



**The roles that coaching and mentoring play
in addressing the leadership challenges
of charity CEOs**

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Abstract

The CEOs of charities have been facing an extraordinary range of economic, social and political challenges in recent years. Coaching and mentoring offer under-utilised and potentially significant forms of support, but very little is known about the practice or impact of the disciplines for leaders in this position. This qualitative, intrinsic case study explores the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK.

The research was undertaken with a constructionist ontological and an interpretivist epistemological stance, acknowledging the issues involved in being an insider researcher. Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain perspectives from a variety of stakeholders within the UK charity sector. Fourteen documents relating to charity CEO roles and coaching and mentoring programmes were also examined. Data analysis utilised NVivo software and reflexive thematic analysis.

The findings identified that coaching and mentoring can play an important, valuable role in helping charity CEOs address their personal, relational and strategic challenges. These challenges tend to be emotionally intense, owing to the values-based motivation of most charity CEOs and their stakeholders. However, the purpose-driven nature of charities also constrains the use of coaching and mentoring, as many CEOs feel an obligation to channel all available time and money to support their organisation's beneficiaries, rather than themselves. When coaching and mentoring do occur, they enable a generative dialogue to take place, in a safe reflective space, helping CEOs to express emotion, stretch thinking, stimulate learning and generate change. Similarities and differences were established between four forms of coaching and mentoring: 'non-directive coaching', 'skills coaching', 'mentoring' and a 'fluid' combination of all three.

The study generates a framework describing the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. Guidance is also proposed to help charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors realise these benefits in practice. The study contributes to the charity leadership and coaching and mentoring literature by exploring the roles the disciplines play in addressing leadership challenges within the specific contextual setting of UK charity CEOs.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. The motivation for the study

This study explores the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. The last four years have been an extraordinarily difficult period for the CEOs of charities. At the height of the Covid crisis towards the end of 2020, it was widely acknowledged that the global pandemic had created a “perfect storm”, with a huge and irrefutable impact on the UK charity sector (Hyndman, 2020, p.1). Many charities faced both a significant increase in the demand for their services and a steep decline in their revenue (NCVO, 2021; Pro Bono Economics, 2021). In a survey of charity leaders by the Charity Commission in October 2021, nearly two thirds anticipated a threat to their charity’s financial viability in the next twelve months (Foster, 2022). The need to shift to online ways of working during lockdown led to many constraints on service delivery, as well as growing concern for the wellbeing of charity staff and volunteers (IVAR, 2021). In a review of the situation facing charity leaders, the Charity Commission concluded that adaptability, especially a willingness to embrace change and to work with uncertainty, had become a critical leadership requirement. It acknowledged that many trustees and senior leaders “will face tough decisions about their charity’s long-term future in the months ahead” (Charity Commission, 2021, p.1).

The problems have not ended there. Several other disruptions have followed in the subsequent years to make the situation facing charity CEOs even more difficult. The #BlackLivesMatter, #CharitySoWhite and #MeToo movements have highlighted a major concern over racial and sexual diversity in charitable organisations (ACEVO, 2020; Inclusive Boards, 2022). High profile statements by the Charity Commission and government ministers have warned charities to steer clear of being too political in their campaigning, accusing them of pursuing a ‘woke agenda’ and contributing towards the so-called ‘culture wars’ currently underway in British society (Grayson, 2022). On a separate note, COP26 increased the urgency of measures to promote social and environmental sustainability (ACEVO, 2022). The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have also raised a variety of issues such as emergency fundraising needs, international operating constraints and potential reputational risks relating to donors (Charity Commission, 2022; Charity Commission, 2023a). The cost of living crisis in the UK is now causing further concerns over the commercial viability of many charities (Pro Bono Economics, 2022). The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) recently published a report called “The Road Ahead 2023” in which they warn of ongoing threats to charities, such as rising costs, declining revenues and increasing demand from service users (NCVO, 2023b).

During this period, I have been providing coaching and mentoring support to six charity CEOs in the UK, alongside several other clients in a range of for-profit start-ups and larger corporates. I have always been intrigued by the contrasting leadership challenges faced by people working in different types of organisations. However, as the Covid pandemic reached its peak, the unprecedented issues facing the leaders of charities became a particular focus for me. The intensity of the work I have been involved in since then has motivated me to commit to doing a doctoral research programme, my aim being to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in helping charity CEOs address their leadership challenges.

1.2. The challenges facing charities and their CEOs

There are currently 170,138 charities registered in the UK, and together they make a vital contribution to the nation's social and economic welfare (Charity Commission, 2024). Charities are institutions established solely for the purpose of delivering 'public benefits', as defined by the Charities Act 2011. This Act describes thirteen areas of potential focus for charities, ranging from the prevention or relief of poverty to the advancement of education, religion and animal welfare (Charity Commission, 2013). The UK government's most recent figures indicate that the total annual income of charities is just over £95 billion (Charity Commission, 2024). A report in 2017 by a House of Lord's Select Committee on Charities concluded that "from small local organisations run entirely by volunteers to major global organisations with turnover in the hundreds of millions, their work touches almost every facet of British life" (Parliament. House of Lords, 2017, p.3).

The House of Lords report provides evidence that the environment in which charities were working had already been changing significantly, even before the pandemic struck. Since the financial crisis in 2008, the sector had been operating under the "shadow of austerity" (Hodges and Howieson, 2017, p.69) leading to both an increase in demand for services and a cut in funding and resources (Hyndman, 2017; Mitchell, 2022). A survey of 452 charity leaders in 2018 highlighted some other important concerns (Charities Aid Foundation, 2019). Most respondents believed that Brexit would have a negative impact on their organisations. They were also conscious that some high-profile negative media stories were undermining public trust in the charity sector as a whole. A key challenge was also digital technology, a disruptive force creating many new opportunities but also necessitating fundamental changes in strategy, operations and fundraising methods.

When analysing these many issues, several commentators have pointed out that the most fundamental and enduring challenges facing the leaders of charities are inherently related to the unique nature of the organisations they run (Renz, 2016; Hyndman, 2017). The

raison d'être of charities is to deliver public benefits, not profit (Moore, 2000; Salamon and Sokolowski, 2016). These social goals are usually less tangible than financial goals, which can make them difficult to measure (McHatton et al., 2011). The social concerns charities seek to address are also typically extremely difficult to overcome (Taliento and Silverman, 2005).

Another key factor distinguishing charities from for-profit businesses is that most of their revenue is generated from individuals or organisations who derive no direct economic benefit from the funding they provide (Hyndman, 2017). If private sector businesses do a good job creating value for their customers, they generate revenues that underpin their commercial performance and organisational survival. The same financial link does not exist for charities. Doing a good job in creating social value for a charity's beneficiaries does not necessarily drive financial returns (Moore, 2000; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022). This disintermediation between beneficiaries and funders means that a crucial priority for charities is to build trust, legitimacy and support for their work amongst potential donors and grant-makers (Hyndman, 2018; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022). There is significant pressure on charity leaders to be seen to channel all available time and money to improve frontline services directly, rather than to invest more indirectly in developing internal organisational systems and managerial capabilities (Kirchner, 2006).

A further significant differentiating characteristic of charities is that, unlike private sector companies, they are not owned by shareholders (Wolf, 2012). Instead, charity leaders have to abide by legally binding rules of governance which are overseen by the Charity Commission (2020). As a consequence, there is a broader range of stakeholders involved in managerial decision-making, and there are often competing stakeholder perspectives on what success looks like (Connolly, Hyndman and McConville, 2013).

Nowhere do these various challenges manifest themselves more acutely than for people serving in the role of charity CEO. The role of Chief Executive Officer in any organisation is a uniquely demanding one, as it is the only place where the external and internal agendas join up holistically (Kirchner, 2006; Lafley, 2009). Although questions have been raised about the extent to which CEOs can genuinely exert control over the performance of their organisations (Salancik and Meindl, 1984), their role undoubtedly involves unusually high levels of decision-making responsibility, personal scrutiny and loneliness (Nadler, 2005; Porter and Nohria, 2018). In the charity sector, these personal challenges can be exacerbated further by the values-driven motivation of many leaders, which makes them especially susceptible to stress and burnout (Gorski, 2015; Kanter and Sherman, 2017). In a survey of 450 charity leaders conducted in 2021, 44% stated that they were

considering leaving their jobs as a result of the increased demands caused by COVID-19 (Ecclesiastical, 2021).

1.2. The roles of coaching and mentoring

Given the many difficult issues facing charity CEOs, research has suggested that coaching and mentoring are promising but under-utilised instruments for their personal support and development (Curran, 2008). In a survey of 3000 non-profit executive leaders in the US, coaching was ranked as the most effective form of personal development, followed by peer networks and leadership development programmes (Cornelius, Moyers and Bell, 2011). In a review of leadership in the voluntary sector undertaken for the UK Cabinet Office, the potential value of both coaching and mentoring to charity CEOs was highlighted, owing to their power in enabling “learning through reflective practice” (Marsh, 2013, p.9).

Coaching and mentoring are forms of “developmental helping relationships” (Salter and Gannon, 2015, p.374). Bruce-Foulds et al. (2022, p.163) argue that “at their heart, coaching and mentoring are ways of having purposeful, skilful conversations that effectively support performance, growth and development”. Passmore (2020) lists a number of characteristics that are common to both coaching and mentoring, including supporting and enabling learning, setting goals and objectives, and using conversations to bring about change. The potential value of coaching and mentoring to senior leaders, in particular, lies in creating a safe space in which individuals can reflect openly on the variety of challenges concerning them, whether these be organisational or personal (Clutterbuck, 2009; Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024).

The differences between coaching and mentoring are less easy to define. Recent research into the role of coaching and mentoring has concluded that drawing clear conceptual distinctions between them is not possible, owing to the interchangeable ways in which they are used (Salter and Gannon, 2015; Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021). Evidence suggests that this lack of clarity extends to the minds of senior executives, in both the private and charity sectors, with inconsistent views on the meaning of the terms coaching and mentoring (Stevens, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2009; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010). As a consequence, academic calls are now being made to study coaching and mentoring together rather than separately, and in specific practical contexts rather than theoretically (Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). A ‘contextual framework’ has been proposed for this purpose by Stokes et al. (2021). This specifies four dimensions of dyadic relationships (Learning, Economic, Temporal, Sociocultural) and suggests a spectrum, in each case, describing the range of

characteristics typical in coaching versus mentoring relationships. This study will be amongst the first to use this framework in practice, applying it to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing leadership challenges in the specific context of UK charity CEOs.

Coaching and mentoring in charities is an under-researched topic (Watson, 2020). Only four studies have been found involving senior executives, all of which were conducted over 12 years ago in the US. Of these, just one was published in a peer-reviewed journal, and this focused narrowly on evaluating a short-term coaching programme pilot (Fischer and Beimers, 2009). Surprisingly, there has also been little research undertaken into the roles that coaching and mentoring play for CEOs, in either the charity or the private sectors (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015; Watson, 2020). The primary explanation given for this is the difficulty associated with obtaining access to and time with individuals in such a busy job (Rosser, 2005; Porter and Nohria, 2018). The limited evidence that does exist in the private sector suggests that coaching and mentoring can deliver significant benefits to CEOs in terms of their leadership performance and personal wellbeing (Stevens, 2005; Gavett, 2013; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). Despite this conclusion, coaching and mentoring seem to be relatively underutilised by the CEOs of charities (ACEVO, 2023). A paradox seems to exist in that, although effective leadership is seen as crucial to the success of charitable organisations, using scarce resources to fund a CEO's own professional development can generate feelings of self-recrimination and guilt (Parliament. House of Lords, 2017; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b).

By deepening the understanding of the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs, this study will therefore address an important gap in the literature. It will also help clarify the contributions that coaching and mentoring can make to improve the leadership performance and personal wellbeing of charity CEOs, thereby increasing the chances that more leaders will seek access to these benefits. The study's impact has the potential to radiate from individual charity CEOs, through to the teams and organisations they lead, and, ultimately, to the social communities they serve.

1.3. Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. To guide the inquiry, the following research question was defined:

“What roles do coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK?”

The research will contribute to academic knowledge by building deeper understanding about the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs, and the roles that coaching and mentoring play in helping CEOs to address them successfully. A conceptual framework will be used to capture and explain the conclusions. Professional practice will also be enhanced by increasing awareness in the charity sector about the nature of coaching and mentoring, and about the activities and behaviours involved in building effective coaching and mentoring relationships. The resulting guidelines will be of practical value to charity CEOs and also the coaches and mentors with whom they work.

The specific research objectives are:

- To critically evaluate the literature relating to the challenges facing charity leaders, theories of charity leadership and the roles that coaching and mentoring play for CEOs in the private and charity sectors.
- To explore the roles of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs by investigating the perspectives of different stakeholders in the UK charity sector (e.g. CEOs, chairs, coaches and mentors, programme organisers, professional bodies).
- To analyse the perspectives different stakeholders have on the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs.
- To contribute to academic knowledge by developing a framework of the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs, and to professional practice by developing guidelines for both charity leaders and their coaches and mentors on how coaching and mentoring can address their leadership challenges.

1.4. Research design and methodology

People's differing views about the meaning of coaching and mentoring suggested that the research question was best addressed with a constructionist ontological and an interpretivist epistemological stance (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Social phenomena and their meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world and interact with each other. As a result, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of multiple realities with multiple meanings which are observer dependent (Yin and Campbell, 2018).

This stance had important implications for the way the roles of coaching and mentoring could be explored in the specific context of charity CEOs. Given the extremely diverse characteristics of charitable organisations in the UK, it was important to investigate the perspectives of a wide range of charity CEOs. In addition, research evidence suggests that CEOs do not always have the same views about the role of their personal coaching as their coaches or other relevant stakeholders in their organisations (Gavett, 2013; McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019). For this reason, a variety of other contributors were also involved in the study to obtain a richer understanding of the subject. Purposive sampling was therefore undertaken, to include not just a diverse selection of charity CEOs, but also charity chairs, coaches, mentors, representatives of professional bodies and coaching and mentoring programme organisers.

The roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs have many distinctive features. This means that it will not be possible to generalise the findings into theories that attempt to explain or predict the roles of coaching or mentoring in other situations (Stake, 1995). The study could only seek to generate contextual knowledge, based on the values, interests and relationships at play within the UK charity sector specifically. On this basis, the form of knowledge involved in the study is 'phronesis' (Flyvbjerg, 2012; Thomas, 2021). Aristotle originally used the term phronesis to distinguish practical knowledge from episteme (scientific knowledge) and techne (technical knowledge) (Flyvbjerg, 2012; Schram, 2012). Phronesis involves building understanding about perspectives and behaviour in particular social situations (Schram, 2012; Thomas, 2021). Flyvbjerg (2012) describes it as pragmatic, context-dependent and action-oriented. Phronesis can also be understood to be "exemplary knowledge", as opposed to "generalisable knowledge" (Thomas, 2021, p.79). Exemplary knowledge relates to examples that "are viewed and heard in the context of another's experience but used in the context of one's own".

To generate knowledge of this type, an abductive approach to reasoning was adopted for the study. Abduction involves making a judgement concerning the best explanation for the facts being collected (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019; Thomas, 2021). It requires “an interaction between the general and the concrete” and the use of experience to drive one’s consideration, judgement and choices (Flyvbjerg, 2012, p.30). Abductive analysis is a creative process in which paying attention to findings that are surprising, either because they are novel or unexpected, is a particularly important source of insight (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012; Earl Rinehart, 2021). It differs from induction in that it refutes the assumption that because something happens in one situation, it will happen again in the same conditions.

Qualitative case study methodology was chosen for the study. One of the essential characteristics of a case study is that it involves the study of a case of a broader phenomenon (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Thomas, 2021). In this study, this broader topic of investigation was ‘the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing leadership challenges’, and the case study ‘subject’ or ‘unit of analysis’ was the ‘CEOs of charities’ (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Yin and Campbell, 2018). This unit of analysis was bounded by limiting the inquiry to the CEOs of charities which are based in the UK, have an annual income above £1 million, are classified as ‘charities in law’ and are registered with the Charity Commission.

Case study methodology is well suited to situations in which the boundaries between a phenomenon and its context may not be easily distinguished (Yin and Campbell, 2018; Welch et al., 2022), a key characteristic of coaching and mentoring as explained above. Case study methodology also enables the capture of different perspectives from different stakeholders. This feature was an important advantage for this study, as it meant that the views of a range of players within the UK charity sector could be incorporated, not just those of charity CEOs themselves.

In line with the discussion so far about phronesis, case study research is a poor basis for generalisation, particularly when only a single case is studied (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The purpose for this study is therefore ‘intrinsic’ (Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2021) – its intention is to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing leadership challenges in the specific context of charity CEOs. Any implications for the roles of coaching and mentoring more generally, even just for CEOs beyond the charity sector, will be left for others to infer through “naturalistic generalisation” (Stake, 1995, p.85).

In order to generate a meaningful response to the research question, five sub-questions were defined to address the knowledge gaps identified in the literature review and to

provide a conceptual architecture for the study (Stake, 1995). These issue-related questions broke down the research question so that it could be answered in a robust and informed manner. The first sub-question addressed the need to build an understanding of the most difficult leadership challenges facing charity CEOs in the UK. Secondly, the sources of personal support used by CEOs to help them address these challenges needed to be established. Thirdly, to compare the different roles played by coaching and mentoring, it was necessary to explore people's understanding of these two terms in the UK charity sector. Fourthly, this information was used to carry out a detailed examination of the characteristics of coaching and mentoring relationships experienced by charity CEOs. Only then could the impact of coaching and mentoring be defined in addressing the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs. These five focus areas are summarised in Figure 1.1 and they have provided the structure for data capture and analysis.

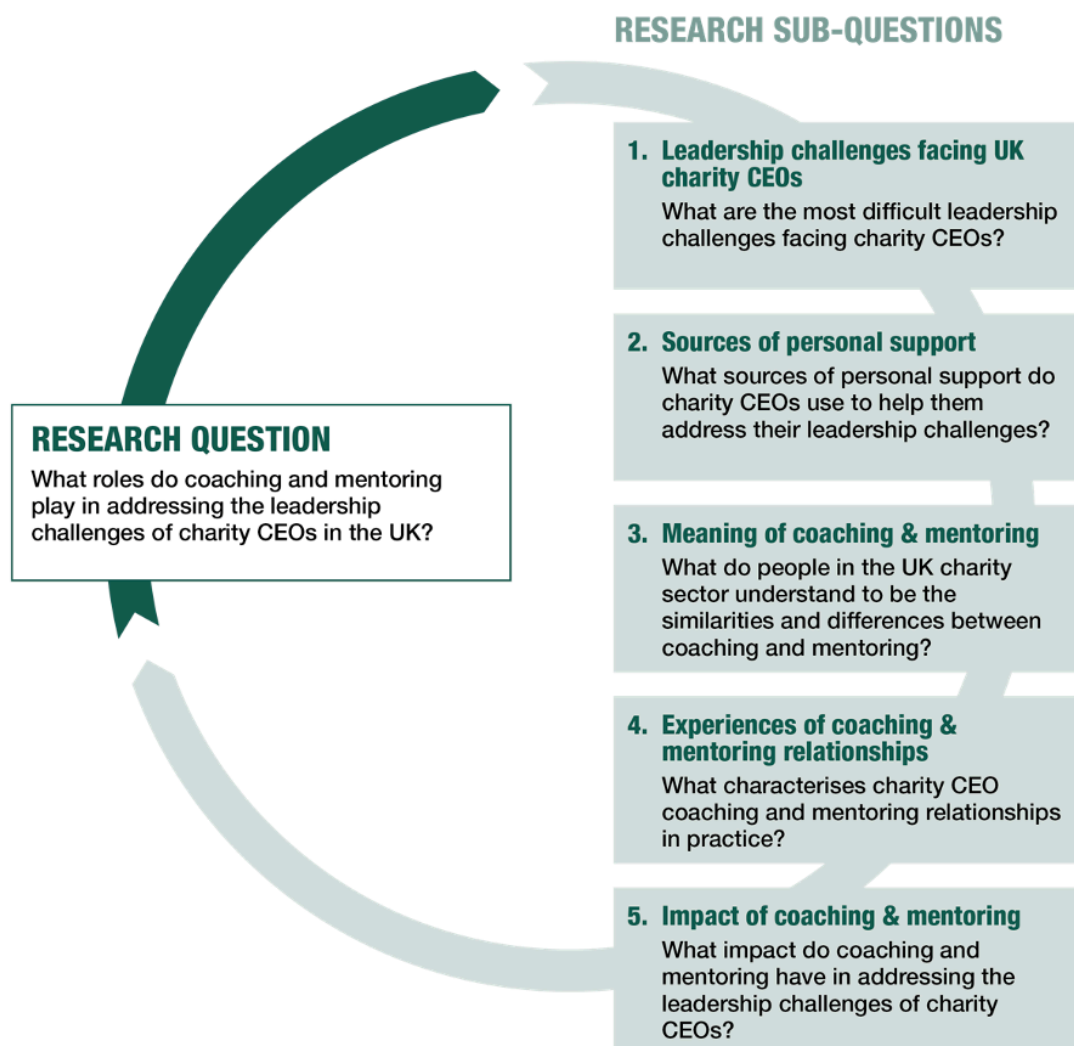


Figure 1.1: The research sub-questions involved in answering the research question (Stake, 1995).

Two data collection methods were used for the study: (a) 29 semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders in the UK charity sector, and (b) 14 organisational documents relating to the role of charity CEOs and some of the coaching and mentoring programmes available to them. The interviews were undertaken with charity CEOs (13), charity chairs (3), coaches and mentors (5), representatives from professional bodies (3) and representatives from organisations providing coaching and mentoring programmes for charity CEOs (5). Analysis of data from the various sources involved direct interpretation of individual statements and then triangulation and reflexive thematic analysis to find meaning across statements (Stake, 1995; Braun and Clarke, 2022b). NVivo software was used to code the interview transcripts and organisational documents.

Given the constructionist/interpretivist stance taken for the study, it has been crucial to embrace the interpretative role that I myself play as the researcher. Flyvberg (2012) emphasises the importance in phronetic social science of judgements being made about values and interests. These cannot be based on personal preferences or moral perspectives, but on situational ethics which are grounded socially and historically in the context of the views of the reference groups involved in the study. To conduct this kind of analysis effectively requires the self-awareness to recognise one's own biases and to declare these openly and objectively as part of the analytical process. This requirement has additional importance given my involvement in the case study system itself as a coach-mentor for several charity CEOs. This insider role brings with it the advantages of passion, knowledge, credibility and participant access, but it also raises some important ethical considerations (Unluer, 2012; Saidin, 2016). In addition to the risk of subjective bias, a particular priority has been to avoid any potential conflicts of interest by not involving any of my coaching clients. Other concerns have included making false assumptions, role duality and maintaining strict confidentiality for participants. My own reflexive practice has therefore been a central component of the research process.

1.5. Structure of thesis

Following this first introductory chapter, the elements of the thesis are structured as follows:

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review begins by exploring in more detail the strategic challenges facing charities and their leaders. The implications for the theory of charity leadership are described, taking into account insights from international research into the broader 'non-profit' and 'third' sectors (Salamon and Sokolowski, 2016; Hodges and Howieson, 2017). The specific role of CEO is defined, again drawing out similarities and differences

between the challenges facing individuals in this role in the private and charity sectors. The various forms of personal development and support available to charity CEOs are assessed, before exploring the meaning of coaching and mentoring. The next section applies Stokes et al.'s (2021) contextual framework to analyse the research done to date into CEO experiences of coaching and mentoring in both the private and charity sectors. The implications in terms of the potential positive and negative outcomes of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs are summarised. The chapter then concludes with five key knowledge gaps which help provide a conceptual architecture for the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology chapter explains the ontological and epistemological stance taken for the study, and the justification for using qualitative case study methodology. It goes on to describe the design of the case study in more detail, specifying the subject, purpose, approach and process. The primary research question is defined, along with five sub-questions, to focus the inquiry on addressing the knowledge gaps identified in the literature review. Attention is given to the choice of data sources, the approach to data gathering and analysis, ethical issues and quality assessment criteria.

Chapter 4: Findings

The findings chapter presents the results of the analysis of the stakeholder interviews and the organisational documents. The chapter is organised to address the research sub-questions in Figure 1.1, though the order in which they are covered is slightly different than planned to help answer the research question as clearly as possible. The key leadership challenges facing charity CEOs in the UK are explored, as is the meaning of both coaching and mentoring in the charity sector. This enables a review of the sources of coaching and mentoring support available to CEOs, with a particular focus on the distinctive role played by external coaches and mentors. An examination then takes place of the experiences charity CEOs have had of coaching and mentoring relationships. Finally, the impact and role of coaching and mentoring are described in relation to the leadership challenges of charity CEOs.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The discussion chapter explores and develops the study's main findings further, and relates them back to the existing literature. To build a comprehensive answer to the research question, the discussion continues to use the research sub-questions as an organising framework. Special focus is given to highlighting the study's distinctive contributions, and also to the practical implications for coaching and mentoring relationships between charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter revisits the aim and objectives for the research, and presents the main conclusions and the contributions to both theory and practice. The limitations of the study are discussed and some recommendations for further research are suggested. The chapter concludes with a reflexive account of the key challenges I experienced undertaking the study, and my approach to addressing these in my role as the researcher.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

To understand the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK, the study began by reviewing the relevant literature relating to charities, leadership, and coaching and mentoring. This chapter begins by examining the nature of the leadership challenges facing charity leaders, drawing comparisons with those facing the leaders of private sector businesses. It then moves on to consider how leadership theories have evolved to account for the distinctive characteristics of charity leadership. The next section explores the role of CEO, again contrasting the challenges facing people doing this job in the private and charity sectors. The focus then shifts to discuss the meaning of coaching and mentoring and how the discourse surrounding each term has evolved over time. A framework proposed by Stokes et al. (2021) is introduced as a basis for exploring the relationship context in which coaching and mentoring occurs. This framework is then used to analyse the research that has taken place into coaching and mentoring within charities and for CEOs in particular. The possible negative effects of coaching and mentoring are considered, and the chapter concludes with a summary of the knowledge gaps to be addressed by this study.

To help focus the scope and structure of the literature review, the conceptualisation provided in Figure 2.1 was developed. This specifies the key areas of focus, and highlights the sections of this chapter which address each element.

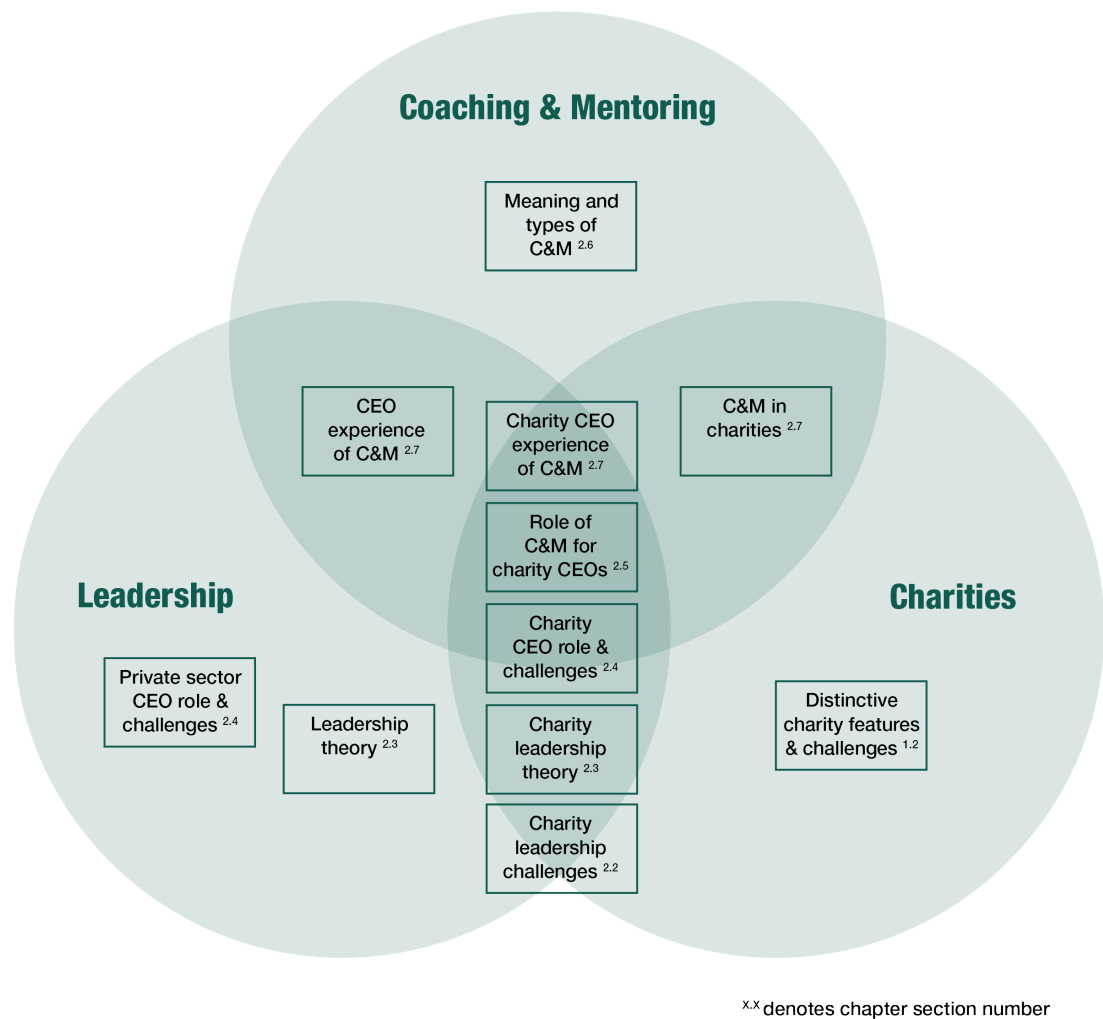


Figure 2.1: Focus areas for the literature review.

2.2. Charity and non-profit leadership challenges

2.2.1. Understanding the charity sector

Before exploring the leadership challenges facing UK charity leaders, it is important to acknowledge that there has been a blurring of the boundaries between private sector and charitable organisations in recent years (Renz, 2016). The shift in scale and profile of government funding has forced charities to compete for new sources of income, leading them to engage in different types of business activity (e.g. commercial trading and social enterprise) and fundraising approach (e.g. brand marketing and partnerships) (Parliament. House of Lords, 2017; Mitchell, 2022). As a result, charities have had to learn to compete professionally and commercially more like private sector businesses (Renz, 2016; Mitchell, 2022). In some recent instances, this has led to charities receiving high profile criticism for using overly aggressive fundraising tactics (Cook and Mason, 2021). Some scholars have argued that there are other ways in which charities are not always the force

for social good that their purpose-driven nature would suggest (Murphy, 2010). A “dark side” exists, in that some charitable organisations are influenced more by the vested interests of governments, businesses and their own leadership, than by the interests of the grassroots constituencies they serve, and the democratic and equitable principles they supposedly espouse (Murphy, 2010, p.252).

The explosion of pandemic-fuelled environmental, social and governance concerns experienced by charities has also resulted in a new range of reputational and financial risks to corporations in the private sector (O’Leary and Valdmanis, 2021; Whelan, 2021). The change in expectations and the declining trust in commercial businesses is leading to a groundswell of support for reform of the free market economy in the direction of ‘stakeholder capitalism’ (Hunt, Simpson and Yamada, 2020; Winston, 2022). At the heart of this trend is a broadening perspective that the purpose of business should go beyond just making money for shareholders, to address more noble, social causes which are of relevance to a broader range of stakeholders (Buffett and Eimicke, 2018; Mayer, 2021). Nevertheless, although it can be argued that some of the differences between charities and for-profit organisations are becoming less marked, the differences are still significant and they result in some distinctive challenges for the leaders of charities (Renz, 2016; Parliament. House of Lords, 2017; do Adro and Leitão, 2020; Mitchell, 2022).

Rather than studying charities specifically, most academic leadership researchers in Europe and the US have focused their analysis on the non-profit sector, or the ‘third sector’ more generally. Salaman (2016) explains that the term ‘third sector’ refers to an arena beyond the state and the market. Hopkins (2010) describes the concept as a useful umbrella for policy makers dealing with organisations ranging from charities to NGOs, co-operatives, social enterprises and community organisations. This diversity has led to questions being raised about whether the third sector can be seen as a coherent entity (Hodges and Howieson, 2017). However, some important contextual understanding can still be gained about the challenges facing charity CEOs from reviewing the literature in this broader context, and the themes that emerge are reviewed in the following section. The discussion is supported by several studies that are specific to UK charity leadership, but these have mostly been undertaken by professional bodies and consultancies. The lack of academic focus on the challenges facing UK charity leaders is an important knowledge gap which this study will address.

2.2.2. Balancing mission ‘stickiness’ with mission ‘drift’

Laurett and Ferreira (2018) begin their systematic literature review of strategy in non-profit organisations by highlighting the growth in the number of these organisations in recent years, and the increasing rivalry for declining levels of private and government donations.

In this context, in order to remain competitive and relevant to the demands of the communities and funders they serve, charity leaders have had to find new, more entrepreneurial ways to deliver their services (do Adro and Leitão, 2020). This involves striking a careful balance between staying true to their charity's original social purpose and responding to the changing environment in which they operate (Moore, 2000; Hyndman, 2017). In a drive for modernisation, and a desire to learn from the private sector, there is a risk that leaders suffer from "mission drift" and a temptation to "chase the money" at all costs (Hyndman, 2017, p.151). Renz (2016) argues that it is when leaders lose sight of their mission, vision and values that the potential problems of public trust and accountability begin.

2.2.3. Driving innovation in culturally resistant organisations

The sustained success and relevance of charities requires that they are proactive in embracing digital technologies, social and environmental sustainability, and structural demographic trends such as the ageing population and cultural diversity (Charity Commission, 2008; Burt and Taylor, 2013; Cordery, Smith and Berger, 2017). However, the buffeting that charities typically receive from volatile market conditions means that their activities are often too focused on survival and firefighting, rather than these more structural, longer-term developments (Mitchell, 2022). Common obstacles to innovation in charities include a cultural resistance to change, the difficulty of understanding and prioritising the voices of different types of customer, the diversity in perspectives of different stakeholders, and a lack of innovation process, resource and training (Hodges and Howieson, 2017; Jevanesan et al., 2021). As a result, the role of leaders often becomes critical in driving new business models and cultural transformation based on values that support innovation and commercial success (Osula and Ng, 2014; Jaskyte, 2018).

2.2.4. Improving diversity and inclusion

Numerous studies by professional bodies and consultancies indicate that, not only does the charity sector fail to reflect the racial diversity of the UK as a whole, it performs less well than both the private and public sectors (Green Park, 2018; Inclusive Boards, 2022; NCVO, 2023a). Racial and sexual diversity is an even greater issue at executive and non-executive leadership level. Recent research indicates that 29% of charities still have all-white boards, compared to 4% of FTSE 100 boards, and only 13% of charity boards have gender parity (Inclusive Boards, 2022). Charity trustees are rarely paid and need established skills, experience and time available to play the role. These requirements tend to bias their recruitment heavily towards white, middle-aged and middle-class candidates (Parliament. House of Lords, 2017; Mitchell, 2022). As a consequence, increasingly strong arguments are being made to improve board diversity and thereby increase the

quality of decision-making, innovation and moral credibility within the sector (ACEVO, 2018a; Jaskyte, 2018; Charity Commission, 2019). Intense public attention is likely to continue in this area, due to high-profile debates about cases of sexual and racial discrimination in charities and the government's concern about the growing 'woke agenda' (Moody, 2022).

2.2.5. Engaging a complex range of stakeholders

The distinctive legal characteristics of charities, coupled with the political context in which they operate, typically lead to the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders: trustees, staff, organisational funders, private donors, government departments, local authorities, community members, project managers and volunteers (Kay, 1996; Renz, 2016). Many of these players bring different and even conflicting performance expectations to bear, resulting in a major engagement challenge for an organisation's leadership team (McHatton et al., 2011). Different researchers stress the importance of building relationships and influence in particular areas, for example: the board (Thach and Thompson, 2007; Herman, 2016), employees (De Cooman et al., 2011; Park et al., 2018), volunteers (Schreiner et al., 2018) and the wider third sector context in which organisations operate (Macmillan and McLaren, 2012).

2.2.6. Addressing ambitious goals with limited resources

Building an effective organisation is uniquely challenging for leaders of charities given the constraints on financial budgets, the lack of staff training and the limited ability to use compensation as a meaningful incentive (Taliento and Silverman, 2005; do Adro and Leitão, 2020). Given the central importance of addressing difficult social goals, there is a constant pressure to channel all available time and money into delivering frontline services (Kirchner, 2006). There is a risk that the passion people feel for their cause, coupled with the lack of resources they have available to address it, can lead to overwhelming workloads and high levels of stress and burnout (Kanter and Sherman, 2017; Lepper, 2021).

2.2.7. Building public trust and accountability

If charities are to convince stakeholders to continue providing funds and support for their activities, they need to demonstrate that tangible progress is being made towards the social purposes they have been set up to address (Renz, 2016). In the wake of several recent governance failures and PR crises, there are increasing demands for more transparent and efficient working methods, with clearer measurement of impact (Hyndman, 2017; Jaskyte, 2018). The Charity Commission's 'Statement of Recommended Practice' (SORP) has helped to set out how charities should prepare both their 'financial

account' and their 'performance account', the latter playing an important role in telling the story behind the organisation's work (Connolly, Hyndman and McConville, 2013). At the heart of this challenge for charities is the need to build public trust in their reliability, honesty and accountability. Without this, the support and engagement of beneficiaries, funders, regulators and staff will be undermined (Hyndman, 2017).

2.2.8. Section summary – Charity and non-profit leadership challenges

From this section of the literature review, a significant conclusion is that the leaders of charities face a complex range of sector-specific challenges. Whilst some of these are strategic and commercial in nature, others relate to the differentiating cultural values that lie at the heart of charitable endeavours. Many of these issues have become more acute in recent years, owing to the volatile changes taking place in the social, economic and political environments. However, the academic literature from which these conclusions are drawn is often not related to the UK, and is focused on the non-profit or third sector more generally, rather than charities specifically. There are also very few studies available which focus on the personal perspectives that UK charity CEOs have of their leadership challenges. This is an important knowledge gap, and one that this study needs to address.

2.3. The implications for charity and non-profit leadership theory

The idiosyncratic nature of charity leadership has important implications for the way in which this form of leadership is conceptualised. A discussion of these theoretical developments will be undertaken in the following section.

2.3.1. The case for a distinctive approach

In their systematic literature review of leadership and organisational innovation in the third sector, do Adro and Leita (2020, p.51) point out that whilst there are many similarities between leadership in the non-profit and business sectors, many "unique specificities" also need to be taken into account for non-profit organisations. Despite this fact, they and many other researchers conclude that much less research attention has been paid to non-profit than for-profit leadership (Thach and Thompson, 2007; Macmillan and McLaren, 2012; Jaskyte, 2018). Hodges and Howieson (2017) highlight the dangers of cutting and pasting theories from one sector to another, and assert the importance of understanding leadership in the particular context within which it is operating. They observe that even the limited non-profit leadership literature that does exist tends to be US-centric and focused too heavily on individualistic psychological approaches. They express concern that this orientation tends to frame leadership as a top-down process from leader to followers,

rather than the distributed process likely to be more appropriate in the European cultural context.

In the UK specifically, Terry et al. (2018) observe that greater attention is now paid to the importance of leadership in the third sector. This is due partly to the complex challenges being faced, and partly to some recent governance failures and fundraising scandals. They point to longstanding doubts about leadership capabilities in the sector, a deficit referenced in the report by the Select Committee on Charities (Parliament. House of Lords, 2017).

2.3.2. The meaning of leadership in third sector organisations

Terry et al. (2018) reviewed the academic and policy-based literature relating to leadership theory and its relevance to the UK voluntary sector. They observed that the focus of attention in the wider literature had shifted over time, with a key milestone occurring in the 1980s, when the emphasis moved from personal leadership traits to leadership behaviours. 'Transformational leadership' was one such theory which had particular influence, referring to leaders who drive organisational change by articulating an inspiring vision of a new reality, and by engaging followers in strategies to deliver that vision in practice (Day et al., 2014).

More recently, concern has emerged that these trait-based and behavioural theories rely too heavily on the assumption that leadership is about a single person (Kay, 1996; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022). Grint and Jones (2022) have argued that whilst this is one valid perspective, it is just one of five potential approaches to exploring leadership. Leadership can be understood to involve the 'person' (who leaders are), 'product' (what leaders achieve), 'position' (where leaders operate), 'process' (how leadership is accomplished) and 'purpose' (why leaders lead).

Terry et al. (2018) conclude that the limited amount of leadership research undertaken to date in the UK voluntary sector has been primarily 'person-centred', exploring the traits and competencies associated with being an effective leader. As examples, studies by Cormack and Stanton (2003) and Chambers and Edwards-Stuart (2007) both generated lists of desired personal attributes, ranging from being passionate, strategic and inspirational to having humility, integrity, resilience, and excellent networking and communication skills. Hodges and Howieson (2017) also set out to discover what leadership means in the third sector, by using narrative enquiry with 20 leaders from a range of organisation types in the UK, 5 of whom were charity CEOs. The participants were asked to express in their own words their experiences and perceptions of leadership and its challenges. Their conclusion was that there were two dimensions to the meaning

of leadership: leadership as an “approach” and as a set of “personal qualities” (Hodges and Howieson, 2017, p.72). The themes related to leadership as an approach included maintaining the reputation of the organisation, ensuring ethical obligations are adhered to, ensuring people are motivated, and creating a positive environment. In terms of personal qualities, numerous leadership attributes were cited including influencing, motivating, listening, empowering others, and being authentic, resilient and courageous. Emphasis was given to a values-orientation, self-awareness and regulation, and social influencing skills.

Many concerns have been expressed in the broader literature about focusing excessively on the characteristics of individual leaders. Grint and Jones (2022) argue that no two lists of leadership attributes are ever the same, and they challenge the likelihood of anyone being able to meet the ‘god-like’ range of qualities involved. When these lists are translated into organisational competency models, further problems arise. Carroll et al. (2008, p.364) refer to the “bewildering and contradictory array of expectations” that often result. Competency models also emphasise measurable behaviours over more subtle situational factors, and limit the consideration of leadership as a more distributed, relational process (Bolden and Gosling, 2006; Carroll, Levy and Richmond, 2008).

The concept of leadership as a collective or shared process is a significant emerging dimension in leadership theory and seems to have special relevance to the charity sector (Grint, 2010; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022). In a pioneering study by Kay (1996) involving 34 CEOs of voluntary organisations, he concluded that leadership is less about a heroic individual in a senior hierarchical position and more “a multi-dimensional process of social interaction, creating and sustaining acceptable meanings of issues, events and actions” (Kay, 1996, p.131). A crucial focus for this process is defining an organisation’s values, mission and strategy and keeping these relevant over time. Given the complexity of the stakeholder landscape, and the importance of taking people with you, a leader’s influence is ultimately driven by their dual capacity to make sense of things and to express them in language that makes them meaningful to many different groups of people. Effective leaders need to read issues from multiple perspectives, live with paradox and use their personal judgement to resolve tensions as they arise.

Ultimately, however, distributive leadership theory maintains that leadership is not the prerogative of one person. It is a collective process in which different individuals and stakeholder groups influence each other relationally, share out responsibilities, and hold one another to account (Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022; Baxter and Ehren, 2023). Grint (2010) builds on this thinking by challenging conventional

views that individual leaders must be expected to have all the answers to the problems faced by their organisations. Indeed, he argues that this may be precisely the wrong approach when those problems are ‘wickedly’ complex, as they tend to be in the non-profit sector. A more appropriate style may be to pose challenging questions, rather than to provide decisive answers, thereby encouraging reflection, creativity and the emergence of less predictable solutions.

Kay’s (1996) identification of sense-making as a critical aspect of charity leadership is endorsed by Macmillan and McLaren (2012). They stress the importance of non-profit organisations building an engaging narrative to explain their activities and their impact to their many stakeholders. Interestingly, this requirement ties in closely with the role of the charity’s story in the SORP performance account referenced earlier. They also suggest that a more strategic narrative is needed for the third sector as a whole, to clarify its focus and its potential role in contributing towards a civil society.

One other recent strand of leadership theory which has significant implications for charities is ethical leadership, owing to the values-driven nature of the sector. Scandals involving charities such as Kids Company and Oxfam have raised significant concerns about the ethical standards and competence of some charity leaders (Cook and Mason, 2021). Day (2014) explains that ethics-based leadership approaches typically include three main concerns: good ‘intent’ of individuals, proper ‘means’, and appropriate ‘ends’. Once again, this type of theory creates demanding expectations of charity leaders at a personal level (Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018). Characteristics of ethical leaders include integrity, honesty, fairness, duty, conscientiousness and altruism (Day et al., 2014). Many researchers have pointed out that, owing to frequent clashes in value systems and other everyday ethical dilemmas, applying these propositions in practice is often a lot more challenging for leaders than is immediately apparent (Day et al., 2014).

2.4. The unique role of the CEO

2.4.1. The role that CEOs play in the private sector

Even when leadership is understood to be a social process that goes well beyond the role of a single individual, there is no doubt that the Chief Executive Officer of an organisation still has a vital contribution to make (Kay, 1996; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022). Lafley (2009) argues that the role of CEO is distinctive in providing the central link between the ‘inside’ world of the organisation and the ‘outside’ world of society, markets, customers, investors and other external stakeholders. Only the CEO can integrate the various interests and priorities involved at a whole-enterprise level and, as a result, it is they who are ultimately

held accountable for their organisation's performance.

Lafley (2009) goes on to highlight four fundamental tasks that are the unique responsibility of a CEO: (1) defining the 'outside' in a meaningful way so that external stakeholders are clearly defined and prioritised, (2) deciding what business to be involved in and, just as importantly, not involved in, (3) balancing yields in the present with investment in the future, and (4) shaping the values and standards of the organisation. He also makes the point that, despite the apparent simplicity of these tasks, they are not easy to achieve, and it is often tempting to get pulled into other, less crucial work.

Given the importance of the CEO role, there is surprisingly little research data about the nature of the work they actually do and how they excel (Dewar, Hirt and Keller, 2019). In an attempt to fill this gap, Porter and Nohria (2018) carried out a study involving 27 CEOs, in which their executive assistants catalogued their activities in 15-minute increments over a three-month period. They highlighted that, owing to the vast scope and complexity of the role, a CEO's own time is their most precious resource, and how they spend it has a crucial impact on both their own performance and that of their company. The results indicated that the main focus areas for CEO time allocation were functional/business unit reviews (25%), people and relationships (25%), strategy (24%) and organisation and culture (16%).

Dewar et al. (2019) make the point that this kind of analysis does not help to indicate whether CEOs spending their time in this way will ultimately prove effective. In their role as partners at McKinsey & Co., they carried out an analysis of their consultancy's database of CEO performance and generated a model of CEO excellence (see Figure 2.2 below). Their study was not peer reviewed, but it claims to draw on 25 years' worth of data, involving 7,800 CEOs from 3,500 companies across 70 countries and 24 industries. Their model defines six key elements within the CEO role, linked with certain mindsets and practices, which they suggest are likely to help CEOs to succeed in their duties. Although their research focused on publicly listed companies, they argue that the model is relevant to the leaders of all types of organisations, including non-profits.

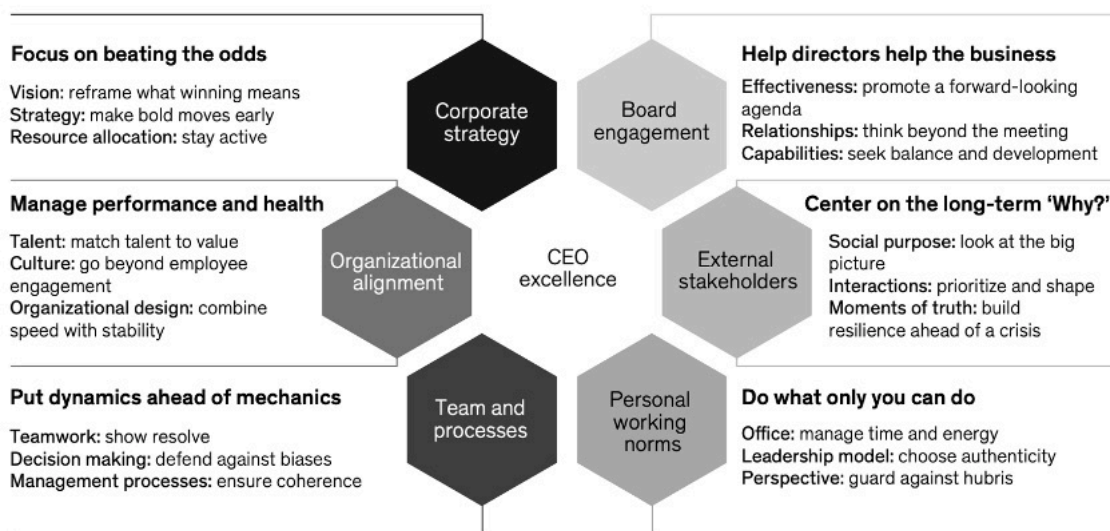


Figure 2.2: A model for CEO excellence (Dewar, Hirt and Keller, 2019).

2.4.2. The role that CEOs play in charities

The need for a CEO to integrate their organisation's external and internal agendas is also a central feature of their role in charities (Kirchner, 2006; Lafley, 2009). Kirchner (2006) highlighted some distinctive challenges involved in doing so in the third sector. Charity CEOs often face unusual levels of external uncertainty, owing to their dependence on political and economic conditions, funding circumstances, and prevalent societal values. Another distinguishing factor internally is that fiscal resources are usually directed towards external goals, meaning that investment in organisational capabilities is constrained (Kirchner, 2006).

Other commentators agree that there are some added complexities facing charity leaders (Osula and Ng, 2014; Mitchell, 2022). An insightful perspective is provided by Taliento and Silverman (2005), who interviewed twelve 'cross-over' leaders with experience of playing senior executive roles in both for-profit and non-profit organisations. Their conclusion was that the challenges faced by non-profit leaders are not well understood, and are often under-estimated by people outside the sector. They identified some key problem areas, the first of which was that non-profit CEOs typically possess lesser levels of authority, deference and control than their private sector counterparts. The range and diversity of their stakeholders places a greater premium on consensus-building, which means that communication skills become especially important in influencing and motivating others. Monitoring performance in relatively intangible areas of activity is another challenge, resulting in the need for innovative metrics. Finally, the scarcity of resource and the lack of training in non-profits makes building effective organisations more difficult.

As part of the stakeholder engagement challenge, one of the most important issues in charities is managing the relationship with the board of trustees (NCVO, 2018). In a model of CEO leadership developed conceptually by ACEVO (see Figure 2.3), Kirchner (2007) shows how integral establishing effective corporate governance and accountability is perceived to be.

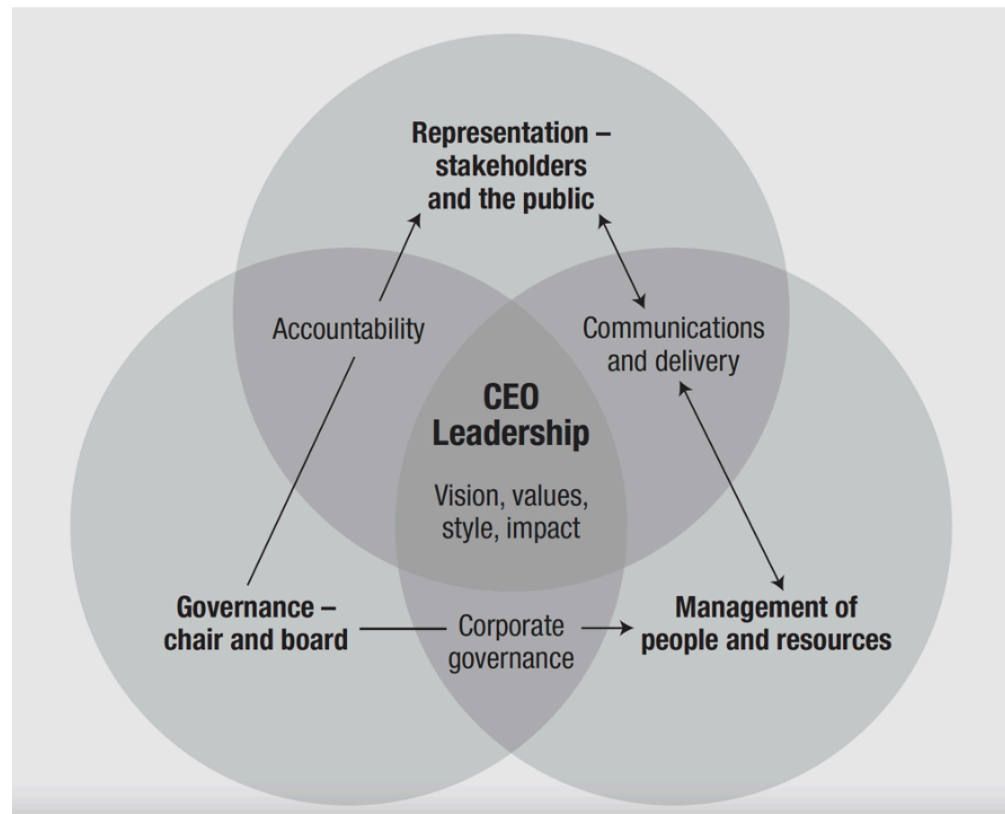


Fig 2.3: The three leadership spheres of a third sector CEO (Kirchner, 2007).

To this end, research by Bernstein et al. (2016) highlights the particular importance of the relationship between CEOs and the chair of their board. In a study of 474 non-profit chairs and CEOs in the US, it was striking how little alignment there was between people in these two roles, and the potentially negative impact it had on organisational performance. Differing perspectives were widespread on issues such as board diversity, capability and effectiveness, with CEOs generally feeling less satisfied with board governance than their chairs. The researchers concluded that the divergence may be explained by a lack of clarity about leadership roles and responsibilities, information asymmetry, and the type of power that boards have over their CEOs. As also argued by Herman (2016), they suggest that a more collaborative approach could be beneficial, in which the responsibility for governance becomes more equally shared between the CEO and the board, rather than continuing as the narrow responsibility of the board alone.

2.4.3. The personal challenges facing CEOs

The role of CEO in any organisation is peerless and potentially more exciting, rewarding and influential than any other, but it is also all-consuming, lonely and stressful (Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Dewar, Hirt and Keller, 2019). A CEO's ultimate responsibility for the biggest business decisions brings with it a huge pressure to make those decisions correctly. It also makes CEOs the lightning rod for any criticism of the organisation (Nadler, 2005). Too often, people who take on the role are assumed to possess the characteristics of an "indefatigable superhero", immune from the fears, doubts and weaknesses of normal human beings (Porter, Lorsch and Nohria, 2004, p.71; Preece and Iles, 2009).

When considering the role of a charity CEO in particular, Paton and Brewster (2008) argue that insufficient attention has been given to what the individual person involved brings to the job in terms of their needs, capabilities and style. Unsurprisingly, given the social purpose of non-profit organisations, their employees tend to be more motivated by making a difference to people's lives than employees in for-profit organisations. They are also more likely to perceive a good fit between their personal values and those of the organisations they work for (De Cooman et al., 2011). In a comparison of the motivation profiles of leaders in the non-profit and private sectors, similar findings emerged (Lukes and Stephan, 2012). Whilst leaders in both sectors had a strong desire for self-realisation and achievement, non-profit leaders were more interested in the meaningfulness of their work and in providing help to others. Private sector leaders placed more value on independence, autonomy and financial incentives.

The passion that charity leaders feel for their social causes has upsides and downsides. On the one hand, they feel that their work matters deeply, and this provides a source of inspiration (Kanter and Sherman, 2017). On the other hand, this passion can result in a sense that they can never do enough to overcome the social injustices against which they are fighting (Kanter and Sherman, 2017). Similarities exist with the tensions faced by the leaders of social movements. Marshall and Ganz (2018, p.194) suggest that the core challenge for such leaders lies in balancing criticality and hope, in the sense of finding an equilibrium between "despair" about the "world's pain" and "optimistic delusion" about the "world's possibility". The risk is that they lose sight of the need to recharge and take care of themselves personally (Lobell, Sikka and Menon, 2014; Kanter and Sherman, 2017). In extreme cases, social activists can see self-care as self-indulgence, a perspective that increases the risk of exhaustion and burnout. A culture of selflessness and martyrdom can creep into charitable organisations, wherein emotional toil becomes established as a necessary sacrifice for the cause (Gorski, 2015).

The urgency for this attention to personal wellbeing is supported by a survey of 125 CEOs, conducted just before the Covid crisis in the UK (Jones, 2019). 72% of respondents reported feeling stressed in their role, 61% were suffering from anxiety, and 87% were experiencing at least one symptom of burnout. 15% of CEOs claimed to have taken time off work due to work-related stress. The situation has intensified further in the wake of the pandemic, with 44% of 450 charity leaders involved in a more recent survey stating that they are now considering leaving their jobs due to burnout (Ecclesiastical, 2021).

2.5. The case for personal development and support

2.5.1 The charity leadership development paradox

Given the many organisational and personal challenges facing charity CEOs, their personal support and development would seem to be an important priority. The Select Committee on Charities report (Parliament. House of Lords, 2017) noted the personal strain on CEOs, and advocated more support to help them thrive in their jobs. Various studies by Kram (Kram, 1988; Ragins and Kram, 2007; Yip and Kram, 2017) have demonstrated that a constellation of developmental relationships with bosses, peers, direct reports, friends and family members can provide essential sources of psycho-social, career-related and relational support for individuals at work. However, the politically-charged context in which charity CEOs operate tends to make their dialogue with staff colleagues and board members a less useful source of support and learning than is traditionally the case in other sectors (Sherlock and Nathan, 2007).

When it comes to their professional development specifically, ACEVO's annual Pay & Equalities Survey indicates that just 17% of charity CEOs have a personal development plan in place (ACEVO, 2023). The proportion who claim to be satisfied with their board's support for investment in their personal development has fallen from 60% in 2017 to just 49% in 2023 (ACEVO, 2023). A paradox seems to exist in the sector, in that effective leadership is seen as being crucial to the success of charitable organisations (Marsh, 2013; Parliament. House of Lords, 2017). Yet, at the same time, an attitude prevails towards professional development that is, at best, ambivalent and, at worst, limited by self-recrimination and guilt (Kirchner, 2006; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b). The most obvious barriers to investment in leadership development are perceived resource constraints, relating to financial budgets, and, even more importantly, time (Kirchner, 2006). However, the root causes for these obstacles lie in underlying cultural perspectives (Marsh, 2013). A belief exists in the sector that resources should be focused on frontline services, and that it would be selfish to channel these, instead, towards one's own

personal development. This viewpoint is exacerbated by a fear that doing so would look bad, in an era when there is already low public trust in the way that charities deploy their resources (Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b).

Many commentators point to a leadership skills deficit that has existed in the charity sector for a number of years (Norris-Tirrell, Rinella and Pham, 2018; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b). This has been caused not just by a lack of support for CEOs who are in role, but also for the career development and succession planning of high-potential leaders on their journey towards the top job (Marsh, 2013; Norris-Tirrell, Rinella and Pham, 2018). As a result, increasing emphasis is now being placed on investment in high-quality leadership training and development as a driver of charity performance (Parliament. House of Lords, 2017; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b).

2.5.2 The potential role of coaching and mentoring

Despite these limitations, UK charity CEOs claim to access learning and development through a variety of channels, with 63% attending workshops/seminars, 58% using online learning, 50% conferences and 26% peer learning groups. 32% of CEOs report having 'coaching', down from 34% in 2020, and 20% say they utilise 'mentoring', though it is not clear what these terms mean to them or whether there is any overlap in the figures (ACEVO, 2023).

There is little data available to indicate how widespread executive coaching and mentoring support is for CEOs in the private sector. In a survey of 70 private sector CEOs, carried out ten years ago in the US, a similar proportion (34%) claimed to be receiving support from an external coach (Larker and Miles, 2013). Given the rapid growth in the coaching market over the past decade, it seems likely that this figure will now be higher. In a discussion of the study's findings, Gavett (2013, p.2) highlighted the value to CEOs of the coaching environment providing "a rare safe place to think through various topics". De Janasz and Peiperl (2015, p.2) describe the mentoring of private sector CEOs as "a growing but as yet undocumented phenomenon". In this case, support provided by veteran leaders from outside the CEO's own company offers "timely, context-specific counsel drawn from experience" (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015, p.3).

The importance of personal reflection to senior executives is emphasised by Megginson and Clutterbuck (1999, p.8). They describe this as "finding sufficient time to think things through, explore their inner meaning and to analyse and compare different strategies". They explain that this reflection can be supported by external partners playing a variety of roles. Some will be executive coaches, others more experienced mentors, and, to some extent, mentoring relationships often shade into coaching and vice versa. But they argue

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that the differences between the two are more than academic, as “research into ‘helping to learn’ roles suggests strongly that clarity of expectation about the role makes a significant difference to the quality of the outcomes” (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 1999, p.13).

2.5.3. Section summary – Case for personal development and support

To summarise the ground covered in this chapter so far, a discussion has taken place about the challenges facing charity leaders and the implications for charity leadership theory. The unique role played by charity CEOs has been explained, as have the intense pressures faced by individuals in this position. A lack of personal support for charity CEOs has been identified, and a potential role for coaching and mentoring established. To examine this opportunity further, an analysis of the meaning of the terms coaching and mentoring is now required, so that the nature of the possible contribution of each discipline towards the leadership challenges of charity CEOs can be clearly understood.

2.6. The meaning of coaching and mentoring

2.6.1. Ontological considerations

Coaching and mentoring are “confused and contested terms” which incorporate a diverse range of overlapping practices (Western, 2012, p.41). It is widely accepted that there are no universally agreed definitions for either of the two disciplines (Salter and Gannon, 2015; Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). Indeed, many researchers have concluded that any attempts to create theoretical distinctions are inherently futile, partly because coaching and mentoring activities are so entangled in practice, and partly because the terms have been used loosely in common parlance for so many years (Western, 2017; Gannon, 2021; Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021). This lack of clarity has been exacerbated by what Clutterbuck describes as a “land grab” by professional bodies, each trying to stake out its territory by issuing definitions, rules and practices based on their own particular perspectives and interests (Clutterbuck, 2008, p.9).

At the heart of this dilemma lies an ontological consideration about the fundamental nature of coaching and mentoring. In their literature review of research into the two disciplines, Koopman et al (2021) observe that most research has been done from an objectivist perspective, seeking to define rather than describe (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Garvey and Stokes (2022) go further and argue that this stance is also common in commercial organisations, as managers look for cause and effect justifications for their investment in coaching and mentoring interventions. The problem is that coaching and

mentoring are, in reality, social constructions, and are thus subject to social communication processes (Garvey and Stokes, 2022). Any typologies and divisions, therefore, become arbitrary, and are only representative of the observer's position, experience and interest (Western, 2012). Attempting to attribute a "hard, solid, rational reality" to a social phenomenon results in "misplaced concreteness" (Garvey and Stokes, 2022, p.19). A subjectivist ontological stance is therefore more appropriate, taking into account the fact that the meanings of coaching and mentoring have evolved over time and will always mean different things to different people (Western, 2012; Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). It is for this reason that a constructionist/interpretivist stance was adopted for this study (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019).

2.6.2. Historical development of mentoring and coaching

Given this philosophical position, it is important to appreciate the historical progression of the terms coaching and mentoring, and the influence that this has had on the way the two disciplines are understood today. The first mention of the term 'mentor' is generally accepted to be in Homer's poem, *The Odyssey* (Koopman et al., 2021). When Odysseus left his home for the Trojan war, he entrusted the development of his son, Telemachus, to a wise and faithful advisor called Mentor. Based on this origin, a mentor has come to mean an experienced person who provides guidance, advice and support to a more junior mentee (Western, 2012).

In contrast, coaching is widely perceived to have its roots in Greek history and the role of Socrates (Garvey and Stokes, 2022). His method of asking questions rather than presenting an argument has led him to be regarded as one of the first coaches (Koopman et al., 2021). However, the term 'coach' itself was first coined in relation to personal development much later, in 1849, in *The History of Pendennis* by Thackeray. In this story, a group of students is educated by a tutor on a coach journey, and they use the word for the vehicle to refer also to the learning they receive whilst they are travelling (Koopman et al., 2021).

By the end of the 19th century, both coaching and mentoring had become established as terms referring to people's development. Whereas mentoring was associated more with growing knowledge, coaching had become related primarily to the improvement of physical performance in sports such as football and rowing (Koopman et al., 2021). The first evidence of coaching being used in the workplace was in the 1930s, but the use of the term in this context seems to have disappeared during World War II and only re-emerged again in the 1960s (Passmore, 2020). This change coincided with the growth of the Human Potential movement in the US, which began to champion people's capacity for self-development (Wildflower, 2013).

Another important strand influencing the evolution of coaching and mentoring was the work of the therapists Freud, Jung and Perls, who advocated that personal development and change could be achieved through exploratory conversations enabling greater self-awareness (Wildflower, 2013; Passmore, 2020). This psychological dimension was brought to the world of sports coaching in 1974, by Tim Galway's seminal book *The Inner Game of Tennis*. During the 1970s, a similar switch in focus took place in approaches to the development of people in business (Koopman et al., 2021). By the 1980s, various forms of coaching and mentoring had become established as methods of improving managerial performance and leadership development.

2.6.3. Types of mentoring and coaching

A seminal influence on the evolution of mentoring was the research of Kram (1983), which identified two dimensions to mentoring relationships – 'career' support and 'psychosocial support'. Career functions involve helping protégés to 'learn the ropes', and preparing them for professional advancement. Psychosocial functions involve higher levels of trust and intimacy, and help to enhance the protégé's personal growth, self-worth and self-efficacy (Ragins and Kram, 2007).

Building on this distinction, Clutterbuck (2009) highlights the emergence of two models of mentoring. Prevalent in the US, 'sponsorship' mentoring has its primary focus on career development, and emphasises the mentor's authority and influence in directing the mentee. In Europe, 'developmental' mentoring became more common, with increased importance given to two-way learning and the mentee's responsibility for self-reflection and development.

Mentoring can be 'formal' – where relationships are set up as part of an organisational programme, or as paid contracts with an external mentor, or 'informal' – where relationships are more organic, and individuals seek and provide support within their own network (Western, 2012). Mentors can be paid or voluntary, and may come from inside or outside the organisation. For the most senior executives, it is likely that mentors will need to be external in order for them to bring the required levels of independence, autonomy and confidentiality (Western, 2012). However, mentors need not always be older or more senior than mentees. Alternative relationships are possible, in which people obtain support from peers, or 'reverse' mentoring from younger people who have different types of experience to share (Kram and Isabella, 1985; Western, 2012).

Coaching has also become established in many forms. Its role now extends not just to supporting people's development and performance in sport and business, but potentially

to helping them live happier, healthier lives more generally (Passmore, 2020). Executive coaching is a particular application of coaching in the workplace, which focuses on individuals in middle or senior management positions (Western, 2012). Passmore (2020, p.9) highlights the importance of the professional working relationship involved in executive coaching, and describes it as a form of leadership development which takes place “through a series of contracted, one-to-one conversations with a qualified coach”. Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018, p.71) define executive coaching as “a targeted, purposeful intervention that helps executives develop and maintain positive change in their personal development and leadership behaviour”. These descriptions distinguish executive coaching from the more informal coaching that can take place in conversations between individuals as they address their work challenges on an ongoing, day-to-day basis (Williamson, 2022). They also separate executive coaching from team coaching, wherein a group of managers is supported to improve their dynamics and effectiveness when working together (Western, 2012).

2.6.4. Social discourses

In order to take into account the wider social, theoretical and organisational influences that shape the way we understand coaching and mentoring, Western (2017) argues it is important to appreciate the broader discourses embedded in our social world. Based on a critical analysis of written and spoken texts, coaching practices, and macro-social factors, he identified four main discourse themes applying to coaching and mentoring (see Table 2.1).

Discourse	Details
Soul Guide	The coach works on the inner self by holding a “mirror to the soul”, creating a deeply reflective space for the coachee that enables their spiritual search for truth, meaning, authenticity and love
Psy Expert	The coach works in the domain of the outer self, drawing on the professional tools and techniques of psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy
Managerial	The coach is less focused on the coachee’s personal identity and more on their role self, seeking to improve personal and organisational productivity
Network-Coach	The coach views organisations as networks, helping the coachee appreciate connections and influence interdependencies more strategically

Table 2.1: Coaching and mentoring discourses (Western, 2017).

Western argues that these discourses can help to clarify the roles that a coach or mentor plays in their relationships with clients, guiding them to build their skills in different areas and to use them flexibly as circumstances demand (Western, 2017). The discourses also provide a lens with which to interpret the chronological development of coaching and mentoring described earlier. For example, Garvey and Stokes (2022) use the Managerial and Soul Guide discourses to help frame the differences between the career-focused and personal development-focused forms of mentoring.

2.6.5. Similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring

Given this historical and cultural analysis, what conclusions can be drawn about the meaning of coaching and mentoring? Most commentators find it useful to distil their analysis by comparing what they perceive to be the similarities and differences between the two disciplines (Passmore, 2020). Consensus seems to exist that both coaching and mentoring are forms of “developmental dialogue” (Garvey and Stokes, 2022, p.23). Bruce-Foulds et al. (2022) suggest that the practice of both disciplines relies on the skills of listening, questioning and feedback, and a good understanding of people, organisations and learning. Both also require good governance, supervision, and effective processes to have the most impact.

Several researchers point to a convergence of mentoring and coaching that has taken place over the years (Clutterbuck, 2009; Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). Koopman et al. (2021) observe that coaching has shifted from instructing to facilitating development, whilst mentoring has evolved from a focus on skills development to include more personal development. Clutterbuck concurs, arguing that mentoring has become less directive, more humanistic and developmental, less one-way and more networked. Coaching has also become less instructional, with the result that both disciplines now rely heavily on asking insightful questions, holding back on advice-giving, and giving control to the learner. As explained earlier, Clutterbuck (2009) also concludes that both disciplines deliver one critical common benefit – creating a personal reflective space in which the recipient has some rare time to think.

Researchers also note some differences between coaching and mentoring (Western, 2012; Passmore, 2020; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). Mentoring is less likely to be a formal relationship, and is more likely to be longer term and focused on career development. Coaching is more likely to have a performance focus, with line managers typically more involved in shaping goals and reviewing progress. Mentors are likely to have less training than coaches, but more organisational or sector knowledge. They are also more likely than coaches to be directive in offering advice to their clients.

However, despite these distinctions, Passmore (2007) argues that the boundaries between executive coaching and mentoring are more blurred than is sometimes suggested. One important way to understand this is to appreciate the difference between coaching and mentoring 'relationships' and coaching and mentoring 'behaviours'.

Research evidence suggests that coachees perceive certain behaviours as being more likely to help generate positive outcomes. These include their coach using a collaborative style, being discursive rather than instructive, using probing and thought-provoking questions, being friendly without being a friend, demonstrating honesty and integrity, being confident in their own abilities, respecting confidentiality, and providing candid feedback (Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck, 1999; Gonzalez, 2004; Passmore, 2007).

It is striking that research into effective mentoring identifies a very similar blend of behaviours as a basis for positive outcomes (Hamlin and Sage, 2011). Indeed, Passmore (2007) asserts that one behaviour which is usually seen as a definitive aspect of mentoring is often crucial in executive coaching too. Coachees value their coach sharing their own career experience and sector knowledge, rather than adopting the stance typically expected of a coach as a completely independent sounding board (Passmore, 2007). The fact that effective coaching and mentoring behaviours are so similar helps to explain why the differences between the two disciplines are so difficult to disentangle in practical terms.

Clutterbuck (2008) goes further to encapsulate the difficulty of creating conceptual distinctiveness between coaching and mentoring. He argues that both disciplines may, in different contexts, be relatively directive or non-directive, be of long or short duration, and may or may not draw upon the helper's experience, involve giving advice, address goals or transitions the learner wishes to make, and address broad personal growth ambitions. He concludes by observing:

"If there is a generic difference (please note the if), it is that coaching in most applications addresses performance in some aspect of an individual's work or life; while mentoring is more often associated with much broader, holistic development and with career progress. This does not mean that we should ignore the differences. On the contrary, clarifying them in the context of a particular program or relationship is fundamental, in my view, to achieving mutual commitment to the chosen process" (Clutterbuck, 2008, p.9).

The reference made here by Clutterbuck (2008) to the importance of context is significant, and highlights the important contribution that this study can make in clarifying the roles of coaching and mentoring in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs.

2.6.6. The critical importance of context

Stokes et al. (2021) endorse the need for clarity about whether coaching or mentoring is taking place in any given situation, otherwise there is a risk of confusion over the kind of service being provided, the behaviours required, and the benefits expected. However, rather than trying to achieve this clarity by seeking concrete definitions, they advocate that it is more useful to embrace the fundamental interconnectedness between coaching and mentoring. They go on to argue that the immediate context in which coaching and mentoring are being used plays a critical 'agentic' role in determining which aspects of each discipline are useful to practitioners in addressing the work challenges involved. Taking a subjectivist ontological stance, they place the varying social conditions within which coaching and mentoring occur as central to any meaningful explanation of the disciplines. As a consequence, they call for more practice-focused research to better understand the coaching and mentoring behaviours involved in different specific contexts (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021).

Salter and Gannon (2015, p.375) reach a similar conclusion, stating that "the specific context in which a coachee or mentee is located is widely understood as holding the key when determining which definition should be applied". Western (2012) argues that the most important priority is "to clarify what is the appropriate intervention for any specific context". He asserts that what the intervention is called matters less than understanding what is actually being provided and why. Finally, following their systematic review of executive coaching outcome studies, Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018) also stress the importance of social contextual influences on coaching effectiveness. They urge greater focus on the role of context as a basis for the design of better research and practice in future.

Koopman et al. (2021) conclude that, to build deeper understanding of coaching and mentoring, more rigorous research is needed, which studies them together as related concepts, rather than separately. To do so, they suggest that models combining coaching and mentoring are needed. One such model has been developed by Lancer, Clutterbuck and Megginson (2016), a two-dimensional framework which maps a relative focus on 'career' and 'performance' on one axis against a spectrum of 'directive' and 'non-directive' influence on the other. Brockbank and McGill (2012, p.10) propose a different 'situational' framework, mapping the ownership of purpose (client versus organisation) against learning outcome (improvement versus transformation). However, the model that seems

most relevant to this study is provided by Stokes et al. (2021). Their framework (see Figure 2.4 overleaf) is explicitly designed to guide the exploration of coaching and mentoring within a particular contextual setting, a key task in this investigation. They identify four contextual dimensions of dyadic relationships and suggest a spectrum, in each case, which describes the range of characteristics typical of coaching relative to mentoring. These four dimensions have been used to guide the next section of this literature review, and also the subsequent collection and analysis of data about the types of coaching and mentoring relationships experienced by charity CEOs in the UK.

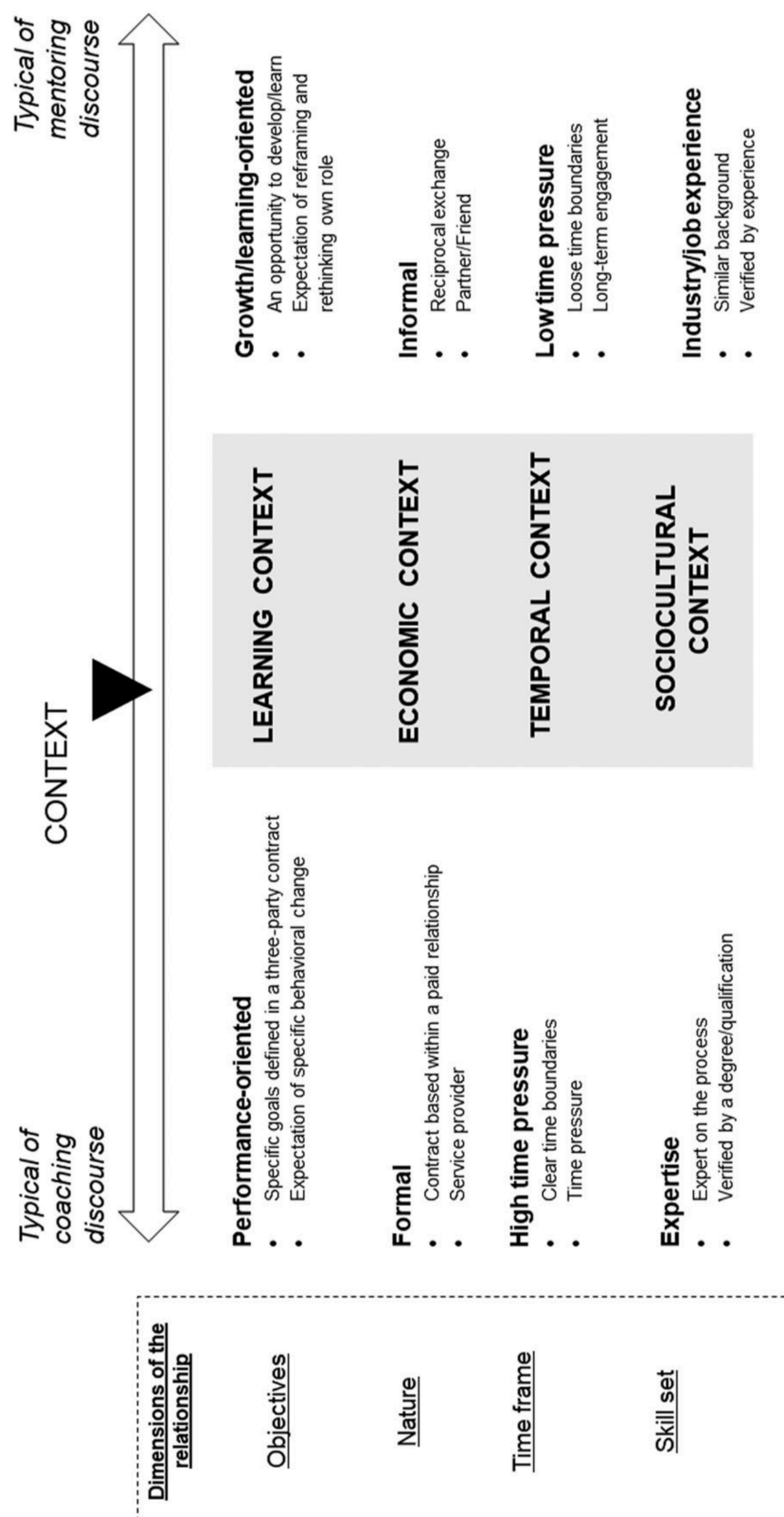


Figure 2.4: A contextual framework for coaching and mentoring (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021).

2.7 The experience of coaching and mentoring in charities and for CEOs

2.7.1. Key contextual factors

When considering the context in which coaching and mentoring take place for UK charity CEOs, two factors seem to be of particular significance. The first is that the relationships involve individuals in the most senior executive positions. It is likely that different things will be happening for people experiencing coaching or mentoring at different hierarchical levels in organisations (Stevens, 2005; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). If researchers ignore these differences, the distinctive approaches to coaching relationships will be missed, and only the most generic conclusions about coaching's role will be possible (Stevens, 2005).

The second contextual factor is that the relationships take place in the UK charity sector. In a review of coaching in different private and public sector settings, van Nieuwerburgh (2015) concluded that the different professional and personal challenges faced by people in different sectors can influence the nature of the coaching that occurs. However, the charity sector was not included in this analysis, owing partly to an assumption by the author that coaching is not used widely by charities, and also to a perceived lack of expert researchers in the sector. Watson (2020) challenges van Nieuwerburgh's first assumption, asserting that coaching is well embedded in the UK third sector as a means of improving personal performance and organisational effectiveness. Typical programmes include external support for senior individuals and teams, pools of internal coaches, and coaching skills development initiatives for line managers (Whybrow and Lancaster, 2012). On this basis, both Whybrow and Lancaster (2012) and Watson (2020) stress the danger of assuming that the knowledge about coaching in other sectors can simply be transferred to the world of charities.

Other researchers have drawn similar conclusions about the role of mentoring in charitable organisations, though these do not relate specifically to the UK (Washington, 2011). Bortnowska and Seiler (2019) assert that the potential spectrum for mentoring in the third sector is broader than in commercial enterprises, owing to differences in their statutory objectives, staff relationships and organisational culture. Williams (2005) emphasises the critical contribution that mentoring programmes can make in non-profits when it comes to priorities such as attracting and retaining talent, developing diverse competencies, and succession planning.

2.7.2. Literature sources and considerations

To review the existing literature in the two key contextual areas defined above, numerous searches were conducted via EBSCO and Google Scholar, using all possible combinations of three groups of key words: (a) coaching, mentoring, (b) charity/charities, nonprofit/non-profit, voluntary organisations, third sector, (c) CEO, executive director, executive leadership. Specific searches of the *International Journal of Coaching & Mentoring*, *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, and *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations* were also conducted.

It is clear from the limited results of this search that coaching and mentoring in charities is an under-researched topic. Just three papers were found focusing on coaching or mentoring in the UK charity sector. The two mentioned earlier, by Whybrow and Lancaster (2012) and Watson (2020), investigate the influence of the charity context on coaching activities, using case study methodology in two UK charitable organisations. The third paper explores the role of internal developmental mentoring schemes, using the St Mungo's homelessness charity as a case study (Ramalho, 2014). However, none of the three papers address the role of coaching and mentoring for CEOs.

A wider range of published papers and doctoral dissertations were identified relating to charities outside the UK, although most of these focus on mentoring rather than coaching. A common theme used to define mentoring is that it involves a relationship in which a more experienced person provides advice and developmental support to a less experienced mentee or protégé (Williams, 2005; Feeney, 2007; Dudley, 2022). A growing body of research examines the role that mentoring by a charity's staff members can play in providing help to their beneficiaries, particularly in areas such as youth support (Preston, Prieto-Flores and Rhodes, 2019). Another research theme is the value of formal internal mentoring schemes in developing the next generation of leaders within non-profit organisations (Williams, 2005; Bortnowska and Seiler, 2019; Dudley, 2022). A few studies also focus specifically on the impact that mentoring can have on the leadership development of women and people from ethnic minorities (Bond, 2017; Brigham, 2019). However, once again, these studies do not focus directly on the implications for charity CEOs.

When it comes to the unique needs of CEOs, very little research exists into the roles that coaching and mentoring play in either the private or the charity sectors (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). The primary explanation given for this is the difficulty associated with obtaining time with individuals in such a busy job (Rosser, 2005; Porter and Nohria, 2018). As a consequence, there exists a degree of mystery about what happens behind closed

doors when a senior executive works with a coach or mentor (Stevens, 2005). This gap in knowledge is important, because it is only by incorporating the client's perspective on their experience that a reliable understanding of the role of coaching and mentoring in any particular context can be obtained (Stevens, 2005; Passmore, 2010).

The few studies identified which relate to the role of coaching and mentoring for CEOs in either the private or charity sectors are summarised in Table 2.2 overleaf. In the private sector, Stevens (2005) conducted insightful research into the perspectives that CEOs have on their experience of coaching relationships, by using structured interviews with seven CEOs across four US business sectors. However, it should be noted that three of these executives had previously been involved in a coaching relationship with the researcher himself, so some questions of objectivity must be considered. The second paper, by De Janasz and Peiperl (2015), focuses on CEO mentoring. Their study was based on interviews with 15 chairman mentors and 25 CEO protégés in large, private sector businesses. The third study was quantitative in nature and explored coaching usage and attitudes at senior executive levels (Gavett, 2013; Larker and Miles, 2013).

Four further papers were found which address the role of coaching for executive directors in US non-profit organisations. Three of these studies have not been published in research journals, but were sponsored and reported by CompassPoint, a consultancy providing leadership development to non-profit leaders in the US. The first of these was an evaluation of a coaching programme for 24 executive directors (Harder & Co, 2003). The second was also an evaluation of coaching, this time involving 22 senior non-profit executives who had participated in the 'LeaderSpring' leadership development programme (Sheridan and Howard, 2009). The third was a study called Coaching and Philanthropy, designed to assess and advance the role of coaching as a strategy for building effective non-profit organisations (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010).

The fourth study relating to non-profit leadership coaching was not connected with CompassPoint, and was published by Fischer and Beimers (2009) in the journal Non-profit Management and Leadership. This research collected retrospective data from nine executive directors and five coaches who were involved in a pilot coaching programme in the US. The programme was intensive and short-term in nature, with one-to-one interventions occurring for at least four hours per month over a six-month period. The coaches involved had all previously been non-profit executive directors, and were trained as coaches specifically to take part in the programme. In some ways, therefore, their profiles are more in line with those of mentors than professional coaches.

	Author	Date	Title	Publication	Methodology & Sample
Private sector	Stevens, J. H.	2005	Executive coaching from the executive's perspective	Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	Informal telephone interviews with 7 CEOs/Presidents (6 men, 1 woman) from US private sector businesses (manufacturing, financial services, health care, academia), using 11 preconstructed questions provided to the interviewees in advance
	De Janasz, S. & Peiperl, M	2015	CEOs need mentors too	Harvard Business Review	Interviews with 15 chairman mentors and 25 proteges in US and UK (CEOs, CEO designates & CFOs)
	Larker, D. & Miles, S.	2013	Executive coaching survey	Report sponsored by Stanford Graduate School of Business and summarized by Gavett, G. (2013) in the Harvard Business Review (What CEOs really want from coaching).	Survey of 203 CEOs, Senior Executives and Directors of US private sector businesses
Non-profit sector	Harder & Co	2003	Executive coaching project: Evaluation of findings	Report by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services	Mixed method evaluation of a coaching project involving 40 hours of personal coaching for 24 nonprofit Executive Directors in US; Survey completed by 23 EDs pre, during and post coaching; semi-structured telephone interview with 20 EDs, 5 ED case studies.
	Sheridan, R. & Howard, K.	2009	Enhancing nonprofit leadership through coaching	Report by BTW Informing Change/CompassPoint	Retrospective evaluation of the LeaderSpring Executive Coaching Project providing 10 on-hour coaching sessions for 24 nonprofit leaders in US: Survey of leaders and coaches, 8 telephone interviews with leaders and their coaches, participation in 2 coach conference calls and one coach retreat.
	Howard, K. Gislason, M. & Kellogg, V.	2010	Coaching and Philanthropy	Report by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services	Four surveys completed in US by nearly 300 respondents, 24 interviews and focus groups and listening sessions with over 50 individuals. Contributors included nonprofit leaders, coaches, intermediaries and grantmakers.
	Fischer, R. & Beimers, D.	2009	"Put me in, Coach": A pilot evaluation of coaching in the nonprofit sector	Nonprofit Management & Leadership vol. 19, no. 4	Retrospective evaluation of 6-month coaching programme in US: Surveys and semi-structured interviews with 9 Executive Directors and 5 coaches

Table 2.2: Research studies into the role of coaching and mentoring for CEOs in the private and charity sectors.

This raises, again, a crucial consideration when reviewing the literature about CEO experiences of coaching and mentoring. The fact that the terms coaching and mentoring are confused, and are often used by different people to mean different things, necessitates careful interpretation of what is being talked about in any particular situation (Clutterbuck, 2008; Reynolds, 2011). For this reason, the contextual framework proposed by Stokes et al. (2021) provides a useful structure to capture and analyse the findings from the various research studies identified.

2.7.3. Contextual dimensions of the relationship

This section analyses the studies listed in Table 2.2, using the four relationship dimensions identified by Stokes et al. (2021) as a framework for analysis.

Learning Context/Objectives Dimension

Whether a CEO is engaged in coaching, mentoring, or a combination of the two, setting some form of objectives upfront is a crucial part of the process (Stevens, 2005; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). Given the potential lack of clarity regarding the intent behind a relationship, Stevens (2005) highlighted one CEO's view that "there should be a goal orientation or focus to the discussion to keep clear what we are striving for" (Stevens, 2005, p.279). Also notable is the ultimate importance of the organisation's performance as a context for the relationship, whether for a CEO coaching or mentoring relationship. Stevens (2005, p.283) concludes that CEOs value coaching as a process which enables them "to better meet their role obligations and responsibilities ... in service of the mission and purpose of their organization".

De Janasz and Peiperl (2015, p.4) emphasise a similar view regarding mentoring, with a common aim being shared by both the CEO and their mentor, to help "the CEO traverse the learning curve more quickly and perform role functions more effectively". The performance orientation of this mentoring goal is significant, as this is a characteristic more usually associated with coaching relationships on the Stokes et al. (2021) objectives spectrum. De Janasz and Peiperl (2015) also stress the related importance of the CEO mentee driving the mentoring process. A leader at this level must own and be committed to their coaching or mentoring objectives, as this provides the motivation for them to devote their scarce time and energy to what can sometimes be a challenging experience (Stevens, 2005; Reynolds, 2011; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015).

An apparent difference between CEO coaching and mentoring relationships and those of executives in more junior roles, is that there is less likely to be contracting around objectives with other people in the organisation. The idea of coaching might sometimes come up in discussion between a CEO and their chair or board colleagues (Stevens,

2005). However, the study by Larker and Miles (2013) found that 78% of the 70 private sector CEOs surveyed claimed that getting coaching was their own idea. The same study also highlighted a frequent lack of alignment between the development areas that a CEO thinks they should be working on, and their development priorities as perceived by other directors. It is, therefore, particularly important to inform the design of senior leadership coaching and mentoring with feedback from other stakeholders in the business (McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019).

Another factor influencing the setting of objectives for CEOs is whether coaching and mentoring is seen as remedial or developmental (Salter and Gannon, 2015). Many CEOs have strong egos and reject the idea that they have some kind of capability deficit which needs resolving. Indeed, historically, this seems to be one of the main factors limiting the willingness of many CEOs to engage in coaching relationships (Stevens, 2005; Larker and Miles, 2013). A more attractive and empowering model of support is one that emphasises the potential opportunities for leaders to develop themselves and strengthen their performance even further (Salter and Gannon, 2015).

Several researchers highlight the importance of objectives evolving over time. Clutterbuck (2009) asserts that the relationships which deliver the most value to coachees and mentees have broad goals to begin with, and these goals are shaped and refocused as the engagement develops. Stevens (2005) concurs, arguing that, whilst the relationship might start out focusing on some specific problems and challenges, it will often evolve into a deeper exploration of the role that the CEO wants to play and the kind of leader they want to be.

When reviewing the objectives identified in the research into the role of coaching and mentoring for charity leaders specifically, a variety of themes emerge. Although their research was focused on charities at a more general organisational level, Whybrow and Lancaster (2012) and Watson (2020) conclude that many of the objectives in charity coaching programmes are similar to those in other types of organisation. Priorities include increasing self-awareness and confidence, broadening perspectives, providing support through change or in difficult situations, improving managerial skills and behaviours, improving interpersonal relationships, and developing leadership skills. However, one important difference arises from the values-based social mission prevalent in charities. This creates in leaders a deep sense of responsibility and high self-expectations. Whilst this can increase work motivation and engagement, it can also lead to intense pressure and potential disillusionment when things are not going well. As a result, coaching can play an important role in creating a sense of perspective and better work–life balance

(Whybrow and Lancaster, 2012).

Table 2.3 captures the types of coaching objective set by non-profit leaders in two CompassPoint programmes in the US. They reveal a diverse range of potential agenda items, including self-management, technical skill development, managing others and leading the organisation.

Groupings of objectives set by the 24 non-profit executive directors involved in CompassPoint's pilot coaching programme (Harder, 2003)	
Objective	Details
Personal development	Improve work-life balance, reduce stress, increase self-awareness and confidence, etc.
Managing staff	Better mentoring, delegating, staffing, interpersonal relationships, etc.
Leadership skills	Develop clearer vision, develop personal leadership style, increase influence beyond organisation, etc.
Organisational development	Improve clarity of board roles, strategic and activity planning, etc.
Personal organisational skills	Better time management, being more organised
Financial management	Increase fundraising capacity, ensure financial security, managing salaries, etc.

"Coaching intake themes" derived from the goals set by non-profit leaders in CompassPoint's coaching referral and matching service (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010)	
Objective (in descending order of importance)	Details
Managing others	Delegating, giving feedback, dealing with different personalities, managing up
Self-awareness	Identifying and refining communication style, identifying personal strengths and vision
Self-management	Managing time, organising work, managing stress
General/sharing leadership	Transitioning from manager to leader, communicating and aligning vision, strengthening external and board relationships, developing leaders, succession planning
Change management	Developing personal strategies, obtaining buy-in from others, managing culture change
Targeted coaching content	Developing skills in areas such as finance, fundraising, etc
Work-life balance	Dealing with burnout, caring for self, setting boundaries
Personal professional development	Career planning, identifying strengths and weaknesses, planning personal development
Transitioning in/out	Dealing with pressures, meeting expectations, setting up for success

Table 2.3: Coaching objectives in two coaching programmes for US non-profit leaders.

The range of objectives identified in these two studies (Harder & Co, 2003; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010) is also evident in the two other studies exploring the coaching objectives of US non-profit leaders (Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Sheridan and Howard, 2009). Interestingly, these cluster the nature of coachee goals further, using distinctions that reflect closely the two ends of the objectives spectrum in Stokes et al.'s (2021) contextual framework: 'growth/learning-oriented' and 'performance-oriented'.

Fischer and Beimers (2009) identified a 'personal growth' dimension to the objectives of executive directors, incorporating issues such as self-confidence, stress levels and job satisfaction. They distinguished this from a more performance-oriented dimension called 'personal skills', which included issues such as improving strategic thinking, time management and better relationships with staff and board. Sheridan and Howard (2009) identified two similar objective clusters, but titled them slightly differently using the terms 'personal impact' and 'organisational impact'. At the personal level, the focus was on growth-oriented issues such as strengthening self-reflection, self-confidence and clarity about career pathways. Their organisational dimension was similar to Fischer and Beimer's (2009) 'personal skills' dimension, with objectives related to improving CEO communication, relationships with staff and board members, delegating more effectively, and increasing the clarity of their organisation's mission and vision.

The fact that the objectives in these coaching programmes span both ends of Stokes et al.'s (2021) objectives spectrum again questions the distinction between coaching and mentoring on this relationship dimension. It is notable that there is no attempt in any of these studies to distinguish, or in most cases even acknowledge, the differences between coaching and mentoring. Another aspect to consider is that the studies are framed in some way by a need to evaluate and prove the impact of coaching programmes and services. As a result, they are influenced heavily by the 'managerial' coaching discourse (Western, 2017) and a positivist philosophical stance (Garvey and Stokes, 2022). It is not possible to hear the voice and experience of the leaders involved, in the way that Stevens (2005) and De Janasz and Peiperl (2015) achieve in their studies of CEO coaching and mentoring.

Another related issue is that CEO performance objectives often seem to be considered only at the level of an individual leader's skills (Harder & Co, 2003; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010). A central characteristic of CEO coaching and mentoring in the private sector, as highlighted in the studies mentioned earlier, is the intense responsibility that CEO's feel for the impact of their performance at a higher, organisational level. The development of their own capability is therefore needed "for the good of the organisation" (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015, p.3). In the words of one CEO, quoted by Stevens (2005,

p.280), “The client isn’t me. The client is the company and its agenda. The executive coach is here to help me serve that agenda in the role I have to the best of my God-given ability.” This involves embracing the strategic challenges facing the business, dealing with complexity and ambiguity, fostering the right ethos within the organisation, and bringing good judgement and courage to bear when making difficult, high-stakes decisions (Stevens, 2005; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). These broader, more strategic considerations seem to be missing from the research done to date into the role of coaching and mentoring for CEOs in the non-profit sector.

Economic Context/Nature Dimension

Just as clarifying objectives throughout a coaching or mentoring relationship is important, most researchers stress the need for contracting and recontracting around other elements such as fees, timescales, logistics and confidentiality (Stevens, 2005; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). The importance attached to trusting relationships in charities can sometimes allow boundaries to become blurred, with insufficient clarity being established about the role, scope and accountability of coaching and mentoring providers (Whybrow and Lancaster, 2012; Ramalho, 2014).

When it comes to fees specifically, there is very little data available which compares how much CEOs are paying for coaching or mentoring in the private and charity sectors. The only sources identified were from the US, and these indicated that, although rates vary widely, their average level in non-profits is about 25% of that in for-profits (Coutu et al., 2009; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010). The key reason given for this difference is the scarcity mentality in the non-profit sector, with leaders finding it difficult to justify investments in leadership development when they could be using the money to fund services for their beneficiaries.

Howard et al. (2010) found that in 58% of cases, a grant or funder had paid the fees for coaching an executive, in 52% the organisation had paid, and in 12% the leader had paid for the support themselves (note that respondents could choose multiple responses). 6% of the leaders had received coaching free of charge, though pro bono arrangements were found to be on the increase. Some concerns were expressed by the researchers about this trend, on the basis that a lack of financial exchange can sometimes contribute to a perception that coaching is less valuable or important. This leads to an increased risk of cancelled sessions and reduced commitment to following assignments through. However, it is important to recognise that the trend is not in CompassPoint’s best interests either, as it has implications for its own revenue model.

Sheridan and Howard (2009) note that in some coaching programmes, administrative fees are charged by an organising body or service provider, but these are not always passed on to the coaches contracted to deliver the work. This occurs because coaches are willing to contribute their time towards charitable causes, but greater transparency about the investments being made would sometimes help coachees place a higher value on their support. Whybrow and Lancaster (2012) also stress the importance to the relationship of the coach's agenda and the value exchange being made more explicit, by clarifying the benefits to the coach beyond money, in terms of their learning, experience and credentials. However, using Stokes et al.'s (2021) nature spectrum as a guide, it seems important to keep these various conclusions about the need for clarity and formality in perspective. One aspect of the CEO mentoring discourse not explored directly in the literature is the role of informal relationships. There is some evidence to suggest that senior charity executives access support from other sources, such as peers, trustees, former colleagues and bosses (ACEVO, 2023). The inter-relationship between these informal networks and more formal coaching and mentoring engagements seems to be an important knowledge gap.

Temporal Context/Timeframe Dimension

The primary temporal considerations involved in coaching and mentoring are the length of time the relationship lasts, and the frequency and length of each individual conversation. In line with Stokes et al.'s (2021) spectrum for this dimension, there is evidence that coaching relationships are often shorter, with a duration in some instances of just 6 months (Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Sheridan and Howard, 2009). Conversely, some CEOs talk about informal mentoring relationships that have lasted as long as 30 years (Rosser, 2005).

Fischer and Beimers (2009) found that, amongst charity CEOs involved in a shorter-term coaching programme pilot, there was almost unanimous agreement that its length should extend beyond a 6-month time frame. It takes time for a CEO to build trust and rapport with their coach, and it can sometimes take several months to get difficult issues out on the table and to work them through properly. Based on a separate study, Harder (2003) qualifies this finding by arguing that the magnitude of performance improvement can often be greatest in the first 6 months of a coaching engagement. However, he goes on to argue that interpreting this fact to mean that coaching should only be offered for 6 months is an oversimplification. It may well be that the period after the initial 6 months will be a crucial one for deepening the learning and embedding changes in sustainable practices. He uses this conclusion as further evidence to support the need for continuous recontracting between a coach and their client as the relationship unfolds.

Howard et al. (2010) found that the average length of a coaching engagement was around 12 months, with coachees typically devoting about 3 hours per month to the process. However, approaches varied widely across different coaching providers. In one programme, 9 one-hour sessions were phased over an 18-month period and linked with other training sessions and peer advisory group meetings. In another, monthly face-to-face sessions were held over a 12-month period, with phone and email contact between sessions as needed.

In contrast to these findings, Stevens (2005) talks about coaching relationships frequently lasting at least two years. Indeed, the nature of the support being provided to the CEOs involved in his study sounds different in many ways to that of the CompassPoint programmes. My own personal experience reflects the fact that, in some cases, once a coaching engagement has been established successfully, it tends to morph into an ongoing relationship, in which the coach becomes more of a trusted confidant.

Wasylyshyn (2019) argues that this evolution happens frequently for senior executives due to the relentlessness of the business challenges and personal pressures they face. She distinguishes the initial short-term role of a coach from that of the longer-term “trusted leadership advisor” they become (Wasylyshyn, 2019, p.1). In the latter role, insights from the initial coaching activities are leveraged, but the coach moves on to support the client with their leadership challenges as an objective sounding board on a sustained basis.

The role of trusted leadership advisor has some similarities with the profile of CEO mentoring described by De Janasz and Peiperl (2015). In their study, they found that CEO mentors focus on helping leaders deal with the challenging situations that arise over time, many of which they have not experienced before. The difference in mentoring is that, rather than just providing some self-reflective space for the CEO, the mentor can bring relevant experience and wisdom of their own to contribute towards the discussion. De Janasz and Peiperl (2015) highlight the time efficiency of this form of developmental support compared to other options, like training courses at top business schools, which are impractical because they last several weeks. Mentoring sessions need to be fixed in the mentee’s diary well ahead of time, so that they are not crowded out by other priorities. To be effective, the meetings need to be regular and fairly long, with structured agendas, but they can also be relatively infrequent (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015).

Sociocultural Context/Skillset Dimension

Given the exceptionally diverse range of challenges that top executives face, several researchers point out that the focus for coaching sessions can often shift widely, from providing support similar to counselling in some moments and to strategic consultancy advice in others (Stevens, 2005; Reynolds, 2011; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). The

range of potential skills and qualities needed by coaches and mentors is therefore an extensive one. In a review of the considerations listed by several researchers, the key characteristics identified were as follows:

Personal qualities

Trust and confidentiality are absolutely fundamental to any coaching or mentoring relationship at CEO level (Fischer and Beimers, 2009; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). The integrity and authenticity of a partner is therefore crucial, as are the neutrality, independence and broader perspective provided by those from outside the CEO's own organisation (Stevens, 2005; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). The personal chemistry between a CEO and their coach or mentor is also a vital consideration (Coutu et al., 2009; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010). CEOs expect their partners to be intellectually astute, calm, challenging and able to work at pace (Gavett, 2013; McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019).

Coaching skills

The minimum requirements to succeed as a helping professional in this environment are core competencies in areas such as self-awareness, behavioural awareness, a sense of proportion and humour, conceptual modelling, building and maintaining rapport, goal clarity, and communication skills such as listening, observing, parallel processing and projecting (Clutterbuck, 2009; McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019).

Psychological training

Several researchers mention the importance of psychological and social systems expertise in enabling coaches to respond appropriately to some of the deeper issues that emerge in their conversations (Stevens, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2008; McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019). Being able to manage and work within appropriate boundaries, and recognising anxiety and depression, are highlighted as particular priorities (Clutterbuck, 2009; Coutu et al., 2009).

Relevant experience

In the case of CEO mentors, the fact that they have previously worked in similar roles to the CEOs themselves is a central requirement. They are role models who have "been there and done that" and can share useful stories of similar situations from their own experience (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). However, even in the case of coaches, relevant commercial experience and credibility is also valued highly. Coaches must possess the business savvy to connect with and appreciate the kinds of issues that CEOs face (Reynolds, 2011; Jones, 2015; McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019). In some cases, a CEO might also need to boost certain technical skills, in order to improve their ability to

handle a cross-functional leadership role more effectively (Harder & Co, 2003). As a result, new terms are emerging to describe people with a blend of coaching skills and commercial experience, including 'coach-mentors' (Bruce-Foulds, Clark and Ray, 2022) and 'bridgers' (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010). In the non-profit sector specifically, CEOs ideally want to work with people who understand the unique environmental challenges involved. Particularly valuable are coaches with experience of governance structures, fundraising and financial issues, HR challenges, the role of social mission and the scarcity of resources (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010).

Cultural awareness

Howard et al. (2010) argue that a coach's ability to apply a cultural lens is particularly important in the non-profit sector. This involves knowing one's own social and cultural story, and being able to relate it to the way that power, privilege and difference play out in society. In some instances, CEOs report that being matched with a coach with a similar gender and cultural background helps to foster trust, communication and understanding within the relationship (Sheridan and Howard, 2009; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010). Advantages to this include being able to speak more openly about issues arising from this background, as well as less time being needed to explain underlying concerns relating to cultural bias and power dynamics.

Given the range of these various characteristics, choosing a partner with the right profile to help with the right issues at the right time becomes a crucial priority (Jones, 2015). There is, therefore, a close relationship between the objectives and skillset dimensions in the Stokes et al. (2021) contextual framework. De Janasz and Peiperl (2015) argue that the difficulty of finding the right match is the single biggest obstacle to CEO mentoring becoming more widely established.

2.7.4. Section summary – CEO coaching and mentoring literature

To summarise the analysis of the studies in Table 2.2, the roles that coaching and mentoring seem to play in supporting CEOs have many similarities. They are both concerned with helping to enhance the capability of individuals to carry out their responsibilities more effectively on behalf of the organisations they lead (Stevens, 2005; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). They both involve a shared endeavour in which problems are explored, options are generated, and potential actions are planned together. Coaching and mentoring are not done 'to' CEOs or even 'for' CEOs – they are done 'with' them (Stevens, 2005; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). The resulting benefits can be profound, and can include new insight into a CEO's personal strengths and weaknesses, increased self-confidence, improved management and leadership skills, bolder strategic approaches, improved organisational innovativeness, stronger working relationships,

better decision-making and increased financial accountability (Harder & Co, 2003; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015; Moore and Wang, 2017; Lee and Suh, 2018).

In addition, some of the distinctions proposed in the literature between coaching and mentoring appear to be questionable in practice. For example, both disciplines seem to span the performance-oriented and personal growth-oriented objectives that Stokes et al. (2021) suggest could distinguish them. CEOs are keen for their coaches to have relevant commercial experience which they can bring to bear in their conversations, a trait typically associated with mentoring (Stevens, 2005; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010). Mentoring is generally seen to be more directive than coaching, but in many situations it is more likely that experiences are being shared to increase the client's awareness of the options available to them, rather than to advise them on taking a particular course of action (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015).

2.8. The negative aspects of coaching and mentoring

Most of the research into coaching and mentoring as disciplines has sought to explore and assess their positive outcomes. However, dyadic relationships are multidimensional, and it is important to recognise that there may also be some negative effects (Schermuly and Graßmann, 2019; Ivey and Dupré, 2022). Wall (2018) highlights a number of important ethical dilemmas and obligations facing coaches and mentors. If these are not handled thoughtfully, and with a strong moral compass, safe and healthy relationships with their clients may well be undermined. Indeed, even when a relationship is generally perceived to have been successful, some negative elements are still likely to occur (Eby et al., 2004; Schermuly and Graßmann, 2019).

Building on pioneering research by Scandura (1998) and Allen (1997), Eby has undertaken numerous studies to explore the negative aspects of mentoring, from the perspective of both protégés and mentors (Eby et al., 2004; Eby and McManus, 2004; Eby et al., 2008). A summary of the findings is captured in Table 2.4.

Negative effects of mentoring			
From the protégé perspective		From the mentor perspective	
Mismatch within the dyad	When a mentor and their protégé have differing values, work styles or personality	Protégé performance problems	When a protégé performs below expectation, is unwilling to learn or experiences difficulties due to self-destructive behaviour
Distancing behaviour	When a mentor neglects or excludes their protégé or when they appear too self-absorbed and have insufficient time for them	Interpersonal problems	When conflicts occur and a relationship deteriorates between a mentor and protégé, or when a protégé engages in behaviour such as impression management, gamesmanship or submissiveness
Manipulative behaviour	When a mentor wields power over the protégé or engages in self-interested political behaviour	Destructive relational patterns	When a breach of trust occurs or when a protégé engages in behaviour such as harassment, sabotage, jealousy, competitiveness or exploitation
Lack of mentor expertise	When a mentor is ill-equipped from either an interpersonal or a technical skills perspective		
General dysfunctionality	When a mentor has a negative attitude towards their work or organisation, or when personal problems interfere with their ability to mentor effectively		

Table 2.4: Negative aspects of mentoring experiences (Eby et al., 2004; Eby et al., 2008).

As indicated in the left-hand columns of this table, the impact on protégés of negative mentoring experiences can include reduced levels of self-esteem, job satisfaction and physical health, and increased psychological stress, anxiety, absenteeism and job turnover (Scandura, 1998; Eby et al., 2004; Ivey and Dupré, 2022). For mentors, the right-hand columns show that a dysfunctional relationship with a protégé can also increase their stress and anxiety levels. In addition to reducing their commitment to that particular relationship, it can also reduce their propensity to mentor other people in future (Schermuly and Graßmann, 2019; Ivey and Dupré, 2022).

When it comes to the negative effects of coaching, a summary of studies led by Schermuly is provided in Table 2.5. Again, these are broken down from the perspective of both the client and their coach.

Negative aspects of coaching			
From the client perspective		From the coach perspective	
Psychological health	Coaching triggers in-depth problems that could not be dealt with, decreased life satisfaction, job anxiety	Psychological health	Feeling personally affected by coaching topics, being scared about not fulfilling the role of coach, emotional exhaustion, pressure from high expectations
Social integration	Decreased work relationships, dependency on coach, decreased family relationships	Social integration	Too little time for oneself, difficulties to open up in private life, loneliness
Performance	More fluctuating or decreased job performance, decreased job motivation	Unpleasant feelings towards client	Guilt, anger, boredom, sexual attraction
Evaluation of work role	Decreased experience of job meaningfulness, decreased job satisfaction, decreased feelings of competence	Unpleasant behaviour towards coach	Sexual advances, insults, stalking, being threatened
Material losses	Job loss, change of employer with worse job conditions, precarious financial position	Results-related disappointment	Not observing long-term influences, frustration that client's problems could not be solved, disappointment about ineffective coaching
Other	Change of goals without approval, access of third parties to personal information, lawsuit with coach, etc	Material losses	Feeling underpaid, problems with payment
		Other	Difficulties in being a good communicator or in maintaining personal boundaries, etc

Table 2.5: Negative effects of coaching experiences (Schermuly, 2014; Schermuly and Graßmann, 2019).

The negative impact of coaching at an organisational level has not yet received the same research attention as the effects for individual coaches and clients (Schermuly and Graßmann, 2019). However, in an opinion paper, Berglas (2002) emphasised the danger to organisations when coaches build undue influence with CEOs. Coaches with senior-level business experience can shift quickly from discussing an individual's personal performance to offering perspectives on matters of strategic significance, often abusing their power without meaning to. Coutu et al. (2009) raise a similar concern, arguing that senior executives sometimes have the kind of advisory conversations with their coach that they should be having with other members of their C-suite team. A dependency dynamic can easily become established, despite the fact that a core role of coaching should be to make an executive more competent and self-reliant (Coutu et al., 2009; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010).

Another danger with far-reaching consequences at CEO level occurs when coaches have insufficient psychological training to handle their relationships or the challenges facing their clients (Berglas, 2002; Coutu et al., 2009). Too often, coaches offer quick-fix behavioural solutions when more deep-seated psychological issues are involved (Berglas,

2002). They may also be ill-equipped to recognise factors such as transference or rescuer syndrome occurring in relationships with their clients (Berglas, 2002; de Vries, 2010).

At a more philosophical level, Gannon (2021) highlights a risk that coaching and mentoring can be limited in their impact by an unquestioning belief in the power of personal responsibility and resourcefulness. This neoliberal ideological stance attaches excessive importance to the individual self, and ignores the impact of factors such as organisational culture and social inequality in influencing the ability of leaders to bring about change on a more widespread basis (Tabarovsky, 2015; Louis and Fatien Diochon, 2018). Indeed, unless coaches and mentors go beyond their traditional position of neutrality and embrace a more systemic and political role, there is a danger that they could end up serving the status quo of the current system rather than helping to change it (Louis and Fatien Diochon, 2018). Gannon (2021) and Western (2012) argue that coaches and mentors need to learn from social movements in the way that they seek to bring about change, embracing broader social issues more directly and finding ways to address them more collectively through networks. Given that the purpose of most charities is to bring about some form of social change (Charity Commission, 2020), this consideration seems of particular significance to the coaches and mentors of charity CEOs.

2.9. Chapter conclusion – Literature Review

In this chapter, the many potential leadership challenges facing charity CEOs have been explored, as have the implications for charity leadership theory. The unique characteristics of a charity CEO's position have been identified, and the resulting pressures that arise for people who take on this job have been highlighted. To scope out the roles that coaching and mentoring can play in supporting them, an investigation of the meaning of these two terms has been undertaken. Finally, an analysis of the existing research into the roles that coaching and mentoring play within charities, and for CEOs in particular, has been presented.

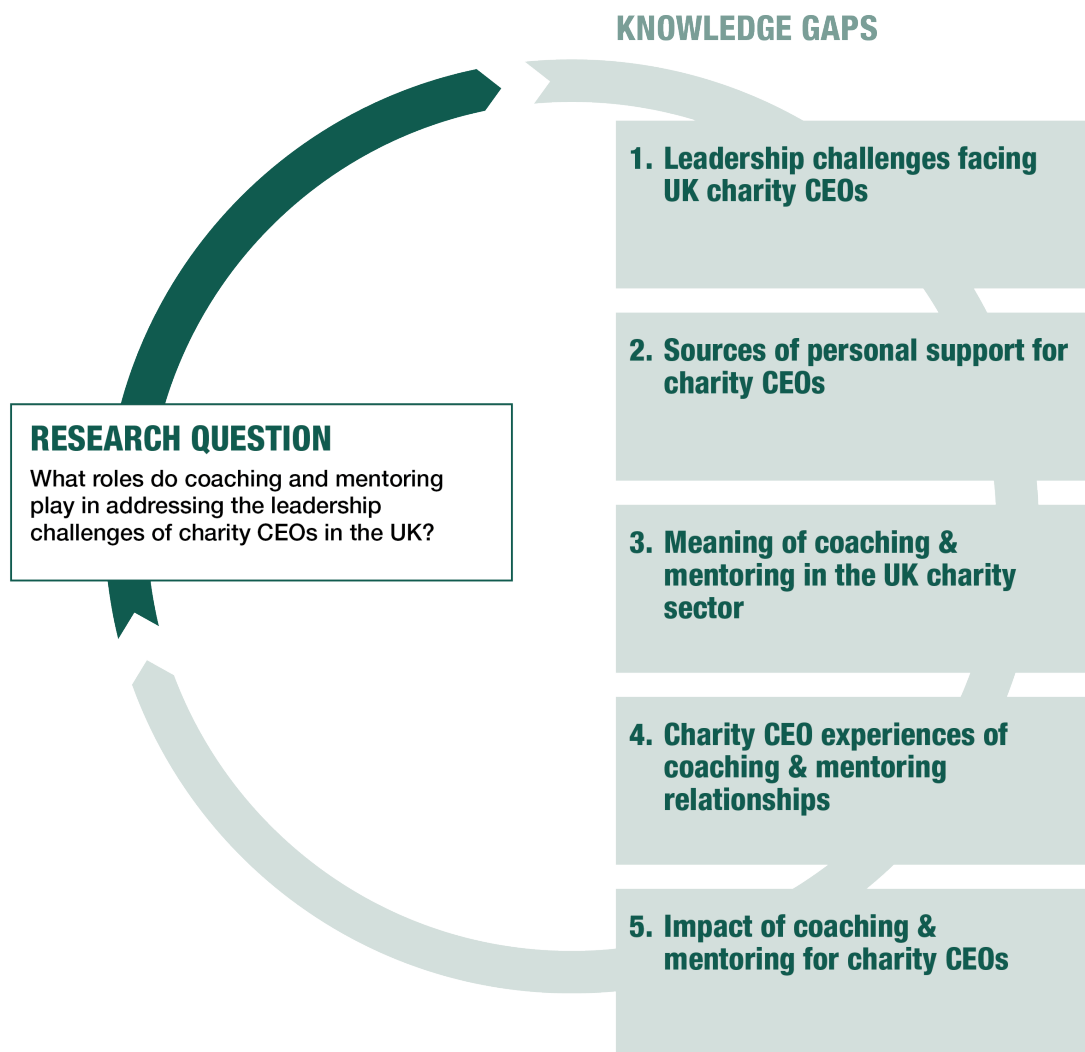


Figure 2.5: Knowledge gaps.

Based on this review, five important knowledge gaps in the literature have been identified in relation to this study's research question. These are indicated in Figure 2.5. Although some useful perspectives are available about the challenges facing charities and their leaders, very little evidence has been found about how these manifest personally for charity CEOs in the UK. Neither is there any data about the sources of support that charity CEOs use to help them deal with these challenges. When it comes to coaching and mentoring, no research has been done into what charity CEOs in the UK understand these disciplines to mean. There is also a knowledge gap relating to the experiences that charity CEOs have had of coaching and mentoring in practice, and the resulting impact on addressing their leadership challenges.

Given the difficulty of disentangling coaching and mentoring theoretically, academic calls are being made to learn more about the two disciplines by studying them together and in specific situations (Koopman et al., 2021; Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021). By

studying the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing leadership challenges, in the context of charity CEOs in the UK, this study will contribute towards a deeper understanding of coaching and mentoring conceptually. In terms of professional practice, it will also help to improve awareness within the charity sector of the potential benefits and pitfalls of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs. This insight will be of significant value to CEOs themselves, as it will help them to appreciate how they might be able to obtain new sources of valuable support with their leadership challenges. It will also help coaches and mentors to comprehend how their own practice can better contribute towards the personal performance and growth of the charity CEOs they work with. The potential impact of the study will ripple out, from improving the leadership effectiveness of charity CEOs, to improving the performance of their teams and organisations, and, ultimately, to benefitting civil society as a whole.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. The focus for this chapter is to explain how the research inquiry was designed and conducted. It begins with the rationale for adopting a constructionist/interpretivist philosophical stance to address the research question. The subsequent decision to select qualitative case study as a methodology is then described, taking into account the benefits and challenges of this approach. The design of the study is explained, as is the approach to data collection and analysis. Attention is given to the researcher's approach to reflexivity, following which, the measures taken to ensure research rigour, quality and ethical standards are described.

3.2. Philosophical stance

A fundamental starting point for any research inquiry is to establish the belief system within which the inquiry will take place (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Cox, 2020). This philosophical stance underpins the legitimacy of any knowledge claims, the criteria by which research quality is measured, and the credibility of the researcher's personal expertise (Jackson, 2020). Given that the focus of this study is on coaching and mentoring, a central consideration in influencing the philosophical position has been that different people understand these disciplines to mean different things (Salter and Gannon, 2015; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). This confusion can be explained by the fact that coaching and mentoring are social constructions (Western, 2017; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). The meaning of the two terms does not exist independently from human consciousness, it is produced by social interaction and is therefore in a constant state of revision (Crotty, 1998; Koopman et al., 2021).

In order to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs, it was necessary to take these factors into account by adopting a constructionist ontological and an interpretivist epistemological stance (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). This stance assumes that social reality can only be understood by interpreting people's actions and their perspectives on the world from their own point of view. There is not one social reality, but multiple versions which are constantly being constructed and shared by the individuals involved (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). My role as the researcher was not to discover explanatory knowledge about the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs, but to co-construct

with the respondents new meaning and improved understanding about this phenomenon (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019).

The significance of this philosophical stance became clear to me when I began writing a reflexive journal at an early stage in the project. As I considered the roles that I had played myself as a coach and mentor for charity CEOs, it struck me immediately how complex my relationship with each individual client had been. In each case, based on the evidence in my coaching notes, we had covered a wide range of issues in our many conversations together. The objectives for our work had tended to shift over time, as had the spirit and dynamics within our relationship. It was difficult to capture a simple expression of the role I had played for one client, even more so to aggregate these experiences in order to create a reliable summary across clients. I was conscious that the choice I made about which ideas to focus on risked being arbitrary, yet the choice was significant because in writing them down I was constructing an important perspective for myself on the role my work had been playing. To complicate matters further, this was only my perspective and did not reflect what my clients perceive, nor indeed the people they work with.

As these issues emerged, some of the challenges involved in answering the research question became clear. Grant (2017) has stressed the need to take the perspectives of both coaches and coachees into account when conducting coaching research. In addition, evidence presented in section 2.7.3. suggests that CEOs may not always have the same view on their coaching needs as other people they work with (Gavett, 2013; McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019). As a result, to build a rich understanding of the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs across the UK charity sector as a whole, it is not only necessary to consider the multiple perspectives of a diverse range of charity CEOs, but also of other stakeholders such as coaches, mentors, charity chairs, professional bodies and the organisers of coaching and mentoring programmes. It is equally important to bear in mind that, in many cases, their perspectives might not be thoughtfully considered or easily defined. In this context, the guidance of Guba and Lincoln (1994) is helpful. In what they term the constructivist paradigm, they argue that individual constructions are not more or less 'true' in any absolute sense. They are simply a version of reality that can be elicited and refined, a process which takes place in the interaction between a researcher and their respondents. By comparing different perspectives, including one's own, new constructions can be created as the investigation proceeds. The role of the study in addressing the research question is therefore "to distil a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.111).

This philosophical stance has important implications for the kind of knowledge that can be

generated by the study. As explained in the introductory chapter, the study seeks to generate phronetic knowledge using an abductive approach. Schram (2012) argues that phronetic social science generates research that builds practical wisdom about affairs in a particular setting. Its value lies in helping to make a difference in people's lives by paying attention to what it would really take to make that difference, addressing the issues that matter to them most. In this study, the focus is on making a difference to the lives of charity CEOs in the UK, by exploring the most important challenges that they face, and the roles that coaching and mentoring can play in helping them to address those challenges effectively.

3.3. The choice of methodology

3.3.1. The initial journey

Based on the fact that the study set out to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs, a qualitative approach to the research inquiry was deemed most suitable. This type of research is consistent with the constructionist/interpretivist stance, as it enables improved understanding of the social world by examining the different interpretations that people make of their activities and experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019).

At an early stage in the scoping of the study, consideration was given to interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a potential methodology, owing to its interest in people's lived experience of a phenomenon (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). However, this was discounted as an approach because it was felt that the use of existing theoretical concepts would play an important role in helping to understand the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs, as opposed to relying solely on data concerning people's subjective experiences. IPA would also have meant bracketing the researcher's own experience and perspectives, thereby missing an opportunity to use these assets as useful ingredients in the study as well (Braun and Clarke, 2022a).

Given this latter perspective, conceptual encounter was also assessed as a possible methodology. This pitches the researcher as a collaborative investigator, seeking to co-construct a model of a phenomenon by drawing on both the lived experience of others and one's own knowledge (Bachkirova, Rose and Noon, 2020). However, the difficulties already experienced by researchers attempting to define the role of coaching and mentoring separately in theoretical terms, suggested that an approach more directly focused on the practice of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs would be more effective (Salter and Gannon, 2015; Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021).

3.3.2 The argument for case study methodology

The methodology best suited to addressing these various concerns was judged to be qualitative case study. Case study is a methodology that is particularly effective in generating phronetic knowledge, because it focuses on “concrete examples” and “particular circumstances” (Flyvbjerg, 2012, p.42). Yin and Campbell (2018) describe case study as an empirical method which examines a phenomenon in depth within its real-world context. They elaborate by explaining that the methodology is particularly relevant when the boundaries between a phenomenon and its context may not be clear, a key characteristic of coaching and mentoring. Welch et al. (2022, p.7) agree, arguing that strong “contextualisation” is critical to enable “interpretative sense-making” of a social phenomenon.

Yin, Campbell and Welch et al. approach the use of case study with a realist orientation, seeking causal explanations and assuming that a single reality can be discovered that is independent of any observer. However, they acknowledge that case study research can also be effective when conducted from a relativist/interpretivist perspective. Welch et al. (2022) suggest that the contribution of an interpretative case study is often to reconceptualise or reframe a topic. Other researchers point out that, by capturing the perspectives of different participants in a case, a rich understanding can be achieved through exploring how their different realities illuminate the topic of investigation (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Ellinger and McWhorter, 2020). This feature will be of particular value in this study, enabling an investigation of the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs from a diverse range of stakeholder perspectives in the UK charity sector.

Another important advantage of case study methodology is that it takes us to places where most of us would not normally have access, as in the case of the coaching and mentoring of charity CEOs (Foster, Gomm and Hammersley, 2000; Stevens, 2005). A case study can also generate more practically applicable findings than other, deeper philosophical approaches, because the research reflects real life (Foster, Gomm and Hammersley, 2000). This methodology, therefore, has the potential to generate practical guidelines for charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors, in line with the research objectives.

3.3.3. Limitations and concerns with case study methodology

A criticism often made of case studies is that it is not possible to generalise the conclusions. Case studies do not represent samples, and statistical generalisations cannot be extrapolated to larger groups (Yin and Campbell, 2018; Thomas, 2021). Some realist researchers argue that theoretical propositions can be developed based on

analytical generalisations from case study research (Meredith, 1998; Yin and Campbell, 2018). However, given the philosophical stance for this study and its focus on generating phronesis, doing so is not the ambition for the research. Seen from a constructionist perspective, Stake maintains that case studies are more concerned with particularisation than generalisation (Stake, 1995). He argues that, by making a case understandable to others, a researcher can broaden their awareness and experience of a phenomenon in different contexts. It is then up to these others to make “naturalistic” generalisations for themselves, taking into account this new insight, rather than for the researcher to make “propositional” generalisations for them (Stake, 1995, p.85). On this basis, it is important to recognise that this study will focus single-mindedly on the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. Any lessons about the roles of coaching and mentoring more generally, even in addressing the leadership challenges of CEOs in other sectors, will be left for others to infer.

Using case study methodology effectively in practice can be a challenging endeavour (Yin and Campbell, 2018; Ellinger and McWhorter, 2020). There are many misunderstandings and criticisms associated with case study research, concerns that must be addressed in its design if its objectives are to be met reliably (Ellinger and McWhorter, 2020). Confusion is caused partly by the use of the term ‘case study’ to describe a wide range of unacademic studies such as media stories, archival records and teaching aids (Yin and Campbell, 2018). Another problem is a frequent lack of clarity and consistency in the way specific terms are used, such as the ‘case’ (the unit of study), ‘case study design’ (the process of study) and the ‘case study’ itself (the output of the study) (Cronin, 2014; Carolan, Forbat and Smith, 2016).

A central concern over the use of case study methodology is a frequent lack of rigour in research procedure (Yin and Campbell, 2018). Scholars of the approach tend to suggest that a linear but iterative process is required, involving six main steps: planning, design, preparation, collection, analysis, and sharing (Yin and Campbell, 2018; Ellinger and McWhorter, 2020). Even given this discipline, weaknesses in case studies often include inconsistencies in articulating and applying a philosophical stance, unclear methodological design logic, inadequate bounding of the case being studied, and poor articulation of data collection and analysis methods (Ellinger and McWhorter, 2020).

Another issue with case study research is that the variety of sources can make the collection and analysis of data an unmanageably time-consuming effort for the researcher, although this can be helped by not relying too heavily on ethnographic or observational methods (Yin and Campbell, 2018). The subjective nature of qualitative studies enables the researcher to bring an important depth of interpretation and understanding to a case.

However, it also raises the risk of misinterpretation and misunderstanding, if the researcher lacks the reflexivity and skill to handle the study appropriately (Stake, 1995). With this in mind, the following sections set out the research design and approach for this study, taking into account these methodological challenges.

3.4. Research design

3.4.1. Case study design and typology

In this case study, the ‘phenomenon’ explored was ‘the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing leadership challenges’ (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Yin and Campbell, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p.39) also describe this as the “topic of investigation” for the case study. The ‘unit of analysis’ or ‘subject’ for the case study was defined as the ‘CEOs of charities’ (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Yin and Campbell, 2018; Thomas, 2021). This unit of analysis was bounded by limiting the inquiry to the CEOs of charities which are based in the UK, have an annual income above £1 million, are classified as ‘charities in law’ and are registered with the Charity Commission.

Yin and Campbell (2018) highlight that case studies are classically understood to focus on one person, but they and several other scholars clarify that case studies have also been conducted on a wide range of other entities such as social groups, professions, communities, organisations and countries (Stake, 1995; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Yin and Campbell, 2018). Focusing on charity CEOs as a professional group, rather than as individuals, was the approach adopted in this study.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p.38) stress that the crucial requirement for a case study’s unit of analysis is that it is “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries”. To establish charity CEOs as a bounded social entity for this case study, a decision was taken to limit the charities involved to organisations based in the UK. The charities included were also restricted to ‘charities in law’ which are registered with the Charity Commission (Charity Commission, 2020). This meant that the CEOs of some charitable bodies with either ‘exempt’ or ‘excepted’ status were not included (e.g. churches, museums, scout/guide groups, universities, housing associations, etc.). The final important boundary was that the study only included CEOs leading charities with an annual income exceeding £1 million. This constraint was imposed because only 5% of UK charities have an annual income above this level, but they account for over 88% of the funds raised (Charity Commission, 2024). As a result, the scope of the study was limited to the CEOs of these 8,449 larger and more influential organisations. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the structural design of the case study.

Phenomenon/Topic of investigation	Unit of analysis/ Subject	Boundaries for charities included
The roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing leadership challenges	CEOs of charities	• Based in UK • Charities in law • Registered with Charity Commission • Annual income exceeding £1 million

Table 3.1: Defining this case study's structural design (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Yin and Campbell, 2018; Thomas, 2021).

The profile of this case study is clarified further in Table 3.2, using a framework of typologies proposed by Thomas (2021). This framework breaks down the various possible kinds of case study by the rationale for the choice of the 'subject' (or unit of analysis), the 'purpose' for the study, the 'approach' to be taken and the 'process' involved.

Subject	Purpose	Approach	Process	
• Outlier • Key • <u>Local</u>	• <u>Intrinsic</u> • Instrumental • Evaluative • Explanatory • <u>Exploratory</u>	• Testing a theory • <u>Building a theory</u> • Drawing a picture • Descriptive • <u>Interpretative</u>	• <u>Single</u> • Multiple	• <u>Retrospective</u> • Snapshot • Diachronic • Nested • Parallel • Sequential

Table 3.2: Defining this case study's typology (Thomas, 2021).

The underlined words in Table 3.2 describe the approach adopted for this case study. The reason for choosing charity CEOs as the subject is 'local', because charity CEOs are an example of something in my own personal experience about which I want to find out more. The alternatives would be either a 'key' case (a good or classic example of something) or an 'outlier' case (an example showing something different from the norm) (Thomas, 2021). The purpose of the study is both 'exploratory' and 'intrinsic' in nature, in that it seeks to investigate the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs, rather than the role of coaching and mentoring in addressing leadership challenges more generally in other contexts. The approach to the case study is 'building a theory', as a key objective is to develop a framework of the roles coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs. In line with the chosen philosophical stance, the approach to the study is also 'interpretative'. The

process can be described as 'single' case, because it focuses only on charity CEOs (Stake, 1995; Yin and Campbell, 2018). It is also 'retrospective' in that it looks back on how people have experienced a phenomenon, (Thomas, 2021).

3.4.2. Research question and sub-questions

The aim of the study was to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. To guide the exploration of this question, a research question and five sub-questions were defined, to focus the inquiry on the key issues and knowledge gaps identified in the literature review (see Figures 1.1 and 2.5). This approach follows the guidance of Stake (1995), who suggests that 'issues' should be defined to provide a conceptual architecture for qualitative case studies. These issues are the main areas of concern in the case. Research sub-questions can then be designed to help direct the researcher's attention towards teasing out the most important insights related to these areas.

It was only possible to generate an informed and meaningful answer to the research question by addressing each of the sub-questions in turn. The initial priority was to understand the most difficult leadership challenges facing charity CEOs in the UK. Secondly, the potential sources of personal support available to CEOs needed to be established. Thirdly, to enable a comparison of the different roles played by coaching and mentoring, it was necessary first to understand how people understand and use these two terms in the UK charity sector. Fourthly, this information could be used to conduct a detailed examination of the characteristics of coaching and mentoring relationships experienced by charity CEOs. Only then could the impact of coaching and mentoring be determined in terms of addressing the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs.

3.5. Data collection

3.5.1. Data sources

The two main methods of data collection chosen for the study were semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders in the UK charity sector, and documentation relating to charity CEO roles and the coaching and mentoring programmes available to them. There are many potential sources of case study data, ranging from interviews, observation, surveys and focus groups, to archival records, documents, social media and reflexive journals (Yin and Campbell, 2018; Thomas, 2021). A key principle for case study data collection is that multiple methods and sources of evidence should be used to enable triangulation (Yin and Campbell, 2018; Thomas, 2021). However, a significant challenge involved in carrying out a case study successfully is keeping the amount of data collected

manageable and the time involved practical (Yin and Campbell, 2018). For these reasons, interviews and documentary analysis were selected as the data sources which offered the best way to understand the case as insightfully and efficiently as possible (Stake, 1995). An overview of these sources is provided in Figure 3.1.

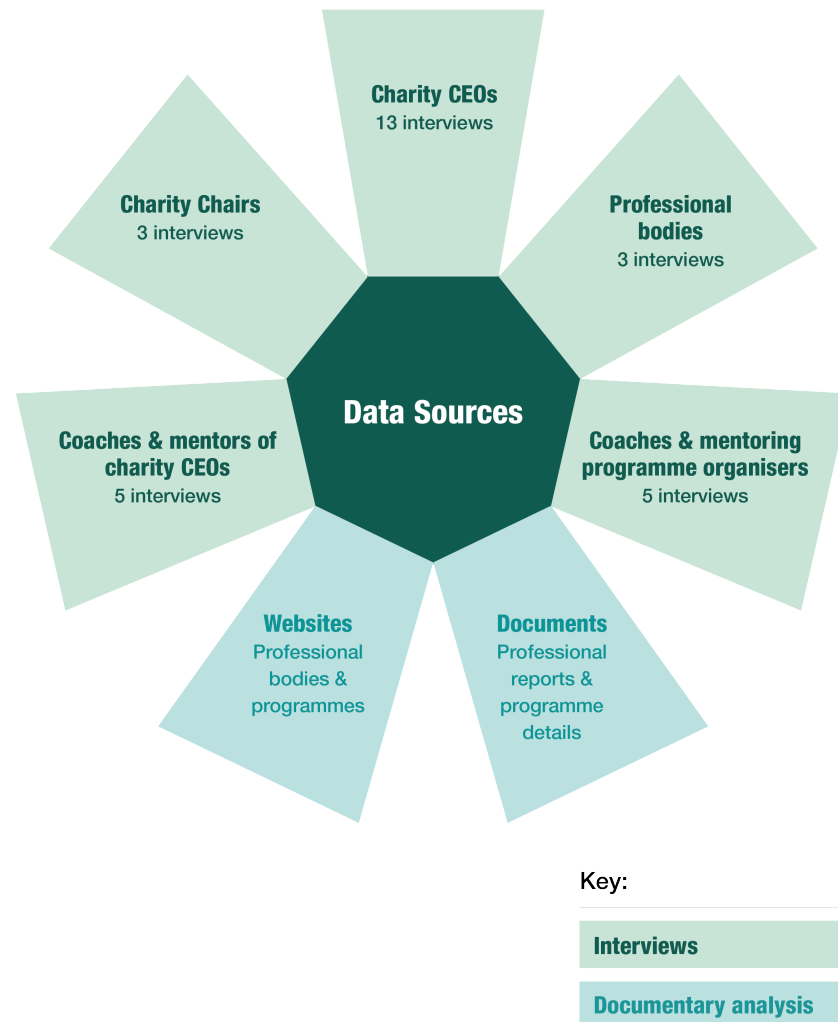


Figure 3.1: Data sources

Interviews offer an adaptable way of generating data about the social world by talking to people about their lives and experiences (Robson, 2002; Holstein and Gubrium, 2004). They are particularly helpful in contexts where observation is difficult and retrospective reconstruction of events or experiences is required, as in this case (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Although the unit of analysis for the case study was charity CEOs, a decision was made to interview a range of different stakeholders, not just charity CEOs, to generate insight into the multiple realities involved in the case (Stake, 1995; Yin and Campbell, 2018). In addition to CEOs from a diverse range of charities, contributions were sought from charity chairs, coaches and mentors of charity CEOs, the organisers of charity CEO coaching and mentoring programmes, and representatives from leading

professional bodies.

3.5.2. Participant selection and recruitment

A fixed purposive sampling strategy was adopted for the study (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). A target of 30 interviewees was set, with ranges defined for the involvement of different stakeholder groups (Charity CEOs: 8-12, chairs: 4-6, coaches & mentors: 6-8, professional bodies/thought leaders: 3-6, programme organisers: 3). The total target of 30 was set to ensure a diverse but manageable range of voices could be incorporated into the research. It was also influenced by a review of qualitative research sample sizes undertaken by Marshall et al. (2013), in which they concluded that 15 - 30 interviews were typically used for single case studies. The final number of interviewees was 29, as one chair dropped out late in the process. A decision was taken not to seek a replacement, because the data already gathered up to that point was considered to be sufficiently rich and insightful (Braun and Clarke, 2022a). The final structure of the sample, split by stakeholder group, is shown in Figure 3.1.

The original plan was to use snowball sampling to recruit the participants in three phases between January and May 2023 (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). In the first phase, seven people were recruited from within the researcher's own professional network, spread across the various stakeholder groups. This was done by sending relevant personal contacts a recruitment invitation (Appendix 1). Connections were also made with other personal acquaintances who could provide introductions to potential participants beyond this immediate personal network. These people were contacted using the recruitment email message in Appendix 2. Care was taken during both stages to engage contacts with diverse demographic and professional characteristics, so that any bias in the profile of the researcher's acquaintances would be minimised. The expectation was that a third recruitment phase would be needed in April-May 2023 to address any gaps in the sample. However, the second round of contacts proved to be more productive than expected, so no further efforts were made to find additional interviewees.

Ethnic and gender diversity was an important factor in helping to build a rich understanding of the potential role of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs with different profiles (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Given the sensitivity of this agenda in the charity sector at present, a diverse sample will also be a significant driver of engagement in the study's findings. For this reason, efforts were made to make sure that a male/female split was achieved somewhere between 40/60 and 60/40. A target was also set to involve at least 4 participants from ethnic minorities.

Other aspects of diversity reflected in the sample were the different levels of experience of the charity CEOs, the range of causes their charities address, and the relative sizes of the organisations they lead. Table 3.3 describes the ultimate profile of the sample. Although it cannot be described as representative of the charity sector as a whole, the research succeeded in including the voices of a diverse range of stakeholders in terms of gender, ethnicity, a variety of charity sizes and causes, and different lengths of CEO tenure.

Overall sample

Gender

Male	14
Female	15
Total	29

Ethnicity

White	25
Ethnic minorities	4
Total	29

Charity CEO profiles

Charity size

£1-5m	4
£5-15m	4
£15-100m	4
£100m+	1
Total	13

Length of tenure

1-4 years	5
5-8 years	4
9 years +	4
Total	13

Charitable purpose

Charitable purposes of organisations whose CEOs were involved in the study
The prevention or relief of poverty
Overseas aid/famine relief
Accommodation/housing
Education/training
Disability
Amateur sport
Economic/community
Development/employment
Recreation
The advancement of health or saving of lives
Environment/conservation/heritage
General/other charitable purposes

Table 3.3: Sample profile.

An important consideration emerged as the sample recruitment unfolded. Although individuals were selected for the study based on the fact that their primary role aligned with one of the stakeholder groups, many of them also held, or had previously held, roles in other stakeholder groups as well. This characteristic of the sample is explained in Table 3.4, which specifies the various roles played by everyone involved. Their names have been replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

Pseudonym	Role	Other current or former roles				
		Coach/ mentor	Charity CEO	Chair	Trustee	Professional body
Chris	Charity CEO					
Caroline	Charity CEO	X			X	
Cara	Charity CEO					
Christine	Charity CEO				X	
Charles	Charity CEO			X	X	
Camilla	Charity CEO	X			X	
Cameron	Charity CEO					
Charlotte	Charity CEO	X		X		
Connor	Charity CEO	X		X	X	
Clive	Charity CEO					
Claude	Charity CEO	X			X	
Celia	Charity CEO				X	
Caitlin	CIC CEO	X			X	
Stephen	Chair	X				
Susan	Chair	X	X		X	X
Sheila	Chair	X				X
Paula	Professional body	X		X	X	X
Peter	Professional body	X		X		
Patricia	Professional body			X		
Daniella	Programme organiser	X				
David	Programme organiser	X				
Diane	Programme organiser					
Damien	Programme organiser		X			
Deborah	Programme organiser					
Alice	Coach/mentor					
Anthony	Coach/mentor					
Adrian	Coach/mentor			X	X	X
Adam	Coach/mentor					
Alex	Coach/mentor				X	

Table 3.4: Roles of interviewees involved in the study.

The diversity of people's roles is significant for a couple of reasons. In case study research, involving people with multiple roles is potentially an advantage because they see things from different perspectives (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). However, for this

same reason, it became important in the data analysis to make sure that people's comments were being viewed in the appropriate way. For example, whilst an individual might have been included in the study because they were a chair, if they spoke at times from a different position as a mentor for charity CEOs, this nuance had to be reflected in the way that their input was interpreted.

In one instance, it became apparent that an interviewee who had been recruited as a charity CEO (Caitlin) led a Community Interest Company (CIC) and not a charity. A CIC is technically different from a charity in that it is a form of social enterprise which operates more commercially and with lighter government regulation (Charity Commission, 2023b). Consideration was given to excluding this interview from the study. However, following a discussion with the Director of Studies, the decision was taken to retain the contribution owing to the insightfulness of the interview and the close similarity in the person's perspectives to those of the charity CEOs involved.

3.5.3. Document selection and acquisition

The documents included in the case study analysis are listed in Table 3.5 overleaf. Four of these were sourced using a Google search for coaching and mentoring programmes available to charity CEOs in the UK. The other ten were obtained through the researcher's contacts in relevant professional bodies and from coaching and mentoring programme organisers. The documents included website pages, research reports and internal documents used to brief charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors about programme details.

The advantages of using documents of this type was that their analysis was unobtrusive and non-reactive, as they were already in existence before the research took place (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). They also met the four criteria proposed by Scott (1990) for assessing the quality of documents to be used in social research: authentic, credible, representative and meaningful.

Scholars make the distinction between personal and official documents, breaking the latter down further into state and private organisational types of documents (Scott, 1990; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Various forms of state documents were included in the literature review, many of which were sourced from the Charity Commission. The possibility of attempting to source personal documents, such as records of individual coaching objectives or contracts, was discounted owing to the risk of this being too intrusive from a participant's perspective. Consequently, the documents analysed in the case study are best described as private organisational documents.

Organisation	Description	Documents
ACEVO (Association for Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations)	A membership organisation for the leaders of charities and social enterprises	- 'Guide to the ACEVO peer mentoring scheme' - Website pages describing coaching services available to members
Clore Social Leadership	A charitable organisation focused on developing leaders with a social purpose so that they can transform their communities, organisations and the world around them.	- Website pages describing coaching services available to members - Internal presentation materials designed to explain coaching and mentoring programmes to charity leaders and their coaches and mentors
Cranfield Trust	A charitable organisation providing charities with pro bono consultancy and management support from volunteers	- Website pages describing mentoring services available to charity leaders - Mentoring Programme Guide for Mentor and Mentee Partnerships - Impact Report 2021-22 - Mentoring application form - Mentor training programme content
Pilotlight	A charitable organisation helping charities tackle the pressing issues they are facing by harnessing the experience of business experts.	- Website pages describing mentoring services available to charity leaders - 'One-to-one mentoring programme' overview - 'How to be a great mentor' guidelines
Association of Chairs	An independent association of Chairs of social purpose and not- for-profit organisations	- A Question of Balance: A guide to the Chair and Chief Executive relationship
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	An independent grant-making foundation in the UK	- Internal review document about the practical application of the Fund's Critical Friend Model of support for charity leader

Table 3.5: Document sources included in the study.

3.5.4. Conducting the interviews

A semi-structured interview format was adopted, thereby enabling a balance to be struck between the interviewer focusing on some key research questions and leeway being given for the interviewee to explore the issues of most importance to them (Brinkmann, 2018; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). The meetings were scheduled for one hour, with the interviews themselves ranging from a minimum of 32 minutes to a maximum of 62 minutes. The interview guides used for the various participant types are included in Appendix 3. These were based around the five research sub-questions defined in Figure 1.1. Before the interviews were conducted, each participant was sent a participant information sheet (Appendix 4), a privacy notice (Appendix 5) and a consent form (Appendix 6). A signed copy of the consent form was obtained from every participant before the interview took place. When clearance from senior gatekeepers was required to allow members of their team to represent their organisations in the research, email approvals were obtained in advance, and copies were sent to the University Research Ethics Committee.

Before the first interview was conducted, two pilot interviews were built into the research design. The first involved a doctoral research colleague interviewing me, using the question guide prepared for coaches and mentors, so that I could experience what it was like to go through the interview process. I then interviewed a charity CEO to trial the proposed questions again, and to learn how a conversation might unfold (Stake, 1995). These interviews were not recorded, and the findings have not been included in the data analysis.

Four lessons emerged from the pilot interviews. The first was a better understanding of the amount of time involved, relieving some of the pressure I felt to move through the initial questions too quickly. Secondly, when I was interviewed myself, I realised how difficult it was to speak generally about one's coaching and mentoring relationships. It was easier to talk specifically about individual cases and then to compare these different engagements. I took this into account in the way that I asked people to describe their coaching and mentoring experiences in the interviews. Thirdly, I made a change in the order of the interview guides, to address a suggestion by Flyvbjerg (2012) about how best to undertake phronetic social research. I was conscious in the pilot interview with the CEO how unclear she was initially when I asked her about the difference between coaching and mentoring, but she later had no problem in explaining what happened during her coaching sessions. Flyvberg (2012) advises to switch the order in which this kind of inquiry takes place, seeking to understand first what people do in practice and only then explore the terms they use to describe it. This proved to be a useful tactic in building a better

understanding of what people meant by coaching and mentoring in the subsequent interviews.

My final insight from the pilots was that I became conscious in the CEO interview how much my questions and interventions shaped the conversation. It occurred to me that I needed to leave more space and be more open-minded, to allow unexpected or “emic” issues to emerge, rather than to let the “etic” issues defined in my interview guide dominate the interview too heavily (Stake, 1995, p.20). This awareness helped me to notice, after the initial 4-5 interviews had taken place, that two surprising areas of interest were emerging. The first was the difference there seemed to be between the triggers for people to consider coaching and mentoring in the first place, and the objectives they set for their coaching and mentoring once an engagement gets underway. The second was the significance of an individual’s mindset about their role as a leader, in influencing the kinds of challenges they face and also the potential role they see coaching and mentoring playing in addressing those challenges. In both cases, I took care in the subsequent interviews to explore these emic issues further.

Once the actual research interviews commenced, attempts were made to conduct them face-to-face when possible. However, for reasons of practicality and participant preference, 22 of the 29 ended up being handled virtually over Zoom or Teams. Evidence from other researchers suggests that, despite some challenges involved in building informal rapport and picking up subtle body language, interviewers still obtain rich data using online interviews (Lo Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016; Oliffe et al., 2021). This form of communication may sometimes also encourage participants to talk more candidly than they would face-to-face (Oliffe et al., 2021). The interviews were audio recorded using a dictaphone and, in all but one instance, transcriptions were generated immediately afterwards using Penguin Transcription Services. The exceptional case involved me transcribing the interview myself to protect the confidentiality of someone referred to by an interviewee during the conversation. The process of conducting the interviews with the participants went smoothly, with everyone turning up on time. I found their level of interest in the study, and their belief in its importance for charity CEOs, to be an inspiring aspect of the research experience.

3.6. Data analysis

An abductive approach to reasoning was adopted, seeking to generate the best possible explanation of the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing leadership challenges, in the particular context of charity CEOs (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019; Thomas, 2021). No attempt has been made to generate theories about the roles that

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coaching and mentoring might play elsewhere. Abduction involves observing interesting anomalies in certain situations and attempting to find explanatory reasons for them (Sætre and Van de Ven, 2021). The process of abductive analysis involves both “logical inference” and “the flash of insight”, to reframe empirical findings in novel theoretical terms (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p.172). Thomas (2021) emphasises the importance of an intuitive and imaginative mindset in achieving this goal. However, Rinehart (2021) advises that when innovative interpretations are made, it is important to backward-map the logic for these breakthroughs to confirm their plausibility. Their credibility will be improved if a clear explanation is given of the clues provided in the data, and the thought process the researcher went through to make sense of them. For this reason, a detailed reflexive journal was maintained throughout the study to capture new insights as they emerged, paying attention to any triggers for new thinking and ideas.

The analytical approach involved a combination of both direct interpretation of individual instances within the case, and reflexive thematic analysis of these instances to help express the essence of the data’s meaning across the case (Stake, 1995; Braun and Clarke, 2022b). The themes generated then provided the building blocks for the mapping of interrelationships and the development of theoretical frameworks (Thomas, 2021). To do this work in practice involved application of the “constant comparative method”, going through the data in detail and comparing each element with all the other elements repeatedly over time (Thomas, 2021, p.225). A map of the analytical steps undertaken is provided in Figure 3.2 overleaf.

Immediately after each interview, I captured my initial reflections in a research log. When the transcript became available, I then reviewed this against the recorded interview and made further notes on the content. As the interviews began to unfold, I wanted to make sure that I was covering all the necessary research sub-questions adequately. To monitor the development of the data content, I began capturing the main insights and examples from each interview, using a framework of the five sub-questions, together with new topic areas that emerged as important (e.g. CEO triggers for coaching and mentoring, leadership mindsets). Throughout this process, I also maintained an ongoing journal to log my thoughts and to challenge myself to think reflexively about the whole experience.

I was only able to identify and gain access to most of the organisational documents included in the study during the interviews. As a consequence, I began reviewing their contents after the interviews were completed, again making notes on my reflections as I went along. I was conscious of the need for my interpretation to be in line with constructionist principles (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004).

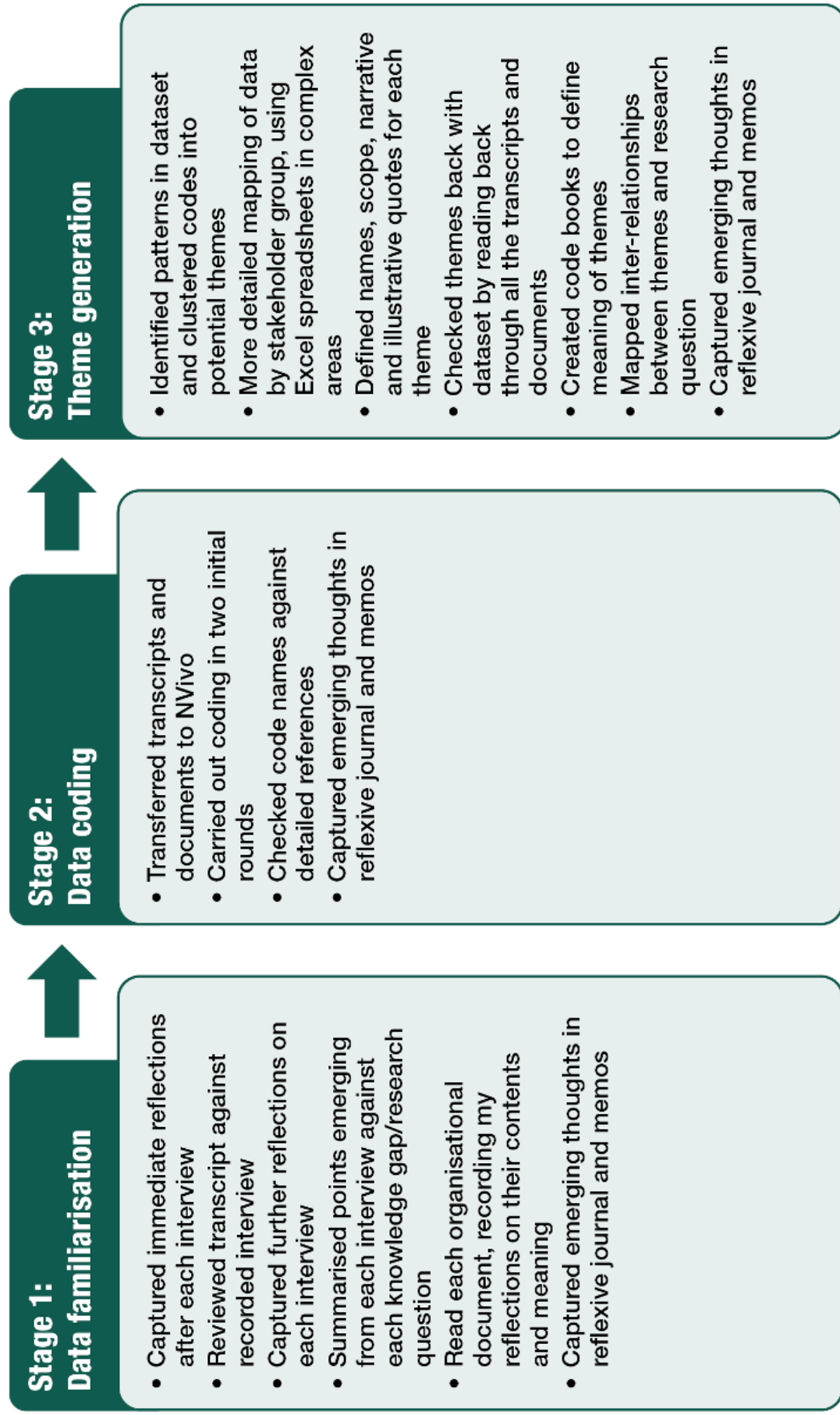


Figure 3.2: Data analysis steps.

It was important to bear in mind the context in which the documents were created, especially the reasons why they were written and the people they were written for. It was also necessary to consider the status they claim as documents, the style in which they were written, the kind of language used, their relationships with other texts, and the ways in which they positioned their authors and readers (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004).

Once this initial data familiarisation stage was completed, I transferred all the transcripts and documents onto the NVivo software platform. To maintain methodological integrity in the study, I used what Braun and Clark (2022a; 2022b) term reflexive/constructionist thematic analysis to code and theme the data. This approach was helpful because it enabled the identification of patterns across the different types and sources of data being used (i.e. interviews with different stakeholders, documents, websites, etc.) (Braun and Clarke, 2022a). As an analytical method, it also has the advantage of embracing the researcher's inevitable subjectivity as a resource in coding data and generating themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022a).

My overall approach to the coding process was guided by the five knowledge gaps identified in the literature review, each one providing a lens through which I read and interpreted the data (Locke, Feldman and Golden-Biddle, 2022). As I began coding the interview transcripts, I was conscious that some of the codes I was choosing reflected the explicit words of the participants (i.e. "semantic" codes) and the meaning of others was more implicit and conceptual (i.e. "latent" codes). (Braun and Clarke, 2022b, p.57). However, I soon realised that I was falling into two traps highlighted by Braun and Clark (2022b). It was tempting to cluster the codes too quickly, and I was not using code names that were sufficiently detailed and descriptive. I went back and recoded the first five transcripts again, before completing the others using this more suitable approach. I then moved on to conduct a similar process of coding for the documents.

As the process unfolded, I became aware that certain topics of importance were emerging that I had not considered earlier in the analysis. Locke et al. (2022) argue that this kind of emerging insight is an important characteristic of the iterative nature of the coding process. In a step they recommend called "organising to code", I responded by setting up some additional codes, and went through a full second round of coding activity for both the transcripts and the documents. I then reviewed all the detailed extracts captured under each code, checking they were in appropriate places and that the code names were an accurate depiction of the contents.

The next stage was to move on to theming, one that I found challenging. I used NVivo for this initially, but also experimented using post-it notes to generate clusters on poster paper. In some topic areas, such as the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs and the roles of coaching and mentoring, the themes began to emerge clearly. However, in other areas, such as the meaning of coaching and mentoring and the types of objectives associated with each discipline, the data was too confused to generate themes reliably by simple clustering. I decided to go back to each interview transcript and map out the details using Excel frameworks. This gave me a more granular grasp of the meaning behind the data, enabling me to go back to NVivo and recode the data once again. An overview of the resulting NVivo codes and themes is provided in Appendix 7.

To triangulate the data, I sought to distinguish the different perspectives of each stakeholder group in each topic area. Using NVivo, I ran matrix coding queries to assess whether certain codes cropped up more frequently with some stakeholders than others. As an example, I found that chairs referred to governance as a CEO leadership challenge much more frequently than other stakeholders. I also took care, when I created the Excel frameworks, to split the data by stakeholder group, enabling me to assess the extent to which their perspectives were aligned on different topics. As another illustration, I found that coaches and programme organisers made more direct references to the contribution of coaching and mentoring in addressing governance challenges than CEOs themselves.

Braun and Clark (2022b; 2022a) do not address explicitly an abductive approach to thematic analysis – their focus is limited to deduction and induction. However, other scholars suggest some important conditions to support abductive data analysis. Rinehart (2021) emphasises the value of time being spent on familiarisation with the data, but also on defamiliarisation – or time out – to enable fresh perspective and deliberation. He advises against rushing too quickly to judgements and suggests, instead, being comfortable to rest in a state of puzzlement and uncertainty at certain stages in the analysis, thereby increasing the chances of creative insight. I found that this was particularly relevant at the theming stage, and I changed the titles of some themes a few times before feeling completely comfortable with their relevance and insightfulness.

The final steps in the analysis involved beginning to identify quotes from both the transcripts and the documents to give voice to each theme. I also created a code book, and began writing an explanatory narrative to scope out the ideas in each theme, an exercise which I carried forward into writing a first draft of the findings chapter (Flyvbjerg, 2012; Thomas, 2021). I then went back over all the transcripts and documents again, reading them in the context of the explanation I had made of them. This enabled me to make tweaks in my text to incorporate ideas that had not been fully addressed. I also tried

mapping the themes in a variety of ways before settling on a framework that helped visualise the interrelationship between the themes and the research question.

3.7. Reflexivity

Interviews and documents provide rich sources of tangible data in a case study, but it is important to appreciate the role played by a different form of “impressionistic” data that exists in the mind of the researcher (Stake, 1995, p.49). Many thoughts are stimulated informally from the very early stages in which an engagement with the case occurs, not just when the use of more formal techniques begins. Much of the skill involved in conducting case study research lies in the way that the researcher captures and makes sense of these ideas (Stake, 1995; Finlay, 2002a). For this reason, I expressed my reflections in a variety of ways over the course of the study to help rationalise the perspectives that I was bringing over time (Finlay, 2002b; Thomas, 2021; Braun and Clarke, 2022b).

I began by writing a detailed memo exploring my motivation for the study and the mindset with which I was approaching it, based on my experiences of coaching and mentoring charity CEOs in practice. My original plan was to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring can play for charity CEOs. However, I realised that this was based on an unconscious position I was holding of advocacy – an underlying assumption that coaching and mentoring can be of value to charity CEOs and that my research could help to make a case for their usage. Indeed, I also became aware that I might be bringing a form of rescuer mentality to the project, viewing coaching and mentoring, and perhaps even the study itself, as a means with which to alleviate some of the intense personal pressures so many charity CEOs seem to be facing (de Vries, 2010). To move to a more open-minded and investigative approach, my plan shifted quickly to focus on understanding the roles that coaching and mentoring do play for different charity CEOs in addressing their leadership challenges. This had an important impact on my choice of case study methodology, as described earlier.

As the research work unfolded, I kept an ongoing log of all my ideas, and wrote further memos to explain my thought process once I got to the phases of data coding and theming. At the stage of conducting interviews, given my concern over rescuer mentality, an important introspective insight (Finlay, 2002a) was how touched I felt personally when CEOs talked about the worry and stress they feel. However, I also noticed that many CEOs talked about other strong emotions like anger and determination. These moments

did not impact me in quite the same visceral way, but I did my best to make sure that my instinctive reaction was counterbalanced in the way I recorded the findings.

There were also moments during the interviews when reflecting more intersubjectively became important (Finlay, 2002b). For example, I noticed that many interviewees were unclear about the differences between coaching and mentoring. They began considering out loud their understanding of the two terms in our conversation, but I was aware that my own interventions in the form of questions and prompts had a significant influence on the direction of their thinking. In this sense, I was becoming an active agent in the discussion, involved in a form of mutual collaboration in which we were constructing a new sense of meaning about coaching and mentoring in our dialogue together (Finlay, 2002b; Thomas, 2021). With this in mind, I did my best to deconstruct our discussions and to distil the resulting conclusions as sensitively and honestly as possible (Finlay, 2002b; Morse et al., 2002).

During the generation of the findings and conclusions, I became increasingly aware of my own predisposition regarding the potential benefit to charity CEOs of blending coaching and mentoring (Flyvbjerg, 2012; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). It was clear from the stances taken by the coaches and mentors in the study that some felt more comfortable with this fluid approach than others. My own view on this was an important one, but not one that should override or diminish those of others. For this reason, once again, I took great care in the presentation of the findings to clarify the different perspectives that different contributors were bringing, and to highlight when I was voicing my opinion as a coach and mentor, relative to my conclusion as a reflexive researcher.

3.8. Considerations of quality and rigour

Reliability and validity are well established as criteria for assessing research quality (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Reliability is concerned with the degree to which other researchers would generate similar data and reach similar conclusions if they were to repeat the study (Franklin, Cody and Ballan, 2010). Validity refers to the accuracy and integrity of the conclusions drawn from a piece of research (Franklin, Cody and Ballan, 2010; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). However, many researchers have taken issue with the relevance of reliability and validity in qualitative research (Whitemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that the nature of knowledge in a constructivist paradigm requires different criteria to address the need for rigour. They suggested that to achieve 'trustworthiness' in qualitative research, 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability' and 'conformability' are more appropriate translations of the assessment criteria typically used within the positivist paradigm (i.e.

internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity). They subsequently advocated some additional 'authenticity' criteria to address the need for researchers to fairly represent different perspectives, to enhance people's understanding of the world and the basis for other people's understanding too, and to stimulate and empower action as a result (Lincoln, 1986; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Lincoln and Guba's work has proved seminal, though they did make it clear that the issue of quality from a constructivist standpoint is not yet well resolved (Morse et al., 2002). Many other researchers have attempted to build on their work, leading to a plethora of different potential assessment criteria now being available (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001). In attempting to navigate through this confusion, it is important to be aware of the dangers of criteriology – an obsession with finding objective criteria by which to assess research (Schwandt, 1996; Thomas, 2021). A key pitfall is that by paying too much attention to the measures by which the quality of a research study will be evaluated after the event, too little focus is given to the disciplined application of the techniques needed to generate that quality in the first place (Morse et al., 2002; Thomas, 2021). This risk is exacerbated when the perceived responsibility for assessing the rigour of a study is allowed to shift to external judges of the research, rather than residing with the investigator themselves (Morse et al., 2002).

On this basis, careful consideration was given during the planning of the study to the potential operational tactics involved in delivering against the quality criteria suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994). To demonstrate the credibility or 'truth value' of the inquiry, efforts have been made to triangulate the data by representing the multiple constructions of different documents, individuals and stakeholder groups. To check that I was interpreting appropriately the statements made by participants in the interviews, I frequently probed their answers and shared my understanding to confirm the meaning of what they had said. The emerging findings were also sense checked with the study's supervisory team, my doctoral peer group, three of the research interviewees, and an experienced charity CEO not involved in the study. This approach also reflects the advice of Flyvbjerg (2012) who stressed the importance in phronetic social research of staying close to reality, by testing the emerging findings with relevant people during the stages of data analysis and publication.

Owing to the intrinsic nature of the case study, the transferability of findings to contexts other than the world of charity CEOs in the UK is inherently limited. However, the more intrinsic the focus of a case study, the more important it becomes to describe the specific context involved (Stake, 1995). This detailed portrayal plays an important role in providing others with the information that they need to make judgements about the transferability of

the findings to other situations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Geertz, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2012). For this reason, attempts have been made to give the reader a “thick description” of the roles played by coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs, enabling them to experience the conditions involved vicariously (Cox, 2020, p.43). This has been done by including the many voices of the research participants as faithfully as possible, including any outliers on particular issues, and by providing a rich account of their experiences and perspectives (Cox, 2020).

The dependability of the study has been supported by rigorous record keeping as the research has unfolded. A tracker has been maintained for all research interviews, digital copies of transcripts and organisational documents have been saved, and notes taken to capture my reflections after each interview. The steps during data analysis have been reviewed by the study’s supervisory team and by a group of doctoral research colleagues. An audit trail also exists of all data coding and theming on the NVivo software platform. The confirmability of the findings has been underpinned by the generation of a reflexive journal and various memos, and by the triangulation of data across different stakeholders and documents.

Many of these measures have also helped meet the authenticity criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (Lincoln, 1986; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Additional considerations include informed consent being obtained by all participants ahead of the study, and care being taken to highlight the researcher’s own value systems and interpretations as the research findings and conclusions are discussed (Flyvbjerg, 2012). The study’s impact on people’s education and action will be enhanced by circulating summaries of the findings and the implications for practice through the professional bodies supporting charity CEOs, chairs and coaches and mentors. A summary of the various operational tactics to ensure the study’s trustworthiness and authenticity are provided in Tables 3.6 and 3.7.

Trustworthiness criterion	Definition	Operational measures
Credibility	Demonstrating 'truth value' by representing the multiple constructions of research participants adequately	• Data triangulation between different stakeholder groups and organisational documents • Peer debriefing to explore and challenge the researcher's interpretations • Regular checking of researcher's interpretations with participants as interviews unfolded • Validation of interpretations and conclusions with three research participants and an experienced charity CEO not involved in the study
Transferability	Providing sufficient descriptive data to enable others to make judgements about the applicability of lessons to other situations	• Thick description to enable the reader to assess the relevance of conclusions to other contexts • Highlighting of any outliers or discrepancies in the dataset
Dependability	Taking into account factors of instability and of phenomenal or design-induced change	• Careful record-keeping throughout the research process to create an accessible audit trail of methodological design • Supervisory audit of this process to confirm proper procedures have been followed • Review of data analysis and conclusions with supervisory team and doctoral research peers • Audit trail of data coding and themes created on NVivo
Confirmability	Ensuring conclusions result from the characteristics of the data, not the characteristics of the investigator	• Data triangulation between different stakeholder groups and organisational documents • Review of data analysis and conclusions with supervisory team and doctoral research peers • Generation of reflexive journal and memos

Table 3.6: Operational measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln, 1986; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Authenticity criterion	Definition	Operational measures
Fairness	Ensuring multiple constructions are presented and honoured in a balanced, even-handed way	- Fully informed consent obtained prior to the inquiry from all research participants - Voice of outliers included and explained in the findings - Researcher's own values and perspectives are highlighted when these might be influencing the analytical conclusions - Study findings checked with three research participants and an experienced charity CEO not involved in the study
Ontological authenticity	Improving the sophistication of people's conscious experiencing of the world	- Clear statement of constructionist/interpretivist philosophical stance - Building a new, more informed construction of the roles of coaching and mentoring by undertaking an intrinsic case study in the world of charity CEOs
Educative authenticity	Increasing people's understanding of each other's constructions of the world	- Research summary to be circulated through professional bodies for charity CEOs, Chairs, coaches and mentors - Voice of outliers included and explained in the findings
Catalytic authenticity	Reaching new constructions that facilitate and stimulate action	Clear statement of implications for practice in the Conclusions chapter
Tactical authenticity	Empowering people with the opportunity to control the practice of power through the negotiation of constructions	Perspectives gathered from multiple stakeholder groups to enhance inclusivity of the study

Table 3.7: Operational measures taken to ensure the authenticity of the study (Lincoln, 1986; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

3.9. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are an integral part of social research practice (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). A key responsibility of any researcher and their supervisory team is to ensure that the rights of participants are protected throughout the process. Cox (2020) warns that gathering data about coaching, in particular, can lead to some distinct ethical challenges. In a review of the potential risks in this study, the following issues were identified and addressed during the research process.

Psychological risk

The interviews with the research participants explored their coaching and mentoring relationships. It was likely that some personally sensitive issues might be brought up and, given the experienced profile of the participants, it was expected that they would be well equipped to handle these conversations in a balanced and self-reflective manner. As it turned out, this is exactly what happened, with many interviewees talking freely about distressing moments in their careers. Indeed, a key success factor in the research was the creation of a safe space in which the respondents felt able to speak openly and honestly about these kinds of experiences. However, it was also recognised in advance that an individual might find a conversation of this type emotionally upsetting. To alleviate this risk, a clear understanding was established at the start of each interview, that the participant need only share what they felt comfortable sharing during the conversation. At no point was any attempt made by the researcher to probe invasively into areas that might take a respondent into a potentially vulnerable place. In the unlikely event that a participant might have become very upset during an interview, potential support pathways had been identified in advance so that an appropriate response could have been provided if needed.

Attribution risk

To protect the personal privacy of the research participants, the information shared during the interviews has been disguised by using pseudonyms to replace their real names. However, there remains a risk that when the findings are published, the perspectives or stories that individuals have shared might enable readers to infer what role they play and who was behind their comments (Wiles et al., 2008). For example, some CEOs brought to life their experiences with information that is specific to the charity they work for. For this reason, great care has been taken in the write up of the findings to remove any details that could be attributable to anyone contributing towards the study.

Personal privacy

An unexpected issue emerged in the first interview I conducted, when a coach shared the name of a charity CEO client they had been working with. They went on to discuss some sensitive information about their personal details, to the extent that I felt uncomfortable sharing the audio recording for transcription. I transcribed this interview myself, rather than using Penguin Transcription Services, to protect the privacy of the charity CEO involved. To avoid this happening again, at the start of all subsequent interviews I asked participants not to share the names of people they had been in coaching or mentoring relationships with, so that we could both respect their confidentiality and privacy.

Blurring research and coaching

Given the nature of the topics likely to be covered in the research, it was possible that the conversation could drift from being a research interview into being a coaching session itself. If a respondent was currently facing difficult challenges, they might look for some support in the moment. As the researcher, I was sensitive to this risk, keeping myself in research mode at all times and not letting my coach-mentoring instincts take over. In one instance, an interviewee explained that they were looking for a coach and I was conscious of feeling tempted to talk this need through with them. However, to avoid any role duality, I made the purpose of the interview clear, and we used the conversation as an opportunity to learn from their situation, rather than to attempt to resolve it for them.

Dependent relationships

There were two ways in which dependent relationships might have manifested themselves in the research. Firstly, given that I have personally been a coach and mentor for CEOs in the charity sector, care was taken to avoid any role duality by not including any clients in the study with whom I have worked directly. Secondly, to avoid any conflict of interest or bias in people's responses, efforts were made not to include any CEOs, chairs or coaches/mentors who had worked together directly. This was done by asking people about their previous coaching and mentoring relationship partners, and by checking their CVs on LinkedIn.

3.10. Chapter conclusion – Methodology

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach used in this study to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. The rationale for adopting a constructionist ontological and interpretivist epistemological stance has been explained (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). So too has the intention to seek phronetic knowledge using an abductive analytical approach

(Thomas, 2010; Thomas, 2021). The benefits and concerns involved in using qualitative case study as the research methodology have been explored, and a set of five research sub-questions have been introduced to provide a conceptual architecture for the study.

The two sources of data have been 29 semi-structured interviews with multiple stakeholders, and 14 organisational documents sourced from professional bodies in the UK charity sector. Reflexive thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the resulting data, using the NVivo software platform to support the process. This chapter has also reviewed the researcher's reflexivity, the considerations involved in ensuring the study's trustworthiness and authenticity, and the ethical considerations involved in the research design and implementation. The next chapter will present the findings from the research that has been undertaken.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. To present the findings effectively, this chapter is organised into five sections, each dealing with one of the research sub-questions defined in the Methodology chapter. However, to explain the findings more clearly, the order in which questions 2 and 3 are handled has been switched (see Figure 4.1 overleaf). The first section of this chapter explores the types of leadership challenge facing charity CEOs in the UK. The second section discusses what people in the UK charity sector understand the terms coaching and mentoring to mean, assessing the perceived similarities and differences between each approach. Based on this analysis, the potential sources of this kind of support for charity CEOs are reviewed in section three. The fourth section examines charity CEO experiences of different forms of coaching and mentoring relationships, and the roles that each play. The concluding section ties things together by assessing the impact of coaching and mentoring in relation to the key leadership challenges faced by charity CEOs.



Figure 4.1: Research sub-questions, with a switch in the order of questions 2 and 3.

4.2. Leadership challenges facing UK charity CEOs

Five themes were identified concerning the leadership challenges facing CEOs in the UK charity sector. However, before discussing these, it is necessary to highlight an important initial finding, which helps to explain the context in which these challenges manifest themselves. As the CEOs introduced themselves and their charities in the research interviews, the significance of the diversity built into the sample quickly became evident. The extensive range of charity income levels, staffing approaches and charitable causes meant that the CEOs interviewed were all leading organisations with very different commercial, geographic and cultural characteristics.

This diversity also extended to the profiles of the CEOs themselves. There was a wide range of experience levels in terms of charity sector involvement, time in post, prior

leadership roles, functional backgrounds and previous leadership development. Some intriguing differences in the motivations and mindsets of the CEOs also became evident in the interviews, a finding that will be shared in the final part of this section. Based on these differences, it is important to appreciate that the challenges facing any particular CEO, at this particular stage in their career, within their particular organisation, at this particular point in time, are inherently unique and ever-evolving. As a consequence, although it was possible to establish five general themes in the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs, these must be interpreted carefully as they tend to manifest themselves in different ways for different individuals in different situations.

4.2.1. Maintain viability

The first theme, a fundamental challenge facing most charity CEOs, is to maintain the financial viability of their organisations. To a certain extent, this has always been a central preoccupation for charity leaders. However, every one of the stakeholders interviewed observed that charity CEOs are currently having to navigate extraordinarily tough external conditions. The years of the Covid pandemic were a traumatic period for most charities and the impact is far from over. The subsequent cost-of-living crisis and an increasingly hostile socio-political environment are also major concerns.

“I’ve spoken to really long-serving stalwarts of the sector and I think lots of them agree there’s never been a harder time to run a charity” (Patricia, Professional Body).

These conditions are causing big increases in the demand for most charity services, but at the same time they are also increasing costs and reducing the availability of resources to support service provision. As a result, many smaller charities are literally fighting for survival. Several CEOs described the intense pressure they feel under to “keep the show on the road” (Celia, CEO) or to “keep the lights on” (Cameron, CEO).

For the leaders of larger organisations, these commercial threats tend to be less existential. However, the downward pressure and uncertainty of both government funding and public donations is still a constant worry. Clive (CEO) described occasions when he had been “kept awake at night” by fears of funding shortfalls and Caroline (CEO) expressed concern that “the uncertainty of income means it’s very difficult to plan”. Even charities that have grown successfully in recent years cannot necessarily rely on the same funding levels being achieved in future. Several CEOs talked about being engaged in programmes of organisational and financial restructuring to sustain commercial viability. As an example, Connor (CEO) explained that “it’s looking like funding is going to be

significantly reduced from next financial year onwards”, resulting in a need “to take out a substantial amount of cost”.

4.2.2. Clarify priorities

A frequent consequence of this intense commercial and operational strain is that charities can lose sight of their core purpose and longer-term imperatives. A crucial challenge for CEOs is, therefore, to clarify these strategic priorities. Several interviewees explained that, without clarity of purpose, a charity’s need to raise funds can lead to compromises in its values when decisions are made about its activities and services. Daniella (Programme Organiser) warned of the dangers of “chasing the money” and Alice (Coach) of “getting carried away trying to raise funds”. Caitlin (CEO) highlighted the importance of integrity and “not compromising the values of myself or my organisation to achieve scale or pace”.

Insufficient clarity of purpose also makes establishing the charity’s role more difficult at a broader systemic level, relative to other organisations involved in addressing the same social cause. The focus, therefore, needs to be on clarifying how the charity can maximise its impact in a relevant way, given the limited and often uncertain resources available. David (Programme Organiser) highlighted the value of knowing “what do I say no to?”, particularly when there is “almost an infinite amount of resource” that can be poured into fixing the problems that charities are seeking to solve.

“It’s very much about being clear about purpose: what are we here to do; why are we doing it; what are the deliverables; what are the outcomes that people will see in terms of either behaviours or language, and how will we judge feelings of success?” (Adam, Coach).

Another challenge raised by several CEOs was keeping pace with the volatile world around them. Agility is essential and inflexible longer-term plans are now seen to be of little value. Caitlin (CEO) commented that recently things had been so fast paced and unpredictable that “having a three-year strategy has been a bit of a joke”. Paula (Professional Body) covered similar ground when she said that “chunky plans are a bit out of the window”. Nevertheless, clear priorities for strategic organisational changes are still required in areas such as diversity and inclusion, digitalisation and net zero commitments. Charles (CEO) also argued that CEOs must “really understand the core risks of the organisation and make sure you know how to mitigate those as well as you can”.

Stephen (Chair) pointed out that “charities are not necessarily very good, certainly from my experience, at looking ahead” and Patricia (Professional Body) stressed how vital it was for charities to be focused on “more challenges coming down the line” like climate

change and artificial intelligence. Strategic priorities of this type also play an important role in establishing internal organisational engagement and the ability to hold people to account. Claude (CEO) highlighted the need to be “aligning all the time with those strategic directions, so people understand where you’re going”. Only then will decision-making be seen as “consistent and aligned to something that they understand.”

4.2.3. Influence governance

The themes raised so far concern strategic challenges which arise for CEOs, owing to their leadership responsibility for charities at an organisational level. However, CEOs cannot address these issues without the support of other stakeholders, and two themes emerged from the research that were more relational in nature. The first was to influence governance arrangements, a challenge which several interviewees referred to using the term “tricky”.

Of the different stakeholder groups interviewed, the chairs made more mention of this governance challenge than others. Susan (Chair) described “really getting your head around governance” as “the hardest thing to do as a charity CEO”, particularly for those coming from outside the sector. When probed on the root cause of the problem, CEOs and chairs were aligned in their view of it being the ambiguity of roles between the CEO and their board. The inherent lack of clarity in their relative strategic and operational responsibilities means that the quality of the personal relationships between a CEO and their trustees, particularly their chair, become critical. This point was highlighted in a document published by the Association of Chairs, titled ‘A Question of Balance: A guide to the Chair and Chief Executive relationship’.

“A failing relationship can create havoc for the organisation. Strained relationships keep both Chairs and CEOs awake at night and create difficulty for all those who need to navigate around the tensions. For CEOs such difficulties are potentially career threatening” (Lesirge and Oakley, 2015).

CEOs described a time-consuming need to plan and flex their working approach to suit the differing styles of their chairs and trustees. Charlotte (CEO) expressed a frustrated desire to “spend less time managing up” and Chris (CEO) talked about the unhelpful pressure of “always trying to manage your message”. The politics can become even more complicated for a CEO if the charity’s founder is still involved on the board, as these individuals tend to have strong views and a very influential voice. When things get particularly difficult, the approach that CEOs need to take sometimes goes beyond managing existing relationships, to taking an active role in reshaping the composition of the board. In one instance, Caroline (CEO) explained how “governance had been quite

weak historically” at her charity, and so she “took the lead” in creating a deliberate process of change. However, being proactive in this way has its risks. Stephen (Chair) observed that any CEO who “heads above their station...will very quickly be found out”. He went on to state that chairs shouldn’t allow their CEO to let it “become their show” and “roam in their own territory”, warning that CEOs who attempt to do so “won’t last long”.

4.2.4. Build engagement

Board members are just one of an extremely complex range of stakeholders with whom charity CEOs need to establish effective relationships. Building widespread engagement in their charity’s strategy and activity is therefore another of their fundamental challenges.

“You have to be able to juggle multiple stakeholders in a way that is more demanding than in the commercial sector, because the relationships that you need to manage, with funders, with staff, with boards, with beneficiaries, with all of those, actually a lot comes down to your own individual competence” (Damian, Programme Organiser).

One of the factors that seem to make this stakeholder engagement so awkward is that many of the people involved come at things from different and strongly held perspectives. As Charlotte (CEO) explained, “you are caught between quite a lot of values-based communities and that’s the challenge”. The consequence is that charity CEOs must manage very sensitively the tensions and conflicts that arise. Several examples were shared of situations in which CEOs had been left feeling frustrated, or even angry, at the lack of support they were receiving externally from certain government, community, trade union or funding bodies. However, a contrasting and more common problem was encapsulated by Caroline (CEO) who described how difficult it can be “leading people who are passionate”. When staff are deeply committed to a charity’s cause, it means they tend to be “hugely motivated, but very emotional”. Charles (CEO) observed that this values-based motivation results in people wanting “a stronger stake in decision-making”, which results in a need “to consult more and communicate more” in the charity sector.

For this reason, internal “people issues” take up a great deal of most CEOs’ attention, particularly since HR departments are often not well resourced.

“We’re ultimately a people business, so if we can’t recruit, retain, motivate, get the best out of our people, we’re totally screwed. So I spend a lot of my time thinking about that, both in terms of the senior team, the extended senior team, but also the wider internal comms and culture and wellbeing. That’s probably job one, I think” (Cameron, CEO).

The fact that some people are willing to accept lower salaries when working for a charity can be helpful, but a few CEOs mentioned that pay levels are increasingly a constraint on recruiting high quality staff. Building an effective leadership team, in particular, was seen as one of their most important – and difficult – priorities. Many CEOs also spoke of the role they need to play in shaping organisational culture more generally. Charity staff seem to be holding their leaders to account more actively in recent years, with formal grievances and disputes increasingly common. Clive (CEO) argued that culture needs “constant attention”, especially in larger organisations where CEOs can’t rely on their “personalised relationships” to embed desired values and behaviours. The most frequently mentioned challenges included improving diversity and inclusion, engaging people in the new hybrid working environment, and handling stress and burnout.

Building a high-performance culture and overcoming resistance to change were also common issues, with people’s passion for the cause often proving an obstacle to a more commercial and professional mindset. In one case, the CEO of a youth charity described the difficulty he faces when people “resist change because they perceive it not good for the children”. The problem is that if the services involved are not affordable, the stark reality is that without progressive change the organisation is likely “to go bust”, and then the services provided to the children would be removed completely.

4.2.5. Lead self

The final theme concerning CEO leadership challenges is personal in nature. The ultimate responsibility for the strategic and relational challenges specified so far is understood to land on the shoulders of the CEO. As Chris (CEO) explained: “the buck stops with you”. Yet the role of CEO can sometimes be an isolated one, with many interviewees commenting that it feels “lonely at the top”. A CEO is often caught between the team they lead and the board they report to, with no immediate peers they can talk to openly about sensitive issues. As a result, their core personal challenge is to ‘lead’ themselves, by choosing to alter their attitudes, actions and behaviours in ways which enable them to handle their responsibilities as effectively as possible (Browning, 2018; Knotts et al., 2022). If CEOs are not addressing this personal challenge effectively, their capacity to handle their relational and strategic challenges is much reduced.

There were wide variations in the extent to which CEOs had experienced some form of leadership development earlier in their careers. Although a few had been through leadership training or coaching programmes, Adam (Coach) commented that “very often people have not had that much education around leadership”. The consequence is that many CEOs start the job lacking what Alex (Coach) described as an understanding of “the

100

interface between self and other". All the CEOs interviewed spoke in some way about having to become more conscious of the way they show up with their teams, controlling their emotions, role modelling the charity's values and moderating their behavioural strengths and weaknesses. As an example, Claude (CEO) described the importance of "the compassionate way I approach leadership, the way I interact with my colleagues, the visibility I bring", all of which "set the tone and culture for the organisation".

Charity CEOs have to deal with a constant, unrelenting volume and variety of issues. Cara (CEO) shared the sense that she must continually "up the ante" on all fronts, and that she can "never be complacent about anything at all". Charles (CEO) recounted how he enjoys the diversity of the job and going "from one spinning plate to another one, to another one, to another one". However, every now and then, he experiences moments that are "really challenging and really difficult" when there are just "too many plates spinning!". These workload problems are often exacerbated by a lack of managerial capacity and expertise, in all but the largest charities, to support a CEO's decision-making. Damien (Programme Organiser) observed that "the infrastructure within charitable organisations doesn't have the resource to actually separate off some of the core functions that make organisations work well". The resulting lack of specialist capability means that "the CEO needs to be constantly dipping in and out of those spaces, if not managing a number of them, and juggling those balls all of the time".

Consequently, CEOs must choose carefully how they allocate their time and energy, setting boundaries to maintain their work-life balance and avoid being overwhelmed. They also frequently need to broaden their own personal skills. As Caitlin (CEO) explained, "you haven't got a team at your disposal to deliver everything, so actually you have to become pretty skilled at all sorts of interesting things". Several individuals mentioned the need for new CEOs to become comfortable as a jack of all trades, rather than a master of a particular function. This was seen to involve stepping out of one's comfort zone and building any missing hard skills to contribute sufficiently in areas beyond one's previous experience (e.g. finance, marketing, IT).

One or two individuals seemed to have taken the move up to CEO in their stride. Chris (CEO) was recently promoted internally into the CEO role and admitted that the transition "hasn't been the step I thought it would be, possibly because I'm in a culture where I'm known, and I know the organisation". However, many others spoke of a lack of confidence or imposter syndrome. In one extreme case, Charlotte (CEO) confessed that she spent all her time "being scared – like white scared" in her first CEO role. She found the experience of doing everything for the first time "whether it was public speaking, trying to get a culture change ... everything was fucking terrifying!". A few CEOs and coaches mentioned that

confidence issues of this type were more common amongst women than men, though they were quick to stress the risk of over-generalising.

The values-based nature of charities also fuels intense public scrutiny, and several examples were quoted of CEOs facing bitter personal abuse on social media and in the press. Charlotte (CEO) described being “trolled and trolled and trolled” on Twitter, facing criticism about everything from her hair to her financial state. Patricia (Professional Body) shared that “it’s not unusual for charity chief execs to receive death threats” and she referenced four female leaders who she knew had stepped down in the past month because of the abuse they had been receiving. Unsurprisingly, in this context, several CEOs expressed concern about how they best manage their public profile in ways that are personally authentic, but that also serve the best interests of their organisations. Ultimately, these various pressures result in a significant challenge for CEOs to manage their personal wellbeing and resilience. One factor that makes this especially difficult for charity CEOs seems to be that they bear an emotional burden arising from their deep concern for their charity’s work and beneficiaries. Peter (Professional Body) described in a heartfelt way how the CEOs he speaks to “care about it, they care about other people”.

“When things aren’t going well, the implications are much greater than a P&L or some numbers on a spread sheet. And they aren’t about me and my career. They’re about knowing that, in my case, disabled children are waiting for help. It takes its emotional toll on you” (Caroline, CEO).

Each individual CEO talked about managing their stress levels as best they can, but several stakeholders highlighted a widespread risk of burnout in the sector. Patricia (Professional Body) pointed to the current level of churn at CEO level as a sign that people are deciding they “can’t continue in such a pressured environment”. Even for those CEOs not looking to leave the sector, several mentioned that planning their own career development beyond their current role is an important consideration. One of the CEOs interviewed was in an interim position and experiencing some uncertainty about how long they will be in post. Another was keen to move on after having served for seven years and spoke of the difficulties in maintaining their motivation.

Figure 4.2 maps out the key leadership challenges facing charity CEOs in the UK, reflecting their different strategic, relational and personal levels. This framework will provide a useful structure to assess the roles that coaching and mentoring play in helping CEOs address their leadership challenges.

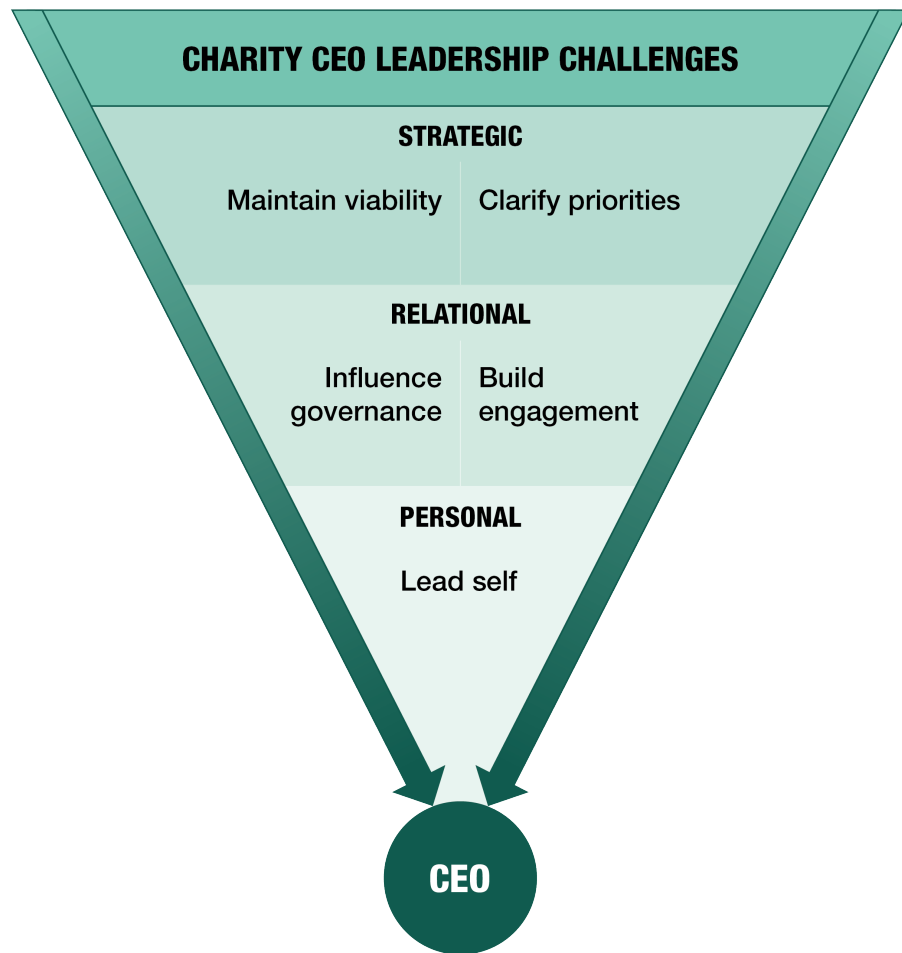


Figure 4.2: Leadership challenges facing charity CEOs in the UK.

4.2.6. The importance of CEO motivations and mindsets

Having identified five main leadership challenges facing charity CEOs, it is important to highlight an unexpected insight that emerged during the interviews. The different motivations and mindsets of different CEOs seemed to have a significant effect on both the nature of the challenges they face, and the impact these challenges have on them personally. To be clear, this finding is not a leadership challenge in itself. It relates more to the way in which the challenges already specified manifest themselves for different individual CEOs.

As a starting point, Damien (Programme Organiser) drew a distinction between CEOs who focus their working lives on serving a specific cause, and those who build careers by moving across sectors and causes over time. Given the “cause-oriented” motivation of most charity employees and volunteers, problems can often occur when a “career-oriented” CEO joins an organisation and begins trying to establish a more performance-driven culture. Whilst their external perspective and professional approach can make “a

really valuable contribution”, they can create “friction and toxicity that is damaging” if they fail to manage their energy and convince the people around them that they are genuinely serving the charity’s best interests rather than their own. This was a challenge also spotted by Alex (Coach) in his experience working with a CEO coachee who had joined her charity from the private sector. He described her as being very driven to build “the right kind of performance culture”, but also having a “constant battle...to bring people on board” and “to build a coalition” that supported her leadership philosophy.

Conversely, Damien (Programme Organiser) argued that CEOs who are more “cause-oriented” often have a different problem. Their shared values and lived experience are a source of strength with their teams, but they might lack the drive or objectivity “to make the difficult decisions that come with leadership”. This was a challenge encountered by Claude (CEO) when he was promoted to CEO in an organisation he had served in for many years: “I think I was seen as very nice, somebody who was probably a good clinical leader, somebody who would take care of his team”. But he had to make a big step up to establish himself credibly as a CEO who could “make some really tough calls, face things, make restructures and do all of that.” Damien (Programme Organiser) observed that the temptation for CEOs who lack the strength of character and commerciality to make this shift, is to retreat until they become “completely isolated and on their own”.

Alice (Coach) highlighted another attitudinal consideration when describing how many charity leaders are “caught up in heroic leadership”. She explained that some people have this idea of the CEO as the “single leader” and “it’s all down to them”. This mindset often brings with it an element of personal guilt and martyrdom, a sense that leaders should sacrifice everything for the cause. It contrasts with a perspective that leadership needs to be shared and distributed within the organisation. Christine (CEO) spoke to this theme, advocating the importance of creating a “joint leadership effort”. She argued that “you can’t do it all on your own” and so you need “to build a strong executive team” and “the relationships you build with your chair and the rest of the board are also really key”. Once again, the stance any CEO adopts in this area is likely to have a significant impact on the kind of relational and personal challenges they experience in their roles.

Closely related to these mindset considerations is the degree to which CEOs are open to learning and support. Alice (Coach) suggests that “heroic” leaders tend to think “they should know what they’re doing” and therefore they “have to go it alone”. Susan (Chair) talked about some CEOs becoming fearful, defensive and tending to view moments of learning as failure, rather than opportunities to grow. Given that all the CEOs in the study were included because they had experienced some form of coaching or mentoring, this did not come across as a common trait in the interviews. In fact, a few CEOs spoke

passionately about the importance of personal learning and growth. Clive (CEO) explained how important he had found it to learn from his mistakes, “embracing failure as developmental” for himself and his team. Charles (CEO) described how a combination of activities, experiences and roles had helped him to continue learning and growing over the years. However, even he confessed jokingly to being very good at “never asking for any help” and then getting “really pissed off that no one ever offers to help me!”.

Another striking finding in the research was that different CEOs seemed to carry the weight of their personal responsibility in different ways, with some individuals embracing and enjoying their roles more than others. Charles (CEO) pointed out that challenges are not necessarily negative: “some challenges are great!”. Celia (CEO) described her newfound responsibility as a CEO as “freeing” because it gave her more control over the charity’s direction and performance. At the other end of the spectrum, several CEOs had a less positive outlook on their challenges. Several shared concerns over tiredness, anxiety, overwhelm and even trauma resulting from their experiences. Camilla (CEO) admitted to being “taken unaware by all the emotional labour of the work” and Connor shared that he was finding life “all a bit grim” and that he’s “struggling” with staying enthusiastic and positive.

4.2.7. Section summary – Charity CEO leadership challenges

In this section, five key leadership challenges facing charity CEOs have been described. The distinctive strategic difficulties involved in ‘maintaining viability’ and ‘clarifying priorities’ have been explored. Two relational issues have been identified concerned with ‘influencing governance’ and ‘building engagement’ with a diverse range of values-driven stakeholders. The underlying personal challenges that result have also been specified, resulting in a need for CEOs to ‘lead self’. Finally, some connections between the way in which these various challenges manifest themselves for CEOs and their individual mindsets and motivations have been highlighted.

4.3. The meaning of coaching and mentoring

To understand the roles that coaching and mentoring play in helping charity CEOs address the leadership challenges just identified, the next step is to examine what the terms coaching and mentoring mean to different stakeholders in the UK charity sector. Only then can the way people describe the relative roles of coaching and mentoring be analysed accurately. This section will begin by explaining the apparent lack of clarity in the charity sector regarding the nature of coaching and mentoring. It will then move on to explore what the research participants understood to be the similarities and differences

between coaching and mentoring, comparing their descriptions of the purpose, activities and principles that characterise each approach. It will conclude by highlighting the roles of the different types of coaching and mentoring behaviours used by coaches and mentors to help charity CEOs address their leadership challenges.

4.3.1. Unclear distinctions between the two disciplines

Each interviewee was asked to share their perspectives on the similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring. In most cases, the starting point was an acknowledgement that the distinction is not clear. Immediate responses to the question included phrases such as: “that classic question!”, “gosh, that’s difficult” and “I think it’s very confused”. It was also seen as an important question. Deborah (Programme Organiser) observed that “it’s a conversation that comes up so often...people get really exercised about it”. Alice (Coach) expressed a view that the lack of understanding in charities about the nature of coaching, in particular, was an obstacle to it being “embedded in the culture of the sector” and “credited with the professionalism it deserves”.

The lack of clarity referred to by most stakeholders exists in part because some people simply do not know what the distinctions are, and they are happy to say so. Deborah (Programme Organiser) confessed that “I just still don’t really understand the difference”. Anthony (Mentor) was equally honest in admitting “I find it difficult to say what I do. I call it mentoring, but others could easily call it coaching.” However, in a few other instances, individuals sought to cut through the uncertainty by expressing firm and quite dogmatic views on the subject. Stephen (Chair) began his definition of mentoring by saying “I’ve always taken a very hard line on mentoring”. Daniella (Programme Organiser) also explained that, because the question about the difference between coaching and mentoring is raised so frequently, her organisation has had to “take on a view” about the definitions.

The problem caused by these stances is that they are often not consistent with each other, so different people and organisations are advocating different interpretations of coaching and mentoring. To illustrate this point, several interviewees used the term “directive” and “non-directive” to help explain the distinction, with a significant majority considering coaching to be less directive than mentoring. Yet the two individuals quoted with firm views above were two examples of people taking the opposite perspective. Daniella (Programme Organiser) stated that “we take on the view that coaching is more directive” and (Stephen, Chair) described coaching as giving “advice on how to do something”.

The causes of these differences in opinion seem to lie in two areas. Firstly, one interviewee explained that the confusion arises from the terms coaching and mentoring being social constructions whose meaning has evolved over time.

“20 years ago, you’d have said coaching was more directive and mentoring was person-centred. It’s only been in the past two decades that that’s flipped” (Damien, Programme Organiser).

This opinion was supported by evidence suggesting that the older and more experienced individuals interviewed tended to view coaching as more directive than mentoring. Secondly, coaching is sometimes associated with developing skills to improve one’s professional performance in a specific area. It therefore requires some transfer of expertise through training or instruction, a form of intervention which some people perceive as more directive. Susan (Chair) described this kind of coaching input on a specific task as explaining “how to do it and how not to do it”.

4.3.2. Similarities between coaching and mentoring

When analysing the documents and interviews in detail, it became clear that a complicated jumble of ideas was being used to describe coaching and mentoring. These could be themed into three broad areas, some relating to each discipline’s overall ‘purpose’, others to the different ‘activities’ involved and still more to the ‘principles’ underpinning their practice. Further analysis in these three areas helped to draw out several perceived similarities between coaching and mentoring.

In terms of their ‘purpose’, there was widespread agreement that both coaching and mentoring support a charity CEO’s personal growth and professional development. Clore Social Leadership (2023, p.10) states that coaching “helps people achieve their professional and personal goals”, whilst the Cranfield Trust (2024) defines the role of mentoring on their website as being to support “charity leaders looking to develop personally and professionally”. Both disciplines enable this personal change by helping to build the capability and confidence of individuals, supporting their leadership development and enhancing their performance on the job. From the perspective of CEOs themselves, Christine (CEO) highlighted the value in mentoring of “gaining more confidence in myself and my own abilities” and Cameron (CEO) described the purpose of coaching as “helping me improve and get better at the practice of being a CEO”.

The descriptions of coaching and mentoring captured in the study also indicate that people think they share many similar ‘activities’. These include listening, providing emotional support, asking questions, clarifying motivations and goals, challenging

thinking, giving feedback, generating options, and developing action plans. In addition, their practice is perceived to be based on some common 'principles'. They both involve conversations that take place in the context of a relationship between a charity CEO and a coach or mentor. Both coaching and mentoring interactions are understood to be emotionally supportive and intellectually challenging. As Alex (Coach) explained, a CEO knows that they can bring their challenges and be met with "empathy and compassion, and also constructive challenge". Most stakeholders also stressed the principle that coachees and mentees should always drive the agenda and retain responsibility for their actions. Clear boundaries are necessary during contracting with coaches and mentors to establish parameters for the discussions. Successful coaching and mentoring relationships also depend upon a spirit of confidentiality and trust. This enables a safe space to be created, in which individuals have time to think and work through the challenges facing them. The Association of Chairs share their perspective in their publication 'A Question of Balance: A guide to the Chair and Chief Executive relationship':

"Good coaches or mentors will provide a framework for your discussions without dictating content, so that the agenda is yours to set, creating a space for you to 'unpack' the things about your role that are really troubling or exciting you."
(Lesirge and Oakley, 2015)

4.3.3. Differences between coaching and mentoring

Turning attention to the distinctions between coaching and mentoring, the key theme that arose consistently across all the interviews and documents was that mentoring involves the use of experience to help develop someone in a way that is different from coaching.

"I think mentoring, for me, is much more about sharing experiences, sharing learning, helping to develop somebody in terms of just showing them what are the possibilities of doing things differently" (Susan, Chair).

A view expressed by most stakeholders was that the practice of "pure" or "non-directive" coaching is based on the principle that a client has the capacity to address their problems themselves. Alex (Coach) talked of "honouring the belief that the coachee has all the resources they need to succeed" and Diane (Programme Organiser) of "helping them think through their own solutions". Mentoring, in contrast, recognises that bringing the experience of the mentor into the conversation might open up new possibilities that the client might not have thought of. As Connor (CEO) put it, "a coach is going to say, 'well, actually, the fundamental idea is that the answer's within you.' Which it might be, but not if you haven't got a scooby on what you're doing!".

When talking about the purpose of mentoring, many CEOs highlighted the value of obtaining knowledge and wisdom “from” someone else. Mentors can draw on what Peter (Professional Body) described as “lived experience” that is relevant to their mentee, and they share this in the form of stories, ideas, perspectives and advice. This experience could result from being the CEO of a charity, but it might also come from leaders of other types of organisations in the public or private sector. Another benefit of the broader experience brought by mentors is that some can serve as inspiring role models to charity CEOs, stretching their ambitions and potentially also providing wider sector perspectives and networks to support their career development. The Cranfield Trust explain their point of view in their ‘Guide for Mentor and Mentees Partnerships’:

“There isn’t much difference between what mentors and coaches do except that mentors have a larger reservoir of relevant experience and are more likely to be role models to the mentee. All Cranfield Trust mentors are experienced leaders and they are willing to share their own resources, contacts and experiences to benefit mentees.” (Cranfield Trust, 2021)

It is more difficult to describe precisely in which ways coaching is distinct from mentoring. As mentioned, the most frequently discussed difference was the principle that in coaching, the client has all the resources they need to succeed, and the role of coaching is to elicit a CEO’s thinking so that they can work things out for themselves. ACEVO’s guide to its peer mentoring scheme describes coaching as “more fundamentally about how a person thinks, feels and acts in situations” (ACEVO, 2018b, p.5). In this kind of work, it is more important for the coach to bring appropriate levels of coaching and psychological expertise, than relevant professional experience.

However, this stance is inconsistent with the directive type of coaching to which a few interviewees referred, which focuses more on skill development. Some talked about coaching being more concerned with achieving specific performance goals and outcomes than mentoring. Susan (Chair) argued that “coaching is much more task-oriented and specific skills oriented”. With a similar perspective in mind, Christine (CEO) observed, “I think you have coaches for different things”. By bringing specialist technical expertise to support your learning, coaches “help you move forward and progress in a particular area.”

4.3.4. Coaching and mentoring behaviours

During the analysis of the data, the difficulty of disentangling coaching from mentoring and the incompatibility between the way people described ‘non-directive coaching’ and ‘skills coaching’ proved an awkward sticking point in making sense of the findings. However, after a good deal of puzzlement, an important insight occurred about the significance of

the behaviours involved in coaching and mentoring interventions. In a thought-provoking contribution, Alice (Coach) explained how any coach or mentor is constantly facing a range of “choice points” about the types of behavioural intervention they can make in their conversations with CEOs. She went on to explain that “you can prescribe, you can provoke, you can ask in certain ways or you can simply listen”. The other coaches and mentors interviewed also described how they use different types of intervention at different times in their coaching and mentoring conversations to help charity CEOs address their leadership challenges. Pilotlight’s guideline document called ‘How to be a great mentor’ highlights the importance of being able to “adapt your style in a way that supports them best” (Pilotlight, 2021, p.1).

Viewing the things that go on in coaching and mentoring conversations as ‘behavioural interventions’ rather than ‘activities’ helps to clarify how people tend to make sense of the similarities and differences between each discipline. For example, stakeholders were all agreed that mentoring, just like coaching, involved activities such as listening, giving emotional support, asking questions and providing challenge. However, when these activities were being carried out, they would typically describe the behaviours involved as coaching behaviours, rather than mentoring behaviours. As Clive (CEO) observed, “for me, coaching is weighted towards questioning”. In contrast, behaviours such as recounting stories and suggesting ideas were seen as mentoring behaviours. As a result, one of the main reasons that coaching is difficult to distinguish from mentoring is that mentoring activity uses many coaching behaviours.

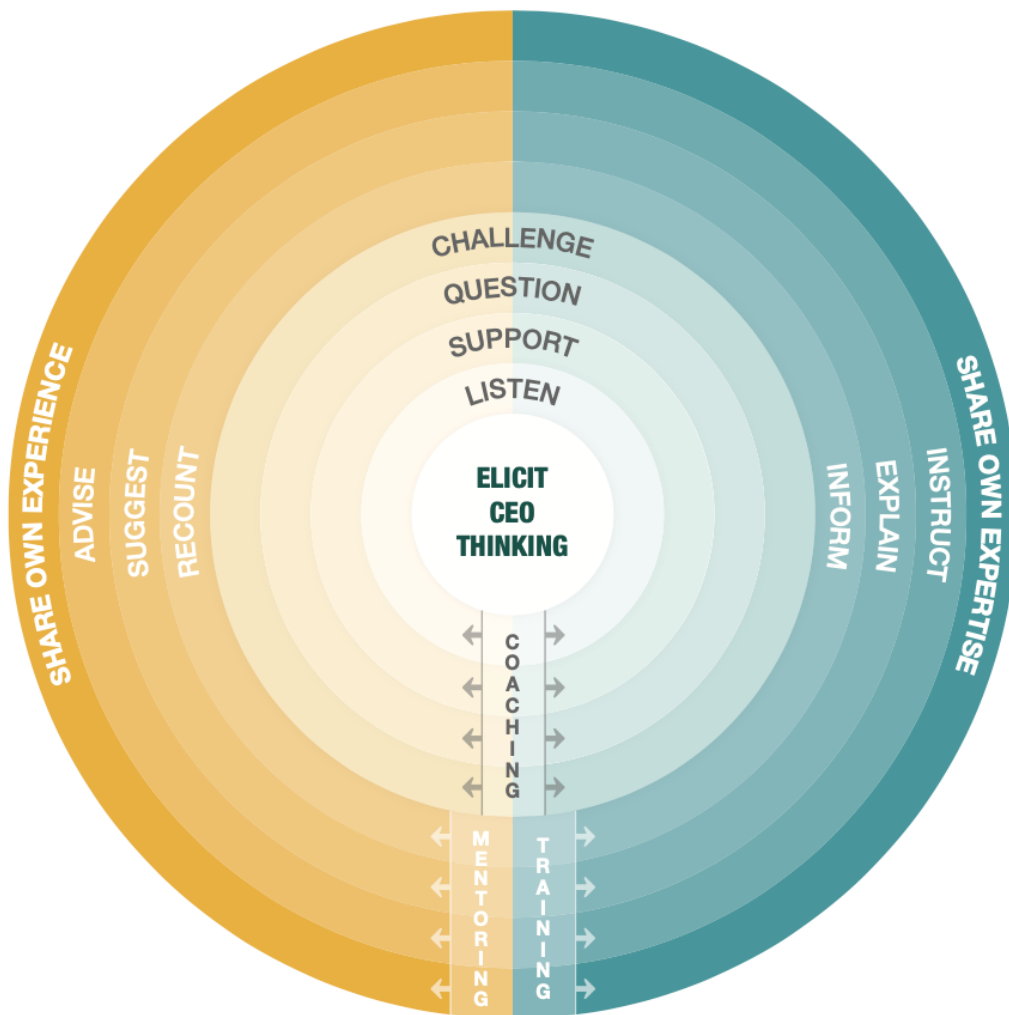
Many coaching and mentoring conversations ebb and flow between a range of coaching and mentoring behaviours on the part of the coach or mentor. Adrian (Coach/Mentor) reflected on his own practice by observing that “the reality is that I practice a hybrid constantly, and I’ve become increasingly comfortable with describing it like that”. The one proviso he highlighted, along with other interviewees such as Alice (Coach) and Damien (Programme Organiser), is the importance of “signalling” the role one is playing with the client, to avoid any misunderstanding about the intention behind one’s interventions.

However, unlike Adrian, the other professional coaches in the study described how they did their best to avoid using mentoring behaviours. Several stakeholders used terms such as “purist”, “classic”, “clean” or “non-directive” to describe an approach to coaching in which the coach shares no experience of their own with their client. Caitlin (CEO) and Chris (CEO) referred to the purpose of this kind of coaching as being to help a person “unlock” themselves and their potential. The rationale given for this approach is that if a coach shares their own experience in the different context facing their client, their input might be misleading or reduce the creativity, sense of ownership or self-esteem of their

client. Adam (Coach) warned that if he became a mentor, “it might give the impression that I’ve been successful doing it this way, so maybe that’s what the person I’m mentoring should do”.

Focusing on the behaviours involved in coaching and mentoring also helps to differentiate ‘skills coaching’ from both ‘mentoring’ and ‘non-directive coaching’. Whereas ‘mentoring’ involves a coach or mentor sharing their personal experience with a client, ‘skills coaching’ is characterised by the coach or mentor sharing their technical expertise. Susan (Chair) argued that in coaching “you’re not sharing your own experience in quite the same way, it’s about coming in to coach someone to do something”. This involves bringing “the skills you’ve got” and “enabling the person”. This differentiation between the sharing of experiential knowledge and technical knowledge is significant, and relates back to the distinction made by Aristotle between *phronesis* and *techne* (Schram, 2012). ‘Skills coaching’ involves ‘training’ behaviours such as informing, explaining or instructing a CEO on how to do things. Daniella (Programme Organiser) explained that a coach will “tell you how to do it” and Stephen (Chair) stated that coaching a CEO involves suggesting “you just need to do this”. These behaviours are also very different from those used in ‘non-directive coaching’. ‘Non-directive coaching’ is based on the principle that a client already has all the knowledge and resources they need to address their challenges themselves. ‘Skills coaching’, in contrast, assumes that the client needs to receive some new technical knowledge that will enable them to perform certain tasks more effectively.

Although Adam (Coach) resisted the use of mentoring behaviours, he was more willing to use training behaviours. He articulated this as providing “a bit of tell, around training in terms of a particular technique”, following which he would then “revert back into coaching”. Alex (Coach) was another who observed that even when he is involved in the activity of coaching, he will “offer models to help people sometimes look at things” in different ways.



Form of coaching & mentoring	Non-directive coaching	Mentoring	Skills coaching	Fluid
Colour reference				
Type of behaviours	Coaching behaviours (inner circles only)	Coaching and mentoring behaviours (left hand side, inner and outer circles)	Coaching and training behaviours (right hand side, inner and outer circles)	All behaviours (left and right hand side, inner and outer circles)

Figure 4.3: The two-dimensional spectrum of coaching and mentoring behaviours involved in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs.

Figure 4.3 is a framework, constructed by the researcher, to map the interrelationship between these various behaviours. It draws on the concept of a directive-nondirective spectrum established by Downey (2014). However, analysis of this study's data has inspired the novel distinction between the directive behaviours involved in sharing experience versus sharing expertise. The focus for 'non-directive coaching' is single-mindedly on eliciting client thinking, and only involves 'coaching' behaviours such as listening, supporting, questioning and challenging. The practice of 'mentoring' uses these coaching behaviours extensively, but augments them with the more directive mentoring behaviours of recounting stories, suggesting ideas and giving advice. The role of these additional behaviours is to stretch the client's thinking even further by sharing the mentor's own experience. 'Skills coaching' also uses 'coaching' behaviours but augments them in a different way, with the coach providing a form of 'training' for the CEO. This involves sharing the coach's own professional expertise, by using the more directive behaviours involved in informing, explaining and instructing a CEO on how to do the things they want to learn. The final form of coaching and mentoring is a 'fluid' approach, in which the coach or mentor draws freely from all these potential behaviours, helping the CEO to address their challenges in whichever way seems most appropriate at the time.

By understanding the different forms of coaching and mentoring in this way, it becomes possible to draw some distinctions between them at a more detailed level in terms of their purpose, principles, activities and behaviours. Table 4.1 provides a construction created by the researcher of the characteristics shared by all forms of coaching and mentoring, as well as the distinctive features of 'non-directive coaching', 'skills coaching', 'mentoring' and a 'fluid' combination of all three. The details have been based primarily on analysis of the study's data, but the overall construction has also been influenced by the conceptualisation of different forms of coaching and mentoring developed by other scholars (Downey, 2014; Passmore, 2020; Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). The distinctions between these four approaches will be important in helping to determine the sources CEOs use to obtain personal support of these different types, and also to assess the roles that the different forms of coaching and mentoring play in helping charity CEOs address their leadership challenges.

Descriptions	All Coaching & Mentoring	Distinctive Features			
		Non-directive coaching	Mentoring	Skills coaching	Fluid
Purpose	- Enhances personal growth & professional development - Builds confidence & capability - Develops skills - Increases self awareness - Supports leadership development - Improves job performance - Enables personal change	- Helps a person unlock themselves and their potential - Deepens self awareness	- Learning from someone else's experience - Broadens awareness of different perspectives and possibilities - Provides inspiring role model - Sponsors career development	- Learning from someone else's expertise - Develops specific skills	- Learn from someone else's expertise and experience - Develops specific skills - Broadens awareness of different perspectives and possibilities
Activities	- Listening - Giving feedback - Asking questions - Stimulating and challenging thinking - Exploring emotions - Clarifying motivations and goals - Generating options - Using tools and techniques - Developing action plans	-	- Recounting stories & experiences - Suggesting ideas and possible solutions - Providing advice - Signposting career pathways - Introducing network contacts	- Informing & guiding skill development	- Recounting stories & experiences - Informing & guiding skill development - Suggesting ideas and possible solutions - Providing advice
Behavioural Interventions	Coaching: Listen, Support, Question, Challenge	-	Mentoring: Recount, Suggest, Advise	Training: Inform, Explain, Instruct	Mentoring: Recount, Suggest, Advise Training: Inform, Explain, Instruct
Principles	- Conversations in the context of relationships - Safe space - Time to think - Emotionally supportive - Intellectually challenging - Client drives agenda - Client retains responsibility for action - Coaches & mentors possess relevant expertise and experience - Bound by commitment to confidentiality - Contracting required to establish boundaries for relationship	- Assumes client has all the resources they need to succeed - Helps client work things out for themselves - Coaches possess professional coaching or psychological expertise	- Mentors possess and share relevant experience	- More goal and outcome oriented - Coaches possess and share specialist professional expertise	- Coach/mentors possess and share relevant experience and professional expertise

Table 4.1: Descriptions of the similarities and differences between different forms of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs.

4.4. Sources of coaching and mentoring support

4.4.1. Potential sources of support

Given these insights into the meaning of coaching and mentoring, the next area of inquiry is to determine the sources of this kind of support for CEOs. This section will begin by describing the various potential sources of support which CEOs use more generally to help them with their leadership challenges. The extent to which these sources provide coaching and mentoring support will then be explored. Finally, special attention will be paid to the role played by external coaches and mentors, including the triggers and barriers to charity CEOs engaging in relationships of this type.

The starting point for most of the non-CEO stakeholders interviewed was a view that many charity CEOs do not have much personal support in place to help them in their leadership roles. David (Programme Organiser) commented that “probably, on average, they’re not well supported” and Adam (Coach) stated that “it’s an area that’s actually quite lacking”. From within the CEO sample, Connor (CEO) admitted that “I think I’m probably not as good at asking for support as I could be. When you talk about what I have, it’s actually not that much.”

However, this was not always the case, and there is evidence to suggest that CEOs are now reaching out for more personal support as their challenges have intensified. The Cranfield Trust’s Impact Report (2022, p.1) described the growing demand for leader support as “the most notable trend of the last three years”. CEOs such as Chris (CEO) were proactive in seeking support from a wide variety of colleagues and contacts:

“It comes from everywhere. It certainly comes from the people who work for me who I trust, are loyal but in a challenging way. It comes from your leadership team. It can come from the chair and the trustees, though not so much at the moment. It comes from external networks and talking to people” (Chris, CEO).

Paula (Professional Body) advocated “developing what I call a professional posse”, a diverse group of people who can support CEOs in different ways depending on their needs at any given time. Figure 4.4 captures the many sources of support mentioned by the various stakeholders. It highlights the extensive network potentially involved, ranging from a CEO’s Board members and internal staff colleagues to their external professional contacts, support organisations and domestic family members and friends.

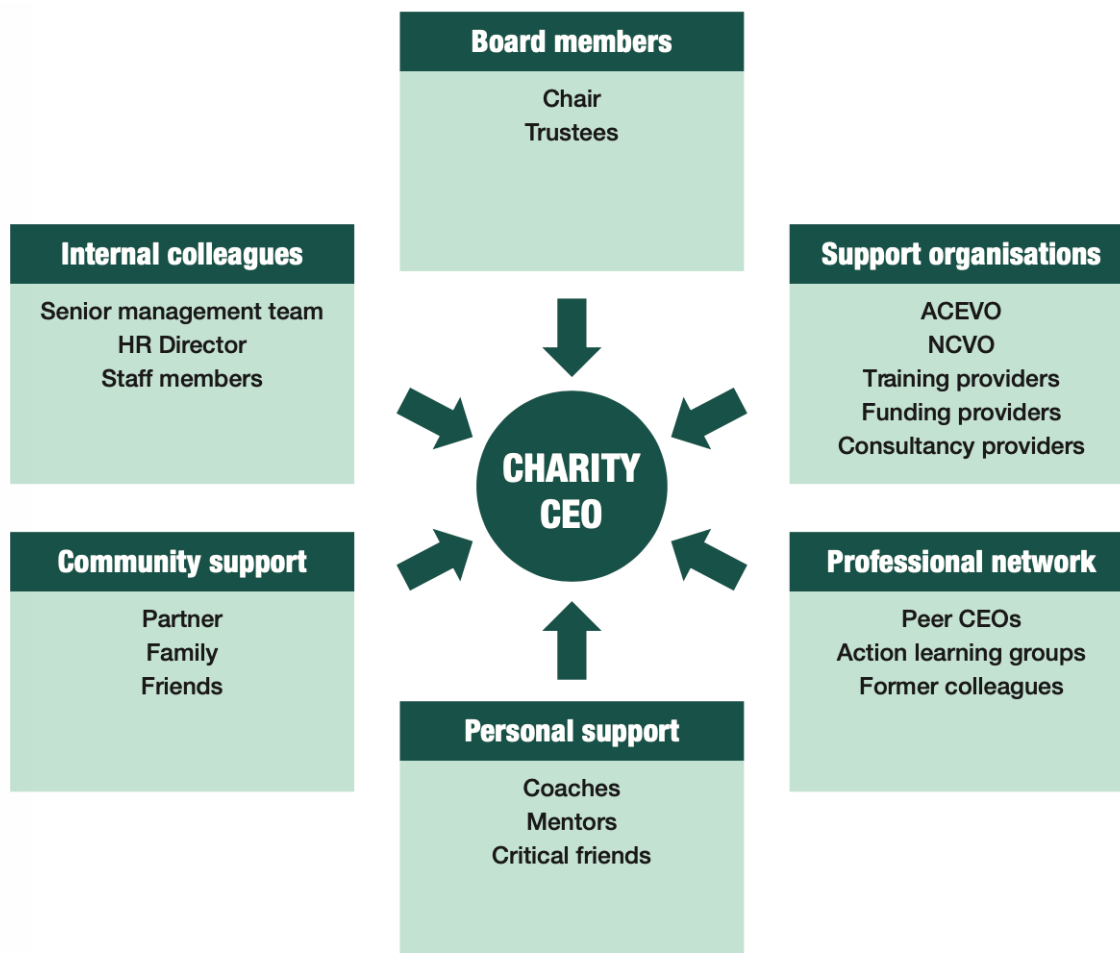


Figure 4.4: Potential sources of CEO support.

4.4.2. Coaching and mentoring conversation partners

Given the definitions of coaching and mentoring provided in the previous section, CEOs can engage in forms of coaching and mentoring conversation with many people in their network. In the case of external coaches and mentors, the relationships within which these interactions take place are established by a CEO with the specific purpose of obtaining coaching or mentoring support. However, many coaching and mentoring conversations take place in the context of different types of stakeholder relationship, such as with a chair, a colleague, or even a family member. In many cases, the CEO's conversation partners might not even see themselves as playing a coaching or mentoring role, even though they might intuitively be using a variety of coaching and mentoring behaviours.

Caroline (CEO) described learning and seeking advice in conversations with lots of her colleagues at work. She reflected that she has “a lot of coaching and mentoring conversations, I just wouldn't necessarily label them as such”. Many of them might just be “friendly chats” with colleagues in which she's simply looking to “pick their brains”. Chris (CEO) held a similar view and emphasised that for CEOs to benefit fully from this type of

support, they need to be “open to listening and ideas” and “good at taking feedback”. He also stressed that “everybody in the organisation has wisdom and knowledge they can add”, so coaching and mentoring shouldn’t be understood as just a “formal” activity with external experts.

Most CEOs described domestic conversations with their family and friends as a valuable source of support, particularly in emotional terms. Christine (CEO) was one example, referring to her husband as “very supportive” and appreciating the fact he “understands the pressure of the role”. Although many CEOs talked about leaning quite heavily on their spouse or partner, there was often also a concern about bringing too many of their work problems home with them. Celia (CEO) was one of several CEOs who also mentioned relying on friends in senior leadership roles: “I talk about work quite a lot, so I will put things out there and get a lot of good feedback”.

Another significant potential source of support for a CEO is the chair of their charity, although experiences of this relationship seemed mixed. Cara (CEO) described how her chair “absolutely nails the way that she balances the governance and support for me”. Other chairs seem less concerned about this balance, focusing more on holding CEOs to account for their performance than supporting them emotionally and developmentally. The result is that even very experienced CEOs often feel nervous about being too open with their chairs.

“Sometimes, to get the best out of a relationship, you need to show vulnerability, but I’m not sure I’m entirely comfortable doing that with some of the more recent chairs I’ve had. I want them to have confidence in me, rather than thinking I’ve got vulnerabilities” (Charles, Charity CEO).

The chairs interviewed seemed very conscious of the possible role that they play in coaching and mentoring their CEOs, though some individuals were more comfortable engaging in these activities than others. Sheila (Chair) embraced her role as being “to try to be a mentor really, and then to some extent a coach”. To her, this meant sharing her own experience when it might be of value, but also helping CEOs to work their own way through their challenges. Susan (Chair) could also see the potential value in her role as a mentor to her CEO, by “showing them how, from your own experience, things might have worked in the past, ideas about how you might do something”. But, because she saw coaching as more related to specific skill development and performance management, she argued that “on the whole I think you should try and get that in from elsewhere”.

A source of support frequently referred to as being of special value to CEOs is their connection with peers in other charities. Some expressed a preference for personal one-to-one relationships, with others more involved in CEO peer groups or action learning sets. A rapid growth in these forums has been fuelled by the extraordinary challenges faced during the Covid pandemic, coupled with the wider use of virtual meeting technologies. The key activities involved seem to lie mainly in the mentoring area – sharing challenges, perspectives and learning with people going through similar experiences.

“I feel very lucky that there are a number of peer networks I’ve found which have been hugely influential – just to hear other people’s opinions, to take other people’s learning, and to share your own personal experiences in a safe, confidential space” (Claude, CEO).

Interestingly, because mentoring is seen to involve the sharing of experience, some charity CEOs referred to “reverse” or “upward” mentoring. They receive this from people who are more knowledgeable than them in certain areas, but who are also less senior in organisational terms. Charlotte (CEO) endorsed the value of using upward mentors in areas as diverse as IT and working with parliamentary MPs: “I’ve found them to be fabulous”. However, because in many cases these individuals will be sharing professional expertise as well as experience, they can also be understood to be involved in ‘skills coaching’ as well as ‘mentoring’.

4.4.3. The distinctive role of external coaches and mentors

Having established that useful forms of coaching and mentoring conversation can take place with many stakeholders in a CEO’s network, CEOs see a distinctive role for external coaches and mentors in helping them address their challenges. All the charity CEOs interviewed had experienced relationships with external coaches or mentors – in many cases, both. A couple of them also referred to the involvement of “critical friends”, a term used widely in the sector to describe external partners who provide a blend of personal coaching, mentoring and consultancy support.

When analysing the factors that the interviewees said make this kind of one-to-one support of value to CEOs, relative to support from other potential sources, one core benefit emerged above all others. The most important role of external coaches and mentors is that they provide a safe reflective space in which CEOs have time to think and to talk through their issues and worries. Deborah (Programme Organiser) stressed the value to CEOs of having “that mental space to make some difficult decisions, reflect on some things that are going on and feel that they’re more in control of events”. CEOs

described feeling able to be completely open and authentic, because the relationship is based on a non-judgemental spirit of confidentiality and trust. Clive (CEO) shared that “I can be completely myself in that space, it’s a very safe space”. This is made possible by the fact these partners are external and independent, which means they don’t have any conflicting agendas or relationships.

“I’m really wanting to talk it out in quite a safe way, say things that I probably wouldn’t say to my chair or to my colleagues, and get a few things off my chest” (Camilla, CEO).

Effective coaches and mentors also possess relevant expertise or experience, as well as a behavioural style, that enables them to support the CEO’s agenda in a meaningful way. Coaching and mentoring programme organisers talked of the importance of “wise, listening people” (Deborah), “experience working with leaders” (Diane) and a “correlation between the challenges” a CEO faces and the personal expertise and experience of their coach or mentor (David).

4.4.4. Triggers and barriers to engaging external coaches and mentors

To understand, more fully, the role played by external coaches and mentors, it is useful to understand the situations which tend to trigger charity CEOs to seek their support, and the barriers which get in the way of them doing so. A summary of the triggers and barriers referred to by the research participants is provided in Table 4.2.

Triggers	Barriers
Times of transition: ■ Becoming a CEO for the first time ■ Moving into a new CEO role ■ Seeking to move on from a CEO role	Lack of awareness or understanding: ■ Not clear about what coaching or mentoring involves ■ Unsure how to go about getting relevant support
Times of difficulty: ■ Struggling at a personal level ■ Concerns over personal performance or impact ■ Experiencing relationship difficulties ■ Facing a particular challenge for the first time ■ Moments of organisational crisis	Don’t see the need: ■ Belief in own abilities ■ Comfortable with support already in place ■ Doesn’t suit personal learning style ■ Poor previous experience
Recommendation by a chair, trustee or peer ■ To support personal development or wellbeing ■ To address a performance concern	Sign of weakness: ■ Concern about appearing not up to the job ■ Assumption that a CEO ought to have all the answers ■ Not wanting to ask for help ■ Coaching and mentoring seen as remedial not developmental
Offered by charity partner or funder: ■ To help enhance charity performance	Poor organisational support: ■ Lack of chair/trustee commitment to CEO personal development ■ Concern over coaching serving chair’s agenda, not CEO’s
Attending a leadership development programme: ■ To help support and integrate learning	Fear of self indulgence: ■ Concern about wasting charity time and money on oneself ■ Sense of personal martyrdom for the cause

Table 4.2: Triggers and barriers to the use of external coaches and mentors by charity CEOs.

The circumstances when CEOs went looking for external one-to-one support which were most frequently mentioned in the interviews, were times of personal transition or difficulty. Several CEOs described seeking a coach or mentor when taking on a new CEO position. A few, like Cara (CEO), did so when they became a CEO for the first time. Connor (CEO) explained how he engaged with a coach after an unpleasant “whistleblowing issue” and Charlotte (CEO) took action at a time when she was “on [her] knees”. Other common triggers include suggestions by board members or opportunities provided by charity partners, funders and leadership programme providers.

Several potential barriers to the use of coaches and mentors were also highlighted. The first and most basic is a lack of understanding about what coaching and mentoring involves, as well as about how to find this kind of support. Amongst those CEOs that do have this understanding, some don’t see the need and feel comfortable with their performance and the support they already have in place. Others may resist one-to-one coaching and mentoring because they have had poor previous experiences or feel that it doesn’t suit their personal learning style. For others who feel less secure, taking on a coach might be seen as a sign of weakness. Sheila (Chair) explained that if a chair suggests to a CEO that they might benefit from a coach or mentor, it can often be seen “as a criticism of their performance and they don’t want to do it”. The counterpoint to this scenario is when a chair and their board are not supportive of a CEO’s personal development, in which case Susan (Charity CEO) envisaged that a CEO might feel “I’m being paid to be the chief executive, I should know what I’m doing”. Peter (Professional Body) argued that it should be seen as “a strength to share and ask for help ... don’t wait for a crisis – it’s preventable”.

Another major barrier to coaching and mentoring is related to the mindsets concerning scarcity and heroic leadership often prevailing in the charity sector.

“We do things on a shoestring and we don’t like to waste money and particularly not waste money on ourselves. So it’s seen as a luxury both timewise...and in terms of money” (Caitlin, CEO).

As this quote illustrates, many CEOs feel self-indulgent or guilty about spending precious time and money on themselves, as opposed to channelling all available resources in direct support of their charity’s cause.

4.5. CEO experiences of coaching and mentoring relationships

4.5.1. Different types of relationships

As explained in the previous section, although charity CEOs can engage in coaching and mentoring conversations with people across their support network, there is only one type of stakeholder with whom their relationship is defined by its sole focus on coaching and mentoring. The support provided by external, independent coaches and mentors provides CEOs with a safe reflective space in which they can address their leadership challenges, in a way that is not possible with other stakeholders. However, to understand the different roles played by these coaches and mentors, it is necessary to investigate the different forms of coaching and mentoring that they deliver. This section will begin by examining the characteristics of the different types of relationships experienced by charity CEOs, considering the four forms of coaching and mentoring identified in section 4.3.4: 'mentoring', 'non-directive coaching', 'skills coaching' and 'fluid'. This will be done by discussing the experiences of the various stakeholders who described being involved in each of these types of relationships. Conclusions will then be drawn about the roles coaching and mentoring play more generally in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs.

Although many of the CEOs involved in the study had experienced several coaching and mentoring relationships over the course of their career, the interviews explored in depth just one or two of their relationships with external coaches and mentors. The CEOs were asked to focus on engagements that were relatively recent and that had been of particular value to them. One type of relationship has been included for each CEO, except in the cases of Camilla and Charles for whom two different relationships are featured. Table 4.3 below provides a categorisation of the CEOs under the form of coaching and mentoring most closely associated with the relationship they described.

It is important to stress that this allocation required some careful judgement, as distinctions between the four forms of coaching and mentoring are often not clear-cut in practice. Each relationship had evolved over time, and had involved various types of behavioural intervention by the coach or mentor, depending on the objectives or issues being addressed at any stage. However, when viewed as a whole, each relationship tended to exhibit the characteristics of one form of coaching and mentoring more than others, and it is on this basis that the categorisation was made. Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 below provide a more detailed breakdown of these characteristics for each CEO relationship, taking into account the four contextual dimensions in the framework proposed for analysing coaching and mentoring by Stokes et al. (2021).

Mentoring	Pure Coaching	Skills Coaching	Hybrid
Camilla (CEO)	Caitlin (CEO)	Camilla (CEO)	Cara (CEO)
Charles (CEO)	Cameron (CEO)	Claude (CEO)	Caroline (CEO)
Chris (CEO)	Celia (CEO)	Connor (CEO)	Clive (CEO)
Christine (CEO)	Charles (CEO)	Adam (Coach)	Adrian (Coach/Mentor)
Sheila (Chair)	Charlotte (CEO)	Alex (Coach)	Peter (Professional Body)
Stephen (Chair)	Alice (Coach)	Diane (Programme Organiser)	Patricia (Professional Body)
Susan (Chair)	Paula (Professional Body)		
Anthony (Mentor)			
Daniella (Programme Organiser)			
Damien (Programme Organiser)			
David (Programme Organiser)			
Deborah (Programme Organiser)			

Table 4.3: A categorisation of the different forms of coaching and mentoring relationships experienced by interviewees.

Regarding the categorisation of the other stakeholder types in Table 4.3, the three chairs are included under 'mentoring' because all described being involved as mentors for CEOs in organisations other than their own. Most of the programme organisers were also focused on providing mentoring support to CEOs, with just one leading a leadership development 'skills coaching' programme (Diane). The coaches and mentors each described different approaches to their CEO relationships, with Anthony positioning himself as a mentor, Alice as a relational coach, Adam and Alex as leadership coaches and Adrian as a hybrid coach/mentor. One of the representatives from the professional bodies (Paula) is included under 'non-directive coaching' as she also engages in coaching practice. The other two (Peter and Patricia) are categorised under 'fluid' because they each brought a more macro-overview of the subject.

4.5.2. 'Mentoring' relationships

All the mentoring relationships referred to in the interviews were established on a pro bono basis. In most cases, there seemed to have been little formal contracting, though there were exceptions in the case of the programme organisers, who saw it as their role to provide some basic structure in this area. The mentoring conversations were typically arranged every 2-3 months for about 60-90 minutes. In organised programmes, most relationships are set up initially for a period of 6-12 months. A few less successful ones do

not last this long, but those that do are often extended further via agreement between the partners involved. A few examples were quoted of mentoring relationships having lasted at least 2 years. The characteristics of the CEO mentoring relationships investigated in the study are captured in Table 4.4 (page 125). This highlights that Camilla's mentoring support had continued for as long as 5 years. It also shows that Chris (CEO) was an outlier, in that his mentoring input had been obtained from several experienced CEOs in one-off conversations, rather than ongoing relationships.

The most distinctive feature of mentoring relationships from the perspective of CEOs is that they are looking to learn from other, more experienced leaders. Charles (CEO) described his mentor as someone who had "been there and done it" and Chris (CEO) defined his objective as being to "leverage their understanding and way of working". Camilla talked of valuing "someone to learn from and to troubleshoot with". These views were mirrored in the perspectives of those who had played the role of mentor. Anthony (Mentor) described seeking to "draw out" ideas from CEOs "based on my experiences". He saw his role as helping them both professionally and personally by providing "another perspective on things in a non-threatening way".

Mentoring programme organisers observed that a wide variety of objectives tend to be addressed in mentoring relationships.

"It's massively about their own career development, the relationship they have with their senior team, the relationship with their board, their relationship with their chair very specifically. And then strategy issues, so their fundraising programme, their plan to merge, their plan to shrink, their plan to develop a new strategy for the next five years. I would say those are the key things, in terms of the problems they bring" (Deborah, Programme Organiser).

The adaptability of mentors to help address such a wide range of challenges was seen as a critical success factor. The breadth and relevance of their experience was an important consideration, but so, too, was their personal mindset and style. Camilla (CEO) had found one mentor she had been matched with in the past to be insufficiently experienced working in a major national charity like her own. Charles (CEO) complained that an old mentor of his had been annoyingly "patronising". CEOs are not looking to their mentors to solve their challenges for them, but to engage in a dialogue which helps them generate new ways of understanding and approaching things. David (Programme Organiser) stressed that it was essential for mentors to use coaching behaviours as well as mentoring behaviours. Indeed, he argued that it was important to "ask questions" and "be curious" first, before moving into sharing experiences and suggestions. He described this

as “unfolding mentoring out of coaching” in the way that behavioural interventions are used.

This approach has an important implication for a CEO’s confidence, a consideration stressed by many stakeholders. Daniella (Programme Organiser) stated that becoming “more confident in actually developing their own solutions to problems or situations” was the “biggest thing” for CEOs, as far as her programme was concerned. Charles (CEO) talked about how reassuring and validating he found it when he realised that “someone who was so unbelievably successful” as his mentor, “was dealing with exactly the same kind of problems and challenges that I was”.

Several stakeholders commented that, although CEOs typically start by raising challenges of a strategic or relational nature with their mentor, the focus for their conversations often shifts quickly to more personal concerns. Camilla (CEO) was one who highlighted several benefits she had enjoyed at a personal level. She mentioned how her mentor had helped her to become more conscious of her learning styles and behavioural preferences. She also observed that he had been very good at giving her feedback, describing how he would “hold up a mirror and show me things that I needed to see in order to be a leader”. In Christine’s (CEO) case, her primary focus had been on working to clarify her thinking about her personal career options. Her mentor had also gone further in providing some practical support by standing for her “as a referee” and putting her in touch with some useful contacts in her broader network. In this respect, this relationship was the only example encountered in which characteristics of the US model of ‘sponsorship’ mentoring were more prevalent than those of ‘developmental mentoring’ (Clutterbuck, 2009).

Form	CEO name	CEO's relationship description	Learning: Objectives	Economic: Fee arrangements	Temporal: Length of engagement	Sociocultural: Partner skillset	Conversation/ intervention style
Mentoring	Camilla	Mentoring	Issue-focused problem solving at work and at home	Pro bono	5 years, once/quarter for 90-minute sessions	Senior executive in blue chip commercial sector organisation	2-way dialogue; partner shares ideas, advice & perspectives
	Charles	Mentoring	Obtain new perspective on leadership challenges, not personal or career oriented	Pro bono	2 years, met for 1 hour, 3 times/year	Experienced CEO of big commercial sector organisations	2-way dialogue to explore issues; partner shares perspective, experience and advice
	Chris	Mentoring	Learn how other people see the role of CEO	Pro bono	One-off single conversations	3 x CEOs in other types of commercial organisation	2-way dialogue; partner shares wisdom, learning and perspectives
	Christine	Mentoring	Career planning and sponsorship	Pro bono	2 years, 1-hour meetings every 1-2 months	Experienced CEO of larger charity	Combination of questioning and sharing advice; provides references and contacts

Table 4.4: Characteristics of CEO 'mentoring' relationships.

4.5.3. 'Non-directive' coaching' relationships

The way 'non-directive coaching' relationships were portrayed differs in various ways from mentoring. Contracts tend to be more formal, and many start off as short-term programmes of 6-8 monthly sessions. However, as with mentoring, there were several examples in which these engagements had been extended for longer periods, when the relationship was working well. Coaching was also more likely to be paid for, although discounted rates and pro bono arrangements were still widespread, as indicated by the 'non-directive coaching' CEO relationships described in Table 4.5 (page 128).

Whereas mentoring enables a CEO to learn from the experiences of someone else, the more non-directive form of coaching enables them to generate learning from within themselves. Alice (Coach) described this kind of support as "exploratory", its role being to provide a psychologically safe space for a CEO "to think about who they are, where they are, what they need, what they need to respond to, what decisions do they need to make". Paula (Professional Body) emphasised the importance of trusting in the experience and capacity of the CEO, "helping them think through their own solutions" and to reflect on the impact their role is having on them "intellectually, emotionally, spiritually".

As Table 4.5 demonstrates, each CEO who had experienced this form of coaching described very different objectives for the support they had received. Celia (CEO) only engaged in her coaching because she had been offered a round of six pro bono sessions by a local business partner. Her goals were unclear to begin with, but a focus emerged around helping her to translate the strategic agenda she had in her head, into a narrative she could use to engage people more broadly within her organisation. Charles (CEO) had been shocked by some observations contained in a psychological profile done for him as part of an interview process, to the extent that he worked with the coach involved for a period of 6 years to help him understand more about himself and his emotions. Charlotte (CEO) had engaged several coaches at different points in time, each with the principal objectives of trying to help her maintain her personal wellbeing, improve her management of emotion, and strengthen her performance as a CEO.

The profiles of the coaches involved were also found to vary widely. All were professionally qualified, but some also had advanced psychological training. In one case, the coach was a very experienced and senior executive at a well-known financial institution. Another was a founder and director of a respected leadership consultancy. Those CEOs who had experienced multiple coaching relationships commented on how different their experiences had been, depending on the expertise, techniques and style of the individual coaches involved. Although a coach's professional experience is not of central importance in the way it is for a mentor, it is still of significance from a CEO's

perspective. Caitlin (CEO) explained that the fact her coach is 20 years older than her gives her “a lot of confidence”, and she values the fact “that most of the stuff I’ve been through, she’s seen or done, or helped somebody in her day job deal with”. A couple of the CEOs observed wryly that one or two of their less experienced coaches had probably learned more from them than the other way round.

Despite all these differences, the one common distinguishing factor about this type of coaching is that the focus is all on the coachee. As Charles (CEO) explained, it’s about “what’s going on in their heads, and how someone’s feeling and how they’re behaving”. Celia (CEO) contrasted the professionalism of her recent coach with others she had worked with: “she’s a very, very good coach ... she didn’t step over, she just asked the questions”. Whereas the others would “jump in with advice” and bring “a lot more of themselves to the table”. Cameron (CEO) had a similar view about his coach, portraying him as someone “who will generally be asking questions that try and help me get to the bottom of what the real issue is”. Caitlin (CEO) described the benefits of this kind of approach as helping her “to unlock where I am stuck” and to speak openly about “ugly feelings” like jealousy and anger that “can turn into behaviours that are really unhelpful for you as a CEO”. Both Charles (CEO) and Charlotte (CEO) also talked about how important their coaching had been in helping them to manage their own emotions and those of other people. Indeed, a few CEOs described this kind of support as being close to a form of therapy.

Interestingly, the coaching relationships described by the CEOs were not always as non-directive as they seem. Celia (CEO) admitted that, towards the end of their time together, her coach had given her “pieces of work that she had done or took me in certain directions”, to help enhance or reinforce the things she had been talking about. Caitlin (CEO) described how her coach would sometimes “influence my thinking or open a door through her stories”. She also recounted one conversation where she had sought expert professional advice on a difficult HR issue she was facing. With this flexibility in mind, Alice (Coach) highlighted that an unhelpful “misunderstanding about coaching” is that the only real coaching is non-directive. She argued that a coach can still be client-centred and move up the directive spectrum by sharing their experience or expertise from time to time, if it serves to enhance the thinking and interests of the client.

Form	CEO name	CEO's relationship description	Learning: Objectives	Economic: Fee arrangements	Temporal: Length of engagement	Sociocultural: Partner skillset	Conversation/ intervention style
Non-directive coaching	Caitlin	Coaching	Handle transition into new CEO role, deepen understanding of emotional connection with her work	Pro bono	5 years, 1½ - 2 hour meetings, every 6-8 weeks	Senior HR leader in commercial organization, trained in coaching, including spirituality & psychodynamic specialities	Listens and asks questions, explores emotions, sometimes makes suggestions based on her experiences
	Cameron	Coaching	Help transition into first CEO role, work-life balance and career planning	£100/hour, paid for by charity	4 years, 2-hour session every 2-3 months	Experienced charity CEO, now a professional coach	Asks questions, 2-way dialogue, partner shares perspectives but not experience or advice
	Celia	Coaching	No initial objectives, focus became engaging organisation in personal vision for change	Pro bono	6 months	Professional coach	Partner holds quiet space, asks questions, GROW model approach
	Charles	Coaching	Learn how to manage emotions and behaviour	Pro bono	6 year duration - regular meetings for 4 years, then a gap, then 3 sessions/ week for 2 months	Experienced psychodynamic coach/leadership consultant	Explored feelings, reactions to situations and impact on other people
	Charlotte	Coaching	Help improve performance as CEO, managing emotional responses, improving relationships	Always paid, up to £1800/day	Several relationships ranging between 6-18 months, monthly sessions	Professional coaches with different styles/ specialist approaches: psychodynamic, relational, performance-oriented	Various – some more challenging than others

Table 4.5: Characteristics of CEO 'non-directive coaching' relationships.

4.5.4. 'Skills coaching' relationships

As explained in Table 4.1, 'skills coaching' is distinguished by its emphasis on helping an individual build the capabilities to handle specific tasks or responsibilities more effectively. For charity CEOs, the main focus for this type of coaching seems to be leadership development, as indicated by Table 4.6 (page 131). The initial objective defined by Connor (CEO) was "being more inclusive in my leadership style". Claude (CEO) described his goal as to better "understand my role, my place, my leadership style, what I wanted to bring to a chief executive position". For this reason, the CEOs interviewed described this type of relationship as being 'leadership coaching', rather than 'skills coaching'.

Contracting arrangements for 'skills coaching' are similar to 'non-directive coaching' in that they tend to be formally defined, short-term, and more likely to be paid. When relationships do prove to be of value to CEOs, they also tend to extend for longer periods of time. Connor (CEO) described how his coaching support had evolved over two or three years to focus less on specific measurable objectives, and more on talking things through "if I've got a particular issue". Given that some of these issues involve his own career development, he now pays for the coaching himself, rather than his organisation paying, as "morally I feel it's more appropriate". In the case of Claude (CEO), he explained that his relationship had lasted for over four years, and he recontracts with his coach annually. This discussion is tied into an annual appraisal, 360 feedback and an agreement with his chair on his developmental objectives and the coaching budget.

Coaches providing 'skills coaching' appear to have a blend of 'non-directive coaching' expertise and the appropriate technical know-how to address the developmental needs of their client. For Connor (CEO), given his focus on inclusive leadership, the coach that his chair recommended was a specialist who had written a book on diversity and inclusion. Diane (Programme Organiser) specified that coaches involved in her leadership development programme require significant experience working with leaders, ideally in the third sector.

Diane (Programme Organiser) pointed out that many leaders need some help with "hard skills", like "good governance" and "strategic development". However, she stressed that "you can't do any of that until you've done that initial piece of work on: 'who am I?'". Building a leader's self-awareness around their identity, values and sense of purpose requires some guidance from a coach, but ultimately the answers must come from within. For that reason, coaching behaviours like listening and questioning are also fundamental to 'skills coaching', when the skills involved relate to leadership. Adam (Coach) described his role as "to give people a good listening to" and Alex (Coach) as "to really enable

people to stretch their own thinking". Nevertheless, they both also accepted that their interventions might need to be more directive at times. Adam (Coach) explained how he would often address a CEO's coaching goals by doing some training using a leadership framework or model, but then he would go back into non-directive mode and "allow them to reflect on it and think how they're going to make it work".

"I think we all can bring ideas and suggestions, and tools and models and experiences. And I think some people in the professions that span this spectrum, some people do more of that and some people do less of it. I think I'm somewhere in the middle" (Alex, Coach).

When more directive interventions fit with the learning goals and style of a CEO, they can be highly valued. Claude (CEO) explained that although his coach rarely shares her personal opinions, he appreciates how she gives him reading suggestions which help him "understand the theory behind things". She also helps him "learn and grow" by giving him homework exercises to do "behind the scenes". One key benefit from his coaching has been learning about "the form of leadership which is 'leading through others', which is well established and well known, but for me was not".

However, if a coach imposes their tools and techniques on a CEO too rigidly, the response can be less positive. Camilla (CEO) was offered the opportunity to have some coaching support as a "gift" by her chair during the Covid crisis. Her initial response was, "what have I done?" and "what needs remedy?". Once she was happy that the offer was positively intended, she set some objectives with her coach, which included a desire to reflect on what it means to be a leader and how she shows up with her team. Camilla (CEO) recounted that her coach was "always teaching me" and brought "tools and resources that we used". Whilst some of this work led to "real breakthroughs" in her understanding of herself and her leadership, she expressed a general frustration that "I'm not getting the answers I want". She much preferred her mentoring support, which better "suits my learning style" because it is "more real" and focused on "issues and problem solving".

Form	CEO name	CEO's relationship description	Learning: Objectives	Economic: Fee arrangements	Temporal: Length of engagement	Sociocultural: Partner skillset	Conversation/ intervention style
Skills coaching	Camilla	Coaching	Being a better leader, improve relationships with Chair & Board, improve EDI in organisation	n/a	6 months, 2 cycles of 8 sessions	Professional coach with extensive commercial sector experience	Prompts personal reflection, use of leadership coaching tools & techniques, high emotional support
	Claude	Coaching	Handling internal transition to CEO role, developing authentic leadership style	£6000/year paid by charity	4 years, contract renewed annually, 90-minute sessions every 3 weeks	Professional coach, extensive commercial experience	Download of latest concerns at start of each session, focus on key issues, partner uses challenging questions, shares theories and reading, uses tools and exercises, doesn't share experience
	Connor	Coaching	Initial focus on inclusive leadership style, became more reactive to leadership issues and personal career planning	Paid initially by charity, now paid personally	2-3 years, fortnightly sessions	Professional coach, specializing in inclusive leadership	Partner asks reflective questions, no focus on business/strategic issues, just relational and personal

Table 4.6: Characteristics of CEO 'skills coaching' relationships.

4.5.5. 'Fluid' coaching and mentoring relationships

The three forms of coaching and mentoring relationship identified so far each have an orientation towards a particular style of behavioural intervention. 'Non-directive coaching' relies primarily on coaching behaviours, 'mentoring' involves the sharing of experience, and 'skills coaching' involves the training behaviours related to the sharing of expertise. The fourth form of coaching and mentoring is a 'fluid' version of these three approaches, in which a coach or mentor is understood to provide all these benefits in a flexible and integrated manner. The characteristics of CEO relationships of this type are captured in Table 4.7 (page 4). Cara (CEO) described her thinking partner as a "wise man" whose role is "somewhere between a coach and a mentor". Clive explained how his coach "brings lots of different experiences" and reads up in advance of his sessions so that he "comes with lots of insights".

Payment arrangements for 'fluid' relationships seem to vary considerably, with some services being provided pro bono, some paid for by the CEO privately, and some paid for by the CEO's organisation. As with 'non-directive coaching' and 'skills coaching', the 'fluid' relationships encountered had started initially as short-term coaching contracts. However, the value derived by the CEOs involved had resulted in them all lasting 3-4 years, and they are still ongoing. Adrian (Coach & Mentor) described this as common practice in his experience. Although he acknowledged that concerns are often raised in the coaching community about risks of dependency, there are good reasons why a CEO would want to keep things going if the relationship is strong:

"I think the life of a CEO is really high pressure, it's not easy. They feel very much alone at times. So why would you stop meeting and discussing your work life with a trustworthy third-party, safe, confidential person? Why would you stop that if you don't have to?" (Anthony, Coach & Mentor).

In relationships of this type, the conversations tend to be less focused on developmental objectives and more issue-based, addressing whatever a CEO is struggling with at the time. Cara (CEO) observed that "he's very much led by me, what I need, what I want to talk about". Although questioning and listening are still central elements, there is a greater emphasis on two-way dialogue between the CEO and their coach/mentor. Caroline describes how her relationship has gone beyond "formal coaching", in the sense that the conversation "ebbs and flows and goes backwards and forwards between the two of us". She particularly values the fact that it's not all about her having to generate answers to questions posed by the coach: "I think I'd find that quite pressurised". Patricia

(Professional Body) concurs, observing that for a CEO who is often feeling “exhausted”, being given just a few new options to consider by a coach can be “a real relief”.

Any coach able to play this role successfully must have an unusual blend of coaching skill, leadership experience and technical expertise. As an example, Cara (CEO) described her coach as having “a lifetime of experience”. He is also “very knowledgeable around leadership and management techniques, and he’s always got a piece of research that he can send me around a particular hot potato that I’m dealing with”. A lot of emphasis is also placed on the suitability of the personal style of the coach. Clive (CEO) appreciates the fact his coach “thinks slightly differently to me” and he’s prepared to “really confront and challenge me”. In contrast, Caroline (CEO) values “that feeling of mutual support and equality” which means that “I’m happy to be vulnerable and I’m happy to share my challenges”.

Adrian (Coach & Mentor) pitches his support to clients in this ‘fluid’ way. In one instance, he described supporting someone who lacked the necessary brand marketing skills to handle his role. Part of Adrian’s own experience involved working for a large national charity in a senior marketing position, so he was able to help by explaining “the mechanics, the steps, the processes, of how you create, sustain and manage a brand in an organisation”. However, he also went beyond instructing his client based on his technical expertise, to sharing his personal experience by explaining “when you do this, this is the type of result you get”. This example is useful because it illustrates again the blurring of intervention styles and the fact that stakeholders understand different terms to mean different things. From Adrian’s perspective, when he is involved in this kind of “competency-based” work, he sees himself as “mentoring”. He did not differentiate between the sharing of his technical expertise and his practical experience, seeing them both as approaches to mentoring rather than distinguishing the former as skill development or training. This is a common perception in the sector, as illustrated further in ACEVO’s description of mentoring, in the guide to its peer mentoring scheme, as the sharing of “knowledge, experience, skills or information to support the development of someone else” (ACEVO, 2018b).

Form	CEO name	CEO's relationship description	Learning: Objectives	Economic: Fee arrangements	Temporal: Length of engagement	Sociocultural: Partner skillset	Conversation/ intervention style
Hybrid	Cara	Coaching & mentoring	Reactive to issues as they arise, helping to make strategic decisions, handling relationships	£100/hour paid for by charity	3-4 years, flexible 1 hour conversations, email exchanges when needed	'Wise man', over 80 years old, knowledgeable about leadership, don't know if he's qualified as a coach	Partner asks questions, often shares stories & strong points of view on leadership, provides thinking frameworks
	Caroline	Coaching	Obtain emotional support, career planning, team relationships	Pro bono	18 months, meet every 6-8 weeks, initial contract for 6 months extended to ongoing relationship	Professional coach, mainly working outside charity sector, 25 year+ commercial career background	2-way dialogue, problem solving, partner asks questions but also shares experience and ideas
	Clive	Coaching & mentoring	Act as sounding board on challenging issues	Pro bono	Over 3 years, monthly 2-hour sessions	Experienced innovation consultant in commercial sector	2-way dialogue, partner asks questions & shares ideas, perspectives and references

Table 4.7: Characteristics of CEO 'fluid' relationships.

4.5.6. The roles of coaching and mentoring

In this section so far, an analysis of the data has taken place, relating to the ways in which charity CEOs have experienced four different forms of coaching and mentoring in their relationships with external coaches and mentors. The distinctive characteristics of ‘mentoring’, ‘non-directive coaching’, ‘skills coaching’ and a ‘fluid’ combination of all three have been identified. A summary of the findings is provided in Table 4.8, based on the dimensions of Stokes et al. (2021) contextual framework.

Form of coaching & mentoring	Learning Context: Objectives	Economic Context: Fee arrangements	Temporal Context: Length of engagement	Sociocultural Context: Partner skillset
Mentoring	Broaden perspective on professional and personal challenges	Pro bono	1-5 years	Relevant leadership experience
Non-directive coaching	Management of emotions	Pro bono or paid (often discounted)	6 month initial contracts, sometimes extending to 4-6 years	Specialist coaching expertise/ leadership experience
Skills coaching	Leadership development & performance	Paid (often discounted)	6 month initial contracts, sometimes extending to 2-4 years	Coaching expertise/ leadership experience and expertise
Fluid	Responsive to issues as they arise	Pro bono or paid (often discounted)	6 month initial contracts, sometimes extending to 2-4 years	Relevant experience/ leadership expertise/coaching expertise

Table 4.8: The distinctive relationship characteristics of the four forms of coaching and mentoring.

‘Mentoring’ is characterised by its focus on helping CEOs to learn from someone’s else’s experience, generating new perspectives and possibilities, as they seek to address their leadership challenges and career development. ‘Skills coaching’ also involves learning from somebody else, but in this case the emphasis is on the coach sharing their technical or leadership expertise. This involves informing CEOs about how to handle specific leadership tasks, and guiding them as they explore their own authentic leadership approach and style. ‘Non-directive coaching’, in contrast, is more focused on CEOs learning from within themselves. Coaches help them to think their challenges through, and more attention tends to be given to exploring and managing emotions. Finally, ‘fluid’ relationships combine these various approaches, with coaches and mentors using a variety of intervention styles to help CEOs address the many issues that they encounter, in whichever way seems most appropriate for each situation.

There is an important proviso in studying the roles of coaching and mentoring in this way. As warned by Garvey and Stokes (2022, p.19), “misplaced concreteness” can result if attempts are made to define differences between coaching and mentoring in too clear or discrete a manner. As highlighted throughout the analysis, even when relationships appear to have the features of one of the four forms of coaching and mentoring, the reality in practice is that the differences between them are blurred. The discussion involved in many conversations is likely to involve a range of behavioural interventions, not just the type associated with that particular form of coaching and mentoring. It is quite possible that in any given relationship, a CEO might have different objectives which require different coaching or mentoring approaches. Many examples also existed of relationships between a CEO and their coach or mentor having lasted several years, with their relationship profile evolving over time. On this basis, whilst it is helpful to be cognisant of the differences between the forms of coaching and mentoring, defining distinct roles for them in addressing the leadership challenges facing CEOs is potentially misleading. To fully appreciate the roles of coaching and mentoring, it is at least as important to understand the similarities between the various approaches.

When seeking the themes across the four relationship types, further evidence emerged of the unique value of the safe reflective space provided by relationships with external coaches and mentors. Stakeholders involved in all forms of coaching and mentoring referred to the value of an external coach or mentor’s independence, and the fact that confidential, non-judgemental conversations are possible regarding topics that cannot be discussed as freely with anyone else. In addition, a new insight arose about the central role of the ‘dialogue’ that takes place between a CEO and their coach or mentor in this space. Armstrong (2012, p.33) defines dialogue, from a social constructionist stance, as “the process through which people constitute who they are and therefore how they act in terms of the situations they face”. In the context of coaching, it is a “meaning making activity” in which a coachee’s exploration of these situations enables new meaning to be created and “solutions to dilemmas and problems emerge”.

Chris (CEO) was one of several CEOs who expressed a preference for “active” and “dialectic” conversations, in which there is a “to and fro of ideas and throwing things together” in a search for “the right way to go forward”. Adrian (Coach & Mentor) explained that “when you get into leadership” particularly at “the higher level of being a CEO”, a conversation tends to “oscillate in and out” as you explore “what might you do in this situation, what have you done in this situation, have you come across this situation?”. Damien (Programme Organiser) highlighted the link back to the origins of coaching and mentoring in Greek society, and the role of “Socratic dialogue” as an approach to education.

When it comes to the roles that all forms of coaching and mentoring seem to have in common in addressing the leadership challenges of CEOs, four themes emerged from the data analysis.

Theme 1: Expressing emotions

Given the intense emotional strain on most charity CEOs, most describe how they use coaching and mentoring sessions as a crucial opportunity to get things off their chest and express their feelings to someone else. CEOs talked in the interviews about needing a “release” or “escape valve”, which enabled them to “offload” and “share their fears and concerns”.

“It’s being heard, and feeling I can express, ‘Actually, I’m angry,’ or, ‘I’m just worried,’ or ‘I’m going round the bend!’ or whatever. ‘OK, I hear you, you can express that, and we can support you around that’” (Peter, Professional Body).

Caitlin (CEO) described how helpful she found it to articulate her “ugly feelings”, the ones she feels “a little bit ashamed about” and that can easily “turn into behaviours that are really unhelpful for you as a CEO”. The emotional support, empathy, and kindness shown by a coach or mentor is a great source of comfort to many charity CEOs. Paula (Professional Body) described how encouraging this form of “positive reflection” can help them to “replenish” their energy and feel less self-critical and more self-compassionate. A contribution that tended to be made by ‘non-directive coaching’, more than other forms of coaching and mentoring, was helping CEOs to learn more deeply how about how to manage and channel their emotions. By understanding their underlying motivations and triggers, a few CEOs recounted how they had become more resilient and in better control of the way they behave back on the job.

“If I’m understanding my own emotions better, in some ways it makes be better able to stand above things and look at myself, if that makes sense, which then makes it easier to deal with stressful situations” (Charles, CEO).

Theme 2: Stretching thinking

One thing the majority of CEOs said they value most about coaching and mentoring is not just having the time to think, but also having someone there to challenge them to think more deeply and expansively. Most enjoy being able to problem-solve and troubleshoot with someone who understands their situation. Several coaches and mentors described how they facilitate this by giving CEOs space to “think out loud” and by “holding up a

mirror” to reflect back what they are hearing. Celia (CEO) spoke about her coach helping to “drag some of the clarity out of me!”.

At times, when in mentoring mode, a coach or mentor might feed in ideas and experiences of their own to open up new possibilities. At others, when in training mode, they might provide informative technical insight about how to go about doing something in practice. In all cases, coaches and mentors ask provocative questions to help CEOs push their own reflection further, stimulating them to think in new ways and from different perspectives. In her role as a CEO mentor, Sheila (Chair) described how she sometimes sees the individuals she supports enjoy “lightbulb moments”. For Adam (Coach), the times he finds “incredibly powerful” are when his clients say things like “I’ve never thought of that” or “I just can’t believe I’ve said that”.

Theme 3: Stimulating learning

‘Skills coaching’ is particularly focused on building new technical knowledge and skills. However, even in the other forms of coaching and mentoring, there were many examples quoted of coaches and mentors helping charity CEOs to learn by signposting useful reading and sharing tools or research. In a similar way, although ‘mentoring’ is oriented more towards learning from the experience of others, several instances were quoted in other relationship types when coaches and mentors had also shared their own wisdom to enhance their client’s awareness.

Perhaps most importantly, in all forms of coaching and mentoring, CEOs learn more about themselves. Anthony (Mentor) saw a significant part of his role being to help “draw out” the client’s awareness and confidence in their own experience and expertise, as opposed to just sharing his own. As Clive (CEO) observed, “from a leadership perspective, self-awareness is absolutely critical”.

“I think for senior leaders doing difficult jobs it can help them understand a bit about why they might do what they do, why they might behave as they do, why they might respond as they do, where their sensitive spots are” (Paula, Professional Body).

Theme 4: Generating change

The impact of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs is ultimately determined by their roles in generating change in people’s mindsets, actions and behaviours. Without this, a CEO’s ability to address not just their personal challenges, but also their relational and strategic challenges, will be unaffected. As one coach commented about his CEO coachee:

“When I think about my relationship with her, a lot of what we’ve done is enabled her to come out of the sessions thinking, ‘right I’m going to do this, this and this. I’m clear about that now’” (Alex, Coach).

When reflecting on his coaching, Clive (CEO) observed that “those sessions worked best for me” when the discussion “ferments” for a while and then you come back and start to “change practice, change your behaviour, change the way you’re thinking”. Another related role that coaching and mentoring can play is boosting a CEO’s “sense of agency” in the way they go about things:

“That might be they have more knowledge, it might be they have better skills, they might be more emotionally resilient, it might be more confidence. All those buckets we’ve talked about, I’m just thinking, ‘What brings them together?’ I think it’s that feeling of agency, that they feel more confident doing their job” (Peter, Professional body).

Together, these four themes help to describe the roles that coaching and mentoring play in supporting charity CEOs. Interestingly, a sequential pattern seemed to be evident in the way they took effect. Most stakeholders talked about coaching and mentoring sessions starting with some form of “check in”, where the coach or mentor invites their client to share what has been going on for them and the issues that are on their mind. When these are emotive, this often provides an opportunity for a CEO to share some pent-up feelings, although it is also quite possible that intense emotions might arise at other stages in a conversation too. The key point made by Paula (Professional Body) is that coaches and mentors need to open a space for CEOs to express their anxieties and fears, because they “limit their ability to think further afield”. By easing the emotional pressure, the mental space is then created for CEOs to begin stretching their thinking in new directions. Once new perspectives and ideas emerge, learning then takes place as CEOs are invited to integrate and make meaning from the conversation. Finally, the implications for new actions and behaviour to bring about change can be clarified.

There was a strong belief amongst all the stakeholders that the roles that coaching and mentoring play can be extremely valuable, but it is important to note that the potential benefits are not always realised. Before moving on to assess the impact of coaching and mentoring in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs, it is necessary first to highlight some pitfalls, which can sometimes undermine the effectiveness of the two disciplines.

4.5.7. Potential pitfalls

Whilst all CEOs in the study could quote examples of powerful coaching and mentoring relationships, many had also experienced less useful ones too.

“I came out of the sessions consistently with one coach in particular – again a lovely, lovely chap – but I just came out of it thinking, I’ve just wasted two hours of my life!” (Clive, CEO).

Several factors were mentioned during the interviews which the stakeholders perceived had the potential to undermine the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring relationships (see Table 4.9). The first theme to emerge was the risk of poor matching between a CEO and their coach or mentor, either due to weak personal chemistry or a lack of fit between the CEO’s needs and the experience or expertise of the coach or mentor. As an example, Caitlin (CEO) described working with a coach who wasn’t equipped to handle her “level of seniority” or the “intricacies of my needs”.

Another significant consideration is the quality of contracting that takes place between a CEO and their coach or mentor. Adam (Coach) described a lack of clarity around the contract as being “dangerous”, because it leads to a blurring of what is and is not in the scope of the relationship. David (Programme Organiser) agreed, explaining that it leads to a “lack of accountability” because people are not sure of their “expectations of each other”. In some cases, this can lead to a lack of commitment to the relationship, a risk that is higher if things are set up on a pro bono basis. Another important factor in contracting is ensuring that the needs of both an individual CEO and their organisation are considered appropriately in the relationship. Cara (CEO) highlighted the “balancing act” required to address the personal needs and perspectives of the CEO against those of other stakeholders, especially the chair.

Given the spectrum of coaching, mentoring and training behaviours outlined in Figure 4.3, one important pitfall frequently mentioned is that a coach or mentor becomes too directive. This could involve them talking too much or putting forward their opinions too forcefully, rather than orienting themselves around eliciting their CEO client’s own thinking. Charlotte (CEO) recalled meeting several “unskilled and unsophisticated” mentors who think “it’s all you learning from them” and passing on their “pearls of wisdom” to you. In the worst cases, CEOs could become unhelpfully dependent on their coaches or mentors, and potentially vice versa.

Pitfalls	
Poor matching	• A coach or mentor lacks the necessary skills or experience to address a CEO's key challenges • Weak personal chemistry and rapport
Poor contracting	• Unclear initial scope and objectives for the work • Misalignment in expectations about the nature of the work • Lack of recontracting as the relationship evolves over time • Poor balance in conversations between a CEO's strategic goals and their immediate issues and concerns • Unproductive relationships not brought to a close quickly
Poor balance between personal and organisational needs	• Working to the Chair's agenda rather than the CEO's • Working in a bubble with the CEO without sufficient input from their colleagues • Conflicts of interest with other stakeholders such as funders or beneficiaries • Insufficient attention given to succession planning if a CEO decides to move on
Too directive	• A coach or mentor attempts to influence a CEO's thinking and activities too forcefully • A coach or mentor talks too much • A mentor is more concerned with sharing their wisdom than eliciting the thinking of their CEO client • The advice a mentor provides is inappropriate or unrealistic given the unique context in which the CEO is working
Lack of commitment & accountability	• CEOs dedicate too little time and energy to the relationship • Relationship becomes too friendly and insufficiently professional or challenging
Dependency	• A CEO relies too heavily on their coach or mentor for support and direction • A coach or mentor relies too heavily on working with their CEO client for financial or psychological reasons

Table 4.9: Pitfalls involved in coaching and mentoring relationships for charity CEOs.

4.6. The impact of coaching and mentoring

Having explored the roles played by different forms of coaching and mentoring, the final step in the analysis is to determine the impact they have in addressing the leadership challenges faced by charity CEOs. In this section, a discussion takes place about the benefits accruing from coaching and mentoring in relation to the key leadership challenges identified in section 4.1.

4.6.1. Strategic challenges

In a detailed review of the various objectives that CEOs bring to their work with external coaches and mentors, fewer mentions were found of strategic challenges than relational and personal challenges. Indeed, a few CEOs stated that they did not cover these issues in their coaching conversations at all. Connor (CEO) explained that “problem-solving and strategy are what I’m good at”. Caroline (CEO) reflected that “I suppose I talk about that quite a lot with the board and with my leadership team”.

However, a few CEOs did make references to coaching and mentoring helping them ‘maintain viability’. As an example, Cara (CEO) described the role of her coach in helping her consider the case for closing down shops and social enterprise projects. She confessed to approaching the issue initially in a “head-over-heart” manner and she valued how he “took me through a really rigorous decision-making matrix”. It is a coach or mentor’s objectivity that makes talking through difficult commercial decisions with them so helpful to CEOs.

“It’s a very lonely role when you’ve got to make some tough choices. Because ultimately ... I mean we just had a meeting in there and everybody just looked to me at the end because there was no easy answer. And you’re thinking, yeah, this is gonna land on me, isn’t it? You can see it heading in that direction. So where do you go to have those conversations, to seek that support?” (Claude, CEO).

At times of financial crisis, several stakeholders also described the value to a CEO of a coach or mentor helping them to keep things in perspective, sense-check decisions and prepare communications to their team.

When it comes to ‘clarifying priorities’, a significant contribution of coaching and mentoring for many CEOs is what Cameron (CEO) described as enabling them to “step back and think about the strategy as a whole and get ahead on some of the thinking”. At a more basic level, some coaches and programme organisers highlighted the benefit of ‘skills

coaching' in building the strategy development capabilities of some less well-trained CEOs, by sharing potential frameworks and approaches.

Several stakeholders talked about the importance of prompting CEOs to think longer term and more systemically. Daniella (Programme Organiser) stated that "lots of charity leaders are quite blinkered" and Susan (Chair) argued that mentoring, in particular, was useful in helping CEOs appreciate that "the work you're doing is part of a much bigger system than your one organisation". Others such as Paula (Programme Organiser) stressed the value of challenging CEOs' clarity of purpose, "what it is they're all about, what it is they stand for, and then how they might articulate it". The impact of this kind of conversation on one CEO was long-lasting:

"He taught me a lesson I'll never forget. He was like, 'Every moment in the weeds is a moment to embody the strategic purpose you're pursuing.'... I don't know if that feels significant – it feels significant to me" (Camilla, Charity CEO).

4.6.2. Relational challenges

Greater mention was made about the impact of coaching and mentoring in helping CEOs handle their relational challenges. With regard to 'influencing governance', several stakeholders explained how CEOs had become clearer about their role and their ways of working. Anthony (Coach & Mentor) talked about a couple of CEOs he had worked with who he perceives now feel "more robust in role, that they're clearer in role, they've got better boundaries, they're clearer about what they're looking for from others". An important factor in helping CEOs handle their governance challenges is building their confidence levels. Daniella (Programme Organiser) observed that "a lot of charity leaders don't have the confidence to speak up to their board". In her view, mentoring had helped to "give them the strength" to debate and discuss board requests and requirements, rather than "just agree" to them.

Other benefits mentioned were that CEOs had come up with tactics to manage difficult board members and to improve their relationships with their chairs. Some had learned more productive ways to present arguments and proposals to their board. For a few with ineffective board dynamics, they had valued the opportunity to talk through politically astute ways to change the profile of their trustees, even though this wasn't their official role.

"Part of it has been her working together with whoever has been in the chair seat to bring in trustees who are more supportive and helpful, both in terms of style and behaviour, but also in terms of their backgrounds" (Alex, Coach).

It was notable that most of the specific examples of coaching and mentoring helping to address governance challenges were not shared by CEOs, but by other types of stakeholders. The CEOs themselves tended to speak much more often about the impact of coaching and mentoring in helping them to ‘build engagement’. A core challenge for most of them is learning how to handle the emotion at play, both other people’s and their own.

“I was trying to remove my emotional response, or my response to either an individual or a situation and take the meta position. I’d always get my coach to do that with me ... I knew I felt things, and I got them to role play the individual who I was going to come up against and enable me to get a broader view of it, till I got that skill myself” (Charlotte, CEO).

One frequently mentioned benefit was the support provided for CEOs in conducting difficult conversations to address poor performance and to hold people to account. Caroline (CEO) described how her style in these situations can sometimes lapse into “parent/child if I’m not careful”, and her coach had helped her to explore “different approaches to managing someone ... whilst staying authentic to myself”. Several CEOs talked about having addressed personal relationship issues with key members of their team, as well as strengthening leadership team dynamics more generally.

“Where I’ve been struggling with dynamics in the team, he’s helping me put some things in perspective or see things in a different way” (Cara, Charity CEO).

Other ways in which coaching and mentoring have contributed to team effectiveness have been through improving delegation skills and the CEO developing a coaching style themselves, to build other people’s leadership capabilities. Coaches and mentors have also helped CEOs to consider how they engage their teams in broader organisational change. Celia (CEO) explained how she had struggled to “bring other people along” with her plans for change and make them “a whole-organisation endeavour”. Her coach had “helped me think through the narrative”, because a lot of people’s engagement depends on “how you speak about it”.

4.6.3. Personal challenges

Whilst coaching and mentoring clearly deliver benefits in strategic and relational terms, their most fundamental contribution for CEOs seems to occur in addressing the personal challenge of ‘leading self’ (Browning, 2018; Knotts et al., 2022). Indeed, in many ways, it

is the impact that coaching and mentoring have personally for CEOs that enables them to step up and embrace their relational and strategic challenges more effectively.

Most of the stakeholders referred to the fact that a core benefit of coaching and mentoring is building a CEO's self-confidence. A lot of the work involved in strengthening this self-belief involves exploring one's personal values and strengths, reflecting on what it means to be a more authentic and resilient leader.

"That is a big outcome of our programmes, people saying that they feel more confident, they feel less alone, and also they feel reassured that they're doing the best that they can in sometimes very difficult circumstances. And there's almost that reassurance of: 'it might not be perfect all the time, but that's OK'. I think their coaches really help them with that confidence piece." (Diane, Programme Organiser).

In some instances, the depth of self-reflection required to build a CEO's confidence had clearly been very significant. In Charlotte's (CEO) case, she described how she had "claimed my own backstory". This involved her facing up to her "shame factors of education, of poverty, of everything that's back there". The public criticism levelled at her was exacerbated by the "tapes" playing constantly in her own head saying: "you don't have a right; you don't have a right...". Her coaching helped her be "brave" and "walk into" her story, resulting in her speaking out in the national press about who she was and the route she had taken. This enabled her to embrace her own story and draw strength from it, rather than "pretend it didn't exist".

'Non-directive coaching' seems to play a particularly important role in helping CEOs to handle this kind of self-analysis. It also helps them to become more mindful about the way in which they engage with others. Several described how they now manage their behaviour more consciously to have a positive impact on those around them. Charles (CEO) explained how he had become "much more deliberate" in the way he comes across. He went on to specify: "the way that I'm using body language, the way that I sit in a chair in meetings. I'm constantly aware of all of those things".

Given the influence of a CEO's motivations and mindset in shaping their perceived challenges, greater self-awareness about these factors is also a significant advantage. Connor (CEO) described how he had started out as a CEO "in a hurry to make a difference", adopting a "pacesetting" leadership style. His mindset has since shifted to focus more on "creating the conditions for success", by "setting the right tone" and "creating an inclusive environment". One especially powerful shift in mindset that can

sometimes take place is when a CEO becomes more understanding and compassionate towards themselves.

“They become much less hard on themselves, much more forgiving of themselves, as opposed to personalising and individualising all the challenges that we talked about. And that, I think, can be an enormous relief and really liberate people” (Alice, Coach).

Many CEOs described their coaching and mentoring sessions as being “energising” and making an important contribution to their sense of wellbeing. They often use their sessions to work through issues of work–life balance and any concerns they might have about maintaining their physical fitness and health. As Cara (CEO) observed, “you can’t pour from an empty cup” and so “you have to look after yourself or you can’t be any good to anybody else.”

Part of this self-care and development also includes looking after one’s own future career. Most CEOs appear to use their coaches and mentors to help them reflect on the potential journey ahead and the ways in which they can best transition out of their existing roles when the time comes. In cases such as Christine’s (CEO), mentors have even played an active role in sponsoring a CEO’s job applications.

4.7. Chapter conclusion – Findings

There was a strong belief amongst all the stakeholders interviewed that coaching and mentoring can play an extremely valuable role in helping charity CEOs address their leadership challenges. Many of the CEOs asserted that their investment of time, and in some cases money, had made a big difference not just to their own performance, but to that of their organisation too.

“It’s helped me navigate and tackle some of the thorniest challenges I’ve faced in the last five and a bit years, and I think we would be in a worse place as an organisation if we hadn’t made that investment” (Cameron, CEO).

“Without question I am a much better leader and chief exec having had coaching than I would have been without it, and without question the leadership team that I’ve got are stronger because of coaching. And therefore, the performance of the organisation is absolutely – exponentially – better because we’ve invested in that

leadership development” (Charles, Charity CEO).

The analysis in this chapter has identified five key leadership challenges facing charity CEOs, at three different levels – strategic, relational and personal. To explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in helping CEOs address these challenges, an examination of the meaning of each discipline in the UK charity sector has been undertaken. Based on the different behaviours involved, four different forms of coaching and mentoring have been described, each with particular strengths in addressing certain types of leadership challenge. A key role of ‘non-directive coaching’ lies in helping CEOs to deepen their self-awareness and enhance the management of their emotions, owing to its focus on eliciting an individual’s own thinking. In contrast, ‘skills coaching’ can have the greatest impact when a CEO is seeking to build their leadership capabilities. The value of ‘mentoring’ is most evident when CEOs are looking for different perspectives on their strategic challenges or support with their personal career development. A ‘fluid’ approach to coaching and mentoring comes into its own when CEOs are looking for ongoing support in addressing the many different issues that arise for them.

However, it would be misleading to pigeonhole each of the coaching and mentoring approaches in this way. All four forms can help CEOs to address the many organisational, relational and personal challenges they face. They do this in different ways, based on the distinctive behavioural intervention styles used in each case. Indeed, the impact of coaching and mentoring for any individual CEO will ultimately be determined by their own personal circumstances and needs, the skills, experience and style of their coach or mentor, and the way in which their working relationship is built and maintained over time. On this basis, to specify distinct links between the different forms of coaching and mentoring and each of the key leadership challenges identified, seems not only inappropriate, but actually not even possible. A more suitable method of encapsulating the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEO is to look at them together.

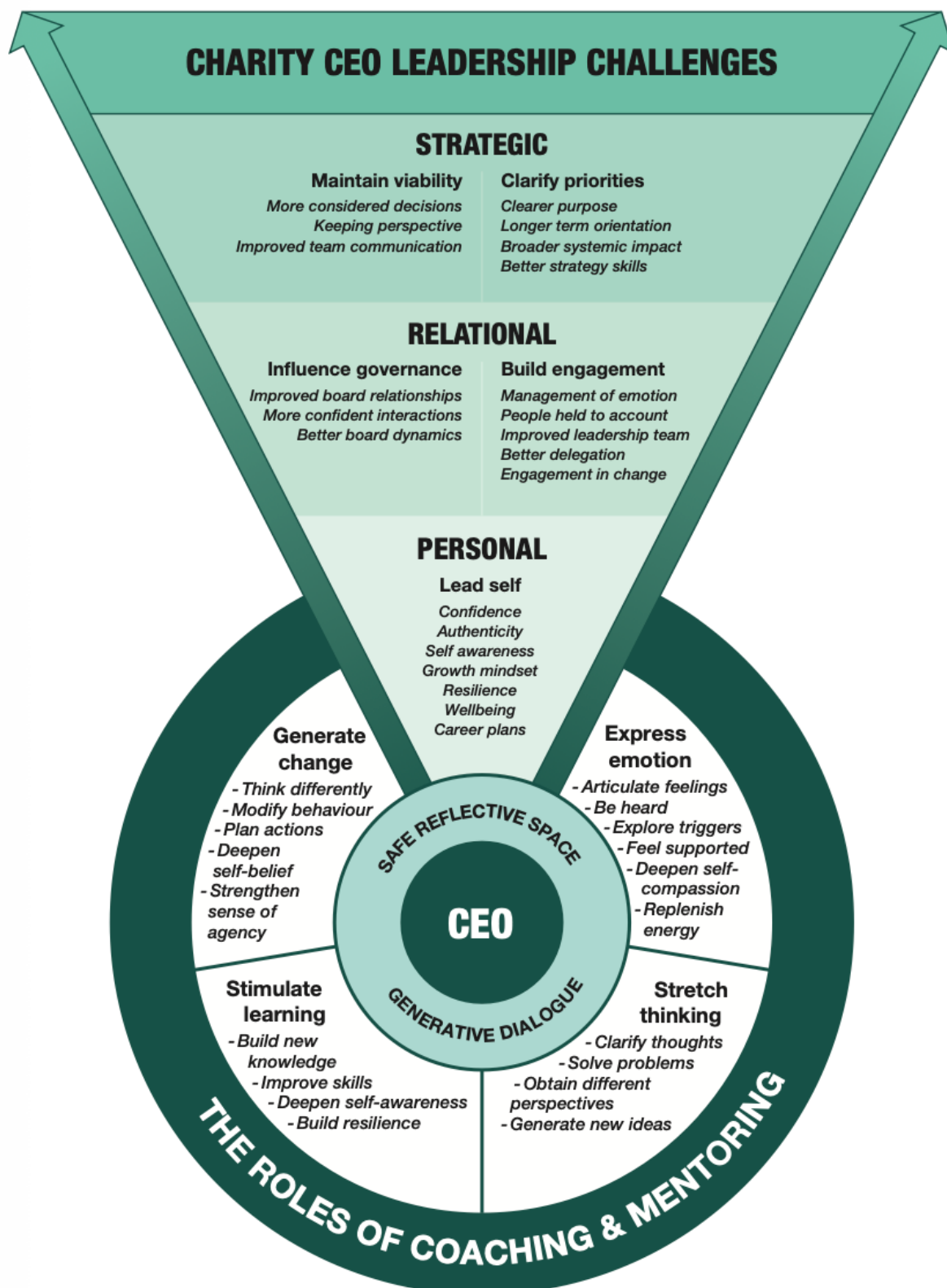


Figure 4.5: A framework of the roles coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK.

A framework is presented in Figure 4.5, describing the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. It captures the leadership challenges identified in section 4.1, and lists the related benefits provided by coaching and mentoring in each case. The way in which these benefits are obtained is illustrated at the base of the framework. The 'generative dialogue' that takes place, in the 'safe reflective space' provided by a coach or mentor, enables four roles of coaching and mentoring to occur: 'express emotion', 'stretch thinking', 'stimulate learning' and 'generate change'. The framework portrays how the impact of a CEO's coaching and mentoring begins for them at a personal level, by helping them 'lead self' more effectively. The benefits then ripple out to help them address their challenges at a relational level, by enabling them to better 'influence governance' and 'build engagement' with a diverse range of values-driven stakeholders. Ultimately, the benefits play out at a strategic level, helping CEOs find new ways to balance the pressure they are under to 'maintain viability' and 'clarify priorities'.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explores and develops the main findings presented, taking into account their links with the relevant literature. The discussion starts by highlighting the most important and distinctive leadership challenges faced by charity CEOs in the UK. To determine the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing these challenges, the next section examines further the meaning of these two terms, and focuses particular attention on the four different forms of behavioural intervention identified. This analysis enables a discussion of the coaching and mentoring roles played by different conversation partners in a charity CEO's network. The following section investigates the role of CEO relationships with external coaches and mentors in particular. The chapter concludes by reviewing the impact of coaching and mentoring in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs, along with some key enablers to help CEOs and their coaches and mentors realise these potential benefits in practice.

5.2. The distinctive leadership challenges facing charity CEOs

To explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs, it was necessary first to investigate the nature of those challenges. An important contribution of this study is to have done so from the perspective of charity CEOs themselves. A key finding from the research is that, despite the enormous diversity in the profiles of both charitable organisations and their leaders, CEOs tend to face challenges at three broad levels: strategic, relational and personal. This conceptualisation provides a simplification of the five-level non-profit leadership framework proposed by Howard et al. (2010): 'leading self' (personal), 'leading others' (relational), 'leading the organisation/community/movement' (strategic).

At the strategic level, the extraordinarily turbulent conditions of recent years have clearly generated enormous pressures for charities and their CEOs. The research confirmed a view expressed by many commentators that the environmental uncertainty and the constant battle to maintain financial viability makes it very difficult for CEOs to give sufficient attention to longer term and systemic strategic priorities (Hyndman, 2020; Mitchell, 2022; NCVO, 2023b). However, it is important to recognise that charities have not been alone in facing these difficult conditions. Recent government statistics suggest that there has been a big increase in the number of private company insolvencies in the past three years, just as there has been a surge in charity closures and mergers (NCVO, 2023a; UK Government, 2024). The unusual double bind facing the leaders of charities is

that the hostile environment has led to significant increases in the need for their services, but at the same time rising costs and reduced funding has restricted their ability to meet these demands (Hyndman, 2020; NCVO, 2023b). The apparent lack of government concern or support for this predicament was a particular source of frustration and anger for many stakeholders in the study. Charity CEOs are often left shouldering an uncomfortable burden of responsibility, not just for the viability and performance of their organisations, but also for the welfare of their beneficiaries. For them, the success of a charity was understood to be not merely a commercial matter, but one which has significant social consequences in tangible, human terms.

The emotionally charged nature of a CEO's challenges was also evident at the relational level. Many references were made, in both the interviews and the documents, to the complexity of stakeholder management as a feature of charity leadership, a distinctive aspect stressed by many scholars (McHatton et al., 2011; Connolly, Hyndman and McConville, 2013; Renz, 2016). Handling the politically complicated relationships involved in charity governance often consumes a surprisingly large amount of a CEO's time and energy, mainly due to the ambiguity of a CEO's role relative to their chair and other trustees (Sherlock and Nathan, 2007; Bernstein, Buse and Bilimoria, 2016; Herman, 2016). A notable insight from this study is that the passion many stakeholders feel for a charity's work is counter-intuitively one of the factors which can make engaging them more difficult. Although people may be highly values-driven, their values are not always fully aligned, and they can sometimes be sources of cultural tension. One particularly frequent issue is that altruistic values can generate resistance to more professional and performance-orientated ways of working (Osula and Ng, 2014). As a consequence, CEOs described needing to pay careful attention to the narratives that they use to explain strategies and decisions to different stakeholder groups, a priority highlighted by Kay (1996), Macmillan and McLaren (2012) and Hodges and Howieson (2017).

Theorists have tended to frame leadership as a shared and socially interactive process in the charity sector (Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018a; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022), yet the CEOs in the study still expressed a significant sense of leadership responsibility at a personal level. As explained in the findings, a lack of specialist functional resource and expertise in many charities means that they are often less well supported than CEOs in other sectors. As a result, they get drawn into a constant and very diverse range of issues on a day-to-day basis (Taliento and Silverman, 2005; Mitchell, 2022). The cause-driven motivation of charity CEOs can be a powerful source of inspiration, but their testimonies suggest it can also be draining emotionally when times are as tough as they have been in recent years (Kanter and Sherman, 2017; Ecclesiastical, 2021). In addition, the intense public scrutiny that some leaders face can be an extremely unpleasant and stressful

aspect of the job (Preston, 2024). These many pressures result in a need for charity CEOs to take care of themselves, a challenge that they don't always prioritise sufficiently, relative to the interests of the many other stakeholders whom they serve (Lobell, Sikka and Menon, 2014; Ecclesiastical, 2021).

Ultimately, these personal challenges result in a critical need for charity CEOs to be able to 'lead self'. Browning (2018, p.15) defines self-leadership as "having a developed sense of who you are, what you can do, where you are going, coupled with the ability to influence your communication, emotions and behaviours on the way to getting there". Knotts et al. (2022, p.274) emphasise the importance of internal "self-influence" processes, and Scouller (2011), the link between a leader's moral, psychological and technical development and their personal presence and behaviour. On this basis, a charity CEO's leadership of self will not only determine their responses to their own personal challenges, but also their impact as leaders at the relational and strategic level (Browning, 2018).

A significant insight emerging from the study, with particular relevance to self-leadership and also to coaching and mentoring, was the influence that charity CEO mindsets and motivations have on their leadership challenges. The extent to which a CEO is seen to be motivated by serving the charity's cause, relative to their own career interests, can have a big impact on their ability to engage their stakeholders. Another important consideration is whether CEOs perceive leadership to be all about the heroic role they play personally, or more to do with the way they share the responsibility with other stakeholders (Grint, 2010; Grint and Jones, 2022). Deepening a CEO's awareness of these mindsets appears to help them understand better the reasons for their actions and behaviours, as well as the resulting outcomes (Browning, 2018; Knotts et al., 2022).

Perhaps most importantly, several participants in the study mentioned that, if a charity CEO has coaching or mentoring support, it can often be perceived as a sign of weakness rather than a positive commitment to learning and development. Comments made by all the stakeholder types suggest that many charity CEOs are also very self-critical, perceiving leadership setbacks and difficulties as reasons to doubt their own capabilities. A useful interpretation of these mindsets is possible by referring to the research of Dweck (2012). She distinguishes between two mindsets – fixed and growth – each having a fundamental impact on the way people lead their lives. For those with a fixed mindset, their capabilities are understood to be determined at birth. Life becomes a constant challenge to prove their intelligence, competence and moral character both to themselves and to others. In contrast, those with a growth mindset believe that these qualities can be developed over time, through effort and experience. The study's findings suggest that a

fixed mindset is brought by many leaders in the charity sector, leading them to be judgemental about their own performance and resistant to their personal development. As a result, encouraging a growth mindset is not only an important priority for coaches and mentors seeking to support the personal wellbeing and leadership development of the CEOs they work with, it is also a central driver of people's willingness to embrace coaching and mentoring support in the first place.

5.3. The behaviours that help distinguish the different forms of coaching and mentoring

5.3.1. The similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring

To analyse the roles of coaching and mentoring in helping charity CEOs address the leadership challenges outlined, the study needed to determine what stakeholders in the charity sector understand the terms coaching and mentoring to mean. This was not an easy task, partly because the participants and documents used such a wide variety of phrases to describe them, and partly because their perspectives were not aligned. As a result, the findings support the conclusions of Western (2017), Gannon (2021) and Garvey and Stokes (2022) that the distinctions between coaching and mentoring are confused. The fact that the terms are social constructions means that their interpretation has evolved over time, and will always evolve to mean different things to different people (Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). However, these scholars also suggest that, because popular usage of the terms is so muddled, generating theoretical distinctions between them may not be possible. This position seems problematic, as several stakeholders in the study explained that the lack of clarity about what coaching and mentoring involve is an important factor in holding back their more widespread usage in the charity sector. As argued by Bachkirova (2024, p.220), the absence of clear definitions can “diminish” people's perspective on the field of coaching, and it also generates “uncertainty mixed with unnecessary mystique”.

To understand coaching and mentoring in the context of UK charities, the starting point was to generate themes for the ways in which the two practices were described in the interviews and the documents analysed. The focal points for inquiry were identified as being the purpose of coaching and mentoring, the principles that underpin them and the activities they involve. These categories reflect the ways that other scholars have approached the definition of coaching and mentoring (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). When viewed through these three lenses, as in Table 4.1, the study's finding, that coaching and mentoring are perceived to have many similarities, is also supported in the literature (Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey, 2024). In terms of their ultimate purpose, both

disciplines seek to support the personal development and performance of individuals. At this level of analysis, Cox et al. (2024, p.3) conclude that “essentially their purposes are the same”. A focus on enabling people to learn and change, by building their self-awareness, confidence and capability, is another aspect to their purpose upon which there is widespread agreement (Passmore, 2020; Garvey and Stokes, 2022; Newell, 2022).

When considering the principles and activities involved in coaching and mentoring, the similarities described in the study also align closely with many of those highlighted in the literature. Both coaching and mentoring were understood to involve conversations which occur in the context of relationships (Garvey and Stokes, 2022; Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). The principles of contracting, confidentiality and emotional support were frequently mentioned as enabling the creation of a safe space in which people have time to think (Clutterbuck, 2009; Bruce-Foulds, Clark and Ray, 2022). Coaches and mentors also all engage in activities such as listening, questioning, supporting, challenging, setting goals and exploring options (Passmore, 2020; Bruce-Foulds, Clark and Ray, 2022).

When it comes to distinguishing mentoring from coaching, a key finding from the study is that mentoring is understood to involve the sharing of the personal experience of the mentor in a way not associated with coaching. This perception seems to be rooted firmly in the historical discourse about mentoring, beginning with the role that Mentor played for Odysseus as his wise and trusted advisor (Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey, 2024). The defining attribute of a mentor is that they must have relevant contextual knowledge and experience, which can help to broaden the awareness and perspective of the mentee (Western, 2012; Passmore, 2020). Although a mentor’s advisory role might extend to helping a CEO to plan their personal career development, the type of mentoring described in the study was almost exclusively developmental in nature. The more active sponsorship role, described by Clutterbuck (2009) as the US model of mentoring, was only evident in one isolated case.

Distinguishing coaching from mentoring in the findings analysis was much more difficult, reflecting a challenge identified by many scholars. Cox et al. (2024, p.3) conclude that “creating a unique identity for coaching is a difficult and potentially unsolvable problem”. One significant reason they give for this dilemma is the transition that has taken place in the meaning of coaching in recent years. They describe ‘traditional’ coaching as directive in nature, as it involves the coach using task-specific expertise to help build their client’s skills and performance on the job. The meaning of coaching has since evolved to be more non-directive, with the client driving their own development by building self-insight and knowledge. The coach’s expertise lies more in the coaching process than in any particular

professional task (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). This conceptualisation captures very helpfully the contrasting perceptions that different stakeholders had of the meaning of coaching in the study. Most participants gravitated towards understanding coaching in its more recent, non-directive form (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). However, there were also several contributors who identified more with the traditional, directive meaning of coaching.

5.3.2. Coaching and mentoring behaviours

Another important reason for the blurring of coaching and mentoring is that the behaviours involved in each discipline are so similar (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021). Passmore (2007) argues that, whilst two individuals might perceive themselves to be involved in a coaching relationship, it is often likely that mentoring behaviours will be applied. The converse is also true for mentoring relationships, where coaching behaviours are likely to play an integral role (Hamlin and Sage, 2011; Salter and Gannon, 2015). These insights are significant because, as Clutterbuck points out, “mismatched expectations of role and behaviour are also associated with relationship failure” (Clutterbuck, 2009, p.480).

When faced with this complexity, several coaches, mentors and programme organisers involved in the study made the point that what matters most in a coaching or mentoring relationship is an aligned understanding of what is taking place in practice, not what you choose to call it. Brockbank and McGill (2012, p.10) support this perspective, arguing that “the name of the activity is less important than its purpose and what is actually happening, as this will influence the learning outcome”. It is for this reason that the development of the two-dimensional spectrum of coaching and mentoring behaviours in Figure 4.3. represents an important contribution, both academically and professionally. The terms used in the framework to distinguish the different categories of behaviours – Coaching, Mentoring and Training – reflect the words that most research participants used to describe the different modes of behaviour involved in coaching and mentoring activities. However, it must be acknowledged that even these titles are social constructions and may not resonate with everyone. What matters, therefore, is that by specifying the range of behaviours clearly, any inconsistencies in the way that people are referring to the activities underway can easily be resolved.

The concept of a spectrum of coaching and mentoring behaviours, ranging from non-directive to directive, is not a new one. Heron’s (2001) seminal model of six intervention styles stretched from directive to facilitative behaviours, on one dimension, and supportive to challenging on another (de Haan and Nilsson, 2017). Downey (2014) has proposed an influential one-dimensional spectrum. This ranges from ‘pull’ behaviours, which the coach

uses to follow the interest of the client and help them solve their own problems, to directive 'push' behaviours, used by the coach to solve the client's problem for them. A weakness in both models is that they do not distinguish between behaviours related to the sharing of experience and the sharing of professional or technical expertise. As a result, it is not possible to use them to differentiate between the behaviours typically associated with mentoring and with the traditional form of directive, skills-orientated coaching described above (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). Neither do they help to explain that the practices of both 'mentoring' and 'skills coaching' also involve what participants perceived to be coaching behaviours. The findings in this study that 'mentoring' is not only understood to involve mentoring behaviours, and that 'skills coaching' not only involves training behaviours, is one of the main reasons that the disciplines are so difficult to disentangle (Salter and Gannon, 2015). It is only by breaking the behaviours down in more detail that this complexity can be navigated.

The importance of distinguishing between behaviours related to the sharing of experience and of expertise is also borne out by Flyvbjerg (2012). He stresses the value to the social sciences of considering both of Aristotle's concepts of *phronesis* (practical knowledge based on experience) and *techne* (technical knowledge based on art and craft). Armstrong (2012, p.41) expresses this distinction in his conceptualisation of the stances that coaches and mentors can take with their clients. He argues that a 'coach-expert' brings knowledge of their own to help a client learn. This can be done by 'knowing about' the world, a position taken by mentors, or by 'knowing how' to do things, a position taken by skills coaches. He distinguishes this 'coach-expert' stance from that of a 'coach-custodian', who is less focused on bringing learning 'to' their client, and more on making meaning 'with' them. This is the position taken by 'non-directive' coaches and can be described as 'knowing between', in that they have the relational sensitivity to enable coachee-centred learning to take place. Armstrong's (2012) key argument is that coaches and mentors should appreciate the philosophical differences between these positions, and make conscious choices about which ones they take in their interactions with clients.

An implication of this analysis is that the shift away from traditional, skills-oriented coaching in recent years may have resulted in a loss of focus on the ways that coaches hone and apply their technical, task-focused expertise. Biswas-Diener and van Nieuwerburgh (2024) have recently suggested that leadership coaches need to think more carefully about keeping abreast of developments in leadership theory, and updating the frameworks they use to guide their practice accordingly. They go on to support the case for clarifying the behaviours involved in leadership coaching, stating that "if some abstract notion of 'pure coaching' exists at one end of the spectrum and at the other is instruction

and telling, it might be helpful for coaches to consider where they locate themselves” (Biswas-Diener and van Nieuwerburgh, 2024, p.54).

5.3.3. Four forms of coaching and mentoring

The conceptualisation of behaviours in Figure 4.3 enabled the identification of four forms of coaching and mentoring practice: ‘non-directive coaching’, ‘mentoring’, ‘skills coaching’ and a ‘fluid’ combination of all three. As demonstrated above by Biswas-Diener and van Nieuwerburgh (2024), the concept of ‘pure coaching’ is now used widely to refer to a non-directive approach. The behaviours most closely associated by the participants with this type of support were listening, questioning, supporting and challenging. Smith (2017) stresses the importance of listening and questioning in particular, and goes on to suggest that this intervention style helps a client “get in touch with their own values and beliefs” and to “surface” their own intelligence (Smith, 2017, p.66). Several references were made in this study to ‘non-directive coaching’ helping people to “unlock” themselves and their potential, an idea originally introduced by Whitmore (1992). He elaborated by describing the role of coaching as being to help people “to learn, rather than teaching them – a facilitation approach” (Whitmore, 1992, p.8).

‘Non-directive coaching’ is different from the other three forms of coaching and mentoring identified, all of which were characterised by participants and documents describing a CEO learning from someone else in a certain way. In the case of mentoring, a good mentor was perceived to augment non-directive coaching behaviours by using their own experience to share relevant stories, ideas and advice. This was seen to bring the advantage of broadening a client’s perspective and range of options, particularly when they lack the necessary knowledge or confidence to handle a challenge effectively by themselves (Garvey, 2024). When it comes to ‘skills coaching’, a coach was understood to possess relevant expert knowledge that they share with their coachee through training or tuition (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021; Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). They do not necessarily need to be a performance expert themselves, but they must at least have sufficient technical knowledge of the tasks involved to help guide credibly the learning and self-discovery of their client (Tschannen-Moran and Gavin, 2024). In a ‘fluid’ approach, effective coach-mentors were described as having both the experience and the expertise to blend a range of intervention styles, to suit the many different client situations that they encounter (Salter and Gannon, 2015; Smith, 2017; Bruce-Foulds, Clark and Ray, 2022).

Before moving on, two important clarifications are needed. Cox et al. (2024, p.2) highlight that coaching has “mushroomed into a panoply of models and approaches”. Whilst defining just four forms of coaching and mentoring in this study, based on the distinctive

behaviours that they entail, the complexity of this landscape is not being ignored. Cox et al. (2024) acknowledge that many of the approaches to which they refer are non-directive in nature. The diverse range of approaches that they describe simply demonstrates in how many ways the core non-directive coaching behaviours of listening, questioning, supporting and challenging can be applied in practice.

Secondly, a choice was made to use these four forms of coaching and mentoring as lenses through which to analyse the role that each discipline plays for charity CEOs. This is a new approach to analysing the roles of coaching and mentoring, based on the behaviours involved. However, this focus is not intended to replace the consideration of the contextual relationship dimensions advocated by other leading researchers (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). Indeed, the framing of the four forms of coaching and mentoring, based on the behaviours involved, was designed to enable and strengthen this contextual relational analysis. It would be difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the role played by a relationship unless one has some sense of what is actually happening within it in practice. In order to answer the research question, therefore, this study explores how the contextual relationship dimensions of coaching and mentoring work, in tandem with the behavioural dimensions of each discipline, to help CEOs address their leadership challenges.

5.4. The roles of different coaching and mentoring conversation partners

5.4.1. Developmental networks

When coaching and mentoring are understood to manifest themselves in different types of behaviour, it becomes important to appreciate that they can occur in learning conversations with anyone in a CEO's support network. They are not restricted to formal relationships with external coaches and mentors (Williamson, 2022). A significant contribution of this study is in exploring the sources of this kind of support for charity CEOs, a topic on which no previous research has been undertaken. A key finding has been that, although there are many potential sources of personal support for CEOs (see Figure 4.4), the way in which each individual CEO embraces these opportunities varies widely. Many lean heavily on their spouse or partner for emotional support, several find significant value in peer learning networks, and some obtain useful coaching or mentoring from their chair or other trustees. The factors that influence the way in which different leaders engage with their networks include their personal self-confidence, their openness to learning, and the extent to which they trust and respect their various contacts.

The variety of relationships involved, and the multiple forms of coaching and mentoring taking place, demonstrate the diverse support needs of charity CEOs. This finding endorses the importance of the executive developmental networks highlighted in numerous studies by Kram (Yip and Kram, 2017; Ghosh et al., 2022). Although mentoring has traditionally been perceived to involve a dyadic relationship between a mentor and a mentee, research suggests that single relationships of this type are insufficient to meet the entirety of a person's developmental needs. A constellation of relationships with multiple developmental partners is required, many of which will be informal and non-work related (Ghosh et al., 2022). Interestingly, less academic attention has been given to informal or 'tacit' sources of coaching (Clutterbuck, 2009; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). Indeed, many definitions of coaching specify that some kind of structured or formalised approach is a necessary condition for conversations to be even classified as coaching (Athanasopoulou and Dopson, 2018; Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024).

It seems unlikely that many of the stakeholders in a CEO's network would perceive themselves to be involved in formal coaching or mentoring activities with the CEO concerned. However, when viewed from a CEO's perspective, the approach that the CEO takes to enlist and acknowledge other people's support can have an important influence on their learning opportunities (Yip and Kram, 2017). Garvey and Stokes (2022) propose a typology of coaching and mentoring conversations, with the focus for dialogue ranging from strategic, tactical, social and technical issues, to self-insight, integration and behaviour change. They also stress the potential for any coachee to get more out of coaching by being 'skilled' in setting the scope and path for the conversations in which they are engaged. On this basis, if CEOs explicitly frame conversations in ways that help them to learn, and also steer them in the directions that are of most value, their opportunities to address their challenges with a broader range of partners are enhanced (Garvey and Stokes, 2022).

One stakeholder whose support for a charity CEO is of special importance is their chair. A couple of chairs in the study described coaching as being related to skills development and performance management. For this reason, they also expressed a resistance to playing a coaching role for their CEO themselves, preferring to bring in this kind of support from outside the organisation. This seems like a missed opportunity. The Association of Chairs highlight a need for chairs to consider carefully how they strike an appropriate balance between support and challenge for CEOs (Lesirge and Oakley, 2015, p.28). They suggest that adopting a "coaching approach" can help to "bring out the best" in a CEO. If coaching can be understood more as a style with which one approaches a conversation, chairs could shift the way that they interact with CEOs in a direction that is both supportive and stretching. By using coaching behaviours like listening and questioning more often to

draw out a CEO's thinking, they could not only help to strengthen the ideas that they generate, but also instil in them greater confidence to see those ideas through.

5.4.2. External coaches and mentors

Having stressed the potential value of a CEO's support network, it is also important to acknowledge that most CEOs described finding it difficult to discuss some topics freely with the people they know. Sherlock and Nathan (2007) help to explain this by arguing that there is an imbalance of power and a political sensitivity involved in most of a charity CEO's relationships. They conclude that this makes it awkward for them to have the learning conversations they need with their immediate stakeholders. For this reason, external coaches and mentors, with the appropriate levels of professional expertise and experience, seem to have a distinct and valuable role to play in providing the necessary support.

The data suggests that the most important characteristic of external coaches and mentors is their independence. This finding aligns with the view of scholars such as Western (2012) and Stokes, Jolly and Cox (2024) about the nature of executive coaching for all top management executives. However, this study indicates that, in the case of charity CEOs specifically, the type of independence that is appreciated is not just from the personal relationships involved in the CEO's organisation, but also from the social cause it serves. The emotional nature of the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs arises in large part from the values-driven commitment of stakeholders to their charity's mission, and their deep concern for the beneficiaries it serves (De Cooman et al., 2011; Watson, 2020). As a result, CEOs expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk confidentially to someone with an objective and dispassionate perspective, about issues which are often very emotive.

The ultimate benefit ascribed by charity CEOs to this kind of relationship is that it offers them a safe reflective space, in which they can think through their challenges and plan appropriate responses. Many scholars emphasise the value of a safe space to think for leaders at the highest levels in organisations (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 1999; Gavett, 2013; Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024). However, a significant emotional dimension also came across in the support provided to charity CEOs. Brockbank and McGill (2012, p.17) acknowledge this consideration by stressing that "the context of empathic acceptance and challenge without judgement...allows the client to recognise their emotional response and reconsider some of the givens of their situation". Owing to the relatively intense emotional and political nature of a charity CEO's role, this aspect of coaching and mentoring seems to be of special value.

Whilst there are distinct benefits available to charity CEOs from engaging with external coaches and mentors, some important barriers were referred to, which make it unusually difficult for them to do so. The most significant obstacle, mentioned frequently by every stakeholder group, is a concern over the scarcity of resources in a charity and the need to channel all available time and money into serving its beneficiaries. For a CEO to spend money, and potentially even just time, on their own personal development and support, often leads to feelings of self-indulgence and guilt (Kirchner, 2006; Marsh, 2013). Given the sensitivity over public accountability, CEOs explained that this guilt can be accentuated by a concern about how such activity might be perceived by others, both inside and outside the charity (Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b). This cultural trait is explored further in the literature relating to social activism. An activist's passion for their cause can often result in a disregard for their own self-interest and care (Gorski, 2015). The paradox is that this form of martyr syndrome can be counter-productive, because it increases the risk of burnout amongst leaders, thereby potentially undermining the social justice movements they are championing.

Another cultural constraint in the charity sector is the 'fixed' mindset that people often bring to coaching and mentoring (Dweck, 2012). The data indicates that, if a CEO admits to needing support, it can be seen as a sign of weakness, and a recognition that there are shortfalls in their capabilities and performance that need to be put right (Coleman, 2008). For coaching and mentoring to be embraced more fully, a less defensive and remedial perspective would be helpful (Salter and Gannon, 2015). In a minority of cases, in charities whose work focuses on providing some form of mentoring or counselling to their beneficiaries, the value of obtaining personal support seems to be more established culturally. There were also signs in the research that people's openness to coaching and mentoring might be beginning to shift in a positive direction throughout the charity sector more generally, although this is probably being driven by the sheer intensity of the pressures that many have been under (Cranfield Trust, 2022). Nevertheless, a key opportunity for this study to influence professional practice will be to crystallise a case for coaching and mentoring which explains their potential roles in more positive terms.

5.5. The roles of coaching and mentoring relationships with external coaches and mentors

5.5.1. The characteristics of different forms of coaching and mentoring relationship

As explained earlier, four different forms of coaching and mentoring were identified, based on the way that stakeholders in the charity sector describe the two disciplines. These

approaches are 'mentoring', 'non-directive coaching', 'skills coaching' and a 'fluid' combination of all three. Particular attention has been paid to the role of different behaviours in helping to distinguish each of these four approaches. The implications have also been established for the different types of purpose, principles and activities involved in each case (see Table 4.1). The next stage in the analysis was to explore the roles that each of these four forms of coaching and mentoring have played in practice for CEOs in their relationships with external coaches and mentors. An investigation was undertaken using the four relationship dimensions in the contextual framework proposed by Stokes et al. (2021) (see Figure 2.4).

Learning Context/Objectives Dimension

The stakeholder testimonies and programme documentation indicated that there is almost always some form of contracting discussion at the start of a coaching or mentoring relationship, to establish the scope and objectives for the work together. This practice aligns with the imperative to clarify the intent for a relationship, as stressed by many commentators (Stevens, 2005; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). An important consideration, regarding what Stokes et al. (2021) term the 'learning context' for this contracting, is the attitude of a charity's chair and trustees towards their CEO's personal development. This varied significantly across different organisations, with a few having a learning culture well established for all employees, but the majority being less oriented towards the investment of time and money in capability building.

One important way in which this factor manifests itself is in whether objectives are discussed and agreed with just the individual CEO concerned, or also with the chair to represent the needs of the organisation. This touches on a question raised by Bachkirova (2024) about how an appropriate balance can be struck between the interests of an individual being coached and the organisation they work for. A few examples of three-way contracting discussions were referred to in the fieldwork between a CEO, their chair and their coach. All these cases were skills/leadership coaching assignments, bearing the hallmarks of a performance-oriented coaching discourse (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021). This kind of contracting was perceived by those concerned to have worked well, because it helped to incorporate other people's perspectives about the CEO's performance into their development plan, and it also involved the chair in providing support.

However, in most cases, objectives were set confidentially with the CEO alone, an approach more typical of a growth/learning-oriented mentoring discourse (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021). This contracting method was often used because managing the

relationship with their chair was one of the CEO's most tricky personal challenges. Other reasons included the CEO's desire to focus on sensitive personal issues such as their self-confidence or their career development beyond their current role, concerns that they did not want to make their board members aware of. The downside of this approach is that the CEO's coaching and mentoring is less explicitly tied into the broader organisational agenda. This, in turn, can heighten the tension about where the benefits accrue from any financial investment in CEO coaching or mentoring in a resource-conscious charitable organisation.

In a review of the distinctive objectives relating to the four forms of coaching and mentoring (see Table 4.8), those in 'skills coaching' relationships had a bias towards personal leadership development and performance. 'Non-directive coaching', in contrast, tended to be more oriented towards the management of one's own and other people's emotions. This distinction between different types of coaching objectives reflects the recent shift in the coaching discourse that Cox et al. (2024) describe, from being traditionally more skills and performance-oriented, to now being more developmental and self-insight related. The objectives quoted for 'mentoring' focused more on the desire of CEOs to obtain a broader perspective that would help them to address their challenges more effectively, both professionally as leaders and personally in their careers and their lives more generally. The 'fluid' relationships tended to be less objective-focused and more related to helping CEOs respond to the many professional and personal issues that arise for them over time.

Despite these differences in the profile of objectives relating to each form of coaching and mentoring, it was striking that, in all cases, there was still a combination of both performance and growth/learning goals. This reflects a convergence in the focuses for coaching and mentoring as described by several scholars (Clutterbuck, 2009; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). It also endorses the findings of other studies assessing non-profit CEO coaching objectives in the US (Harder & Co, 2003; Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Sheridan and Howard, 2009).

In a related finding, there was widespread acknowledgement in the study that the objectives for both coaching and mentoring often shift once a relationship gets underway. A movement frequently occurs from a performance-oriented agenda towards more personal issues as the rapport and trust in a relationship builds (Stevens, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2009). Jackson and Cox (2024) help explain this evolution by pointing to a natural progression that takes place, from skills coaching (building technical skills), to performance coaching (improving deployment of skills) and, ultimately, to developmental coaching (helping the person to change). The point they make is that, to bring about

lasting change in a person's performance, that person needs to learn and grow themselves. The implication is that performance and growth/learning goals are fundamentally linked, and need to be addressed in an integrated way. Fischer and Beimers (2009) provide an example in which, in non-profit leadership roles, greater personal self-awareness and confidence is a necessary enabler of improved relational effectiveness in interacting with staff, board directors and community members.

Economic Context/Nature Dimension

The scarcity mindset prevalent in the charity sector, and the resulting concerns over the affordability and justifiability of personal support, has a big influence on the 'economic context' for the coaching and mentoring of charity CEOs (Kirchner, 2006; Whybrow and Lancaster, 2012; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b). No examples were found of mentors being paid to support charity CEOs. In 'non-directive coaching' and 'fluid' relationships, pro bono arrangements were also common. The rewards for coaches and mentors in these situations lie more in the sense of fulfilment they get from using their time and experience to give something back and to make a positive difference in the world (Whybrow and Lancaster, 2012). Even when fees were charged, these were typically discounted versus the rates established outside the charity sector. In line with the Stokes et al. (2021) nature spectrum, the more formal characteristics of 'skills coaching' seem to make it the approach for which fees are highest and most widely established.

There was certainly evidence to suggest that the approach to payment has an impact on the nature of the work that results in a relationship. Several programme organisers commented that pro bono arrangements can sometimes lead to lower levels of commitment from CEOs, a perspective shared by Howard et al. (2010). Professional coaches also raised concerns about the potential impact on the perceived value of their contribution when they are not being remunerated. When coaching is being paid for by the organisation, some CEOs expressed guilt about working on too personal an agenda, especially when this might involve them considering their career options beyond their current role. This concern could relate to a values-based dimension in the psychological contract between a CEO and the charity they work for (Vantilborgh et al., 2012). In some cases, CEOs had opted to pay for their support themselves to avoid breaching any obligations that they felt to channel all their organisation's resources towards the direct service of its beneficiaries. Conversely, it seems possible that when coaching and mentoring support is provided pro bono, the obligation to stick to the organisation's agenda becomes less strong. This may be another factor explaining why so many of the relationships studied included a focus on both professional performance and personal growth/learning goals.

Temporal Context /Timeframe Dimension

The 'temporal' context for CEOs working in the charity sector is one of extreme time pressure. In this kind of situation, Stokes et al. (2021) suggest that coaching relationships with tight time boundaries tend to be more common. However, one of the most striking findings from the analysis of CEO coaching and mentoring relationships is how long many of them have lasted. Mentoring relationships are typically thought to be relatively long-term in orientation (Rosser, 2005; Passmore, 2020). This was backed up in the study, with even formal engagements in timebound mentoring programmes being established for a minimum of 6-18 months. As suggested by the Stokes et al. (2021) timeframe spectrum, most coaching relationships do seem to start off as shorter-term engagements, with contracts typically being set for around 6 months. However, if a coaching engagement goes well, it is common for the timeframe to be extended well beyond 6 months, with recontracting discussions taking place every year or so to redefine the terms of the work. As a result, there is often a blurring in the distinction between coaching and mentoring from a time perspective.

One programme organiser mentioned that the concept of 'accompaniment' could have some relevance to the role that coaches and mentors are playing. This practice is established in the worlds of education and religion, and relates to the support that an individual receives on their learning journey over time. Booton (2023, p.6) describes the nature of this support for leaders as having someone who "walks alongside" them, to help them "become more confident and competent in their professional life". Although accompaniment is associated more typically with mentoring, the coaches interviewed who were involved in this kind of relationship seemed very comfortable with the value their role delivers, despite the dependency concerns of some of their counterparts.

A characteristic of the longer-term coaching and mentoring relationships described by charity CEOs was that their focus had evolved over time. The agenda tends to move beyond some initial developmental objectives, to address pressing leadership challenges as they arise. Whybrow and Lancaster (2012) highlight the "hand to mouth" existence of many charities, owing to the financial strain that they are usually working under. They observe that this can often result in a tactical orientation that focuses on "meeting immediate needs". The politically isolated role of a charity CEO means that they have no one else with whom they can discuss the more sensitive of these urgent needs. Several CEOs in the study explained that, once they had built up a trusted relationship with their coach or mentor, it was a natural evolution to begin using them as a helpful confidant and sounding board to discuss these sensitive issues. As a consequence, their relationships

with them had shifted pragmatically, from receiving their support in a relatively focused and timebound developmental journey, to doing so on an ongoing, issue-focused basis.

Having identified some potential causes for the lengthening of CEO coaching and mentoring relationships, it is important to question whether relationships of this type are an unusual characteristic of the charity sector. Intriguingly, a doctoral research study undertaken by Campagna (2020) suggests that this is probably not the case. A key finding from her mixed-method inquiry was that, out of 325 business coaches surveyed across 32 countries, over 200 coaches claimed to have worked with a client for longer than two years. This surprising discovery led to the conclusion that “long term business coaching engagements are not an anomaly” (Campagna, 2020, p.247). These longer-term relationships tend to emerge organically, and stem from the personal growth and development of both the client and their coach, as well as a deepening in the quality and depth of their dyadic relationship. This finding is supported by Wasylyshyn (2019, p.1), who argues that the engagements that expert coaches have with senior executives often evolve into longer-term relationships in which their role becomes that of a “trusted leadership advisor”. On this basis, the finding in my own study that coaching engagements are frequently long-term in nature, appears itself not to be an anomaly, but further evidence supporting the widespread existence of this type of relationship more generally.

Sociocultural Context/Skillset Dimension

As highlighted in the Stokes et al. (2021) skillset spectrum, relevant industry/job experience is understood to be a key characteristic of ‘mentoring’ (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015; Garvey, 2024). The charity CEOs engaged in mentoring relationships described being keen to learn from people who have worked at a senior executive level, either in charities larger than theirs or in well-respected private sector companies. However, experience alone is not enough to make an effective mentor, and some CEOs recounted finding relationships with mentors who lacked interpersonal and coaching skills very unsatisfactory. Interestingly, one mentoring programme organiser commented that the risk of this happening seems to be reducing, as she had seen a big shift in the proportion of aspiring mentors with professional coaching qualifications.

If CEOs have specific, task-focused performance objectives, they will seek ‘skills coaching’ from coaches with the relevant technical expertise. Examples mentioned in the study included coaches who specialised in leadership development and inclusivity. When it comes to ‘non-directive coaching’, CEOs seem much less clear and knowledgeable about what they are looking for. Coaches are assumed to have some form of professional coaching qualification, though their credentials are rarely checked. For certain forms of

'non-directive coaching', particularly those with a psychological orientation, further specialist expertise is required in areas such as psychometrics, cognitive behavioural techniques and psychodynamics (Western, 2017). However, client understanding of the different genres of coaching is limited, and most will end up doing work that is driven primarily by the approach and expertise of the coach they happen to match up with, rather than by a conscious choice to engage in coaching of a particular type.

References were made by all stakeholder groups to how much value is placed on the coaches of charity CEOs having professional experience in the world of charities, even though they might not be 'mentoring' them. This is clearly an important feature of the charity sector's 'sociocultural' context (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021). This finding is similar to that of Howard et al. (2010, p.7), who concluded that charity CEOs want their coach to fully appreciate "the unique challenges of the sector". The contextually important areas of understanding they highlight include the significance of mission, fundraising and capitalisation, scarcity thinking, governance structures, HR issues and the complexity of the CEO role. When CEOs are involved in coaching, they want to spend their time thinking through their issues, not having to explain this context to their coach.

The ideal combination for charity CEOs seems to be working with someone who has both relevant experience and coaching expertise. This enables them to address the wide variety of strategic and relational challenges that arise, whilst also working at a deeper personal level to help CEOs to build their self-awareness and confidence. This combination of experience and expertise is a prerequisite for any coach-mentor seeking to provide a 'fluid' form of coaching and mentoring (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; Bruce-Foulds, Clark and Ray, 2022).

5.5.2. The roles of different forms of coaching and mentoring relationship

Based on this analysis of charity CEO relationships with external coaches and mentors, the distinctive characteristics of the four forms of coaching and mentoring were summarised in Table 4.8. The most important distinguishing factors seem to be the type of learning objectives and the sociocultural profile of the coach or mentor involved. 'Non-directive coaching' focuses on helping CEOs to work through their challenges for themselves. Special attention seems to be given to helping them manage their own emotions and those of others. In the context of the charity sector, a likely driver of this characteristic is the relatively intense emotional nature of the challenges that CEOs face. A consequence is that the professional coaches involved often have additional training in psychological or relational techniques (Western, 2012). 'Skills coaching' tends to be more oriented towards leadership development. The relative lack of leadership training and career pathways provided for high-potential managers in the charity sector means that

first-time CEOs often have a lot to learn in this area (Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b). This form of coaching typically requires coaches with leadership expertise and experience, and it is also the one that is most likely to be paid for. 'Mentoring', on the other hand, is more concerned with broadening the perspectives that CEOs bring to their leadership challenges. This is often done by engaging with a mentor who has charity experience. However, many charity CEOs also value the opportunity to learn from the private and public sectors, too. The career profile of a mentor is, therefore, the primary determinant of their ability to add value, and 'mentoring' is also most likely to be offered on a pro bono basis. Finally, in relationships that are more 'fluid' in nature, the agenda tends to focus on responding to the various challenges that arise for CEOs over time. In this scenario, coach-mentors require a suitable blend of coaching skill and leadership experience and expertise.

5.5.3. The hybridisation of coaching and mentoring relationships

It is important to point out, once again, that the distinctions between these four forms of coaching and mentoring should not be overstated. Western (2012, p.44) argues that, although categorising types of coaching and mentoring can be helpful in defining the terms of relationships, the disciplines are "fluid and porous" and there are "not fixed boundaries or borders". The analysis in the previous sections demonstrates that there is certainly some blurring in the differences between the four approaches across all four dimensions in the Stokes et al. (2021) framework. All tend to address a combination of both performance and learning/growth objectives. They are all typically offered pro bono, or at discounted rates compared to the private sector. Coaching contracts usually begin with short, 6-month terms but often extend to last several years, like mentoring relationships. Finally, there is also a trend towards most mentors and coaches having a blend of relevant leadership experience and professional coaching expertise, rather than one or the other (Passmore, 2007). As a result, the conclusion that Garvey and Stokes (2022, p.18) come to that coaching and mentoring are both "the same and different" seems apposite. There is also strong evidence from the study to support their view that a 'hybridisation' is underway between the two disciplines.

To help understand why this hybridisation is taking place in the coaching and mentoring of charity CEOs, Figure 5.1, overleaf, attempts to map the complex system involved using the analogy of a tree.

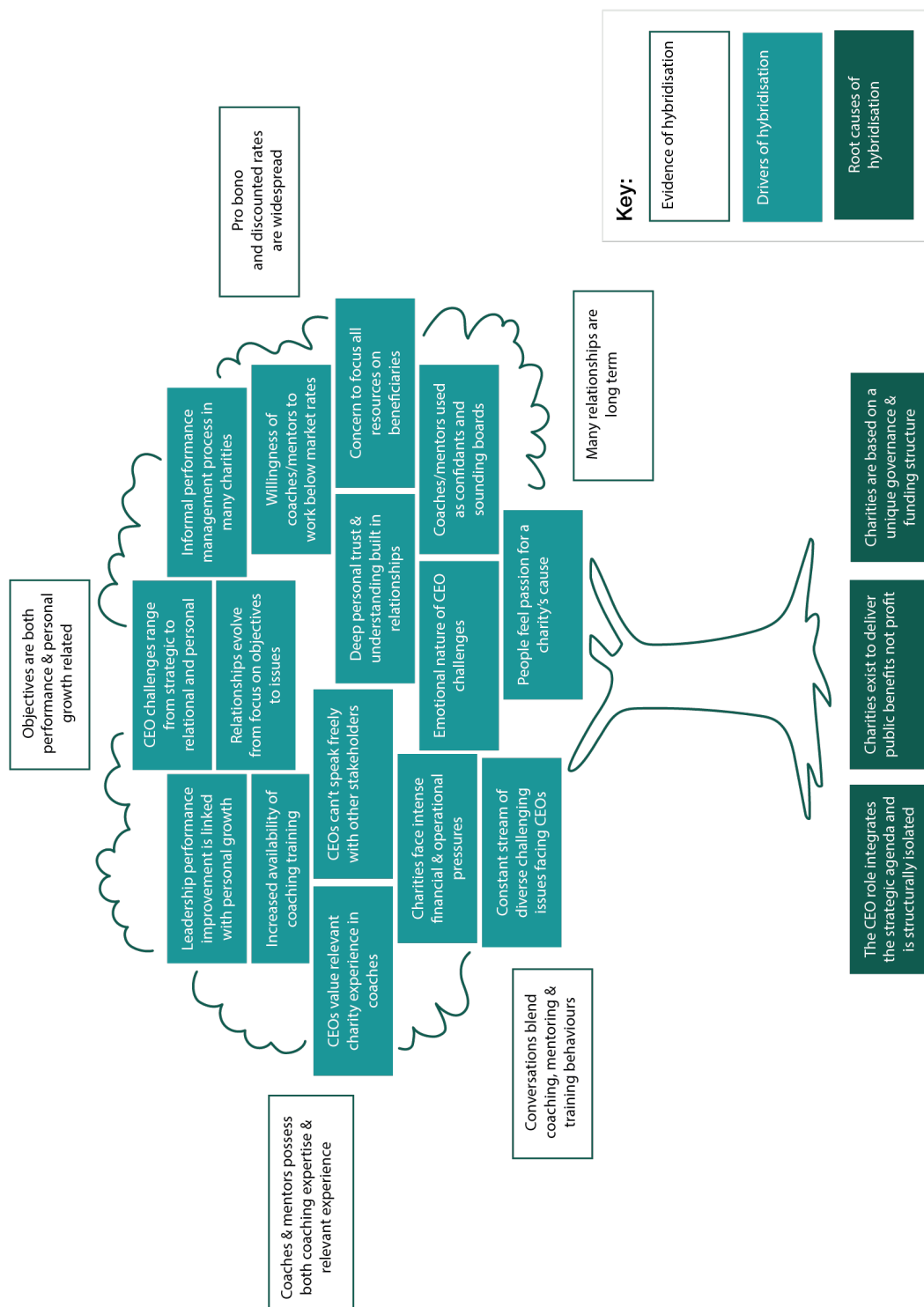


Figure 5.1: The root causes, drivers and evidence for hybridization in the coaching and mentoring of charity CEOs in the UK.

The root causes for the distinctive nature of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs can be traced back to the unique nature of both charities as organisations and the role of CEO. Charities exist to deliver public benefits, not profit, and they are made distinctive by their governance structure and the disintermediation between the funders and beneficiaries of their services (Moore, 2000; Wolf, 2012; Hyndman, 2017). CEOs sit in a structurally isolated position between their board and their staff (Lesirge and Oakley, 2015; Herman, 2016). Their role is also the only one wherein the external and internal agendas of an organisation join up holistically (Kirchner, 2006; Lafley, 2009). These characteristics are the underlying causes for a range of systemic factors which influence the way that charity CEOs establish relationships with external coaches and mentors. The 'drivers of hybridisation' are drawn from the analysis in the previous section, and are included as the branches on the tree. Together, they help to describe the contextual conditions that generate the 'evidence of hybridisation' – i.e. the blurring of objectives, fee arrangements, timescales and skillsets. These are captured in the white boxes around the outer edges of the tree, representing the 'produce' or 'fruits' of hybridisation.

5.5.4. The hybridisation of coaching and mentoring conversations

The hybridisation of coaching and mentoring is not just evident in the relationships that CEOs have with their coaches and mentors. It is also a feature of the dialogue that occurs in their conversations together. In most cases examined in the research, CEOs described how their coaches or mentors blended coaching, mentoring and training behaviours in some way (Garvey and Stokes, 2022). This finding relates to an observation made by Stelter (2021) about the nature of coaching dialogue. He argues that it has evolved through two phases in recent years, the first focused on setting goals and solving problems, the second on possible solutions and appreciative inquiry. In what he terms 'third generation coaching', a greater emphasis is now being placed on the coach assuming an active and collaborative position as a co-reflective partner.

The three key features of Stelter's (2021) 'third generation coaching' dialogue all seem highly relevant to the context of a charity CEO's leadership challenges. The first feature is a focus on values as a foundation for leadership, a fundamental characteristic of the purpose-driven charity sector (Renz, 2016). The second feature is an opportunity for 'meaning-making', a crucial enabler of self-leadership as charity CEOs explore how they "feel, think and act" (Stelter, 2021, p.3). Meaning-making also lies at the heart of the distributive form of leadership process that is required in charities (Kay, 1996). Stelter's (2021) third feature is a collaborative approach to shaping narratives together, another central challenge for charity CEOs as they seek ways to engage the complex range of

stakeholders involved in their organisation's work (Kay, 1996; Macmillan and McLaren, 2012; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022).

This kind of conversation style resonates strongly with the way that many of the CEOs talked about interacting with their coaches and mentors in the study. There was a strong appreciation for two-way generative dialogue, in which coaches and mentors contribute towards the thinking of their clients, rather than relying on a questioning approach. The longer their relationships lasted, the more this type of interaction seemed to occur. This finding is similar to that of Campagna (2020, p.1), who concluded that, in longer term relationships, a business coach's role shifts "to include more input and direction". The same perspective is given by Booton (2023) about the practice of accompaniment. He refers to a seamless movement that takes place between 'facilitative', 'directive' and 'dialogic' stances on behalf of a coach or mentor, as they respond intuitively to the needs of the person with whom they are working.

The systemic drivers of this type of hybridisation in the charity context are also represented in Figure 5.1. Charity CEOs are faced with a constant stream of challenges, ranging from the strategic to the relational and the personal. The emotional and political sensitivity of many of these issues means that CEOs cannot discuss them freely with their other stakeholders. The longer a relationship lasts with a coach or mentor, the more a CEO feels able to open up with them about the challenges they are facing. Any coach or mentor wants to do all they can to support the CEO with whom they are working. The fact that they also usually possess a blend of coaching expertise and leadership experience means that they have the capacity to contribute in different ways to address the full range of a CEO's challenges. All these factors help to explain why coaching and mentoring conversations with charity CEOs often feature a blend of coaching, mentoring and training behaviours.

5.5.5. The similar roles of coaching and mentoring

In the discussion so far, efforts have been made to distinguish between the different roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs. Attention has been drawn to four different forms of coaching and mentoring, the differences between coaching and mentoring behaviours and relationships, and the role of learning conversations with different conversation partners. However, whilst it is useful to understand these differences, a consensus is clear in the literature that trying to categorise coaching and mentoring too discretely and rigidly is not possible, and would be potentially misleading (Salter and Gannon, 2015; Western, 2017; Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). As discussed, a hybridisation between coaching and mentoring is blurring the distinctions between them in the relationships and conversations

that charity CEOs have with external coaches and mentors (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). For these reasons, the analysis for this study would not be complete if it only focused on the differences between coaching and mentoring. Just as important is to understand the similarities in the roles which both approaches play for charity CEOs.

Four themes were identified in the research when it came to identifying the roles that both coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs. The first relates to the opportunity that they provide for CEOs to express their emotions, a particular benefit given the emotional intensity of many of their challenges. Charity CEOs carry a significant burden of responsibility and are continually handling a diverse range of relationships, highly charged by people's values and passions. The build-up of emotional pressure that CEOs feel can be eased significantly by sharing their feelings with a coach or mentor who listens to them in a spirit of empathy and compassion. Emotions play a crucial role in human life, conditioning our subjective experiences and shaping our disposition to action (Shabi, 2021). By helping charity CEOs to "acknowledge their own emotions and become more curious about them", the study's data indicates that they become better able to reflect more deeply on the challenges they face and the underlying issues involved (Shabi, 2021, p.149). In a recent study of the impact that coaching has on the emotions of leaders, Roberts (2024, p.3) highlights that key influences are "the emotional and systemic attunement of the coach, the conditions the coach creates and the leader's inclination toward emotional engagement". Her findings align with those in this study on the benefits available to leaders when effective emotional engagement with their coach occurs. These include greater authenticity, improved emotional regulation, and the agency to generate significant improvements in their relationships.

The second theme relating to the roles of coaching and mentoring involves stretching the thinking of charity CEOs. Coaching and mentoring relationships are known to provide a safe space in which leaders can reflect on their challenges and work through possible solutions (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 1999; Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024). For charity CEOs in particular, the study indicated that taking the time out to do this thinking is appreciated greatly, given the intensity and speed of their typical day-to-day work schedule, and the blurring of the boundaries between their work and home life (Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024).

The highly political and emotive nature of many charity CEO challenges also makes it difficult to talk them through with anyone other than an independent, external coach or mentor (Sherlock and Nathan, 2007). CEOs in the study used terms such as "sounding board", "sparring partner", "wise elder", "independent advisor", and "thinking partner" to

describe the roles played by their coaches and mentors. The contribution that results for CEOs is help to make sense of the complex situations they face, to clarify routes forward and to develop narratives that engage their many different stakeholders (Kay, 1996; Western, 2012; Stelter, 2021).

An important consideration for coaches and mentors is how they can best go about challenging and stretching the thinking of their clients. Louis and Fatien Diochon (2018) argue that no coach can ever be neutral in the way that they create a coaching space, even if they aspire to a 'non-directive coaching' approach. Every coach or mentor inevitably brings their own values, experiences and expertise, all of which will shape the dialogue generated. Indeed, there is a growing body of opinion in the coaching community advocating that coaches and mentors should embrace this fact more actively, assuming greater responsibility for lifting a client's thinking to a more systemic and environmentally-conscious level (Hawkins and Turner, 2020). This approach seems especially relevant in the world of charities, where the fundamental social and political challenges involved require solutions that go well beyond the developmental needs of individual CEOs (Tabarovsky, 2015; Louis and Fatien Diochon, 2018).

The third and fourth themes – stimulating learning and generating change – are described by many scholars as central to the purpose of coaching and mentoring. They are also understood to be inherently linked. Newell (2022, p.32) argues that learning does not just involve "knowing something differently", but also the process by which individuals adapt to "be different". Cox et al. (2024) take a similar stance, suggesting that learning involves extending and clarifying the meaning of one's experience. It is an indication that learning has occurred when changes are apparent in a person's attitudes and behaviour.

Evidence emerged in the study of charity CEOs having learned at a number of levels, in line with the theory espoused by Smith and Hawkins (2024). Although adaptive development involves learning new facts and skills, more transformational learning is possible when shifts occur in people's frames of reference and their sense of self (Gunnlaugson, 2006). Given the importance of charity CEO mindsets in influencing the way that their leadership challenges manifest themselves, learning at these more fundamental levels would seem to be of greatest value. This requires deep, personal reflection on the part of the coachee about their patterns of behaviour, their reflex feelings and the assumptions and beliefs that they have about themselves (Smith and Hawkins, 2024).

5.5.6. Section summary – Characteristics of coaching and mentoring relationships

This section has explored the characteristics of the different forms of relationship that charity CEOs have experienced with external coaches and mentors. This has been done by examining the objectives, timeframes, payment arrangements and skillsets involved in each case. Some distinct roles have been identified for each of the four forms of coaching and mentoring. However, some significant similarities have also been established, and a case has been made that, in many ways, a hybridisation is taking place between the two disciplines. This hybridisation is being driven contextually by the unique nature of both charities as organisations and the role of CEO. Given the resulting difficulty in distinguishing clearly between coaching and mentoring, four common roles of the two disciplines have been identified: expressing emotion, stretching thinking, stimulating learning and generating change. On this basis, the next section will move on to discuss the potential benefits that result for charity CEOs as they seek to address their leadership challenges. Some guidance will also be given about how CEOs and their coaches and mentors can realise these benefits in practice.

5.6. The benefits and enablers of coaching and mentoring

5.6.1. The potential benefits of coaching and mentoring

A case has been made that coaching and mentoring can take place in the form of a spectrum of behaviours applied in conversations with people throughout a charity CEO's network. When these conversations occur in the context of relationships with external coaches and mentors, their independence and objectivity provide charity CEOs with a safe reflective space. This provides CEOs with an opportunity to address leadership challenges that they would not be able to discuss freely with other stakeholders, due to their personal, emotional, or political sensitivity. The profile of the professional expertise and experience brought by individual coaches and mentors shapes both the nature of the issues that can be explored, and the behavioural style of the conversations involved. On this basis, four different forms of coaching and mentoring have been identified: 'non-directive coaching', 'skills coaching', 'mentoring' and a 'fluid' mixture of all three.

Despite some differences between these various approaches, at the heart of all of them lies an opportunity for a charity CEO to engage in a dialogue with a thinking partner. This dialogue enables CEOs to express their emotions, stretch their thinking, stimulate their learning and generate change – in themselves, their relationships and their broader organisations. Crucially, the dialogue is not just reflective, but generative (Armstrong, 2012; Stelter, 2021). It enables a charity CEO to see their challenges in new ways, and to discover new opportunities for action and change. Indeed, without this dialogue, these fresh perspectives and possibilities would potentially go undiscovered.

The findings from the research suggest that the impact of coaching and mentoring radiates from addressing a charity CEO's personal leadership challenges, to influence their relational challenges and, ultimately, their strategic challenges. In this sense, the study confirms the 'ripple effect' described in the model of non-profit leadership effectiveness developed by Howard et al. (2010). At the personal level, as in other studies, several examples were mentioned of CEOs gaining useful developmental support with their managerial skills (Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Sheridan and Howard, 2009; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010). Of more significance is the impact that coaching and mentoring can have at a deeper level, in helping charity leaders to obtain new perspectives on themselves and the situations they face. Their values-driven motivation, combined with the intense operational and commercial pressure they work under, makes the opportunity to take time out to reflect with someone supportive extremely important to them (Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Sheridan and Howard, 2009; Whybrow and Lancaster, 2012). This support is especially valuable when CEOs are having to deal with intense, and sometimes extremely hostile, public scrutiny (Preston, 2024). In many cases, the shifts in a CEO's perspective resulting from their coaching and mentoring experience have led to significant benefits in terms of their self-awareness, confidence and wellbeing (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; Jackson and Cox, 2024). Yu et al. (2022) highlight, in particular, the opportunity for leaders to build their resilience by improving their attitudes toward their challenges and adversities.

In helping to generate these changes in charity CEOs personally, many significant benefits were realised at a relational level. Several examples were given in which a CEO's improved personal authenticity, emotional sensitivity and regulation had enabled them to strengthen their relationships with both their board directors and their staff members (Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Sheridan and Howard, 2009; Roberts, 2024). Improved stakeholder engagement was possible as a result of the CEOs crafting narratives on difficult issues, enabling them to communicate more clearly and convincingly (Coleman, 2008; Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Sheridan and Howard, 2009). Their ability to build stronger, more committed leadership teams was also a feature in common with other studies (Sheridan and Howard, 2009; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010).

The impact of coaching and mentoring with external coaches and mentors did not seem to be as strong at a strategic level, often because the conversations CEOs have about strategy and financial performance are taking place regularly with other stakeholders in their leadership team. However, for several CEOs, the opportunity to step back and think about the bigger picture was much appreciated. When coaching and mentoring dialogue focuses at this level, it helps leaders to clarify their thinking about their charity's mission

and vision (Sheridan and Howard, 2009). Given the appropriate stimulation and challenge from their coach or mentor, a CEO's thinking can lift to a more systemic level, and they are able to generate new perspectives on their strategic dilemmas and options (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 1999; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024).

It is important to stress that these benefits manifest themselves in different ways for different charity CEOs, depending on the focus they choose for their coaching and mentoring conversations, and on the profiles of the coaches and mentors they work with. As previously explained, 'non-directive coaching' relationships seem to have special value in helping leaders to understand themselves and their emotions more deeply. 'Skills coaching' tends to be most oriented towards a CEO's leadership development. For some this will involve building skills in areas such as strategy, delegation and communication, but for most it will focus on generating deeper changes in one's self-awareness and personal authenticity. 'Mentoring' serves to broaden a CEO's perspective on their many challenges, helping them identify new ways to address them and, importantly, address them with greater confidence. A 'fluid' form of coaching and mentoring is well suited to dealing with any of the challenges CEOs find most pressing, as a coach-mentor has the capability to flex their approach depending on the issue at hand.

However, in all cases, the dialogue that occurs in coaching and mentoring can generate benefits that go well beyond the personal development of the individual CEOs involved. Given some of the barriers facing the adoption of the disciplines in the sector, it is this finding which is perhaps most significant. If coaching and mentoring for CEOs are understood to be generative, not just for themselves, personally, but also for the teams and organisations they lead, then perhaps their potential value can be better appreciated and resourced. Only when charity CEOs have the opportunity to engage in generative dialogue about their most sensitive leadership challenges, with suitably qualified coaches and mentors, can the full scope of their leadership potential and impact be realised.

5.6.2. The enablers of effective practice

The benefits of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs are potentially significant, but the research made it clear that they are not always delivered in practice. Several pitfalls were specified, and these can undermine the effectiveness of relationships with coaches and mentors (see Table 4.9). To help avoid these risks, a framework of guidance for charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors has been created in Table 5.1. This captures the perspectives gathered from all stakeholders in the study about ways to make charity CEO coaching and mentoring engagements as productive as possible.

Pitfall	Coaches/mentors	Charity CEOs
Matching	Be explicit in explaining personal areas of focus, expertise, style and philosophy	Be as clear as possible about objectives and the type of support needed
	Be prepared to provide trial sessions	Check out a variety of potential partners before choosing one to contract with
Contracting	Scope out and agree written objectives to provide an initial focus for the relationship	
	Explore the strategic/relational/personal landscape to help identify key challenges	
	Redefine objectives and ways of working together every 6-12 months as the relationship evolves	
	Relate any immediate tactical issues that arise in sessions back to agreed strategic developmental goals	Don't feel obliged to continue with a coach or mentor if their services are provided pro bono
Balancing personal & organisational needs	Consider engaging the Chair in initial 3-way contracting discussions to incorporate their perspectives and involve them in the developmental process	
	Seek 360 feedback from other stakeholders to ensure the CEO's impact on others is factored into coaching and mentoring discussions	
	Avoid entering into relationships in which independence, confidentiality and trust are potentially undermined by other, conflicting interests	
	Even if a relationship is kept private between a coach/mentor and a CEO, both sides should explore how they can best honour their responsibility to the CEO's organisation and their broader stakeholder network	
Balancing directive & non-directive interventions	Establish explicitly the importance of the CEO retaining responsibility for both the coaching/mentoring agenda and for any resulting actions	
	Signal carefully the intention behind conversational interventions to avoid them being misconstrued	Avoid offloading the responsibility for doing the thinking on issues to the coach/mentor
	Take stock of the amount of time each person speaks, using 80% CEO/20% coach/mentor as a rule of thumb for good practice	
Commitment & accountability	Ensure coaching/mentoring sessions are scheduled with the frequency and regularity necessary to create momentum and impact behind the agenda	
	If sessions are often being postponed or cancelled, explore together whether this is a symptom of an underlying lack of relevance or commitment in the relationship	
	Bring coaching and mentoring relationships to a close if they become too cosy or friendly	
Dependency	Explore any risk of dependency in supervision	Think carefully about the role a coach/mentor is playing, taking care not to lose one's autonomy
	Draw things to a close if concern exists over any unhealthy dynamics emerging in a relationship	

Table 5.1: A framework of guidance to help make charity CEO coaching and mentoring relationships productive.

The first and most important priority highlighted in Table 5.1 is for a charity CEO to ‘match’ their personal needs by finding a coach or mentor with a relevant blend of skills, experiences and personality traits (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015; Jones, 2015). Doing so is not straightforward, for various reasons. CEOs are not always clear about the potential role of coaching and mentoring, or about the objectives that they would like to work on. Indeed, these objectives are also likely to shift once the work gets underway and moves to a deeper personal level (Stevens, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2009; Jackson and Cox, 2024). The more thought a charity CEO can give upfront to the type of support they require, the more likely they will be to find an appropriate partner. Of particular concern should be the relevance of a coach or mentor’s experience and expertise to their developmental needs. Coaches and mentors have an equally important responsibility to articulate the nature of their expertise and experience, as well as the philosophy and style that drives their approach (Armstrong, 2012). Only then will charity CEOs be able to make informed choices about who they work with. A few stakeholders also suggested that CEOs could benefit from arranging trial coaching sessions before committing to a relationship, to check that the chemistry with a coach or mentor feels suitable.

Once an appropriate coach or mentor has been identified, data from both the interviews and the documents confirmed a theme arising in the literature, that clear contracting upfront is vital to establish the terms of the relationship (Stevens, 2005; Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). Given that many engagements evolve over several years, revisiting and redefining these agreements is also essential (Harder & Co, 2003; Clutterbuck, 2009). There is an opportunity during contracting discussions to integrate the CEO’s personal agenda with that of other stakeholders and the organisation as a whole (Coleman, 2008; Bachkirova, 2024). Consideration should therefore be given to engaging the chair, and also the 360 feedback of other stakeholders, in the setting of developmental goals. This will help to ensure that the coaching and mentoring takes into account other people’s perspectives on a CEO’s behaviour and performance (Gavett, 2013; McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019).

When it comes to the dialogue that takes place between a CEO and their coach or mentor, the main risk is that an unhelpful balance is struck between directive and non-directive behaviours by the coach or mentor (Downey, 2014). This can take the form of them either talking too much and sharing too much advice and instruction, or conversely relying too much on ‘non-directive coaching’ behaviours and not contributing enough of their own thoughts and feelings. The optimal balance will vary across relationships and across different conversation topics. The key priority is for both parties to be conscious at a meta level of the dynamics unfolding in their conversations. By reflecting on these

openly together, dyads will be able to move their dialogue forward in the most helpful directions (Armstrong, 2012).

To ensure that relationships maintain momentum, each person's commitment level should also be discussed openly and regularly. This is particularly important when the arrangements are pro bono, as the value exchange and accountability between both parties may not always be clear (Whybrow and Lancaster, 2012; Ramalho, 2014). Any risks of dependency should be taken into account, with coaches and mentors assuming a particular responsibility for reviewing the power dynamics in their relationships in supervision (Louis and Fatien Diochon, 2018). At all times, the principle must be maintained that the client defines the agenda and retains responsibility for their actions (Berglas, 2002; Coutu et al., 2009).

5.7. Chapter conclusion - Discussion

This chapter has reviewed the findings from the study and drawn out some important implications, with references to the relevant literature. The discussion began by highlighting the distinctive leadership challenges facing the CEOs of UK charities, emphasising that they can be understood to cascade down through three levels: strategic, relational and personal. An examination has also taken place of the way in which stakeholders in the UK charity sector interpret the meanings of coaching and mentoring. Some important similarities between coaching and mentoring have been established, and four different forms of coaching and mentoring have been identified based on the different types of behavioural interventions involved. Given this framing of coaching and mentoring, the roles of different conversation partners in a CEO's network have been explored. Special focus has been given to assessing the relationships that charity CEOs have with external coaches and mentors. The chapter concluded with a review of the benefits that coaching and mentoring deliver in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs, along with some guidelines to help CEOs and their coaches and mentors to realise these opportunities in practice.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

This final chapter revisits the research aim and objectives, and the overall conclusions drawn by the study. The contributions to both theory and practice are identified, as are the limitations of the study. Finally, some recommendations are provided for further research, and my personal reflections are shared about the experience of conducting this study.

6.2. Revisiting the research aim and objectives

The aim of the study was to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. In terms of the specific research objectives, the first was to critically evaluate the literature relating to the challenges facing charity leaders, theories of charity leadership, and the roles that coaching and mentoring play for CEOs in the private and charity sectors. This analysis was undertaken in Chapter 2, a review which began with an exploration of the distinctive and often very difficult issues facing charities and their leaders (Hodges and Howieson, 2017; Parliament. House of Lords, 2017). The implications for the development of leadership theory relevant to the charity sector were explained, as were the consequences for individuals fulfilling the role of CEO (Kirchner, 2006; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018a). An examination took place of the meaning of the terms coaching and mentoring (Koopman et al., 2021; Garvey and Stokes, 2022), which informed a review of the studies exploring the roles that each of these disciplines have played in supporting CEOs in both the private and charity sectors (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). The literature review concluded by identifying five important knowledge gaps, which are specified in Figure 2.5.

The second objective was to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs, by investigating the perspectives of different stakeholders in the UK charity sector (e.g. CEOs, chairs, coaches and mentors, programme organisers, professional bodies). The approach to meeting this objective was explained and justified in Chapter 3. A constructionist ontological and an interpretivist epistemological stance was adopted to reflect the fact that people have different views about the meaning of the terms coaching and mentoring (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019; Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021). Different stakeholders also have different perspectives on the roles that coaching and mentoring can play for CEOs, a finding from the literature that shaped the design of the research to include a variety of contributors from across the UK charity sector (Gavett,

2013; McGill, Clarke and Sheffield, 2019). Qualitative case study methodology was used for the research, with two methods of data collection. 29 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse range of charity CEOs and other senior stakeholders. Additionally, 14 documents were reviewed, which related to the role of charity CEOs and a selection of coaching and mentoring programmes available to them.

The third objective was to analyse the perspectives that different stakeholders have on the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs. The approach to data analysis was described in Chapter 3, and the resulting findings were presented in Chapter 4. The findings chapter included sections on the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs, the meaning of coaching and mentoring, the sources of coaching and mentoring support, the characteristics of coaching and mentoring relationships, and the impact of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs. Chapter 5 went on to relate these findings to the existing literature, clarifying the ways in which the findings support, challenge and build on previous studies.

The final objective was to contribute to academic knowledge, by developing a framework of the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs, and to professional practice, by developing guidelines for charity leaders and their coaches and mentors on how coaching and mentoring can address their leadership challenges. This objective has been addressed by the conceptual framework presented in Figure 4.5, and by the practical guidelines proposed in Table 5.1.

The overall aim of the study has been fulfilled by articulating a research question and disaggregating it into five sub-questions (see Figures 1.1 and 4.1). Through an investigation of each of these sub-questions in turn, a comprehensive understanding has been built of the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. The first step was to generate insight into the leadership challenges faced by charity CEOs. The second was to understand what the terms coaching and mentoring mean to stakeholders in the UK charity sector. Based on this analysis, an exploration was undertaken of the sources of this kind of support for charity CEOs, taking into account the roles of different potential conversation partners. Given the distinctive role played by external coaches and mentors, a more detailed examination took place of the characteristics of these relationships and the role they play for CEOs in practice. The final step was to explore the impact of coaching and mentoring, thereby enabling insights to be drawn about the roles that the disciplines play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs.

6.3. Conclusion

The central conclusion from the study is that coaching and mentoring can play a significant and valuable role in helping charity CEOs to address their leadership challenges. The opportunity for charity CEOs to engage in a generative dialogue about the issues they face, in a safe reflective space with a suitable coach or mentor, provides several important benefits. One of the distinctive characteristics of the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs is that these challenges tend to be relatively intense emotionally, owing to their values-based motivation and the concern that CEOs and their stakeholders feel for their charity's cause and its beneficiaries. Coaching and mentoring conversations provide CEOs with opportunities to express this emotion, helping them come to terms with it and feel more supported (Shabi, 2021). They also enable CEOs to stretch their thinking, giving them time to explore new potential ways of framing and addressing the issues with which they are grappling (Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024). Ultimately, they can stimulate a CEO's learning and help to generate changes in their mindset, action and behaviour (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024).

For all these reasons, coaching and mentoring seem to have most impact for charity CEOs at a personal level. However, an important conclusion from the study is that changes in the ways that CEOs see both themselves and the challenges they face, also generate effects at the relational and organisational levels. By reflecting carefully on their approach to handling conversations and building relationships with their various stakeholders, CEOs can strengthen people's engagement in their leadership agenda. Perhaps more significantly, the shifts that take place in their self-awareness and confidence can affect the way in which they show up as individuals, influencing others through the way they are being, not just through what they are doing. This relational effectiveness is particularly important for charity CEOs, given the complexity of their stakeholder landscape and the emotive nature of many of the issues involved in charity work (McHatton et al., 2011; Renz, 2016). At a strategic level, the opportunity to take time out to think more broadly and systemically is also extremely valuable to some CEOs. When short term operational and financial pressures are intense, coaching and mentoring can reorientate CEOs towards the bigger picture (Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024). This can help keep them focused on their organisation's core values and purpose, as well as their wider responsibilities at a more systemic level (Renz, 2016; Hawkins and Turner, 2020).

Distinguishing a difference between the roles that coaching and mentoring each play in supporting charity CEOs is more problematic. The lack of clarity and consistency in the way stakeholders in the UK charity sector refer to coaching and mentoring supports the point of view, reached by many scholars, that there is widespread confusion about the meaning of the terms (Clutterbuck, 2009; Western, 2017; Garvey and Stokes, 2022). This

lack of common understanding seems to be a constraint on the wider adoption of coaching and mentoring within the charity sector. In this context, a significant conclusion from the study is that a useful way of disentangling the complexity is by focusing on coaching and mentoring as different types of behaviours. The two-dimensional spectrum of behaviours presented in Figure 4.3 sheds light on two significant causes for people understanding coaching and mentoring to mean different things. Firstly, it helps explain the shift in the coaching discourse in recent years from referring to task-orientated, directive interventions to more developmental, non-directive interventions (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). It does this by distinguishing between the more directive behaviours involved in 'skills coaching' (i.e. guiding, informing, instructing) and the less directive behaviours of 'non-directive coaching' (i.e. listening, supporting, questioning, challenging). Secondly, the spectrum helps to clarify why the practices of coaching and mentoring are often seen as difficult to separate. This is because mentoring is not only perceived to involve mentoring behaviours (i.e. recounting, suggesting, advising). 'Non-directive coaching' behaviours are also understood to be integral to 'mentoring' practice as well.

Being more specific about the behaviours involved in coaching and mentoring offers several important opportunities. Firstly, by being clearer about the role that a charity CEO is wanting a coach or mentor to play, they are more likely to match themselves with someone equipped to provide the appropriate form of support (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015; Jones, 2015). This is particularly relevant given the distinctive nature of the leadership challenges facing charity CEOs. If they would like to learn from someone sharing their experience, they should seek a mentor with the appropriate career background in either the charity, public or private sector. If they are looking to build their professional skills in some way, they should seek a coach with the appropriate specialist expertise. If they are more interested in deepening their self-awareness and their capability to think things through for themselves, they should seek a coach with the appropriate coaching or psychological qualifications. If they are looking for someone to help them with a diverse range of challenges, then a coach-mentor with an appropriate blend of experience and expertise will be required. This clarity can help to ensure that coaching and mentoring focuses effectively on the unique specific needs of any individual charity CEO.

Another advantage of being clear about the behaviours involved in coaching and mentoring is that a charity CEO and their coach or mentor can align their expectations upfront about the kind of activities they will be involved in together. Given the range of strategic, relational and personal challenges CEOs face, it is quite possible that different styles of intervention might be required for different topics. If coaches and mentors

become more conscious of the behavioural choices available to them, they will be more able to adapt and signal their approach in ways that address their client's challenges in the most helpful ways possible (Passmore, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2008; Booton, 2023).

Having highlighted the value of clarifying some of the differences between coaching and mentoring, it is also important to stress that the study found a hybridisation to be taking place between the two disciplines. As just intimated, at a behavioural level, it is common practice for external coaches and mentors to draw on a range of intervention styles in conversations with their clients, not just the ones that characterise the particular form of coaching and mentoring on which their relationship is based (Passmore, 2007). In terms of these relationships themselves, the analysis using the framework proposed by Stokes et al. (2021) also indicated that it is difficult to distinguish between coaching and mentoring based on the dimensions of learning objectives, timeframes, economic arrangements and skillsets. The study suggests that the root causes for this hybridisation can be traced back to some fundamental contextual characteristics of charitable organisations and the role of CEO. The distinctive influencing factors are the focus of charities on public benefits rather than profit (Charity Commission, 2013), unique governance and funding arrangements (Hyndman, 2017; Mumbi and Obembe, 2022), and the fact that the CEO role integrates the strategic agenda and is structurally isolated (Kirchner, 2006; Sherlock and Nathan, 2007). Together these characteristics generate a range of systemic conditions which encourage the blurring of coaching and mentoring in relationships with external coaches and mentors, as described in Figure 5.1.

When coaching and mentoring are understood to be characterised by certain types of behaviour, another conclusion is that they can manifest themselves in conversations with many different stakeholders in a charity CEO's network, not just external coaches and mentors. Family members, friends, colleagues, chairs, trustees and peers in other charities can all be useful conversation partners. The priority for charity CEOs is to embrace the learning opportunities provided by these relationships and to frame conversations in ways that help them realise this potential in practice (Yip and Kram, 2017; Garvey and Stokes, 2022).

Within this support network, it is clear that a distinctive and valuable role exists for external coaches and mentors. Their independence and objectivity, combined with an appropriate blend of professional expertise and experience, means that CEOs can explore a range of challenges with them that are often too complex, emotive or personally sensitive to discuss with anyone else. The dialogue that takes place in these conversations enables charity CEOs to generate new ways of framing and approaching

their challenges. This enables them to lift not just their own performance as leaders, but the performance of their teams and organisations too.

6.4 Contributions to theory

The primary contribution to theory made by the study is the development of a framework which describes, for the first time, the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs (see Figure 4.5). This captures the five key leadership challenges facing charity CEOs identified in the study, as well as the three different levels at which they manifest themselves. The framework portrays the central role played by the safe reflective space for a charity CEO involved in coaching and mentoring, and the generative dialogue that takes place within that space. The resulting roles that coaching and mentoring perform in helping CEOs to express emotion, stretch thinking, stimulate learning and generate change are also described. Finally, the ripple effect of the impact of coaching and mentoring is represented in addressing personal, then relational and, ultimately, strategic leadership challenges.

Another important contribution to theory is provided by the two-dimensional spectrum of coaching and mentoring behaviours involved in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs (see Figure 4.3). By distinguishing between the different behaviours involved in sharing experience and sharing expertise, a clarification is made about the differences between 'mentoring' and 'skills coaching' (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021; Biswas-Diener and van Nieuwerburgh, 2024; Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2024). The spectrum also demonstrates that both 'mentoring' and 'skills coaching' involve non-directive coaching behaviours, as well as the mentoring and training behaviours involved in sharing experience and expertise (Passmore, 2007; Hamlin and Sage, 2011; Salter and Gannon, 2015). This conceptualisation offers a means with which to explain why different people in the charity sector understand the terms coaching and mentoring to mean different things. It also helps to inform the description of the similarities and differences between the four forms of coaching and mentoring provided in Table 4.1.

A further theoretical contribution results from the study being one of the first to apply the coaching and mentoring contextual framework proposed by Stokes et al. (2021). The four specified dimensions of dyadic relationships were helpful in structuring the gathering and analysis of data, as well as the presentation and discussion of the study's findings in sections 4.4 and 5.5. However, the framework was less effective in helping to distinguish between the roles that different forms of coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs. The way in which the four relationship spectrums specify the typical coaching and mentoring discourses does not fully reflect the way that these discourses seem to have evolved in recent years. As Cox et al. (2024) explain, the coaching discourse has moved

from being performance-oriented to development-oriented, a shift not captured in the framework. As a result, the spectrums did not help to disentangle the differences discovered between 'skills coaching' and 'non-directive coaching'. Similarly, a shift seems to have taken place in the opposite direction for mentoring. Whereas the mentoring discourse has traditionally tended to focus more on an individual's learning and career development, the support that many leaders are now looking for is more concerned with equipping them to deal with their immediate leadership issues and performance (De Janasz and Peiperl, 2015). Consequently, distinguishing between 'mentoring' and 'skills coaching', especially leadership coaching, became more problematic. Stokes et al. (2021) acknowledge that the coaching and mentoring discourses are subject to change. Given the developments identified in the way that coaching and mentoring are now understood in the UK charity sector, an update in the way the discourses are captured in their framework would appear timely.

The challenge of distinguishing between the roles of different forms of coaching and mentoring was resolved in the study by paying greater attention to the types of behaviour used in coaching and mentoring activities. Indeed, another issue with the Stokes et al. (2021) framework seems to be the lack of connection to the behaviours involved in coaching and mentoring. Although its intended focus is on the relationship context within which coaching and mentoring conversations occur, the range of interventions within those conversations are a key driver of whether coaching and mentoring are understood to be taking place. Therefore, another potential area for conceptual development would be to find a way to link the contextual dimensions of coaching and mentoring relationships in the Stokes et al. (2021) framework, with the behavioural interventions involved in coaching and mentoring conversations.

6.5. Contributions to practice

When the stakeholders involved in the interviews were asked how this study could make the biggest possible contribution towards the practice of coaching and mentoring for charity CEOs, the most frequent response was to construct a compelling description of the benefits that can result from CEOs receiving this kind of personal support. Some important barriers limit the extent to which many charity CEOs seek coaching and mentoring, as well as the endorsement and encouragement to do so from their chairs and trustees. As a result, a key benefit of the study will be in helping to describe, for all these stakeholders, the distinctive and valuable roles that coaching and mentoring can play for charity CEOs.

One of these barriers is a lack of basic knowledge in the UK charity sector about what coaching and mentoring actually involve. The study's identification of the four forms of coaching and mentoring, distinguished by the types of behaviours concerned, will help to disentangle some of the confusion surrounding people's understanding of the disciplines. Of particular importance is the distinction between 'skills coaching' and 'non-directive coaching', with the former being characterised by the use of more directive 'training' behaviours. Also of value will be the clarification between the sharing of expertise and the sharing of experience in 'skills coaching' and 'mentoring' respectively. This emphasis on behaviours will help to clarify the role that chairs and other stakeholders can play in providing coaching and mentoring for CEOs. By shifting their style of intervention to use more coaching and mentoring behaviours in their conversations with CEOs, their role in supporting them both intellectually and emotionally can be enhanced (Lesirge and Oakley, 2015).

Another crucial contribution will be in shifting cultural perceptions that support from an external coach or mentor is either remedial or an unjustified luxury. A need for coaching or mentoring is frequently seen as a sign of personal weakness. It can also be considered self-indulgent, given that CEOs feel an obligation to channel all available time and money into the direct service of a charity's beneficiaries (Kirchner, 2006; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018b). However, the study has shown that coaching and mentoring with an external, independent partner provides CEOs with an opportunity to explore challenges that they would not be able to discuss with anyone else (Howard, Gislason and Kellogg, 2010; Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024). The generative dialogue involved helps them to think issues through and come up with better ways of handling the situations they face (Stelter, 2021; Stokes, Jolly and Cox, 2024). Without the safe reflective space in which to explore their difficult and often sensitive challenges, these new opportunities would potentially go undiscovered. As a result, the study helps to describe how coaching and mentoring can enable charity CEOs to enhance their own personal effectiveness and, in doing so, deliver significant ongoing benefits to their teams and organisations as well.

A further contribution of the study is in identifying some practical steps that charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors can take to improve the productivity of their relationships. The pitfalls that tend to undermine these relationships were explained in section 4.4.7. The suggestions made by the various stakeholders to avoid these risks were summarised in Table 5.1. These include ways to improve the matching of CEO needs with the experience and expertise of their coaches and mentors. Also included are methods to improve the quality of contracting, especially to balance the needs of the individual CEO and the organisation for which they work. Finally, advice is provided about managing conversational dialogue, ensuring accountability and commitment, and avoiding any risks

of dependency. This practical guidance can serve as useful input into the coach and mentor training content used by business schools and programme providers, and also into the information provided about coaching and mentoring to charity CEOs by professional bodies such as ACEVO and NCVO.

6.6. Limitations of the study

The philosophical and methodological approach adopted for this study results in several important limitations. Given its constructionist/interpretivist stance (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019), the study's aim was to construct new meaning and understanding about the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. The form of knowledge generated by using qualitative, intrinsic case study methodology has been phronetic, in the sense that it has helped build practical wisdom about people's perspectives and behaviours in this specific social situation (Schram, 2012). As a result, the findings and conclusions relate only to the roles of coaching and mentoring in this particular setting. The study cannot be used to propose generalisations for application in other contexts. Any potential implications beyond the immediate world of charity CEOs must be left for others to infer through naturalistic generalisation (Stake, 1995).

A similar qualification must be made about the applicability of the findings even within the UK charity sector. The experiences of every charity CEO are unique, and vary widely depending on their own personal profile, the profile of the organisation they lead, and the profiles of the coaches and mentors with whom they have worked. An attempt was made to reflect this diversity in the sample involved in the research, building a rich understanding by hearing from a wide range of voices (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). However, the study's conclusions must still be interpreted with care as their relevance may well vary for different individuals.

Some limitations also arise from the selection process for interviewees, and the approach used to explore their experiences of coaching and mentoring. Firstly, one of the key recruitment criteria for charity CEOs was that they had experienced coaching and mentoring themselves. This means that the perspectives of CEOs who had not had relationships of this type were not incorporated. As a result, it is possible that some barriers stopping charity CEOs from engaging in coaching and mentoring may have been missed. Secondly, the interviews could only explore the recollections that stakeholders had of their coaching and mentoring experiences. This raises concerns about how well they could remember the details, and also how comfortable they felt sharing them (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). In addition, they were only able to share their own perspectives on the role of their coaching and mentoring, a view which might be very

different from the partners with whom they worked, or other stakeholders in their organisation. For these reasons, it is important to remember that the interviewees were not sharing perspectives that were true in any absolute sense, but simply a version of reality as they understood it at the time of the interview (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

My own role as researcher will have influenced the study in a variety of ways. Inevitably, I will have brought my own perspectives to co-create the meaning emerging in the interviews, as well as to make sense of it in the analysis afterwards (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2022b). My involvement as a coach and mentor to CEOs in the charity sector raised particular challenges for me as an 'insider researcher' (Unluer, 2012; Saidin, 2016). For this reason, I made every effort to be conscious of any assumptions or biases that I was bringing to the process. I did my best to surface and challenge these whenever possible, to make sure my contribution in the interviews and my interpretation of the data was as self-aware as possible (Unluer, 2012; Saidin, 2016). Further details on my approach to reflexivity are shared in sections 3.7 and 6.8.

6.7 Recommendations for future research

The limitations highlighted above raise a variety of important opportunities for future research to generate deeper understanding of the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs. Given that coaching and mentoring relationships evolve over time, it would be useful to conduct a longitudinal study that examines the roles that they play at different stages of a charity CEO's coaching or mentoring journey (Stevens, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2009). This would also have the advantage of exploring the nature of dialogue taking place around specific topics in recent conversations, rather than relying on the more general memories that people have of relationships in the past (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). In addition, since many coaching and mentoring relationships last for several years, another intriguing area of inquiry would be to assess potential links with the concept of accompaniment established in other sectors such as religion and education (Booton, 2023).

This study provides evidence to suggest that charity CEOs derive significant benefits from effective coaching and mentoring relationships. On this basis, it would be useful to understand more about the views of the many CEOs who have not engaged in this kind of support (ACEVO, 2023). The insights revealed could potentially help coaches and mentors to position their services in a clearer and more compelling manner (Coutu et al., 2009). Another useful piece of research would be to examine the role that coaching and mentoring plays for CEOs outside the charity sector. Although some conclusions have been drawn from this study about the distinctive nature of the challenges facing charity CEOs, and the implications for the role of coaching and mentoring, making some explicit

comparisons with the experiences of other types of CEO would be helpful (Taliento and Silverman, 2005).

Another approach would be to take a more pragmatic philosophical stance, and seek to gauge the extent to which some of the perspectives and practices identified in the study manifest themselves across the charity sector (Robson, 2002). Now that this study has helped to deepen understanding about how people experience and describe coaching and mentoring, some carefully worded questions could be developed for use in quantitative research. Useful areas of enquiry could be the relative numbers of CEOs who are engaged in coaching and mentoring, what form their support takes, the length of time they have been involved, and the perceived benefits that have resulted.

6.8. Reflexivity

As my work on this thesis has come to fruition, I have become increasingly aware of three challenges in my role as the researcher. The first has been how to represent as insightfully and honestly as possible the many perspectives shared with me by the people whom I have interviewed. Although I found many of the themes in what they said to be relatively clear and straightforward to express, the more difficult contributions to interpret were some of the isolated comments that people made. In many instances, these might simply have been examples of unusual outliers within the sample. But in some, they might reveal deeper insights that are relevant more generally within the charity sector, although they were not brought up explicitly in other interviews. To help me to decide how to handle this kind of interpretation, to some extent, I used my own intuition. However, I also did my best to sense check this against what I thought the different stakeholders to whom I have spoken would make of what I was saying. Would it ring true? Would they support it? The subsequent member-checking conversations I have undertaken have been useful in helping to confirm that the conclusions I have reached seem valid. I have also done my best to highlight in the thesis text when any inferences of this type are made.

Secondly, as my data analysis progressed, finding a way to disentangle the similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring became a perplexing challenge. This task was necessary to provide a comprehensive answer to the research question, but at one stage, I began to feel a bit lost. The fact that the terms were used so loosely and inconsistently made it very difficult to come up with useful insights about the relative roles that each discipline was playing. I was also worried that any attempt that I made to choose a definition would be spurious, providing just another subjective construction to compete with all the others already out there in the literature. The breakthrough came when I realised that an opportunity existed to relate the distinctions between coaching and mentoring to the behaviours involved in each approach. This helped me to identify and

generate definitions for the four forms of coaching and mentoring in a tangible way. Other people might not agree with the descriptive terms I am using, but at least the rationale for them is clear from a practical perspective, and the basis for any disagreement can be understood in behavioural terms. It was this breakthrough which gave new energy and focus to my analysis, and I hope that the benefits are evident in my subsequent findings and conclusions.

Finally, I have borne in mind the concern which I identified at the start of the study, about me potentially being in rescuer mode for charity CEOs. Throughout the fieldwork and analysis, I have questioned the mindset I have brought, and whether I am biased towards advocating the value of coaching and mentoring. On balance, considering the testimonies of the people to whom I have spoken, I believe that the evidence is now convincing, that when coaching and mentoring relationships are effective, they deliver significant benefits to charity CEOs and the organisations that they lead. However, these relationships are not always effective, so whilst coaching and mentoring can be of value, this is not always the case. An important contribution of the study is to identify some practical steps that can be taken by charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors to build more productive working relationships. As a result, I now see some important responsibilities for myself in sharing the findings of the study more widely. Referring to the potential roles of a case study researcher identified by Stake (1995), I now need to embrace the opportunity to be not just an advocate, but also a teacher.

From the perspective of charity CEOs, I am keen to help people appreciate more fully the nature of coaching and mentoring relationships, the benefits that they can provide and the practical steps involved in realising this potential. As the study has unfolded, I have established strong links with ACEVO, NCVO and the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at Bayes Business School. Some promising opportunities are emerging to share the findings within the UK charity sector, with the endorsement and support of these professional bodies. I am also keen to deepen the understanding of coaching and mentoring amongst the coaching and mentoring community. By sharing the lessons from the study of charity CEOs, I hope to improve the capacity of coaches and mentors to support these potential clients, specifically. In addition, I would like to use the case study to stimulate a more informed discussion about the purpose, principles and behaviours of coaching and mentoring practice more generally.

Appendix 1: Research invitation

DOCTORAL RESEARCH STUDY

An exploration of the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs.

Context

The last three years has been an even more difficult period than usual for charities and their leaders. The issues facing CEOs have been particularly acute given the unique role they play in joining up an organisation's external, internal and governance agendas. However, despite these concerns, surprisingly little research has yet been done to explore the role that coaching and mentoring play in supporting charity CEOs at a personal level. In this context, a new doctoral research study has been initiated to address this knowledge gap and to contribute towards guidelines for both CEOs and their coaches and mentors on how best to work together.

Purpose

The study will explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK.

Participants

The perspectives of a range of 25-30 stakeholders in the UK charity sector will be investigated to build a deep understanding of different people's views and experiences. Individuals are being invited to participate in the study who serve in one or more of the following roles:

- CEOs with experience of being coached or mentored as leaders of UK-based charities (with annual income over £1 million)
- Chairs of UK-based charities (with annual income over £1 million)
- Coaches and mentors with experience of supporting charity CEOs
- Leaders within professional bodies that provide support to charity CEOs

Contribution

Each participant will be interviewed for one hour, either face-to-face or virtually, at a time of their choosing. The conversation will be audio-recorded with their permission, but all contributions will be kept strictly confidential and anonymised in the publication of the findings.

Timing

The research fieldwork will be conducted between February and July 2023.

Researcher

Andy Bird is undertaking the research as a doctoral researcher at the International Centre for Coaching and Mentoring Studies, Oxford Brookes University. Andy is an experienced coach-mentor who has worked with several charity CEOs, as well as many senior leaders in the private sector.

Next steps

If you or someone you know would like to participate, please contact Andy Bird via 19152803@brookes.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Recruitment email message

Title: Doctoral research study

Dear x,

(Further to the kind introduction from xxx,) I am writing to invite you to take part in a doctoral research study which I am undertaking in the coming months at the International Centre for Coaching & Mentoring Studies, Oxford Brookes University.

The project's aim is to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges faced by charity CEOs. The study will analyse the perspectives of a range of stakeholders in the UK charity sector to build a deep understanding of people's views and experiences. The intention is to contribute towards professional practice by developing guidelines for both charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors on how best to engage together in leadership coaching and mentoring activities.

Given your unique experience as a Charity CEO/Chair/Coach etc, you will have extremely valuable knowledge about this subject and your participation in the study would be greatly appreciated. Your contribution would be taken into account along with those from a range of other charity CEOs, chairs, coaches and mentors, professional bodies and thought leaders.

What would be involved? We would need to fix up a one-hour interview together, scheduled either face-to-face or virtually, ideally at some point in February 2023. Our conversation would be audio-recorded with your permission, but please rest assured that all contributions to the study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymised in the publication of the findings. Even given these precautions, if it might be possible to infer from any anonymised quotes or other information included that you might be the source, these details will be shared and agreed with you in advance of publication. I have sent attached a participant information sheet with further details.

If you'd be happy to go ahead, please can you let me know and we can then look to schedule some time in the diary. If there are any other stakeholders who need to agree to your involvement, please can you also clarify this for me and confirm their approval too.

I'd be extremely grateful for your support.

Many thanks and very best wishes,

Andy Bird

Appendix 3: Semi-structured interview guides

Charity CEOs

- Introduction to the research project and terms of the interview: aims, researcher's background and role, confidentiality, consent, etc.
- Please can you give me a brief overview of your career, leading up to the roles you're playing now in the world of charities?
- In your role as charity CEO, what are the most significant leadership challenges you face?
- What kind of personal support do you feel you need and where do you get it from?
- What roles have coaching and mentoring played for you in this context?
- What do you understand to be the similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring?
- If we take one of your coaching or mentoring relationships as an example:
 - How did the relationship get established in the first place?
 - How long have you worked together?
 - What kind of contracting has occurred around your relationship?
 - What objectives have you worked on together?
 - What skills, training and experience has the coach/mentor brought?
 - What have been the outcomes from the coaching or mentoring – positive and negative?
- On reflection, what conclusions can you draw about the roles coaching and mentoring have played in helping you address your leadership challenges?

Coaches/Mentors

- Introduction to the research project and terms of the interview: aims, researcher's background and role, confidentiality etc.
- Please can you give me a brief overview of your career, leading up to the roles you're playing now in the world of charities?
- When you look at things from the perspective of the charity CEOs you've worked with, what are the most significant leadership challenges they have faced?
- What kind of personal support do CEOs need and where do they tend to get this from?
- What roles do coaching and mentoring play in this context?
- What do you understand to be the similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring?
- If we take one of your charity CEO clients as an example:
 - How did the relationship get established in the first place?

- How long have you worked together?
- What kind of contracting has occurred around your relationship?
- What objectives have you worked on together?
- What skills, training and experience have you drawn on?
- What have been the outcomes from the coaching or mentoring – positive and negative?
- On reflection, what conclusions can you draw about the roles coaching and mentoring play in helping charity CEOs address their leadership challenges?

Charity Chairs

- Introduction to the research project and terms of the interview: aims, researcher's background and role, confidentiality etc.
- Please can you give me a brief overview of your career, leading up to the roles you're playing now in the world of charities?
- When you look at things from the perspective of the charity CEOs you've worked with, what are the most significant leadership challenges they have faced?
- What kind of personal support do CEOs need and where do they tend to get this from?
- What roles do coaching and mentoring play in this context?
- What do you understand to be the similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring?
- If we take one CEO's coaching or mentoring relationship that you are aware of as an example:
 - How did the relationship get established in the first place?
 - How long has it lasted?
 - What kind of contracting has occurred around the relationship?
 - What were the objectives?
 - What skills, training and experience did the coach/mentor bring?
 - What have been the outcomes from the coaching or mentoring – positive and negative?
- On reflection, what conclusions can you draw about the roles coaching and mentoring play in helping charity CEOs address their leadership challenges?

Professional/support bodies

- Introduction to the research project and terms of the interview: aims, researcher's background and role, confidentiality etc.
- Please can you give me a brief overview of your career, leading up to the roles you're playing now in the world of charities?
- When you look at things from the perspective of charity CEOs, what are the most significant leadership challenges they face?

- What kind of support do CEOs need and where do they tend to get this from?
- What roles do coaching and mentoring play in this context?
- What do you understand to be the similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring?
- What kind of support does your organisation provide in helping CEOs obtain coaching and/or mentoring?
- If we explore your programme in more detail:
 - How do relationships get established in the first place?
 - How long do relationships last?
 - What kind of contracting occurs around the relationship?
 - What are the most common types of objectives?
 - What skills, training and experience do you need your coaches/mentors to bring?
 - What have been the outcomes from your coaching or mentoring programme – positive and negative?

On reflection, what conclusions can you draw about the roles coaching and mentoring play in helping charity CEOs address their leadership challenges?

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

An exploration of the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs.

You are being invited to take part in a doctoral research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The proposed research aims to explore the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. The study will analyse the perspectives of a range of stakeholders in the UK charity sector to build a deep understanding of different people's views and experiences (e.g. CEOs, Chairs, coaches and mentors, professional bodies, thought leaders etc). The intention is to contribute towards professional practice by developing guidelines for both charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors on how best to engage together in leadership coaching and mentoring activities. The study will use qualitative case study methodology and the fieldwork will be undertaken during the first half of 2023.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You are being invited to contribute towards this study because you have unique knowledge and experience of the leadership challenges faced by charity CEOs in the UK. Your contribution will be taken into account with others from charity CEOs and Chairs, coaches and mentors, professional bodies and thought leaders.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research study. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used. You will be asked to give your consent and if you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Any data collected from you can be withdrawn, up to the point at which it is included in data analysis.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will participate in an in-depth interview for one hour, scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. You can choose whether this discussion is face-to-face or virtual. Throughout the interview, you will only be invited to share information that you feel comfortable talking about. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and a transcription of the interview will be made available to you on request. If you have any documents that you think might be relevant to the study, you would be welcome to share them but only if you feel comfortable doing so (e.g. coaching guidelines, mentoring programme details, etc).

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Participants may find the reflection involved in the interview valuable in building insight into their own leadership challenges and their use of coaching and mentoring. They will also be making an important contribution to the leadership development and support of CEOs in the UK charity sector.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is not anticipated that there would be any disadvantages to you from taking part in the study and the only 'cost' will be the one hour of your time involved in the interview.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about the individuals involved in the study will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Any contributions from individual participants will be anonymised to ensure the utmost privacy in publication of the research findings. Even given this precaution, if it might be possible to infer from any anonymised quotes or other information included that you might be the source, this information will be shared and agreed with you in advance of publication. Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will also be ensured in the collection and storage of the research materials. Data generated by the study will be securely stored in devices and locations that are encrypted and password protected. The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper and electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, in line with the policy of Oxford Brookes University.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you would like to participate, please contact Andy Bird, the doctoral researcher conducting the study, via 19152803@brookes.ac.uk. If you need to obtain approval to take part in the research from any colleagues within your organisation, written confirmation of their agreement will also be required.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings from the research will be used in Andy Bird's thesis for a Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring. This will be published and held as a public document in the Library at Oxford Brookes University. You will be provided with a copy of the summary of the findings on request. The conclusions will also feature in subsequent academic and professional publications in the charity and coaching & mentoring sectors.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Andy Bird will be conducting and funding the research himself as a doctoral researcher at the International Centre for Coaching and Mentoring Studies, Oxford Brookes Business School, Oxford Brookes University.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been approved by the Cross-Faculty Research Ethics Committee of Oxford Brookes University number 221652.

The supervisory team monitoring the research is as follows:- Dr Judie Gannon, Deputy Head of Doctoral Programmes, Oxford Brookes Business School, jmgannon@brookes.ac.uk, Dr Joanna Molyn, Senior Lecturer, Oxford Brookes Business School, jmolyn@brookes.ac.uk, Dr Sarah-Louise Mitchell, Senior Lecturer, Oxford Brookes Business school, smitchell@brookes.ac.uk

Contact for Further Information

For further information, contact Andy Bird, Doctoral Researcher (Coaching & Mentoring), Business School, Gipsy Lane Campus, Oxford Brookes University, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP.

Email: 19152803@brookes.ac.uk

Should participants have any concerns about the conduct of the study they can contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet and for your collaboration to this research.

Date

15th January 2023

Appendix 5: Privacy Notice for Research Participants

This Privacy Notice provides information on how Oxford Brookes University (Oxford Brookes) collects and uses participant's personal information when you take part in one of our research projects. Please refer to the research Participant Information Sheet for further details about the study and what information will be collected about you and how it will be used.

Oxford Brookes is the Data Controller of any data that you supply for this research. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it lawfully. We will make the decisions on how your data is used and for what reasons.

Why do we need your data?

The proposed research aims to explore and describe the roles that coaching and mentoring play in addressing the leadership challenges of charity CEOs in the UK. The study will analyse the perspectives of a range of stakeholders in the UK charity sector to build a deep understanding of different people's views and experiences. The intention is to contribute towards professional practice by developing guidelines for both charity CEOs and their coaches and mentors on how best to engage together in leadership coaching and mentoring activities.

Oxford Brookes' legal basis for collecting this data is:

Public task: your Personal Data will be used in academic research. Oxford Brookes University is a public body and staff and students carry out research in line with the University's legal powers and constitution.

Your consent is an ethical requirement.

Oxford Brookes University's legal basis for processing your Personal Data (or information) is as set out in Art 6 UK GDPR.

Special Category Data:

Oxford Brookes may ask you for sensitive data such as: racial or ethnic origin. This is defined by law as Special Category Data. If Oxford Brookes requests this data, it can only be used because one of the following processing exemptions applies as set out in Art 9 UK GDPR:

- You consent to share this information
- This information is already made public (lawfully)
- Oxford Brookes needs to use this data for legal purposes
- Oxford Brookes needs to use this data for scientific or research purposes

What type of personal data will Oxford Brookes use?

Name; Physical Address; Email Address; Job title, Gender; Racial or Ethnic Origin.

Who will Oxford Brookes share your data with?

Your data will be stored using Microsoft Office software and Apple iCloud back up. Your contact details will also be shared with Zoom if the research interview takes place virtually. Audio recordings of the interview will be shared with either Otter.ai Inc or Penguin Transcription Services, one of whom will be transcribing the conversation into a written format. The transcript will then be analysed using QSR International's NVivo software. Privacy statements for these third-party platforms can be found here:

Microsoft Office: <https://privacy.microsoft.com/en-gb/privacystatement>

Apple: <https://www.apple.com/uk/legal/privacy/en-ww/>

Zoom: <https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/>

Otter.ai: <https://otter.ai/privacy-policy>

Penguin Transcription Services: <https://penguin-transcription.co.uk/confidentiality-and-privacy/>

NVivo: <https://lumivero.com/legal-information/global-privacy-policy/>

Will Oxford Brookes transfer my data outside of the UK?

Apple iCloud and Zoom store their data outside the UK.

What rights do I have regarding my data that Oxford Brookes holds?

- You have the right to be informed about what data will be collected and how this will be used
- You have the right of access to your data
- You have the right to correct data if it is wrong
- You have the right to ask for your data to be deleted
- You have the right to restrict use of the data we hold about you
- You have the right to data portability
- You have the right to object to Oxford Brookes using your data
- You have rights in relation to using your data in automated decision making and profiling.

Your rights will depend on the legal ground used to process your data

Where did Oxford Brookes source my data from?

Any data used will be provided by yourself and the research interview we conduct with you.

Are there any consequences of not providing the requested data?

There are no consequences of not providing data for this research. It is purely voluntary. If you like to withdraw part way through the research, the Participant Information Sheet includes this information. It may be that some of the data that you have provided has already been used in the research. If you would like more information about this, you should feel free to contact the research team.

Will there be any automated decision making using my data?

There will be no use of automated decision making in scope of UK Data Protection and Privacy legislation.

How long will Oxford Brookes keep your data?

In line with Oxford Brookes policies data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years in accordance with the research funder or University policy.

Who can I contact if I have concerns?

In the event of any questions about the research study, please contact the research team in the first instance. Their contact details are listed on the Participant Information Sheet. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee at ethics@brookes.ac.uk. For further details about information use contact the Information Security Management team on info.sec@brookes.ac.uk or the Data Protection Officer at brookesdpo@brookes.ac.uk. You can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office via their website ico.org.uk.

Appendix 6: Consent Form

Project: An exploration of the roles that coaching and mentoring play for charity CEOs.

Researcher: Andy Bird, Doctoral Researcher, Business School, Gipsy Lane Campus,
Oxford Brookes University, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP.

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet
for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free
to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

☐

Please initial box

Yes

No

3. I agree to the interview being audio recorded

☐☐

4. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

☐☐

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Andy Bird

23rd January 2023



Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 7: NVivo coding overview

	Home	Edit	Import	Create	Explore	Share	Modules	
	Clipboard	Item	Organize		Visualize	Code	Autocode	Uncode
							Code In Vivo	Spread Coding
								Case Classification
Name	Files	References	Created on	Created....	Modified on	Modified by	Color	
> 1 Diverse participant profiles	0	0	9 Jun 2023 at 10:58	A I	Today, 13:03	A I		
> 2 Leadership challenges	33	323	9 Jun 2023 at 10:50	A I	Today, 13:02	A I		
> 2.0 Meta views on challenges	16	28	22 Jun 2023 at 09:...	A I	4 Oct 2023 at 11:00	A I		
> 2.1. Strategic	0	0	10 Jul 2024 at 11:37	A I	10 Jul 2024 at 11:42	A I		
> 2.2. Relational	0	0	10 Jul 2024 at 11:38	A I	10 Jul 2024 at 11:43	A I		
> 2.3.Personal - Lead oneself	32	295	19 Jun 2023 at 11:05	A I	10 Jul 2024 at 11:43	A I		
> Career progression	6	12	9 Jun 2023 at 12:24	A I	10 Jul 2024 at 11:48	A I		
> Dynamics caused by interim role	1	3	4 Jul 2023 at 10:52	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> How to move on	3	5	9 Jun 2023 at 12:24	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Dealing with volume and breadth of work	26	80	20 Sep 2023 at 10:...	A I	10 Jul 2024 at 11:48	A I		
> Difficult starting point	10	14	9 Jun 2023 at 11:07	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Lack of skills and experience	22	40	30 Aug 2023 at 15:...	A I	10 Jul 2024 at 11:46	A I		
> Volume of work	13	26	30 Jun 2023 at 15:...	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Lonely at the top	16	26	9 Jun 2023 at 12:10	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Lack of organisational support	5	8	30 Aug 2023 at 14:...	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Managing mindset and behaviour	23	95	15 Jun 2023 at 08:...	A I	10 Jul 2024 at 11:46	A I		
> Being a role model	1	3	10 Jul 2023 at 11:15	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Being from an ethnic minority	1	2	19 Jun 2023 at 16:34	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Lack of confidence	9	15	9 Jun 2023 at 12:08	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Leadership mindset	19	59	9 Jun 2023 at 12:05	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Managing strengths and weaknesses	3	3	30 Jun 2023 at 15:18	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> Wellbeing and resilience	24	82	9 Jun 2023 at 11:55	A I	5 Oct 2023 at 09:09	A I		
> 3 Meaning of coaching and mentoring	0	0	9 Jun 2023 at 16:35	A I	Today, 13:00	A I		
> 4 Sources of support	0	0	9 Jun 2023 at 15:50	A I	Today, 13:02	A I		
> 5 Experiences of C&M	0	0	19 Jun 2023 at 11:18	A I	Today, 13:02	A I		
> 6 Impact of C&M	35	555	19 Jun 2023 at 11:23	A I	Today, 13:03	A I		

References

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