaching research. In many instances, it was felt that coaching and cooperative inquiry share common values such as mutual respect, critical reflection and collaborative decision-making. The coaches' view was that the research process was developmental on both cognitive and emotional levels, thus agreeing with Reason and Bradbury (2008) when they note that "Action research is emancipatory; it leads not just to new practical knowledge, but to new abilities to create knowledge" (p. 2). From another perspective, the study also revealed the power coaching has as a research tool. As opposed to merely collecting information from

participants, coaching can be seen as a form of two-person action research, whereby coaches work with coachees to facilitate their development, while generating knowledge, through reflective practice.

Another lesson is around aspects of the study that required further attention. First, the development of the coaches; this was not initially thought of as a direct outcome of the study, but the experience has proven that more attention could have been given to the ways the coaches were developing throughout the journey. Second, the long-term experience of the coachees; it would have been beneficial if some form of longitudinal study was agreed with the coachees at the start of the study, whereby we were able to go back to them six months or a year after their coaching journeys had ended and seek their views on how the effects of coaching remained or faded in their lives.

During the reflective workshops, some of the most significant and richest parts were the ones where expressive and presentational methods were used (as opposed to rational analysis and discussions). These parts represented windows into the emotional dimension of the studied world. The initial coaching model was primarily cognitive in nature, and the design of the inquiry was rationally oriented. However, the primacy of emotions became evident from the first reflective workshop. Future studies may benefit from allowing more space to express and appreciate the role of emotions in the experience of both coaches and coachees.

Looking at group dynamics, I believe that the fact that I was not acting as a coach during the study was an important ingredient for the success of the cooperative aspect, as it helped balance the power dynamics in the group, making the participation of the coaches easier, as they were bringing to the group something that I could not bring; they were closer to the overall experience even in terms of their physical presence in Egypt. Another lesson was the language barrier; the fact that this study is published in English, while most of the discussions in the workshops were in Arabic, meant that I had to go back several times to the coaches asking them whether my translation of their statements was accurate. A final consideration is the life of the group outside the reflective workshops. The study was initially designed with six formal group meetings (training, reflective workshops and wrap up). From as early as the second meeting, the group had developed a life of its own; members were meeting outside the reflective workshops, and were communicating with each other online, sharing feelings,

discoveries and dreams. At the point of writing this chapter, the group is still doing the same, with a number of them undertaking different initiatives together. I believe that this is one of the positive outcomes of a cooperative approach.

E. The future of Coaching for Emancipation

Coaching for emancipation is proposed as an emergent practice that would benefit from further research. In this section, I suggest a number of questions that emerged during discussions with the group that may represent worthwhile aims for future research.

From a theoretical perspective, the first theme that emerged from the study was the primacy of emotions in the emancipatory process. Supporting coachees' emotional fitness and dealing with strong emotions appear to be key tasks for coaches working in oppressive environments, and hence would benefit from further research. The second theme was around the conceptual relationship between oppression and emancipation from one side, and development from the other side. The inquiry group has conceptualised models for understanding signs of development, and has argued against the pre-assessment of the coachees' developmental level. Meanwhile, findings also suggest that coachees' living in oppressive environments exhibit signs similar to specific developmental levels, such as Kegan's (1982) socialised mind. It might therefore be useful to test the application of a formal measurement to the coachees' developmental levels in the context of oppression, or to test further how coaches, using conceptual models, can better evaluate their coachees' needs without the use of formal assessment. The findings of the study are focused on cognitive and emotional development, but suggest that further research may be beneficial to explore how areas of spiritual development, identity development, and sexuality are affected by the experience of oppression.

In terms of the target population, the group suggested that the coaching framework could be adapted to be used with younger age groups (early and late adolescents). Due to the different developmental needs of this group, there is a need for further research before expanding the practice to such population. A second possible extension is to explore coaching for emancipation with groups living within generally less oppressive environments, like minorities or immigrants living in democratic countries. A third variation on the context is to look at the

impact of culture, by applying coaching for emancipation in contexts different from the one used in this study. Cultural differences may have implications on how oppressive systems work and how they may be resisted, as well as implications on the different coaching interventions like the use of narratives. Another question relate to how the dynamics of coaching change with changing the profiles of both coaches and coachees in terms of factors like age, gender and social class. Within an oppressive context, these factors affect power relations and social roles in ways that may either support or hinder the coaching process.

A third area for further research concerns practical improvements to the coaching framework. The group suggested that a more in-depth use of arts, especially in the process of naming oppression, might have a significant emancipatory impact. It was also suggested that X-role analysis interventions might benefit from some instructional interventions, in terms of exposing coachees to readings or visual materials that would support a critical understanding of the role of society in forming their beliefs. A third practical area that requires further study is the facilitation of critical reflection on macro assumptions. Although the research on transformative learning provides some insight into this process, the dynamics of oppressive environments mean that the challenges for the coach in facilitating this process need to be further analysed. Lastly, the overall practice of breaking from reality needs to be studied and expanded, as it is an emerging concept that is not commonly considered in the coaching literature.

More generally, the two topics that represent key questions for the future of coaching for emancipation are the coaches' education and development, and the integration with other emancipatory approaches. The inquiry has shown that the challenges that face emancipatory coaches are considerable, and the struggles they go through during the coaching process are as important to understand as the coachees' journeys. The education of coaches may involve elements like emotional empowerment, assessment of their development, and training them on critical thinking skills and ideology critique. Beyond coaching, I believe that the challenges of fighting oppression create many shared aspects and interconnections between all emancipatory approaches. Whether it is coaching, education, art, therapy, social work or participatory research, there is a need for integral theories and frameworks that explain how practitioners can support the challenging and amazing journey of emancipation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Invitation for Coaches (Translated)

Invitation to Join an Inquiry Group

Are you currently working in human development in Egypt as a coach, trainer or facilitator?

Do you find it difficult sometimes to support the growth of the individuals you're working with, because of their underlying social conditions?

Would you like to be part of a small research group who will apply and develop a coaching model that might be more effective in these conditions?

If you answered 'Yes' to all three questions then you might be interested in this opportunity.

My name is Hany Shoukry and I am currently doing a doctorate in coaching and mentoring in Oxford Brookes University - UK. My research title is "Coaching for emancipation: a framework of coaching in oppressive environments".

The research aims to develop a model for the use of coaching in oppressive environments. A coaching model is a set of guidelines; processes and tools that help coaching practitioners work with their clients to support their development. Oppressive environments are social conditions that deprive some social groups from their basic rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, gender equality and so forth.

The research will take place in Egypt, and it will involve training a small group of practitioners on a suggested coaching model, then inviting them to use the model with a number of coachees from a community of their choice. The coaching model will be based around facilitating the development of the coachees with emphasis on supporting their empowerment and helping them to critically reflect on their beliefs and their social conditions.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will receive training on the model, and you will be invited to use it with three to five coachees from your current community of practice for around six months. You will also be invited to attend a full day reflective session every two month with the remaining participants to reflect on your practice and suggest alterations or improvements to the model. This will be repeated three times. You will also be asked to keep a reflective journal on your practice, and to adhere to the code of ethics of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council. Any coaching you will offer as part of this research will be for free.

By choosing to be part of this research group, you get to develop your own practice, and contribute to the development of a coaching model that can be used by you and your peers in the future.

If you think this opportunity might be for you, please send me your contacts. I will send you the detailed information sheet, and call you to offer answers to any questions you may have.

Hany Shoukry

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet – For Coaches

Participant Information Sheet – Inquiry Group

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Study title

Coaching for emancipation: A framework of coaching in oppressive environments.

Purpose of the research and background

The research aims to develop a model for the use of coaching in oppressive environments. A coaching model is a set of guidelines, processes and tools that help coaching practitioners work with their clients to support their development. Oppressive environments are social conditions that deprive some social groups from their basic rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, gender equality and so forth.

It has been documented in the literature that living in oppressive environments has deep implications on the development of individuals. It deprives individuals from their basic sense of free choice and self-responsibility, it results in distorted and stereotyped views about self and others, and it creates anxiety and hampers performance. These implications call for specific approaches to help individuals grow in these conditions; ones that promote empowerment and foster critical reflection. Coaching is reported to be an approach that may work effectively towards these objectives. However, there aren't any coaching models designed or empirically tested to support working with individuals in oppressive environments.

How, When and Where will the study be conducted?

The research will take place in Egypt, from January to September 2012. The study is done using a form of action research called co-operative inquiry, which relies on forming a group of people to investigate a question of common interest, through cycles of action and reflection.

The study will start by forming an inquiry group from five human development practitioners (coaches, trainers, facilitators …). This group will work together over the period of the study to apply and develop a coaching model to support the development of individuals living in oppressive environments.

The inquiry group will be trained on an initial coaching model and the coaching code of ethics, and then the group members (coaches) will use the model with three to five coachees from their current communities of practice for around six months.

The inquiry group will meet every two months to reflect on their practice and suggest improvements to the model, then apply these improvements in the following cycle with their coachees. This will be repeated in three cycles over six months. All group meetings will take place in Cairo. Coaching is primarily individual, but group members may decide if a group intervention can be added to the model.

At the end of the study, an improved coaching model will be defined and results will be reported as part of doctoral dissertation.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You were chosen to take part in this study because you indicated interest in helping to develop a new coaching model. The five participants are required to have some background in working in human development, preferably as coaches, and to be currently working in a community where adverse social conditions seem to be affecting individuals'

development.

What will happen to me if I take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

If you do decide to take part in this research, you will receive a 3 days training on the coaching model between January and March 2012, this training will be conducted in Cairo with the other participants (around five). The training may include exercises of practice within the peer group. The training will also include an orientation to the code of ethics of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council.

If – after the training – you decide to apply the model in your own coaching practice, and to contribute to the enhancement of the model, you will be asked to invite three to five coachees from a community of your choice (preferably a community where you have some experience), and offer to coach them free of charge, using the model for six months (Approximately six sessions between March and September 2012). You will be provided with all the forms needed to explain the process to your coachees and obtain their consent to participate. You will also commit to adhere to the code of ethics of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (Please check http://www.emccouncil.org or the attached sheet at the end of this information document).

After each coaching session, you need to fill a reflective journal, where you write about your experience using the model and document your observations. The overall commitment for this part of the research is about eight hours per month.

The inquiry group will be invited to meet once every two months for a full day, or on two consecutive half-days. During these reflective sessions, the group will start by sharing their reflections on their practice, then engage in a number of facilitated discussions to analyse the experience and suggest improvements to the coaching model. These sessions may be audio-recorded for transcribing purposes. All participants will be advised to observe the confidentiality of their coachees, and not to share personal information that was shared with them during coaching. The time commitment of these sessions is around six hours every two months.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By being part of this research group, you get to develop your coaching capabilities through training, practice and participation in group discussions. You will also be able support the development of a number of individuals, and contribute to the development of a coaching model that can be used by you and your peers in the future.

Background of the researcher

I have more than 20 years of extensive experience in the human development field, facilitating group discussions, personal reflections, trainings and experiential learning, workshops and youth camps, youth mentoring and career coaching. I also have over 100 hours of coaching practice as well as more than 10 years of middle and senior management experience.

As part of my MSc in Industrial Engineering, and my academic preparation for the Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring, I have a solid knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about any individual who takes part in this study will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Confidentiality will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material by de-identifying the participants. The data ownership in this study (including sessions' recordings, notes and feedback forms) belong to the researcher. Individual coaches will be able to keep their reflective

journals.

Data will be stored in a secure repository. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. Any laptops or memory sticks used will be securely code encrypted in compliance with the Data Protection act in the UK and will be maintained in a secure place. All data will be transferred to Oxford Brookes University for safe storage for 10 years after the conclusion of this research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will form part of my thesis for the Doctorate of Coaching and Mentoring. The thesis will be available from Oxford Brookes library. You will be given the option of receiving a summary document containing an overview of the study's findings following data collection and analysis. This would be offered as a hard or soft copy. Anonymised findings will also be presented at the Oxford Brookes Coaching and Mentoring Research Conference.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting the research as a part-time student at the Business School, Wheatley Campus of Oxford Brookes University. I am self-funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), Oxford Brookes University. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the UREC on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you do wish to take part in this study please email or call me using the contact details below. I will be happy to answer any questions, and arrange for a suitable time to start.

My supervisory team consists of:

Dr Elaine Cox

Director: Coaching and Mentoring Programmes

Editor: International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring

Dr Tatiana Bachkirova

Course Leader for Coaching and Mentoring Supervision

International Centre for Coaching and Leadership Development

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix C: Research Consent Form – For Coaches

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: Coaching for emancipation: a framework of coaching in oppressive environments.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:
Hany Shoukry,
Student: Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring
Business School, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1HX
TEL: +44(0) 7 9170 40876
EMAIL: 09113602@brookes.ac.uk

	Please initial box
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
I agree to take part in this project, and I understand that my participation is volun and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.	☐
I have read the European Mentoring and Coaching Council code of ethics and agree to adhere to it	☐
I understand that all the coaching I will offer as part of this project will be for free	☐

	Please tick box	
	Yes	No
I agree to the reflective sessions being audio recorded	☐	☐
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	☐	☐
I agree to reflect in the coaching sessions with a larger group of participants and to give regular feedback to the PhD researcher	☐	☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet – For Coachees

Participant Information Sheet – Coachee

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Study title

Coaching for emancipation: a framework of coaching in oppressive environments.

Purpose of the research and background

The research aims to develop a model for the use of coaching in oppressive environments. A coaching model is a set of guidelines, processes and tools that help coaching practitioners work with their clients to support their development. Oppressive environments are social conditions that deprive some social groups from their basic rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, gender equality and so forth.

It has been documented in the literature that living in oppressive environments has deep implications on the development of individuals. It deprives individuals from their basic sense of free choice and self-responsibility, it results in distorted and stereotyped views about self and others, and it creates anxiety and hampers performance. These implications call for specific approaches to help individuals grow in these conditions; ones that promote empowerment and foster critical reflection. Coaching is reported to be an approach that may work effectively towards these objectives. However, there aren't any coaching models designed or empirically tested to support working with individuals in oppressive environments.

How, When and Where will the study be conducted?

The research is taking place in Egypt, from March to September 2012. The study involves a small group of coaches working together to define and improve the model through cycles of action and reflection.

The coaches in this study have received training on the coaching model, and are committed to the ethical standards of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council. They will benefit from your feedback on their practice to keep improving the model throughout the study.

At the end of the study, an improved coaching model will be defined and results will be reported as part of a doctoral thesis.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You were chosen to take part in this study because you indicated interest in getting a coaching intervention that links your personal growth and the context you're living in. The main objectives of the coaching are to help you find your own voice and your free choice, reflect on your own beliefs and how they relate to your social environment, and decide on actions to take you forward.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you do decide to take part, you will receive six coaching sessions free of charge, between March and September 2012, all sessions will take place in [place].

Your coach may also suggest that you attend some group sessions within that period that offer relevant topics to your development. You may choose not to attend these sessions without any implications on your coaching arrangement.

Every two months, you will be asked to fill a feedback form that includes evaluation of your experience with coaching and an opportunity to suggest improvements to the practice.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By being part of this study, you get six coaching sessions to support your development, and you get to contribute to the development to the coaching theory and practice.

Background of the researcher

Hany Shoukry has more than 20 years of extensive experience in the human development field, facilitating group discussions, personal reflections, trainings and experiential learning, workshops and youth camps, youth mentoring and career coaching. He also has over 100 hours of coaching practice as well as more than 10 years of middle and senior management experience.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about any individual who takes part in this study will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Confidentiality will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material by de-identifying the participants. The data ownership in this study (including sessions' recordings, notes and feedback forms) belong to the researcher. Individual coaches will be able to keep their reflective journals.

Data will be stored in a secure repository. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. Any laptops or memory sticks used will be securely code encrypted in compliance with

the Data Protection act in the UK and will be maintained in a secure place. All data will be transferred to Oxford Brookes University for safe storage for 10 years after the conclusion of this research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will form part of a thesis for the Doctorate of Coaching and Mentoring, to be submitted by Hany Shoukry (Contacts below). The thesis will be available from Oxford Brookes library. Participants will be given the option of receiving a summary document containing an overview of the study's findings following data collection and analysis. This would be offered as a hard or soft copy. Anonymised findings will also be presented at the Oxford Brookes Coaching and Mentoring Research Conference.

Hany is conducting the research as a part-time student at the Business School, Wheatley Campus of Oxford Brookes University. He is self-funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), Oxford Brookes University. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the UREC on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you do wish to take part in this study please email or call me using the contact details below. I will be happy to answer any questions, and arrange for a suitable time to start.

[Coach Name]

[Coach Contacts]

Hany Shoukry [contacts]

Supervisory team [contacts]

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix E: Research Consent Form – For Coachees

CONSENT FORM – استمارة موافقة على المشاركة

Full title of Project: Coaching for emancipation: A framework of coaching in oppressive environments.
عنوان البحث: التدريب من أجل التحرر، تطبيق نموذج للتدريب في مجتمعات القهر

Name, and contact address of Coach:
[Coach Name],
[Coach Contact]

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Hany Shoukry,
Student: Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring
Business School, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1HX
TEL: +44(0) 7 9170 40876
EMAIL: 09113602@brookes.ac.uk

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
قرأت البيانات التفصيلية عن البحث وسألت كل الأسئلة التي أريد ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
أعرف أن مشاركتي اختيارية وأنني أستطيع الانسحاب في أي وقت دون أسباب ☐

I agree to take part in the above study.
أوافق على المشاركة في هذا البحث ☐

Please tick box

	Yes	No
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications أوافق على نشر تعليقات من هذا التدريب دون أي إشارة أو استدلال على شخصيتي	☐	☐

______________________	__________	______________________
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Coach	Date	Signature

Appendix F: Reflective Journals

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">REFLECTIVE JOURNAL – INCIDENT ANALYSIS</th></tr>
<tr><td>Coachee:</td><td>Session:</td><td>Date:</td><td>Place:</td></tr>
<tr><td>The event</td><td colspan="2"></td><td>Duration:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Subjective

Write freely about your feelings/ perceptions surrounding the incident</td><td colspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Objective</td><td colspan="2">Analysis</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Describe the situation using facts and observations. Try not to add your judgments. Record what you were seeing and hearing, what the coachee was saying and what you were thinking/doing during the session. Notice whether it is easy or difficult to write objectively about the incident.</td><td colspan="2">Why was I feeling/thinking as such? How can I understand what the coachee was saying/doing? How do I interpret the incident in the wider context of the coaching journey? What is the subtext behind what was said/done?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Critical</td><td colspan="3">What am I assuming about the coachee, the coaching relationship, or myself? What do I know of the coachee’s assumptions about him/herself, about me and about coaching? What am I not seeing? Is there another perspective to look at the incident? Are the objective/subjective/analytical accounts coherent? Why/Why not?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Learning</td><td colspan="3">Pull out all the learning. What will you do next time?</td></tr>
</table>

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL – INCIDENT ANALYSIS (FILLED EXAMPLE)			
Main Info	**Coachee:**	**Date:** 27 march. 2012	**Place:** Mahrani
The event	Aim of session vs the bigger aim vs a need to talk about a certain relation. And their connection ☺	**Total session,** all in all 2 hours, the actual session 1h40mins	
Subjective	In this session too many points were tackled, due to lots of things happened to her that shifted her focus during that period. I asked her, you came last time with that aim and said wanted to talk about your self- image this time, and then she said no but I want to talk about this. She started talking about her father, which to me felt right, since I was feeling her refusal to talk about this issue last time, and I felt that was a real issue in her life; this was due that her father is sick, and something in the relationship temporarily shifted. As she was talking, I felt to do an exercise about father, and I told her, ok so this session's focus will be on dad, and then she paused and said, no but there is this thing I want to talk to you about. I was surprised and scared that this comment I created made her shift the topic, she already started to talk about, and seemed to be the right dance (as if she is saying I don't want to waste this session talking only about dad). Between talking about what happened between the sessions, her frustration about country situation, her relationship with father then she moved to another topic, which to her was important, I felt am I giving up my authority, should I have linked things, or it is ok, since she so much needed to talk about that last topic. To me I felt that the three are very important, and I had questions between the big original aim "doing things in half" and the other relationships and her frustration, and the journey of the session and its bigger context… so at the end the session was about this story that she desperately needed someone to guide her in, which is of course related to a bigger context; her sense or fear of loneliness (which she threw at the end of the session) she is aware.		
Objective	She started to talk about her frustration towards the irresponsibility and corruption in country, and spoke about how she answered and defended every situation, and how it drains her. She talked about relationship with father and how she "hates" him, yet she helped him out of duty, she was trying to justify the motives behind helping him, and not being sure about them. The key thing to her was when he saw that she is up to the responsibility and that he told her I am sorry for not trusting you before. She didn't dwell on the effect of this statement. Then she asked me to talk about a relationship with a male friend, (let's call him Mounir) she told me she wanted to hear another voice in this story. She said that she is not happy with the relationship and that she needs to change it. My lines of questioning had different criticality in them, maybe interruptions or making her see how it looks from outside them. she seemed most of the time to		

	have thought of it, and maybe answered it before, she was stubborn in different areas, maybe in certain moments I tried to be rough, since it is a liberation from a guy, that she needs to be liberated from. The key moment was when I used the approach, of let me tell you, what I heard from you, I narrated the subtext I received from what she said. She then said, some of what you say is true, some is not, and we kept on talking on which are right and which wrong, though we didn't follow that trail till the end. I asked her, since you talked about it, this means that there is something you see in this relationship, that you want to change, and we left with a concrete step (I don't believe that this is the real solution) yet this is what she wanted to do for now, and after reflection on it, she said this is what I want to do.
Analysis	The emotional development vs the intellectual one. She is aware and she might know the answers, but emotionally she is blocked in different areas, I think the emotional layer of development, might be very important in hindering someone to grow on the same intellectual and cognitive level. The link between the relationship with the father, and the need to have mounir in her life. Should that be tagged? Mounir's value in her life, how can we change that, to shift, to make his value less and so her liberation from him easier. Is that a real assumption from my part, as a solution? In Mounir's case, Ironically I was stuck in the same area, and I knew exactly what questions she might need, yet I tried to free myself, and took her story as a new fresh different one from mine, since of course it is different. So in times, I felt very hypocrite to ask her certain questions, that I know I am still stuck in myself. But also made me see how important for her to see it from the outside. There were different questions that I felt was important to be asked but didn't follow the trails till the end, because she was opening up another one. Was not firm, in the aim of the session, because it was not clearly stated.
Critical	The coach doesn't have to relate, yet when the coach is passing by a similar situation, how this can be helpful in the coaching journey, and how it cannot be. Can the coach help a coachee surpass something the coach is still trying to surpass? And to what extend it is important, to share that with her, I think that she might be very surprised or guiltless, If she knows that I understand what she is saying? And that I am not judging. However being firm in situations like these, I think is more helpful. Is liberation from mounir, the real question here? The link between the sessions, it seems that her sense of general melancholy about country and relationship with father and this not defined relationship with mounir, are related to a bigger sense of loneliness, maybe depression, how can we tackle the big one, instead of taking story by story, since, they are all important. عندما يكون هدف اللقاء بعيد ظاهريا عن الهدف الذي اتي به المتدرب في بداية المسيرة، كيف نربط المسيرة و ما اهمية ذلك، الهدف غير مهم في حد ذاته وارى تغيير المتدرب للهدف علامة للنمو لكن في هذة الحالة اشعر انه قفز على عدة مواضيع، لو اخذنا كل على حدة لن يحدث نمو جزري. When emotionally you are in a loop, how can the coach help? Me as a coach not easily liberated from trying to fix the problem, which is not our battle, rather than liberate the coachee from it, which

	determines the lines of questions, sometimes I am stuck in that. The difference between authority and advice, sometimes gets blurred especially when it is liberating from a relationship and from a loop, how firm should the coach be, without giving advice, cause sometimes, it is what the coachee needs, this kind of intervention, again I am talking when we are talking about emotional development.
Learning	أصعب الحالات حينما يكون المتدرب واعي، هو من يملك القدرة و يملك الادوات و يعلم اين هو او لماذا يتصرف هكذا و لكن لاسباب معينة (أعتقد انه مستوي النضج العاطفي، or certain relapses) يكون النمو او الخروج من القهر اصعب لانها ليست مسالة وعي او تكسير فرضيات انها اعمق و اعقد. I think in Mounir's case, changing roles might have been easier and a faster tool, then me asking her criticality questions, I don't know if it will be too late, to do that, next time. I think it will really work, cause I know the situation for her and I let her be the coach in that issue, might make her see It from the outside. I think she needs to see the link between all her stories, this loneliness sense she shared, and to her, the fear of being lonely what does it mean? I think targeting this bigger issue would be more important than focusing on Mounir, or maybe the father. I need a good evaluation sheet, cause I feel I am not showing emotions, and I don't know if A) this is true or wrong as a perception, B) if this is upsetting them , that I am not supportive on the emotional level, I think I give a very intellectual look as a coach sometimes, with certain coachees, not a human who is with them in the room, I think being a coach is making me create that distance, that I am not used to on other relationships and is making me less human, in a way…why being distant to me is less human, that is a question to me ☺

Appendix G: Research Forms

RESEARCH FORM			
Coachee:		**Session:**	**Date:**
Block	**Was it present?**	**How did I see it?**	**What have I learnt?**
Empowering Dialogue			
Consciousness Raising			
Breaking from Reality			
Critical Reflection			
X-Role Analysis			
Discovering New Worlds			
Narrative of Liberation			
Reflective Action			
Oppression	How has my understanding of oppression changed?		
Development	How has my understanding of development changed?		

Research form (Filled Example)

Main Info	Coachee:	Date: 27 april, 2012	Place: Mahrani

Reflecting back on the Session by going through the main elements

Element	Present	Critical	Learning
Empowering Dialogue	The dialogue had a lot of criticality elements more than the empowering ones, when it came to the issue with mounir, however in other situations, I was trying to pinpoint at her strengths.	How you can be emotionally supportive but also tough, in certain emotional issues to create the liberation, maybe the coachee needs more than support to get out of the emotional loop.	Emotional support is important. The relationship between the sessions, I think is crucial, I was sticking with some, to make it official, yet sometimes you need that rapport with them. I think tagging and explaining more the model and where we are in the process might be very empowering and i need to work on that.
Consciousness Raising	Though no direct exercise was used like the last, yet some of the questions about mounir were aiming to make see herself from outside, like when I retold her the subtext that I felt from the story.	Telling her the subtext from my point of view is my view from what I heard it is subjective but it might be important, and she said some of things, I said was right, some not. In general, retelling the story is a clever way to affirm a discovery or allow it to appear.	It is funny that sometimes, it is just about being aware of certain things and routines, but failing to be aware of the oppression in them. That might be the coaches' responsibility if the coachee couldn't see that.
Breaking from Reality	I would love to do a session like this, but it needs a lot of preparation, and I am not sure, when or how to fit it in. but it is needed, the more varied the oppression is, the more we are inside, the more we need to	If the coachee never suggests a breaking from reality action. The coach should interfere. Because the coachee will rarely see breaking from reality as a suitable action rather than a luxury. Or not to be aware of it to start with.	We need to think of appropriate breaking from reality that can match in different cases, for example in case of emotional blocks or loops. I think not just using it as form of action, how can it be done as a form of session?

	break and find some liberation acts.		
Critical Reflection	Although I was planning to work with it, but when she changed the aim of the session, it changed. It was never through exercises, but some questions, from her talk about the relationship with Mounir.	I think she needs criticality on a higher level. She needs to be free from the bigger assumption of being lonely, but I think if we choose the aim of the session each time, we might not get to that, so I think the coach should use authority sometimes, to say from last session I saw this and work from it. Or this is not dancing with moment?	The balance between criticality and empowerment and support.
X-Role Analysis	It was said in her talk, on asking different questions, about why we follow certain societal or religious rules that are wrong, yet we have to abide by them. Had to ask her, why this question is important to you, because I feel she used it as a form of escape as a hope that she can be with mounir.	She is aware of society and her being a girl, but maybe this model with her can workif we used it on loneliness.	It is always difficult to ask the question, ok so you know that, you are aware of the messages, then…you are free from that? How to say that or make them feel that, free from the x role?
Discover New Worlds	It was more of an inside in approach, since she has a lot to say, and a lot that is affecting her. I think a discovering new worlds' exercise, could have been	I think it is important, if you are stuck in a certain emotion to allow an outside in approach and open new possibilities, I haven't done that in that session.	I think this technique is important, when the coachee has a high level of awareness of problem and of assumptions, and of self, because, they will always look at things from their own eyes, and I think breaking

	beneficiary at this point, but didn't have time for. I was more listening, I think she needed it.		from that and seeing themselves from an outside perspective might be very liberating.
Liberation Narrative	It was not done. Not in a direct way nor hidden.	I am not finding a time for it, now. I am aware of its importance, but not finding time to get to it.	She is aware of her strength and fights, yet she is sad in different areas, and blocked in others. So how we can work on the emotional liberation.
Reflective Action	She came up with an action, that I think is a small step and not the real issue, but after dealing with criticality and asked her if she is comfortable with this step, she said yes, so I respected that.	Maybe the criticality was not thorough and enough for her, because I believe, that the depth of the action is a result of the session itself. However I think the action itself is never the big thing, but what she will process and live in the time between the sessions that is important and might be away from the actual action.	Questions like are you comfortable with that action for now, I think is very important, and as a follow up, if the action was not done, when evaluating next time, might be an important step for the liberation act. I am learning to accept that affirming a finding, a thought, an assumption, an already thought of action, is a kind of action, I need to acknowledge that, findings should not be new all the time.

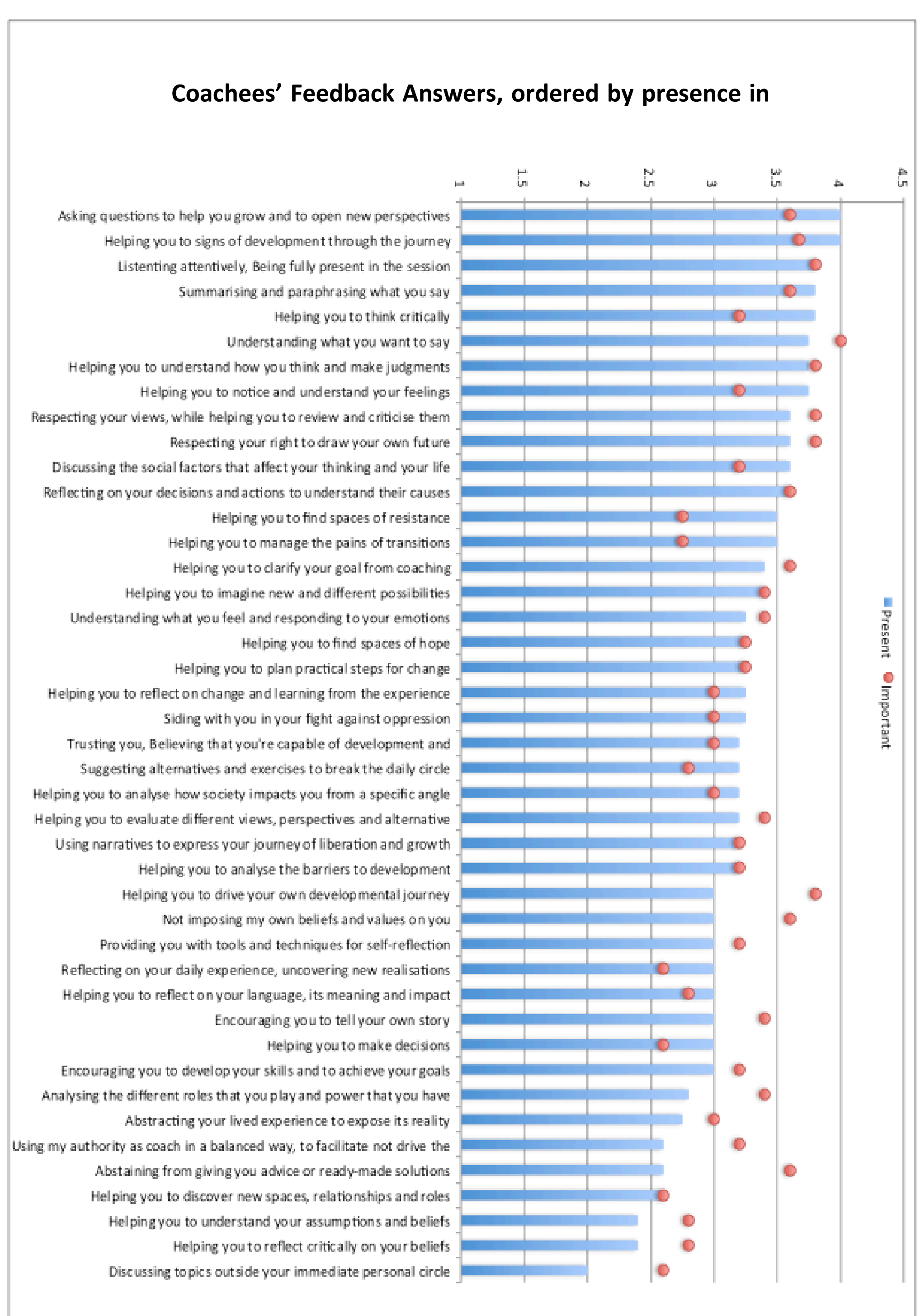
Oppression: what is that link between the emotional development and well-being of a girl, and her relationship with her father, how can an oppressive father, have a direct impact on his girl. I think fathers do have a great impact on girls, and it indirectly can affect their emotional needs, or choices. Again I don't want to generalize cause each is unique and complex. How oppression can toughen people up in certain ways. She is refusing to be treated differently as a girl, she is fighting every little battle having to do with oppression in the streets, she is drained from the quantity of it, especially in that time, but she is fighting, even while being depressed and sad, this I respect, yet she is sad in general and this is not her true self.

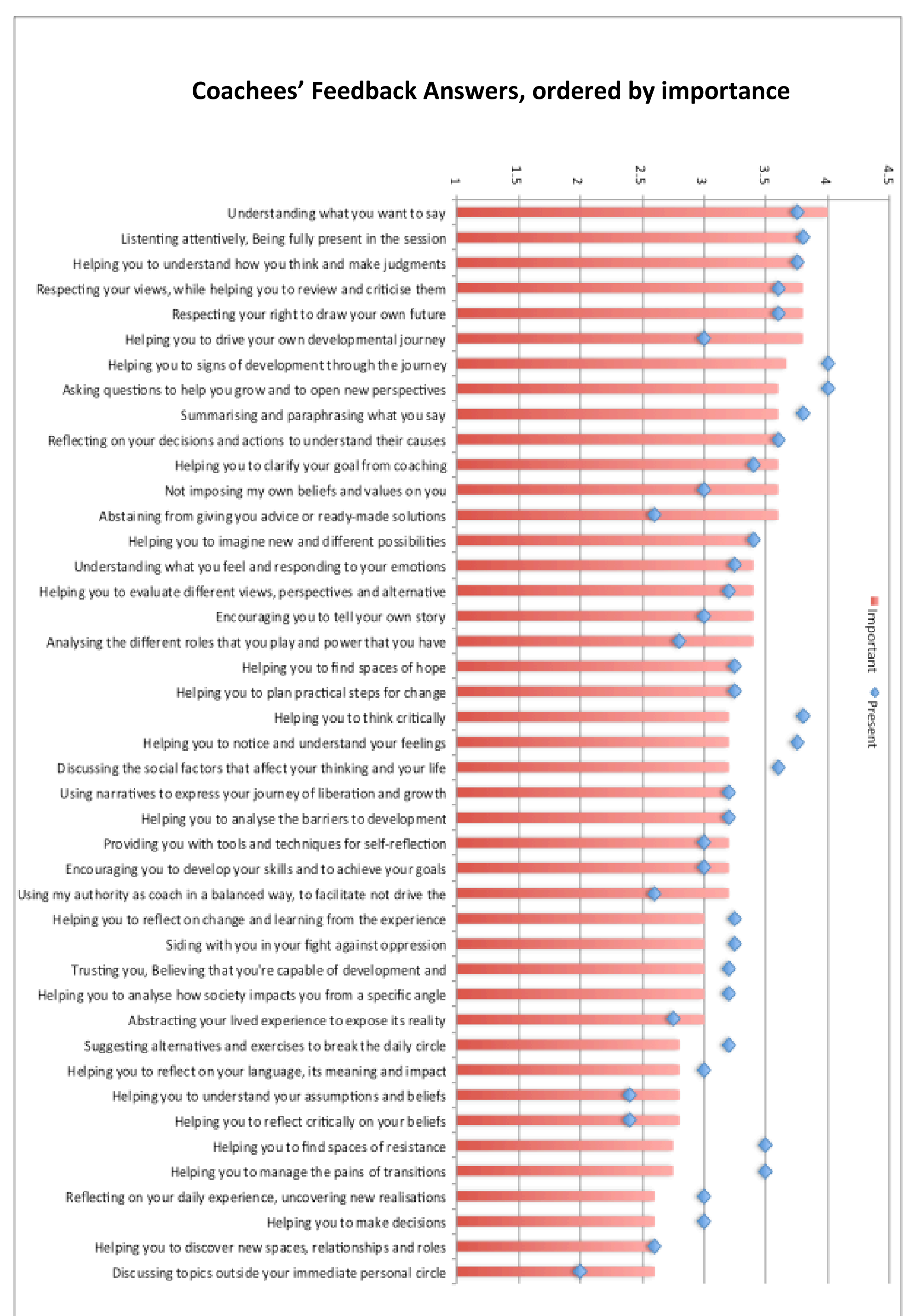
Development: أصعب الحالات حينما يكون المتدرب واعي، هو من يملك القدرة و يملك الادوات و يعلم اين هو او لماذا يتصرف هكذا و لكن لاسباب معينة (أعتقد انه مستوي النضج العاطفي، or certain relapses) يكون النمو او الخروج من القهر اصعب لانها ليست مسالة وعي او تكسير فرضيات انها اعمق و اعقد. Again this question about emotional development, vs cognitive, or awareness, I feel that with her, we need to work on this layer. It is amazing how sometimes, the coachee can change the aim of the session or journey simply Because, they are more aware, or because, deep inside they know where the real problem lies and allow themselves to talk about. الهدف غير مهم في حد ذاته وارى تغيير المتدرب للهدف علامة للنمو لكن في هذة الحالة اشعر ، انه قفز على عدة مواضيع، لو اخذنا كل على حدة لن يحدث نمو جزري.

Appendix H: Coachees' Feedback (Translated)

	How important has this been for you?				Would you have liked me to do more or less?			
	Very important	Important	Not very Important	Unimportant	Much more	A little more	A little less	Much less
Trusting you, Believing that you're capable of development and emancipation								
Helping you to drive your own developmental journey								
Using my authority as coach in a balanced way to facilitate not drive the journey								
Listening attentively, being fully present in the session								
Understanding what you want to say								
Respecting your views, while helping you to review and criticise them								
Understanding what you feel and responding to your emotions								
Asking questions that help you grow and to open new perspectives								
Abstaining from giving you advice or ready-made solutions								
Not imposing my own beliefs & values on you								
Summarising & paraphrasing what you say								
Helping you to think critically								
Providing you with tools and techniques for self-reflection								
Respecting your right to draw your own future								
Helping you to clarify your goal from coaching								
Reflecting on your daily experience, uncovering new realisations								
Abstracting your lived experience to expose its reality								
Suggesting alternatives and exercises to break the circle								
Discussing topics outside your immediate personal circle								

	How important has this been for you				Would you have liked me to do more or less?			
	Very important	Important	Not very Important	Unimportant	Much more	A little more	A little less	Much less
Suggesting alternatives and exercises to break the circle								
Discussing topics outside your immediate personal circle								
Helping you to understand how you think and make judgments								
Helping you to notice and understand your feelings								
Helping you to discover new spaces, relationships and roles								
Encouraging you to tell your own story								
Using narratives to express your journey of liberation and growth								
Reflecting on your decisions and actions to understand their causes								
Helping you analyse the barriers to development								
Helping you to make decisions								
Encouraging you to develop your talents and realise your goals								
Helping you to find spaces of hope								
Helping you to find spaces of resistance								
Helping you to plan practical steps for change								
Helping you to reflect on change and to learn from experience								
Helping you to manage the pains of transitions								
Helping you to see signs of development through the journey								
Siding with you in your fight against oppression								
Please add any comments:								


Coachees' Feedback Answers, ordered by presence in
1
1.5
2
2.5
3
3.5
4
4.5
Asking questions to help you grow and to open new perspectives
Helping you to signs of development through the journey
Listenting attentively, Being fully present in the session
Summarising and paraphrasing what you say
Helping you to think critically
Understanding what you want to say
Helping you to understand how you think and make judgments
Helping you to notice and understand your feelings
Respecting your views, while helping you to review and criticise them
Respecting your right to draw your own future
Discussing the social factors that affect your thinking and your life
Reflecting on your decisions and actions to understand their causes
Helping you to find spaces of resistance
Helping you to manage the pains of transitions
Helping you to clarify your goal from coaching
Helping you to imagine new and different possibilities
Understanding what you feel and responding to your emotions
Helping you to find spaces of hope
Helping you to plan practical steps for change
Helping you to reflect on change and learning from the experience
Siding with you in your fight against oppression
Trusting you, Believing that you're capable of development and
Suggesting alternatives and exercises to break the daily circle
Helping you to analyse how society impacts you from a specific angle
Helping you to evaluate different views, perspectives and alternative
Using narratives to express your journey of liberation and growth
Helping you to analyse the barriers to development
Helping you to drive your own developmental journey
Not imposing my own beliefs and values on you
Providing you with tools and techniques for self-reflection
Reflecting on your daily experience, uncovering new realisations
Helping you to reflect on your language, its meaning and impact
Encouraging you to tell your own story
Helping you to make decisions
Encouraging you to develop your skills and to achieve your goals
Analysing the different roles that you play and power that you have
Abstracting your lived experience to expose its reality
Using my authority as coach in a balanced way, to facilitate not drive the
Abstaining from giving you advice or ready-made solutions
Helping you to discover new spaces, relationships and roles
Helping you to understand your assumptions and beliefs
Helping you to reflect critically on your beliefs
Discussing topics outside your immediate personal circle
Present
Important


Coachees' Feedback Answers, ordered by importance
1
1.5
2
2.5
3
3.5
4
4.5
Understanding what you want to say
Listenting attentively, Being fully present in the session
Helping you to understand how you think and make judgments
Respecting your views, while helping you to review and criticise them
Respecting your right to draw your own future
Helping you to drive your own developmental journey
Helping you to signs of development through the journey
Asking questions to help you grow and to open new perspectives
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Helping you to find spaces of hope
Helping you to plan practical steps for change
Helping you to think critically
Helping you to notice and understand your feelings
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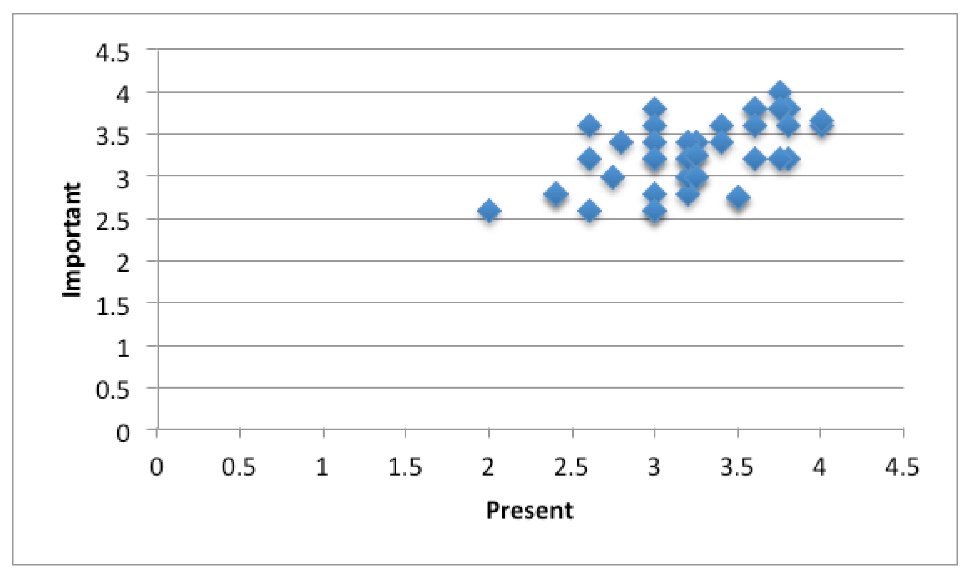
Helping you to reflect critically on your beliefs
Helping you to find spaces of resistance
Helping you to manage the pains of transitions
Reflecting on your daily experience, uncovering new realisations
Helping you to make decisions
Helping you to discover new spaces, relationships and roles
Discussing topics outside your immediate personal circle
Important
Present



Average Score of all questions in terms of both presence and importance