"A LONGITUDINAL STUDY TO EXPLORE AND EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL AND IMPACT OF AN E-COACHING PROGRAMME ON THE LEARNING AND SELF-EFFICACY OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS IN THE NORTH WEST OF ENGLAND"

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The aim of this longitudinal study was to examine the potential of coaching to develop female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy through learning and development. This was achieved by firstly conducting a needs analysis, which explored the potential of an e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs in the North West of England. Secondly, implementing an e-coaching programme called TEC (Tailored E-Coaching) for female entrepreneurs in the North West of England and exploring the impact of the programme, specifically examining female entrepreneurs’ learning development with regard to entrepreneurial self-efficacy, general entrepreneurial attitudes and locus of control, compared to a control group who did not receive the coaching intervention. The study consisted of two stages, with two time points in stage two (pre and post programme). A mixed method approach was used, whereby qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

The main barriers faced by female entrepreneurs appear to be based on, access to funding and finance, balancing domestic responsibilities and work, a lack of human capital, a lack of social capital and lack of confidence. Women often dismiss entrepreneurial endeavours because they believe that they do not have the required skills (Wilson, Kickul and Marlino, 2007). In addition, they do not appear to be accessing the support that is currently available, particularly when compared with male entrepreneurs (Stranger, 2004; Fielden et al, 2003). However, there is limited empirical research examining female entrepreneurs’ requirement regarding business support provision. One form of professional one-to-one support that may have the potential to overcome these barriers to entrepreneurial activity is coaching. Longitudinal empirical research examining the effectiveness of coaching and the learning processes in coaching relationships is scarce, with an absence of research using control groups (Smither and London, 2003).

Thirty women were involved in stage one of the study. In stage two of the study, sixty female entrepreneurs (coachees and coaches) commenced a coaching relationship for six months and twenty six female entrepreneurs signed up to a control group (those not receiving the coaching intervention). The aim of the coaching programme was primarily to use instant messaging for the majority of coaching meetings. The relationship lasted approximately six months (2006-2007). Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and quantitative questionnaire data was analysed using paired sample t-tests. The study found that coachees’ learning development resulted in increased levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes in a range of key areas and increased internality regarding locus of control. In contrast, the control group did not show any increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy and showed a decrease in general entrepreneurial attitudes. Coaches developed their coachees through a range of learning processes, for example, enactive mastery and the clarification of business goals, vicarious experience through shared experiences and verbal persuasion through validation. The study found that online coaching has a variety of advantages, e.g. convenience, ease of access, and time to reflect on information.
Declaration

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction
This chapter provides the background of this study examining both female entrepreneurship and coaching. The chapter will briefly describe the study, the design of the e-coaching programme, the research objectives and the structure of this thesis.

1.2 Background
Gender differences in business development and entrepreneurial activity are well documented in the literature (Gatewood, Carter, Brush, Greene and Hart, 2003; Reynolds, Bygrave and Autio, 2004). Studies show that almost twice as many men as women become entrepreneurs, and that these differences are not confined to the United Kingdom (UK) (Acs, Arenius, Hay and Minniti, 2005; Gupta, Turban, Wasti and Sikdar, 2009). Despite this, the number of women entrepreneurs has increased over recent years (De Bruin, Brush and Welter, 2006).

Alongside the increase in entrepreneurship and small business employment, there has been a growing interest in small business and entrepreneurship in academic literature. For the purposes of this study, entrepreneurship is defined as “a process that involves the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new products, services, processes, ways of organizing, or markets” (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) (discussion of definitions provided in chapter two). Entrepreneurship can be seen as a relatively new area of academic interest, emerging only in the mid 1980s, with early literature focusing upon the personal characteristics and the differences and similarities in motivations of male and female entrepreneurs (Schrier, 1975; Schwartz, 1976; Hisrich and Brush, 1986).

Female entrepreneurs often lack the support, guidance and experience that they require to be successful in small business ownership and do not appear to be accessing the business support that is currently available, particularly when compared to their male counterparts (Harding, 2005, 2006; Stranger, 2004; Fielden, Davidson, Dawe and Makin, 2003; Carter, Williams and Reynolds, 1997; Watkins and Watkins, 1984). However, there is limited empirical research examining female entrepreneurs’ experiences of business support provision and their requirements regarding such support. Furthermore, women often dismiss entrepreneurial endeavours because they believe that they do not have the required skills (Chen, Greene and Crick, 1998; Wilson, Kickul and Marlino, 2007). Female entrepreneurs’ low self-efficacy regarding entrepreneurial success may in fact be a barrier to their own development. One form of professional one-to-one
support that has the potential to overcome these barriers to entrepreneurial activity and perceptions of success, is coaching. For the purposes of this study coaching is defined as “a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve” (Parsloe, 1999: 8) (discussion of definitions provided in chapter three). Coaching is a highly personalised form of development activity (O’Connor and Lages, 2004), which can be tailored specifically to female entrepreneurs’ needs. Information Technology (IT) can open numerous avenues for business support and has an array of benefits for developmental tools such as coaching. Despite this, there is an absence of literature and empirical studies focusing on coaching in an entrepreneurial setting, with the available literature tending to focus on mentoring schemes (Evans and Volery, 2001; Stokes, 2001; Sullivan, 2000).

The aim of this longitudinal study was to examine the potential of coaching to develop female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy through learning and development. This was achieved by firstly conducting a needs analysis, exploring the potential of an e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs in the North West of England. Based on this exploration, an e-coaching programme called TEC (Tailored E-Coaching) for female entrepreneurs in the North West of England was developed and delivered. Finally, the study examined the impact of the e-coaching programme, specifically examining female entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy relating to a variety of skills and general entrepreneurial attitudes, compared to a control group who did not receive the coaching intervention. This chapter will provide background information on this study, specifically examining entrepreneurship and coaching. The chapter will then go on to look at the study aims and objectives and the organisation of this thesis. Definitions of terms will be provided in this chapter, however a full discussion of these terms and definitions will be provided in subsequent chapters.

1.3 Female entrepreneurship

Despite the increase in entrepreneurship, women are only half as likely to be involved in entrepreneurial activity as their male counterparts (Harding, Hart, Jones-Evans, Levie, 2008). In the UK female early stage entrepreneurial activity accounts for 49 per cent of male activity, while established business ownership at 3.4 per cent is just 40 per cent that of males (8.6%). The equivalent proportions for the US are 70 per cent and 62 per cent respectively (Levie and Hart, 2009). In the UK, males tend to have more positive entrepreneurial attitudes when compared with females. Furthermore, the gap in fear of failure between females and males has widened over recent years (from one to five percentage points) (Levie and Hart, 2009). One of the key barriers to women’s entrepreneurial activity is a lack of relevant skills and knowledge (Harding, 2005). Female entrepreneurs do not lack
drive, ambition or ability; however they tend to see fewer opportunities and are less likely to rate their abilities favourably when compared with men (Harding, 2004).

Business support is provided by organisations such as Business Link and Chamber of Commerce to provide development and support for entrepreneurs. Business Link is a government-funded service designed to promote enterprise. The Business Link service is coordinated nationally, while local delivery is driven by the nine Regional Development Agencies in England. British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) is the national body for a Network of Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK. The British Chamber of Commerce is one of the largest providers to businesses of government funded and commercial skills' development services, for example, Greater Manchester Chamber is the largest chamber of commerce in the UK, and delivers help to all businesses that are members of the Chamber. These organisations offer business support and advice to business owners. Despite the importance of business support provision, the literature has identified a variety of reasons why women do not access business support provision that is currently available, including: lack of confidence, lack of knowledge and lack of physical access (Fielden et al., 2003; Schmidt and Parker, 2003). In addition, a number of studies have indicated that female entrepreneurs appear to have less industry experience than their male counterparts (Watkins and Watkins, 1984; Carter et al., 1997), hence they are disadvantaged as investors may undervalue the experience they do have (Carter, Brush, Greene, Gatewood and Hart, 2003). Women often dismiss entrepreneurial career paths as they believe that they do not have the required skills for business ownership (Chen, Greene and Crick, 1998; Wilson et al., 2007). An individual's uncertainty regarding success is inextricably linked to his/her belief that he/she has the ability to succeed (self-efficacy) (Wilson et al., 2007). Therefore, female entrepreneurs' low self-efficacy regarding entrepreneurial success may in fact be a barrier to their own success and development and may be contributing to the fear of failure reported by Levie and Hart (2009). Thus, women who are deciding to enter into business ownership are, on the whole, likely to be in greater need of relevant training and support (Stranger, 2004).

Over recent years, the government has taken important steps to understanding entrepreneurship, so as to increase the number of women-owned businesses in the UK. A Government action plan for small businesses (DTI, 2004: 35) states that “barriers to female entrepreneurship include: a lack of accessible or affordable childcare, inappropriate or inaccessible business support, difficulties experienced in the transition from benefits to self-employment, and a range of complex issues concerning access to finance.” In 2003, the Government launched a strategic framework for women’s enterprise and has produced a toolkit based on identifying
and encouraging the sharing of good practice in support of female entrepreneurs (DTI, 2003). This toolkit emphasised the importance of mentoring and coaching entrepreneurs through the business start-up and development phases.

In addition to this support, in 2008 the Government promised that it would help to develop and ‘back up’ women in business, particularly those in the early stages. A Government fund (Aspire) of £12.5 million was proposed which would be matched by £12.5 million from the private sector, which would be used specifically to establish women business centres. The aim of the centres would be to provide advice for women on starting their own business.

The purpose of this study is to address key gaps in the literature, for example examining the experiences of female entrepreneurs in relation to business support provision and to investigate the role of coaching and its effectiveness in increasing the entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes of female entrepreneurs.

1.4 Coaching

One form of professional one-to-one support that has the potential to overcome barriers to entrepreneurial activity is coaching, “a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve” (Parsloe, 1999: 8). Coaching is a developmental intervention that is increasingly being employed in organisations, to enable individuals to adjust to major changes in the rapidly evolving business environment (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Whitmore, 2002; Giglio, Diamante and Urban, 1998). Proponents of coaching state that it can help to support individuals in making the necessary steps to advance their careers and perform at optimum levels in roles that require large step-changes in skills and responsibility. Coaching is a highly personalised form of development activity (O’Connor and Lages, 2004), which can be tailored specifically to relevant aspects of female entrepreneurship. Improving individual performance and developing skills are central to effective coaching (Gallway, 1986). Coachees can receive direct advice, assistance and attention which fit within their own time schedules and objectives. Therefore, coaching has the potential to overcome many of the domestic barriers that inhibit female entrepreneurs from accessing traditional forms of business support, for example accessing support at a convenient time in the home to alleviate some of the problems with trying to balance work and home life. This potential can be enhanced further by the use of information technology, which opens numerous avenues and has an array of benefits for developmental tools such as coaching. Information technology, i.e. email and instant messaging services such as MSN, can help to overcome ‘all sorts of barriers such as time, work responsibilities, geographical distance and lack of trust”, which often reduce if
not halt interaction (Bierema and Merriam, 2002: 214) and can provide an effective alternative to traditional forms of business support.

The definitions of coaching provide a good basis in order to understand this development intervention, however current definitions do not allow for differences in coaching different groups of individuals and the impact of other variables such as gender and ethnicity. In addition, a review of the literature has shown that there is limited research examining how individuals learn and develop in coaching relationships, particularly examining different groups of individuals, which would help to highlight any differences in the learning processes inherent in coaching relationships. Without an examination of the learning practices involved in coaching relationships it is difficult to show exactly how the coaching process can be employed and how it works in practice.

There is a variety of aspects of coaching which can be used to facilitate coaching for entrepreneurs, such as the importance of establishing contracts and rapport between the coach and the coachee and the importance of building and maintaining a collaborative relationship, (O’Connor and Lages, 2004; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Kenton and Moody, 2001). The majority of coaching literature typically focuses on large organisations (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Whitmore, 2002; Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995). An explanation for this is that the UK has tended to be relatively slow to focus and capitalise on the small business sector (Peel, 2004; Nancarrow, Attlee and Wright, 1999). Coaching relationships are a highly personalised development intervention (Edwards, 2003) and therefore an examination of this relationship is required in small business settings to ensure that coaching programmes are meeting the needs of entrepreneurs (Peel, 2004). Furthermore, longitudinal empirical research examining the effectiveness of coaching is scarce, with an absence of research using control groups (Smither and London, 2003).

A fundamental factor for designing and delivering effective business support is to understand the learning processes of entrepreneurs, to ensure that the training and support provided is effective in terms of content, timing and delivery (Sullivan, 2000). Utilisation of the internet and its link with business support development is an emergent area of interest, where there has been limited research and ‘generation, rather than cumulation of knowledge is needed’ in this area of business support development (Evans and Volery, 2001: 340).

The research presented in this thesis is designed to ascertain female entrepreneurs’ requirements of business support and to explore the potential of e-coaching as a method of business support for female entrepreneurs and finally to
examine the impact of an e-coaching programme on the development of female entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitudes.

1.5 The Tailored E-Coaching (TEC) Programme
The aim of the TEC programme was to provide female entrepreneurs with a one-to-one coaching relationship, essentially based online via instant messaging service, for approximately six months. The TEC programme was designed as a source of business support for female entrepreneurs and was based on a one-to-one coaching relationship which was essentially delivered online via the use of instant messaging software. The programme also provided participants with a website where they could access the instant messaging software, discussion forums and advertise their business. Thirty coaches and thirty coachees formally commenced an individual coaching relationship for six months. The programme was free to participants and coaches did not receive any payment for their coaching services. The project covered four regional areas of the North West: Greater Manchester; Liverpool and Merseyside; Lancashire; Cheshire. All coachees were from the North West of England, coaches were not restricted to this region and could apply from any location in the UK. Participants applied to the programme through an application form which provided detailed information regarding the individual and their business. This application form was used to match coaches and coachees. The following section will describe the measures used to examine the impact of the TEC programme.

1.6 The study
This study was unique as it was the first of its kind to explore the potential of an e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs and to examine its impact on the development of female entrepreneurs.

The aim of this longitudinal, two stage, mixed methods study was to examine the potential of coaching to develop female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy through learning and development. This was achieved by firstly, conducting a needs analysis, exploring the potential of an e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs in the North West of England. Secondly, this study examined the impact of a tailored e-coaching (TEC) programme on female entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy relating to specific skills’ development and entrepreneurial attitudes, compared to a control group. This study contributes to learning and theoretical debates by providing an understanding of female entrepreneurs’ needs with regard to business support and how this can be related to e-coaching. The study also provides an insight into the impact of an e-coaching programme on the development of female entrepreneurs. This study was guided
by the following main research objectives, which were informed and formulated through an in-depth review of relevant literature.

1) Conduct a needs analysis to ascertain female entrepreneurs’ requirements of business support provision in the North West of England (by analysing qualitative interview data).

2) Conduct a needs analysis to investigate the potential of an e-coaching programme for the provision of business support for the learning and development of female entrepreneurs in the North West of England (by analysing qualitative interview data).

3) To identify the impact of informal and formal support received by participants on an e-coaching programme compared to a control group who did not experience the programme over a period of time (6 months) (by using descriptive statistics and by analysing qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire data).

4) To investigate the impact of an e-coaching programme on the process of learning through entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitude measures of participants on an e-coaching programme compared to a control group who did not experience the programme over a period of time (6 months) (by using descriptive statistics and by analysing qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire data).

5) To investigate the perceptions of coach and coachee participants in relation to their learning experienced through an e-coaching programme (by using descriptive statistics and by analysing qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire data).

6) To provide recommendations from the monitoring and evaluation of an e-coaching programme for the development of future e-coaching programmes (by using descriptive statistics and by analysing qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire data).

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is comprised of eight chapters including this first introductory chapter. Chapters two and three present extensive literature reviews on female entrepreneurship and coaching. Chapter two offers definitions of entrepreneurship and small business management and presents some general statistics and trends relating to entrepreneurship in the UK. The chapter then goes on to show
characteristics of female entrepreneurs and their motives for starting out in business, followed by the various barriers faced by female entrepreneurs (Carter et al., 2007; Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Welter, 2004; DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000; Verhuel and Thurik, 2001; Wilson et al., 2007, Chen et al., 1998) and the importance of business support provision.

Chapter three presents the main literature in relation to coaching as a development intervention. The chapter firstly addresses the concept of coaching in general and presents the main features of coaching relationships compared to other forms of development interventions. The chapter then examines the process of coaching and the roles required by a coach and coachee. This is followed by a section describing learning in coaching relationships, addressing the way in which people learn. In keeping with the aims of the thesis this chapter then examines various methods of delivery and coaching in small businesses. This chapter also contains the theoretical framework for this study examining self-efficacy and entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy and learning through coaching. The framework is followed by a diagram which shows how female entrepreneurship, coaching, learning and self-efficacy are linked and a table which highlights the main gaps in empirical work relevant to this thesis. This was utilised to develop specific research questions, which are further developed in chapter four (methodology).

Chapter four presents the research design and methodology for this study, which was based on the in-depth literature reviews, presented in chapters two and three. This two stage study adopted a longitudinal, mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2003; Ruspini, 2002), whereby qualitative (semi-structured interviews) was collected from thirty female entrepreneurs during stage one. Thirty coaches and coachees and twenty six control group members were involved in stage two of the study which examined the impact of the coaching relationship on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes over a six month period, quantitative an qualitative data were collected during stage two (T1 and T2).

Chapter five presents findings from stage one of the research which involved thirty semi structured interviews. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and the author adopted a human based coding system (Creswell, 2003; Weber, 1990). The interviews were designed to elicit in-depth information relating to the aims and objectives of the study. The chapter then presents the design of the TEC programme showing how the findings from stage one lead to the development of the programme.
Chapter six presents quantitative and qualitative data collected from the coachees, control group and coaches. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS for windows version 15.0. Quantitative questionnaire data was analysed using paired sample t-tests to highlight the main statistical differences among coachee and control group participants over the six month study. Chapter six presents findings relating to formal and informal support, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, general entrepreneurial attitudes, including locus of control, evaluation of the coach, evaluation of the coaching relationship and the programme.

The implications of the qualitative and quantitative findings are explored in chapter eight. The findings from stage one and stage two are discussed in relation to previous research on female entrepreneurship, self-efficacy, learning and coaching. In addition, recommendations are made with regards to the future development of e-coaching programmes. This chapter also presents a section on theoretical contributions made by this study. The limitations of the study and implications for future research are also discussed. Finally, chapter eight presents the conclusion and the future for female entrepreneurship, learning, self-efficacy, and e-coaching.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW (PART 1):
Female entrepreneurship and barriers to development: an overview

2.1 Introduction
Although the number of female entrepreneurs has increased (Wilson et al., 2004), entrepreneurship remains largely a male-dominated area (de Bruin, Brush and Welter, 2006). Empirical research indicates that almost twice as many men as women become entrepreneurs, and that these differences are consistent across most countries (Levie and Hart, 2009; Acs et al., 2005; Baron, Markman and Hirsa, 2001). Research suggests that women continue to report lower entrepreneurial intentions, therefore gender differences in the rate and pattern of entrepreneurship are likely to continue in the future (Zhao et al., 2005). The literature suggests that one of the main barriers to women’s entrepreneurial activity can be linked to a lack of relevant skills and knowledge (Harding, 2004), and fear of failure (Levie and Hart, 2009). Women may also be reluctant to start their own business because of their lack of familiarity with the business world (Harding, 2004). The literature highlights a number of factors which negatively affect the business support accessed by women, such as a lack confidence, lack of knowledge and lack of physical access (Fielden et al., 2003; Schmidt and Parker, 2003). Allen, Elam, Langowitz and Dean (2008: 67) highlight the importance of women-owned businesses by stating the following: “when women enter businesses, they are more likely to share their gains in education, health and resources with members of their family and communities at large…Women entrepreneurship is an important way for countries to exponentially increase the impact of new venture creations, ignoring the proven potential of women’s entrepreneurial activities means that countries put themselves at a disadvantage and thwart their opportunities to increase their economic growth”.

This chapter will provide a detailed review of the literature relating to entrepreneurship in general and more specifically, female entrepreneurship. The review will particularly focus on defining entrepreneurship, and female entrepreneurs’ characteristics and motivations for starting a business. This chapter will also examine the barriers and obstacles faced by female entrepreneurs, specifically accessing finance, balancing work and home life, business support, and issues regarding confidence and self-efficacy.

2.2 Entrepreneurship definitions and statistics
This section will examine the definitions of entrepreneurs and small business owners and will provide a picture of entrepreneurial activity in the UK and specifically female entrepreneurship.
2.2.1 Small businesses

A review of the literature has highlighted that there is not one clearly agreed definition of small businesses (Storey, 1994). The Bolton Committee’s Report on Small Business (1971) attempted to overcome the definition problem by establishing an ‘economic’ definition and a ‘statistical’ definition of small businesses. The economic definition described a small business as meeting the following criteria:

- They had a relatively small share of their market place.
- They were managed by owners or part-owners in a personalised way and not through the medium of a formalised management structure.
- They were independent, in the sense of not forming part of a larger enterprise.

The ‘statistical’ definition used by the Bolton committee aimed to address three issues; firstly, the current size of the small firm sector and contributions to gross domestic product, employment, exports and innovation. The second issue was to compare the extent to which small businesses had changed over time in terms of economic contribution; the third issue was that the statistical definition would enable one to make comparisons between the contributions of small businesses in different countries. The definitions relating to key industries are shown in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>200 employees or fewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>25 employees or fewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td>25 employees or fewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailing</td>
<td>Turnover of £50,000 or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Turnover of £50,000 or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Turnover of £50,000 or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor trade</td>
<td>Turnover of £100,000 or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>Turnover of £200,000 or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road transport</td>
<td>Five vehicles or fewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>All excluding multiples and brewery managed houses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bolton (1971)

However, Storey (1994) states that taking the ‘economic’ definition that a small business is managed by its owners or part-owners in a personalised way and not through a management structure, is in fact incompatible with the ‘statistical’ definition of a small manufacturing firm having up to two hundred employees. Using the upper limit of employees as two hundred might be inadequate for defining small business, as managerial appointments and structures are typically
made when firms reach between ten and twenty employees (Atkinson and Meager, 1994).

In 1996, the European Community (EC) defined small enterprises as being independently owned and having fewer than 50 employees, with sales of less than €7 million (approx £5 million) or maximum capitalisation of €5 million (approx £3.5 million). A medium sized enterprise is also independently owned with fewer than 250 employees, sales of less than €40 million or capitalisation of less than €27 million. In addition to this definition, is the relatively new concept of ‘Micro Enterprises’ which includes firms with fewer than ten employees, those with zero employees being referred to as ‘self-employed’. This is a major source of confusion when reviewing the current position of small and micro enterprises, and the vast majority of studies exclude such small and micro enterprises even though there is no economic logic for such omissions (Stanworth, 1991). The main advantage of the EC definition is that it does not use any criteria other than employment and it does not vary the definition according to the industry sector (Storey, 1994).

Similarly, the Enterprise Directorate of the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (http://www.dti.gov.uk/bbf) defines businesses according to the number of employees. The DTI state that micro-businesses are those with zero to nine employees, small businesses have zero to 49 employees, medium-sized businesses have 50 to 249 employees, and large businesses have 250 plus employees. Defining small businesses by their number of employees enables policy makers and researchers to examine small businesses regardless of their industry and/or turnover and thus provides a more inclusive definition. For the purposes of this study the small business definition provided by the Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform will be used.

2.2.2 Entrepreneurship

The symbolic meaning of the term enterprise is encapsulated by the mythological figure of Mercury, and by the various mercurial personality traits, e.g. shrewd, pragmatic, creative, open-minded and adventurous. The features of entrepreneurship are closely related to initiative-taking and accomplishment (Bruni et al., 2004; Collinson and Hearn, 1994, 1996). Livesay (1982:10) stipulates that entrepreneurship is:

“purposeful and successful activity to initiate, maintain, and develop a profit-orientated business... given that the activity takes place in anything but a static environment.”
Livesay’s (1982) definition would suggest that there is no real distinction between the creation and operation of business or those who engage in such activities. However, some would argue that the characteristics of entrepreneurs and small business owners are inherently different. Entrepreneurs are seen as being interested in inventive tactics that help them achieve long-term growth and profitability. In contrast, small business owners are more likely to be motivated toward their own individual goals rather than that of expansion and profitability (Carland, Hoy, Boulton and Carland, 1984; Glueck, 1980; Vesper, 1990). However, one might question that an individual could have both inventive characteristics and also be motivated to individual goals whilst wanting to make a profit, therefore they do not appear to be mutually exclusive.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines an entrepreneur as “a person who attempts to profit by risk and initiative”. This definition emphasises the importance of initiative and that entrepreneurs are often willing to take risks that others are not. Back in the 1800s, the French economist, Jean-Baptiste Say said “entrepreneurs shift economic resources from an area of lower productivity into an area of higher productivity and greater yield” (Burns, 2007: 9). Therefore, entrepreneurs create value by exploiting some form of opportunity and change and welcome change because of the various opportunities that can be exploited through it.

It is also important to consider that entrepreneurs are defined by their actions rather than the size of the organisations within which they work e.g. any manager can be entrepreneurial, but the manager of a small firm need not be an entrepreneur – equally entrepreneurs can exist within large organisations (Burns, 2007). When examining the definitions of entrepreneurs (Schumpeter, 1911; 1928; Shapero, 1975), not all owner-managers of organisations are entrepreneurs. Indeed, the majority of owner-managers are not entrepreneurial. Therefore, entrepreneurs can be “described in term of their characters and also judged by their actions, and one of the major differentiating factors is the degree of innovation that entrepreneurs practice” (Burns, 2007: 12). Schumpeter was one of the main originators of modern entrepreneurship theory and described an entrepreneur as an innovator, rather than a profit seeker, a leader who held qualities of intellect, will, initiative, foresight and especially intuition (Schumpeter, 1934). An entrepreneur will learn that actions can be reliably calculated and it is these notions of intuition and ‘learning in the social world’ which are important, as they connect entrepreneurship with social learning (Rae, 2005: 25).

Furthermore, entrepreneurship can be seen as the starting of a business and/or the growth and development of that business. In contrast, small business management is seen as the starting of a business, growth and development to a
certain point and then loss of entrepreneurial flair (Timmons, 1999:27). However, this distinction between small business owners and entrepreneurs may be too simplistic. Small business owners are often inventive and bring new and creative business ideas to market, therefore it may be too black and white to suggest that only entrepreneurs have ‘inventive tactics’. In line with Burns (2007) and Schumpeter (1934), Carland, Hoy, Boulton and Carland (1984:358) state that the critical factor distinguishing between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurial managers and, in particular, small business owners, is innovation. A small business owner can be defined as:

"an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of furthering personal goals. The business must be the primary source of income and will consume the majority of one's time and resources. The owner perceives the business as an extension of his or her personality, intricately bound with family needs and desires."

In contrast, an entrepreneur is defined as:

"an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of profit and growth. The entrepreneur is characterised principally by innovative behaviour and will employ strategic management practices in the business."

However, this may be an over simplistic way of distinguishing between entrepreneurs and small business owners. A business owner may view their business needs and desires as closely related to their family needs; however their principal reason for starting out in business may be purely related to profit.

It is evident that there is no single, universal definition of entrepreneurship and there is no shortage of descriptions of what an entrepreneur is (Davidsson, 2005). Following consideration of the literature, one may suggest that an inclusive definition of entrepreneurship may be that offered by (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000: 6) who state that entrepreneurship is “a process that involves the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new products, services, processes, ways of organizing, or markets”. This definition contains the descriptions of innovation, and opportunity exploitation discussed above, however it does not eliminate nascent entrepreneurs from the discussion as it describes entrepreneurship as “a process”; this is important as it ensures that entrepreneurs at the pre start-up phase are not eliminated simply because of where they are in the business cycle. Despite this distinction, it is difficult to identify any differences at the pre start-up and start-up stages of business as the behaviour patterns are not easily distinguishable. Therefore, for this study no differentiation will be made between entrepreneurs and small business owners and both entrepreneurship and small business ownership literature will be examined in this literature review. The
samples used in this study will be referred to as entrepreneurs, however the
discussion above must be noted.

2.2.3 Entrepreneurship in the UK

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor UK which measures entrepreneurial attitudes
and activity in the UK (based on 32,007 adults aged 16-80), reported that in 2008
the Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) in the UK was 5.5 per cent, the
same as in 2007 (Levie and Hart, 2009). In the UK in 2008, 84 per cent of working
age individuals were not engaged in entrepreneurial activity and had no intention of
starting a business within the next three years. There were 4.5 per cent of
individuals expecting to start a business in the next three years, however they were
not actively trying to start a business or running an existing business. A further 2.6
per cent were nascent entrepreneurs and additional 2.8 per cent were new
business owner/managers and 6.0 per cent were established business
owner/managers. The figures from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor UK show
that the proportions have changed little since 2002 (Levie and Hart, 2009).

The Small Business Service annual report (Williams and Cowling, 2009) which
involved a large-scale telephone survey of 9,362 Small and Medium-sized
Enterprises (SMEs), conducted between November 2007 and March 2008, found
that SMEs employ 9.68 million people, or 30.55 per cent of the total workforce in
employment in the UK. SMEs have a combined turnover of approximately £1,200
million, which equates to 44 per cent of the total turnover of UK private sector
enterprises of £2,800 million. The survey found that overall one in five SME
employers (20 per cent) reported employment growth in the previous 12 months,
while 65 per cent said their employment level had stayed the same, and 15 per
cent reported a decline in employment. The majority of businesses are entirely
male led (52 per cent), compared with 14 per cent which are majority-led by
women. The survey also found that shortage of skills was reported in the top ten
of biggest barriers to business success. Regarding business support and advice
just over a quarter (27 per cent) of SME employers had sought general advice and
information about running their business. New businesses were more likely than
established ones to have sought general advice, with 32 per cent of new
businesses having sought advice compared to 26 per cent of older businesses.
Around two thirds (64 per cent) of recently established SME employers had sought
advice at the time of starting their business. In addition to formal sources of
support, 13 per cent of SME employers also drew on informal advice from friends
or family, and a small number of employers also used the Internet. One in ten (ten
per cent) respondents experienced some problems in trying to seek information or
advice. Furthermore, women-led recently established businesses were
significantly less likely than other new businesses to seek advice (55 per cent) (Williams and Cowling, 2009).

2.2.4 Female entrepreneurs in the UK

The North West of England saw a small increase in overall entrepreneurial activity from 2007 to 2008 (5.3% to 5.5% of the working aged population) (Levie and Hart, 2009). In the UK female early stage entrepreneurial activity accounts for 49 per cent of male activity, while established business ownership at 3.4 per cent is just 40 per cent that of males (8.6 per cent). The equivalent proportions for the US are 70 per cent and 62 per cent respectively (Levie and Hart, 2009). This figure is similar to other developed countries with the exception of the US, however UK female TEA rates have remained slightly below the G8 (Group of Eight) average since 2004 (Levie and Hart, 2009). In 2008, the GEM report stated that in the UK, the gap in fear of failure between males and females had widened (Levie and Hart, 2009).

Table 2.2 illustrates how females in the North West of England have seen the second largest decrease in self-employment from 2004 to 2006, with fewer females in self-employment when compared with the East, London, South East and South West. In fact all of the regions, apart from the North West and London, have experienced an increase in female entrepreneurship. Self-employment for both males and females in the North West may fall below other regions because of the attitudes and perceptions of potential entrepreneurs in the North West. Individuals in the North West region are less likely to be expecting to start a business and see good business opportunities and more likely to fear failure, compared to the UK as a whole (Harding, 2007).

As females are now contributing approximately 25 per cent of the self-employment in the North West, one may suggest that it is important that the business support provided for entrepreneurs reflects this situation. However, the concern regarding the relatively low number of women starting up in business is an area which requires consideration.
Table 2.2 Regional Picture of Self-Employment 2005 - 2007 (Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Quarter 4 2005</th>
<th>Quarter 4 2006</th>
<th>Quarter 4 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and Humber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.3 Summary of Section 2.2: Entrepreneurship definitions and statistics

Some theorists have drawn distinctions between a business owner and an entrepreneur; however, it is often difficult and too simplistic to group individuals in either category, particularly at the early start-up phases of business development.

Small business growth now appears to be regionally concentrated, with an increased number of businesses being established in regional areas around the UK, specifically London and the South East. In addition to the regionally concentrated growth of entrepreneurial activity, there also appears to be differing activity between men and women.

There appears to be a disproportionate share of entrepreneurial activity between men and women. In the North West of England, female entrepreneurship contributes to approximately 25 per cent of self-employment in the region. Despite the North West of England showing some encouraging results for male and female self-employment, negative attitudes towards entrepreneurship, e.g. fear of failure, remain (Harding, 2007).
2.4 Characteristics of female entrepreneurs

Whilst female and male entrepreneurship share similarities, female entrepreneurship is unique (Greene, Hart, Gatewood, Brush and Carter, 2003). For example, differences in their enterprises reflect underlying differences particularly with regard to their motivations and goals, preparation, organisation, strategic orientation, and access to resources (Greene et al., 2003). Over the past two decades research has identified several central areas where female and male entrepreneurship are similar, but the progress of research examining the differences has been slow (Greene et al., 2003).

When examining entrepreneurship it is important to examine how, if at all, general discrimination and male domination are transferred to an entrepreneurial setting. Hurley (1999: 59) asserts “the professionalisation of entrepreneurship is creating a profession with the same male-dominated standards as traditional organisational theory”. An understanding of the various issues faced by female entrepreneurs is a fundamental starting point in order to provide the support needed to develop and grow female-owned businesses (Gatewood et al., 2003). Only by exploring female entrepreneurship as a distinct area of study, will academics and policy makers be able to understand organisational structures of small businesses and the occupations in which women business owners predominate, for example, service sectors and how these affect females differently (Mirchandani, 1999).

The statistical data showing the current trend of female entrepreneurship increasing could be viewed as a positive message. However these findings may have masked the fact that men continue to play more of an active role in entrepreneurship, compared to their female counterparts (Wilson et al., 2007). Therefore, it may be important to examine the distinct features of female entrepreneurs to understand why women are not equally represented in business ownership. The following sections will examine the unique nature of female entrepreneurs.

2.4.1 Marital status

For many years, sociologists have stated that men benefit from marriage far more than women when they are contrasted with single men. Bernard (1976) argued that compared to single men, married men are significantly more likely to gain high income, high status, successful careers and live longer and happier lives. In contrast, married women are in fact disadvantaged, being more likely to experience depression, dissatisfaction and frustration and be less healthy than single women (Bernard, 1976).
More recently, researchers have suggested that the pressures placed on individual women managers as a result of family life, appear to be caused less by the burden of childcare and domestic responsibilities and more by the negative attitudes towards married and co-habiting women managers that are apparent (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). For example, while heterosexual, committed relationships (and especially marriage) benefit men’s careers, employers tend to regard married women with suspicion, fearing that husbands and children may in fact be a demand that competes with commitment to employment (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). As Fielden and Cooper (2001:10) state “female managers are not only deprived of the benefits of having a wife, but are also condemned for having a husband, (which may impact negatively on the well-being of female managers).” While this research is based on female managers, one might suggest that this could also be the case for female entrepreneurs, particularly when considering the investment decisions of banks and other lending agencies and the trade-off between work and family roles. When examining the issue of business ownership, Goffee and Scase (1985: 5) found that, “while the wives of small businessmen are often subordinated to the needs of their husbands”, the reverse is seldom true. More recently, Winn (2004) found from a review of entrepreneurship literature that work and home life appeared to be complimentary for men, whereas work and family roles often present a dilemma for women.

In contrast, financial and human capital available in the household can have a positive impact on a woman’s choice to start a business. Caputo and Dolinsky (1998) conducted secondary data analysis to explore the relationship between financial and human capital. The study found that role flexibility and financial and human resource support that are available in the home can lead to increased levels of self-employment (Caputo and Dolinsky, 1998). Furthermore, when a husband has a higher level of earnings from self–employment, this positively impacts on the wife’s decision to become self-employed. However, this relationship does not occur when the husband’s earnings are from wages, i.e. not self-employed (Caputo and Dolinsky, 1998). Access to a husband’s knowledge and experience relating to setting up a business and help from the husband in arranging and providing childcare, are also positive correlations to women deciding to start out in business (Caputo and Dolinsky, 1998). These findings would suggest that women find the support and financial resources which are available in the home, as particularly important and a motivating factor for starting out in business. The findings suggest that being married can have a positive and negative impact on women’s business ownership experiences.
2.4.2 Age

Age can be another important factor to examine when considering female entrepreneurship. Watkins and Watkins (1984) reported that female entrepreneurs in the United States tended to be significantly younger than their male counterparts. The average age of men was 39 years, compared with women who had an average age of 32 years of age. A more recent study by Mattis (2000), reported that female entrepreneurs tended to be older than previous studies had suggested, with the ages ranging from 40 to 50 years. Similarly, a report by the Cabinet Office (2001) stated that entrepreneurship in the UK is a midlife choice, with the majority of women setting up their own business after the age of 35.

The 2006 UK GEM report also showed an increase of mid-career entrepreneurship (Harding, 2007). The highest level of TEA across the UK is in the 35-44 year old age group at 7.3% of the population. The very youngest and the oldest age groups are the least entrepreneurial at 3.7 per cent and 3.9 per cent respectively. The highest levels of entrepreneurial activity for men are for the 25-34 and 35-44 year old age groups, whilst for women, entrepreneurial activity peaks at the slightly later age group of 35-44 (Harding, 2007). The reason for the increase in TEA among certain age groups could be based on the fact that the 35-44 year old age group shows the highest level of confidence in opportunity availability and confidence in personal skills, which tend to diminish slightly in the 45-54 year old age group (Rae, 2005). Whilst younger age groups may be more likely in future to follow an entrepreneurial career path, the mid-career groups appear most likely to do so at the present time. Therefore, they are more likely to constitute the largest proportion of the population engaged in entrepreneurial activity (Rae, 2005).

The GEM UK (Harding, 2007) regional report for the North West, states that the region has higher levels of entrepreneurial activity in the 18-24 year old age group than the UK average. However, the age groups 25-34 and 35-44, are below the UK average, but the figures draw level by 45-54. The 55+ age group has one of the lowest rates in the UK at 2.6 per cent. One may conclude that the increased levels of entrepreneurial activity in the 18-24 year old group are perhaps due to the recent increase of entrepreneurship education in schools and colleges, whereas significantly less attention has been paid to entrepreneurial learning among people in older age groups (Rae, 2005; Davies, 2002). However, the general level of TEA across the UK appears to be higher in the mid age groups, therefore the increase in 18-24 year old age group witnessed in the North West does not represent the national picture.
2.4.3 Education

In general, women’s further education has tended to be in the liberal arts, rather than in business, technical, or more vocational areas (Watkins and Watkins, 1984; Carter and Cannon; 1988; Brush, 1992; Carter et al., 2003). More recently, a study of 56 female entrepreneurs across six countries (Canada, Singapore, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland) found that a minority had degrees in business, engineering or technical disciplines (McClelland, Swail, Bell and Ibbotson, 2005). These findings suggest that women business owners may not have the relevant educational experiences with regard to business ownership. In contrast, studies in the UK have found that the number of women pursuing business qualifications has increased. For example, the proportion of women pursuing social administration and business degrees stood at only ten per cent in 1973 (Davidson, 1997). However, in the academic year 2000/01, it was estimated that more than 50 per cent of students (or approximately 54,900) in these areas were female (EOC, 2003). In 2006, more women (51 per cent) than men (49 per cent) had pursued a Business and administration degree (EOC, 2006). Research also suggests that women today are seeking degrees in traditionally male-dominated areas of management and professional qualifications (EOC, 2006; Davidson, 1997; Fernandes and Cabral-Cardoso, 2003).

Harding (2007) reports that level of education, on its own, appears to be a strong predictor of whether or not an individual will decide to become an entrepreneur. For example, TEA is highest amongst those with a Master’s level qualification (10.5%) or a doctorate (10.2%). The results are similar for both men and women: for both genders TEA rates are significantly higher amongst those who hold a university qualification compared with those who do not. Women who have degrees are more likely to take an entrepreneurial career path as Harding (2007) found, the TEA rate for women with a degree is 5.6 per cent compared with 3.1 per cent for women who do not have a degree. Therefore, education appears to have a positive impact on the decision to enter into entrepreneurship. These findings are confirmed by the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) study which examined educational qualifications of women business owners (Harding, Cowling and Ream, 2003). The study found that 22 per cent of female-owned businesses have been established by women with ‘O’ levels, approximately 20 per cent (19.4) by women with ‘A-Levels and nearly a quarter (24) of women in the study had degrees. Considering the high levels of educational attainment which women business owners have, it seems to be gender rather than women’s education that is preventing women from setting up in business (Harding et al., 2003). While business and management qualifications may be useful for providing business owners with theoretical business knowledge, work and previous self-employment experience is more important than formal education (Mueller, 2006).
2.4.4 Summary of Section 2.4: Characteristics of female entrepreneurs

Female entrepreneurs are clearly making a vital contribution to the global and UK economy (Wilson et al., 2007). Despite this, women are approximately half as likely as men to be thinking of starting a business (Harding, 2007). It is evident that there are barriers to women’s entrepreneurial activity, for example, a lack of relevant skills and knowledge. Women may also be reluctant to start their own business because of their lack familiarity with the business world (Harding, 2007).

The financial and human capital and flexibility which are available in the home and advice and support from a partner can often lead to increased levels of self-employment (Caputo and Dolinsky, 1998). However, work and family life can often be a dilemma for women. In terms of age, female entrepreneurs tend to be aged between 35 and 44 (Harding, 2006) and US studies have shown that the age of female entrepreneurs has increased over the last two years (Mattis, 2000). Female entrepreneurs tend to be highly educated and more women are now registering for degrees in traditionally male-dominated areas of management and professional qualifications (EOC, 2006; Davidson, 1997; Fernandes and Cabral-Cardoso, 2003). It is evident that age, marital status and educational attainment can be motivating factors for women starting out in business. The following section will address reasons for starting out in business, by examining female entrepreneurs’ motivations for embarking on an entrepreneurial career path.

2.5 Female entrepreneurs’ motives for starting up in business

The rise in small business ownership has seen an increase in studies examining the major motivating factors for individuals starting up in business. There are two schools of thought regarding women’s motivations for setting up in business. The first suggestion is that women business owners are pulled into self-employment by the promise of increased flexibility and the opportunity to be independent; the second is, that business owners have been pushed into self-employment because of restructuring and downsizing and the impact this has had on the availability of jobs, both in the public and private sector (Hughes, 2003). Categorising females into either a push or pull category clearly highlights the fact that female entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group, particularly with regard to their motivations and characteristics. Pull factors are seen as an opportunity, whereas push factors are seen as necessity drivers, whereby the individuals are pushed into setting up a business because of factors beyond their control. Understanding women’s motives for starting up in business provides insight into the differences among this group of entrepreneurs. Not only is it important to recognise the differences between men and women business owners, but it is also important to understand and appreciate the differences among female entrepreneurs. To be
‘pushed’ or ‘pulled’ might be too simplistic a description to categorise motivating factors, therefore the following sections attempt to provide a detailed description of a variety of female entrepreneurs and their decisions and motives for starting out in business.

2.5.1 Intentional entrepreneur

Intentional entrepreneurs are seen as ‘born to be’ entrepreneurs (Mattis, 2004), i.e. they have always intended to set up their own business and have only worked in other organisations to gain industry and/or business experience. A finding in many studies is that women are pulled into business ownership or entrepreneurship for many of the same reasons as men, i.e. a desire for greater independence, challenge and improved financial opportunity (Belcourt, 1988, Fischer, Reuber and Dyke, 1993; Lee-Gosselin and Grise, 1990; Moore and Buttner, 1997). Belcourt’s (1988) study of 36 women business owners found that independence was the top motivator (cited by 67 per cent of women), followed by financial opportunity (39 per cent) and challenge (28 per cent).

2.5.2 Work-Family entrepreneurs

Theories of entrepreneurship tend to overlook work-family motivations for entrepreneurs. A reason for this could be that these factors tend to be important for women. Lee-Gosselin and Grise (1990:425) emphasise the role of family-based motivations, stating that for some women, “starting a business may be an adaptive response to the demands of the parent and spouse/partner role, which are very important to them”. In addition, a number of small scale studies in the UK have highlighted the importance of the family when explaining women’s entry into the small business sector (Baines and Wheelock, 1998).

Research suggests that men and women can have very different reasons for starting their own business. Studies have shown that women tend to be concerned with issues concerning personal challenge and satisfaction, both for themselves in terms of a balanced life, and with regard to the job that they are doing (Scott, 1986). Many women decide to set up their own business to provide them with an opportunity to manage the dual responsibilities of work and family (Feldman and Bolino, 2000; Orhan and Scott, 2001). Marlow and Strange (1994; 179) refer to this as an ‘accommodation tactic’, whereby women can create the flexibility that they need to balance their work and domestic responsibilities (Buttner and Moore, 1997). As Brush (1992) argues, women’s businesses tend to be integrated, rather than separated from their family roles and relationships.

A comparative study, involving 20 semi-structured interviews with SME owner/managers (male n=10 and female n=10), was conducted to explore the
personal and contextual factors that influence women’s decisions to start their own business (Brindley and Ritchie, 1999). The study found that female entrepreneurs’ motivations when setting up their own business, tended to be centred on the need for flexibility. This flexibility was often related to their child care responsibilities and their negative experiences from previous employment. On the whole, these negative experiences were centred on gender discrimination and childcare difficulties. Similarly, Carter and Cannon (1988) found that women’s motivations mainly hinged on their need for flexibility and independence. These studies highlight that women value the increased flexibility provided by self-employment, particularly when considering their domestic responsibilities.

Research developed in conjunction with academics at the London School of Economics (LSE) and Yellow Pages (LSE, 2006) found that there is a new breed of enterprising female entrepreneurs defined as ‘kitchen table tycoons’. Mothers who have started businesses from home currently contribute £4.4 billion to the UK economy. The study by LSE was based on data taken from a nationwide quantitative survey commissioned by Yell.com of a representative sample of 200 ‘business mums’. The group was defined as “self employed women who started their business since having children and within the last five years.” A ninety minute focus group with business mums was also conducted. ‘Kitchen table tycoons’ are women who have started their own business while also balancing the demands of being a mother. Whilst many women are motivated by the need for flexible hours for juggling home and work commitments, the research also suggests that motherhood itself is often the impetus behind a particular business idea. Tim Leunig of LSE (2006) states that “it is the act of having and raising children which makes mothers so well placed to identify gaps in the market”. Over half of the mothers surveyed were running businesses relating to children’s services or products, and home-friendly businesses such as web design and marketing (LSE, 2006). These findings suggest that women’s experiences of motherhood actually provide them with unique business ideas and knowledge which are filling gaps in the business market. Despite this, there is an absence of research examining this group of entrepreneurs. As such, there is limited available knowledge regarding the positive impact of raising children on business development. In addition, there appears to be limited empirical research examining the development of business support which is designed to assist women balancing work and family roles.

2.5.3 Forced entrepreneurs
Few studies of female entrepreneurs have examined job loss or difficulty finding employment as a major motivating factor (Belcourt, 1988). Forced entrepreneurs can be viewed as entrepreneurs who have entered into entrepreneurship because of unemployment and/or lack of work opportunities. A number of UK studies point
to an increase in “forced” entrepreneurship, particularly for women in the 1980s and 1990s in particular regions and sectors (Baines and Wheelock, 1998; MacDonald, 1996). However, most of these studies use small non representative samples. A more recent study by Smeaton (2003) of three large national British surveys: Working in Britain (2000), Employment in Britain (1992), Social Change and Economic Life Initiative (1986), confirmed that “push” factors, for the self-employed, had taken on a growing importance in Britain since the 1980s due to contracting out and redundancy in certain sectors. Women who are in the position of being ‘pushed’ into self-employment may also be defined as ‘corporate climbers’. Women may have decided to leave their careers, primarily because of negative factors in their organisation/work environment, such as a lack of career progression, or because they want to take full advantage of an unexpected business opportunity (Mattis, 2004).

Understanding of the characteristics of forced entrepreneurs may also be particularly important in the current economic climate when many people are losing their jobs and moving into entrepreneurship as a career alternative. When examining the issues faced by entrepreneurs in the current economic climate, Delta Economics (Tyler, 2008) found that female business founders appeared less concerned about barriers to finance and specific issues faced by the sector in which they operated. Rebecca Harding, managing director of Delta states that "men are likely to have taken on more credit and are now finding access to finance more difficult. Women are very much more cautious about taking on huge amounts of debt." (Tyler, 2008:1).

2.5.3.1 Glass ceiling
Women may also experience the glass ceiling which may be another motivating factor which ‘forces’ or ‘pushes’ them out of their career. The glass ceiling is defined as a barrier experienced when attempting to attain higher managerial positions (Blake-Beard 2001; Davidson and Burke, 2004). The need for greater autonomy and freedom is a significant motivating factor for women deciding to set up their own business. Women can often feel that in order to progress, develop and to reach where they want to be in their career, it is necessary to start their own business (Mattis, 2004; Buttner and Moore, 1997; Marlow, 1997; Cromie and Hays, 1991). Many women are now leaving the corporate world to set up their own business (Terjesen, 2005). This increasing population of new female entrepreneurs who have corporate or management experience have been labelled as ‘careerpreneur, “corporate incubator, “corporate climber”, “modern” and “second generation"’ entrepreneurs (Moore, 2000; Moore and Buttner, 1997). Vinnicombe and Bank (2003) suggest that the main motivating factors for the increase of female ex-corporate entrepreneurs are pay inequalities and career frustration due
to the glass ceiling and the promise of a more flexible lifestyle from entrepreneurship. Whilst this group of women have received attention in the popular press, this phenomenon has received relatively limited attention within the academic literature. As Kouzmin, Korac-Kakabadse and Korac-Kakabadse (1999) state, many women are capable of contributing much more than the traditional career pathways have allowed. Korac-Boisvert (1994) describes such women as being “caged eagles” who are thwarted and contained by “glass ceilings”.

Mattis’ (2004) national study included a representative sample of women and men business owners (n= 800 US business owners: n = 650 women: n=150 men). The study found that out of the entrepreneurs who had left corporate careers to start their own business, nearly one third (29 per cent), who had been employed in the private sector, stated that glass ceiling issues and dissatisfaction with their work environment were major reasons for wanting to set up a business (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Marlow, 1997, Cromie and Hays, 1991). As Cromie and Hays (1991: 23) state, “job satisfaction of business founders in their pre entrepreneurial jobs was significantly lower than the job satisfaction of other employees.” Cromie and Hays (1991) conclude that many entrepreneurs may see entrepreneurship as a way of overcoming the career progression barriers, or as many define it ‘the glass ceiling’, which they face in organisations.

The glass ceiling and the changes in the economic environment appear to suggest that more individuals will choose an entrepreneurial career as an alternative career path. Therefore, it is increasingly important to ensure that business support is available for these entrepreneurs, particularly female entrepreneurs to help them to succeed in this difficult climate.

2.5.4 Summary of Section 2.5: Female entrepreneurs motives for starting up in business
The literature has highlighted that female entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group and the motives for starting up a business are diverse. The main perspectives regarding women’s motives for starting up in business appear to be based on ‘push’ and ‘pull’ theories. The findings highlight the differences among female entrepreneurs and the various factors which motivate women to start their own business.

2.6 Barriers encountered by female entrepreneurs
Entrepreneurship is considered a viable alternative to enable women to overcome many of the obstacles that they face, such as discrimination and the glass ceiling (Cromie and Hayes, 1988). However, business ownership can also present its own unique barriers for women embarking on an entrepreneurial career path. The
barriers that female entrepreneurs face can be viewed in terms of liberal feminist theory, where men and women are seen as equally able and any subordination of women is largely dependent on discrimination or structural barriers, for example, unequal access to education, suggesting that barriers can be eliminated. In line with the liberal feminist perspective, many authors have argued that self-employed women remain disadvantaged when compared to self-employed men, as women face barriers relating to education, families and workplace (Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991). Liberal feminism often referred to as the situational perspective, states that men and women are fundamentally identical and have equal mental capacities and rationalities. Therefore, any observed differences in business preferences or success will be based on unequal access to opportunities, for example, education, employment opportunities and social networks (Black 1989; Jaggar 1983). This view has been criticized for the fact that it has an unstated male norm and suggests that women will need to adapt to this norm (Ahl, 2006). In contrast, social feminist theory, psychoanalytical feminist theory, or radical feminist theory asserts that men and women are seen to be, or have become different. Feminine traits are not seen as needing to be changed, but are perceived as benefits rather than drawbacks (Chodorow, 1988; Gilligan, 1982). This has led to management research within this area examining and calling for the removal of the corporate ladder and the importance of building flat organizations, having shared leadership and consensus-oriented decision making (Ahl, 2006; Iannello, 1992). Social feminist perspective argues that men and women are subjected to different socialisation processes and that this will result in them having different characteristics, i.e. motivations (Black 1989; Jaggar 1983; Fischer et al., 1993). As a result of the differences in socialisation, which begins at childhood, women are ultimately placed at a disadvantage to their male counterparts when starting their own business (Jones and Tullous, 2002). Social feminism sometimes referred to as the dispositional perspective, states that women and men are fundamentally different. This perspective views women and men as having equally valid self-perceptions, motivations, and belief structures. Therefore, any observed differences are the result of dissimilar experiences or socialization (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007). However, this view also does not question the male norm.

Moving these debates forward, social constructionist and poststructuralist feminist theory belongs to the third group. This group is not concerned with what men or women are, but how masculinity and femininity is constructed and the ultimate impact this has on social order (Ahl, 2006). Gender is viewed as something that is “done,” “accomplished,” or “performed” rather than something that simply “is” (Ahl, 2006). Therefore, professions, for example, are gendered, as is entrepreneurship.

The dispositional and structural barriers faced by women business owners will now be discussed in more detail, e.g. access to finance, domestic responsibilities,
human capital, social capital, access to advice and confidence, followed by an examination of the gendered nature of entrepreneurship.

2.6.1 Access to finance

Female entrepreneurs tend to rely on their own savings rather than attempting to access external funding, unlike their male counterparts (Carter and Rosa, 1998). Female entrepreneurs’ reliance on personal funds is due to a variety of reasons. For example, women often lack the track record that banks and other funding sources require. Female entrepreneurs also tend to have reduced access to financial or advisory support that is usually dominated by male networks (Carter et al., 2001). Women are also often disadvantaged with regard to funding from external investors, as investors tend to undervalue the experience that women have (Carter, Brush, Greene, Gatewood and Hart, 2003). Furthermore, women are less likely to have generated a track record regarding their credit history (Shaw et al., 2001); therefore they find it difficult to show formal credit worthiness.

Barclays (1999) found two clear areas of funding for those entering self-employment, personal savings (which also included contributions from family and friends) and bank lending. The data indicated that the majority of small businesses draw upon their own resources at the start-up phase, with only 17 per cent using bank lending. The dependence upon personal resources has been supported by Cosh and Hughes (2000) who identified a recent decline in the use of external funding in preference to savings and family support.

When examining the issue of personal resources in relation to female entrepreneurs, it is evident that women are disadvantaged. A study of North American and Norwegian women entering self-employment found that women had greater limitations upon access to personal savings, when compared to their male counterparts. This situation occurred because women were more likely to have been working part-time, or in lower remunerated work, or from lower income households, when compared with men (Carter and Kolvereid, 1997; Carter et al., 2001).

Previous research has also highlighted the differences in the financing patterns of male-owned and female-owned businesses (Brush, 1992; Brush, Carter, Greene, Gatewood and Hart, 2001). Women-owned businesses typically start up with lower levels of overall capitalization (Carter and Rosa, 1998), lower ratios of debt finance (Haines, Orser and Riding, 1999), and much less likelihood of using private equity or venture capital (Brush et al., 2001). Research which has investigated gender-based differences in finance usage has explained women's lesser likelihood of using external debt finance in three main ways. Firstly, it could arise because of
structural dissimilarities, e.g. business size, age and sector, between male-owned and female-owned firms, secondly, that (mainly inadvertently) there is gender discrimination in the supply-side. Thirdly, researchers have highlighted demand-side factors, pointing to apparently higher levels of debt aversion among women (Carter et al., 2007). Research suggests that women are relatively more risk averse than men (Jianakoplos and Bernasek, 1998), and studies have shown that female entrepreneurs "are less willing to get involved in situations with uncertain outcomes where financial gain is involved" (Sexton and Bowman-Upton, 1990: 34).

When examining the issue of gender discrimination in the supply-side, Fay and Williams (1993) examined differences in loan officers’ decisions. Bank loan officers were presented with an identical loan application from male and female applicants. The study found that there were gender-based differences when the applicant was described as having high school education, but not when the applicant had a university education. The scenarios used were identical in all respects except for the sex and education level of applicants. Loan officers were asked whether or not they would approve loan finance for the proposed business purchase and to indicate factors that contributed to their decisions. Experiments involved responses of loan officers of 200 branches of four major banks with New Zealand operations. The first experiment showed that in response to female and male applicants with university education, both sexes were likely to obtain a loan, but education was considered more important for the female applicants. In experiment two where respondents had high school education, the female applicant was less likely to obtain a loan than the male applicant. They concluded
that their study “demonstrate[d] experimentally that some loan officers do employ differing evaluative criteria for female and male applicants, and that these differences in evaluative criteria may act to female disadvantage” (Fay and Williams, 1993: 304. Similarly, Orser and Foster (1994: 16) suggested that the standard 5Cs model of bank lending (character, capacity, capital, collateral, and conditions) was typically applied in a ‘subjective’ manner to the detriment of female entrepreneurs.

In contrast, Carter et al. (2007) using experimental and qualitative methodologies, explored the role of gender in bank lending decisions, focusing on the criteria and processes used by male and female loan officers. The results showed that there were similarities in the criteria used to assess male and female applicants, but show modest differences in the emphasis given to certain criteria by male and female lending officers. The study also found that bank loan officers use a wide range of criteria to assess loan applications from entrepreneurs. While there is diversity in the criteria used to assess loan applications, for the most part, these do not vary by the gender of the loan applicant. However, female loan applicants were more likely to be assessed on whether or not they had undertaken sufficient research into the business. In contrast, male loan applicants were more likely to be assessed on whether or not they had supplied sufficient information about the business opportunity, the business’ financial history, and their general personal characteristics. The issues of loan officers decisions was also more recently studied by Wilson (2008) who examined the issue of gender further in a study which aimed to test bank loan officers’ judgments. Officers were given an identical fictional bank loan proposal from either Jack or Emma Jones. The study conducted 35 interviews and presumed that the more positive the statement made about each proposal, there would be an increased likelihood that they would lend Jack or Emma the funds. The study found that there was no link between the numbers of positive statements. However, six loan officers would not give an overall decision on whether they would lend. This study would appear to support the argument that decisions made by loan officers are not influenced by the gender of the applicants. Similarly, when examining 282 matched pairs of male and female entrepreneurs, McKechnie, Ennew, and Read (1998) found that there were few substantial differences once structural factors had been taken into account. However, this view is not held by all authors in the field. Several studies have reported that there are residual gender differences, even after structural factors have been controlled (Carter et al., 2007; Carter and Rosa, 1998).

Despite the importance of angel financing, (an angel is an individual who provides capital for a business start-up, usually in exchange for ownership equity), there has been little consideration of women's access to this source of funding (Amatucci and
Sohl, 2004; Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007; Harrison and Mason, 2007). However, there have been claims (frequently unsupported by direct evidence) that gender-based issues exist in respect of access to business angel capital (Harrison and Mason, 2007). For example, “although finding and engaging angel investors is a challenge for anyone, women entrepreneurs have experienced particular difficulty” (Brush et al., 2004: 56). This difficulty has been found to be caused by two main factors. Firstly, women are less likely to have had prior entrepreneurial experience or a high level of managerial experience in a corporate setting. Therefore they are less likely to participate in networks which have high net worth individuals (Verheul and Thurik, 2001). Secondly, if women do decide to establish and engage with such contacts, they need to build a strong case for their capabilities and commitment. This often needs to be achieved without the benefit of an established relationship or trust based on long-standing relationships. Harrison and Mason (2007) found that women business angels are slightly more likely to invest in women-owned businesses, although this does not appear to be because they factor gender into their investment decision. However, a minority of women did suggest that they would relax their investment criteria to consider investing in a female entrepreneur, or would spend time helping women business owners become investment ready (Harrison and Mason, 2007). Therefore, one may conclude that having more women angel investors is likely to result in increased investments in female entrepreneurs.

Governments can also help to overcome the problems of accessing funding through banks and building societies, by positively influencing the supply of funds to businesses. The Small Business Loan Guarantee Scheme has been operated by the Small Business Service since April 2000. The aim of the scheme is to improve access to finance for ventures that have been disadvantaged by either a lack of security or the lack of a track record (characteristics frequently associated with female entrepreneurs). In addition, the new funding made available by the Government through the Aspire fund may help female entrepreneurs to access funding and finance specifically designed for female entrepreneurs.

Literature has also suggested that women are often reluctant to assume the burden of debt and to engage in a fast paced growth business (Marlow and Carter, 2006). Typically, female entrepreneurs have a lower usage of debt finance, and private equity and venture capital (Marlow and Carter, 2006; Carter and Shaw, 2006). Gaining external finance is a problem for all entrepreneurs; however the evidence would suggest that women have a greater number of hurdles to overcome when compared with men when attempting to obtain external finance (Marlow and Patton, 2005). Therefore women may be more inclined to reduce the possibility of a refusal by requesting a smaller volume of finance, and as a result
start a business in a smaller sector which requires less start-up funds (Carter and Shaw, 2006).

The literature suggests that access to finance may be based on three factors, firstly, structural differences, e.g. business size, age and sector, between male-owned and female-owned firms, secondly, gender discrimination in the supply of funds and finally, dispositional barriers, e.g. women more likely to be risk averse when it comes to financing decisions. Business support agencies can help to encourage and support women who are attempting to access business finance and can help women to identify relevant funding channels and to support women through the application process. This level of support and its effectiveness is an area which requires further exploration.

2.6.2 Work and home life balance

Over a decade ago, Allen and Truman (1992, 1993) criticized entrepreneurship research for neglecting the importance and the impact of female entrepreneurs’ personal lives on their business-related goals and objectives. Similarly, authors have called for a reframing of the entrepreneurship literature, whereby there is a need to examine female entrepreneurs’ activities in the context of their whole lives (Aldrich, 1989; Brush, 1992; Green and Cohen, 1995; Lee-Gosselin and Grise, 1990). This reframing has now started and many authors are adopting a “family embeddedness perspective” (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Dyer, 2003), whereby an entrepreneurs’ businesses and families are seen as inextricably linked, rather than two completely separable entities (Jennings and McDougald, 2007).

Following on from the family embeddedness perspective, there is now a relevant body of literature that remains relatively untapped by entrepreneurship scholars: the work-family interface (WFI) literature. Jennings and McDougald (2007) state that there are at least three reasons for integrating the WFI perspective into entrepreneurship research. Firstly, studies have shown that the desire to create a work life balance often motivates, particularly women, to start their own business (Caputo and Dolinsky, 1998; DeMartino and Barbato, 2003). Secondly, studies have also show that achieving a work-family balance remains an important goal for both male and female entrepreneurs, well beyond the start-up decision (Fischer et al., 1993; Orser and Riding, 2004). Thirdly, research has suggested that family factors have important consequences for the work domain (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000; Powell and Graves, 2003). Therefore entrepreneurial outcomes are to some extent incomplete without the attention to work and family issues.

Entrepreneurship studies have shown that female entrepreneurs tend to spend a greater amount of time on household work than their male counterparts (Cliff,
Women who have families are more inclined to face primary domestic responsibilities and ultimately to have their careers interrupted at some stage (Aldrich, 1989). Women strive to create a balance between work and family life and as previously stated this can be a significant motivator for women starting their own business, however there are opposing factors at play (Shelton, 2006; Aldrich, 1989; Parasuraman et al., 1996; Holmquist and Sundin, 1988). In the UK, domestic responsibilities and the impact of domestic work and family issues have significantly greater effect on the working lives of women than men (Mitchell and Weller, 2001). Furthermore, Barclays Bank report (2000) found that 80 per cent of female entrepreneurs, compared with just 17 per cent of men, had responsibility for looking after children and dealing with childcare issues. Women-owned ventures are particularly affected by the conflict presented by home and family demands, “and these conflicts may have deliberate or inadvertent implications for growth” (Morris, Miyasaki, Watters and Coombes, 2006: 222).

Research has clearly shown that women experience greater role conflict between work and family life, than their male counterparts (Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Welter, 2004; Parasuraman et al., 1996). Childcare is probably one of the most widely cited reasons for women’s comparative lack of participation in entrepreneurship (Hollowell et al., 2006). Although both men and women must deal with conflicting demands that include family concerns; women often take the primary role for traditional duties in the home and childcare issues, while also managing their business. This balance can have significant implications regarding choices, priorities, and aspirations (Stevenson, 1986).

Given the ‘resource drain argument’, which suggests that work–family conflict occurs when the pressures from the work and family domain are incompatible, both the time and energy required to fulfil one set of the expectations (a resource drain effect) impair the fulfilment of the other, i.e. the time that is committed to family responsibilities will ultimately reduce time available for work responsibilities (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000: 190). Furthermore, research has indicated that an individual’s family responsibility level can also influence the amount of work-family conflict the individual experiences (Huang, Hammer, Neal and Perrin, 2004; Milkie and Peltola, 1999).

Some research has revealed that female professionals are less likely to have children (or at least have fewer children) than their male counterparts (Epstein, Saute, Oglesky, and Gever, 1995; Hagan and Kay, 1995), however this is not the case for female entrepreneurs. Therefore, it could be argued that female entrepreneurs have greater domestic demands than women in other careers. Research suggests that female entrepreneurs do not tend to choose an
entrepreneurial career over parenthood, as with their male counterparts they tend to be parents as well as entrepreneurs (Belcourt, Burke and Lee-Gosselin, 1991; Goffee and Scase, 1985; Jurik, 1998).

Studies have shown that the balancing of work and family roles can be problematic for women. Parasuraman et al. (1992) found that family role responsibilities were often more strongly linked to psychological strain for women than for men. Milkie and Peltola (1999) found that having young children can have a significant negative effect on women’s, but not men’s, perceptions of work-family balance. Furthermore, Duxbury and Higgins (2001) found that parental status had a stronger impact on the role overload, stress, and depression levels experienced by women than by their male counterparts. These studies were not specifically conducted with business owners, however they do provide some insight into the problems that female entrepreneurs may face when attempting to balance work and home life.

Balancing work and family roles can also often prevent women from accessing support that they require to develop the skills essential for business success. There is limited research examining the difficulties faced by women with young children, particularly when attempting to access business support provision. It is important for business support providers to provide support packages which are appreciative of the balancing act which female entrepreneurs are attempting to perform. It is also important to provide business support which helps women to develop strategies to overcome some of the problems they face when attempting to balance work and family roles.

2.6.3 Human Capital - Education and experience

Human capital theory is defined as the investments in education, knowledge skills and abilities which an individual invests and how this can enhance cognitive abilities and result in more productive activities (Becker, 1964). Education and prior experience are key components of an entrepreneurs’ human capital (Becker, 1993). Human capital is a critical component of entrepreneurial knowledge and capabilities and is viewed as an initial endowment in business development (Carter et al., 2003). Human capital can also be used to acquire other forms of business resources, such as physical capital and financial capital (Brush, Greene and Hart, 2001; Carter et al., 2003). Studies have shown that there is a difference between ‘general’ human capital and ‘specific’ human capital. General human capital is usually measured by such items as formal education, age, prior work experiences, and prior entrepreneurial experience (Gimeno, Folta, Cooper and Woo, 1997). Research has shown that the ability to identify entrepreneurial opportunities is related to human capital such as education, work experience, and entrepreneurial experience (Davidsson and Honig, 2003), prior knowledge (Shane, 2000), prior
knowledge of customer problems (Shepherd and DeTienne, 2004), experiential knowledge (Dimov, 2003), and previous entrepreneurial experience (Ucbasaran, Westhead, Wright and Binks, 2003). In contrast, specific human capital refers to the knowledge and skills (often accumulated on-the-job) that are useful in a specific organisation (Barron, Black and Loewenstein, 1989) or a single industry (Buchholtz et al., 2003; DeTienne and Chandler, 2007). Shane (2000) found three types of specific human capital that impact on the ability of entrepreneurs to identify opportunities; these include prior knowledge of markets, prior knowledge of ways to serve markets, and prior knowledge of customer problems.

Moore (1999) refers to an individuals’ prior working experience as an incubator, whereby the entrepreneur can obtain valuable training and skills such as finance, marketing and networking (Moore and Buttner, 1997; Moore, 1999). By acquiring such skills, entrepreneurs can increase their ability to attract relevant and required resources (Carter et al., 2003; Haynes, 2003). Training and skills can enable entrepreneurs to make improved decisions regarding the resources that are required for business success (Hart, Stevensen and Dial, 1995; Haynes, 2003). Furthermore, human capital can help to increase the entrepreneurs’ core competencies (Haynes, 2003).

As previously highlighted, women are attaining high levels of educational attainment (Harding et al., 2008). As previously stated, in 2006, more women than men had pursued a Business and administration degree (EOC, 2006). Despite this, research also shows that venture capitalists rate ‘management’ more favourably if business owners have experience in founding a business, a strong track record in marketing management, engineering and leadership decision-making (Wright, Robbie and Ennew, 1997). Despite women’s educational background, they are less likely to have had strategic decision-making experience, or previous experience in founding a business and this can impact on women’s knowledge regarding financial aspects of business ownership, marketing and planning (DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Fielden et al., 2003; Harding and Cowling, 2004; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000). Despite Fischer et al. (1993) showing that there were differences between men and women in terms of human capital, they did not find strong evidence that women’s firms are impeded by the business owners’ lack of education and experience. The study targeted a sample of over 2,500 manufacturing, retail and service firms (908 manufacturing, 908 retail, 908 service). Fischer et al. (1993) found that having more education in production does not seem to provide men with a clear advantage, similarly men who have more experience managing employees actually seem to be at a disadvantage as this is negatively related to changes in employees and sales over a two year period. However the study did find that men’s greater
number of years spent in a similar business area does seem to contribute to the increased performance of their firms in terms of size, and is positively related to annual sales and annual income. Although a sample of over 2,500 businesses were targeted, the final usable sample consisted of 136 (11 female) manufacturing firms, 156 (29 female) retail firms, and 216 (20 female) service firms. This low response rate may impact on the generalisability of the study findings, particularly as the number of female firms represent just over ten per cent of the overall sample of usable surveys returned.

A number of studies have examined the role that human capital plays in opportunity identification (Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Ucbasaran et al., 2003). Previous research has shown that both general and specific human capital can be related to opportunity identification (DeTienne and Chandler, 2007). Therefore, it is important to examine the relationship between opportunity identification, human capital and entrepreneurs. In order to examine the role of gender in opportunity identification, DeTienne and Chandler (2007) conducted a two stage study with senior undergraduate students and entrepreneurs in two high-technology industries. The study found that although women and men utilize different opportunity identification processes, there was no difference in the innovativeness of the opportunities they identified. Whilst this study does present some important findings, there are some limitations which need to be noted. For example, in the second study the proportion of women (13 per cent) in the sample is relatively small. Furthermore, the study focused on industries that are typically male dominated, technical in nature, and in which the firm’s founders are highly educated. This may suggest that the entrepreneurs in this study are not representative of entrepreneurs as a whole.

In contrast to the findings of DeTienne and Chandler (2007), research has suggested that men and women who start businesses possess different human capital at the business start-up phase (Boden and Nucci, 2000; Changanti and Parasuraman, 1996). Studies have also shown that among business founders, men have significantly more years of industry experience (Carter and Williams, 2003; Changanti and Parasuraman, 1996; Cromie and Birley, 1991; Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991). This experience is fundamental to the development of business, as entrepreneurs who have specific training and experience are less likely to spend time seeking, gathering or analyzing information as they are typically familiar with the industry (Forbes, 2005). This experience will ultimately “increase their confidence in the efficiency with which entrepreneurial efforts will translate in higher performance” (Manolova, Carter, Manev and Gyoshev, 2007: 409).
It is evident that human capital can play a significant role in preparing business owners for the challenges and opportunities they will ultimately face. Research has suggested that women are now attaining higher levels of education in relevant subjects; however they still lack the relevant industry experience. Some suggest that the limited experience that women have may create a barrier to the pursuit of business ownership and development as it may impact on their self-confidence. Considering the lack of industry experience that women have it may be useful to examine other ways in which women can gain access to development and learning which can help to overcome this barrier.

2.6.4 Social Capital

Social capital can be defined as “goodwill” that is afforded to us by others (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Entrepreneurs require information, support, capital, business expertise and skill to start a business. The entrepreneurs themselves may have some of these resources, but may find that they need to access other contacts to increase their resource base (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; Aldrich, Birley, Dubini, Greve, Johannisson, Reese and Sakano, 1991). The contacts which entrepreneurs access, which can ultimately lead to successful outcomes, are known as social capital, which can be found in entrepreneurial networks (Burt, 1992). There is a wealth of research which emphasises the importance of networks for entrepreneurs and the social capital which can be found in such networks (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; De Carolis and Saparito, 2006). The main benefit of networks for entrepreneurs is the increased access to information and advice (Hoang and Antoncic, 2003).

Entrepreneurial activity relies on social interaction and the sharing and acquiring of knowledge and experience. According to Doe (1998), networks are effective for providing and enhancing the sharing and exchange of information which subsequently leads to the success or failure of a business. Despite the importance of networking, women are frequently excluded from traditional networks, or lack information about such networks (Kramer, 1992; Buttner and Rosen, 1988). Furthermore, women are also more likely to set up a business from home (Loscocco and Smith-Hunter, 2004), which again may considerably reduce their networking opportunities. Despite the importance attached to networks and networking, research suggests that women’s networking activity is significantly lower than that of men (Katz and Williams, 1997). Unfortunately, women’s limited networking practice can ultimately reduce their access to new sources of potential business opportunities (Verhuel and Thurik, 2001).

It may be that women actively avoid networks that reflect the social support needs of men, as such networks can not provide the affirmative support required by
female entrepreneurs. Women also have less access to networks that can provide developmental relationships and, as a result it is more difficult for women to develop influential relationships that can provide access to targeted career progression opportunities (Kaplan and Niederman, 2006). However it is not only access that is an issue, as women’s perception of the effectiveness of those relationships is also dependent on the degree of tangible support they provide. Rodriguez’s (2001) work suggests that dispositional characteristics, needs and situational influences affect perceptions of support quality and determines women’s acceptance of the support offered. If women need emotional support, but only receive instrumental support, it can have a negative impact on both their expectation of future support and their ability to cope with change and transition.

Gender differences are apparent in the forming, establishing and managing of networks (Carter et al., 2001). Women often have different requirements from networks, tending to use them as sounding boards, unlike their male counterparts who tend to use networks to gain resources (Moore and Buttner, 1997). Some women are also more likely to establish and become part of women only networks (Carter et al., 2001). A key finding from the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) (Harding et al., 2003) report was that women prefer to work in clusters, not only to establish their businesses but also to maintain and expand their businesses. These clusters represent a number of women working together and accessing support from one another, similar to a networking group. This highlights the need for women to work collectively to share their ideas, solutions, experiences, aspirations and inspirations. Rather than engaging in the traditional male model of networking, women prefer smaller, more intimate groups, where they feel less threatened (Aldrich, 1989). Hisrich (1989: 28) suggests that women should be encouraged to develop a ‘girls’ network’ to parallel the ‘old boy’s network’ which exists. However, this research is now nearly twenty years old and therefore one may question whether women should develop a similar version of the ‘old boy’s network’ and whether women do in fact find larger networking groups as threatening. Despite these considerations, research has shown that women tend to have improved learning and are more willing to participate in discussions in all female groups, due to their ability to interact confidently and comfortably within a female group situation (Richardson and Hartshorn, 1993). This preference is not surprising considering the importance that gender can play in the experience of individuals in group and team situations (Powell and Graves, 2003; Eagley and Karau, 1991). Social identification theories would suggest that individuals who share similar demographics to their team mates, particularly with respect to sex, ultimately have a more positive experience than those who are not similar (Tsui, Egan and O’Reilly, 1992). The perceived similarity between individuals can strengthen the interpersonal attraction between members and therefore facilitate
positive, rather than negative, interpersonal interactions (Powell and Graves, 2003). Therefore, in same sex groups, individuals can have more positive experiences. These findings would suggest that entrepreneurs may have increased satisfaction of development and training if they can actually identify with the people they are working and networking with. Powell and Graves (2003) suggest that forming same sex groups for females may help to alleviate some of the problems associated with sex effects and the negative possible outcomes of sex diversity, whilst at the same time increasing the positive associations of sex similarity effects. However, Powell and Graves’ (2003) work is based on behavioural styles adopted among male and female negotiators in mixed-gender, multi-party business negotiations. Further research is required to examine the sex similarity effects on same sex groups of entrepreneurs.

Confidentiality and trust are also important in the development of networks. Trust is essential to enable individuals to share the type of information which is likely to lead to good business opportunities. The importance of confidentiality was found in a study by Farr-Wharton and Brunetto (2007) who used mixed methods to examine networking benefits for entrepreneurs in one state of Australia. The study found that if female entrepreneurs are to be supported in their growth and development, they need to build trust within business networks. This would suggest that women require networks which are based on developed relationships. Networking and developing relationships with other individuals in similar situations can lead to entrepreneurial success. Whilst the importance of developing relationships is clear, there is a lack of research examining the specific impact of support and interventions on developing the networking ability of female entrepreneurs.

Social support exists in the now (received support i.e. the actual enactment of social support) and in the future (perceived support i.e. the perception that social support would be available should an individual wish to access it) (Helgeson, 1993). Although it is generally acknowledged that there are real benefits of perceived support and supportive environments, little is known about the process by which support is actually received (Lindorff, 2005). Perceived support is not just about availability but also satisfaction (Terry, Rawle and Callan, 1995), and when there is an absence of perceived support individuals can experience negative impacts on coping and performance. Support is rarely given in a structured form where both parties specify their requirements and the type of support required at any one time, e.g. emotional (affective – caring, acceptance and respect), instrumental (behavioural – tangible assistance) or affirmation (cognitive – information, knowledge and advice). However, there is evidence that specific functional types of social support are more effective in certain situations (Gigliotti,
2002). This can be seen when we look at the differences between men and women, for example, men are less likely to seek emotional support than women (Ashton and Fuehrer, 1993). In addition, if the wrong form of support is given then it can be interpreted as unsupportive and/or negative. In transitional situations, such as the process of new venture creation, it appears that for women affirmative support (specifically listening and exploring ideas) is the most helpful in dealing with the issues arising from their situation (Gigliotti, 2002).

The importance of informal relationships with regard to support and assistance is an area of great importance (Low and Mcmillan, 1988; Light and Rosentein, 1995; Aldrich, 1989). The Small Business Service (2004) survey reported that 17.8 per cent of business owners had consulted nobody other than their friends, family or informal contacts, compared with 14.7 per cent who had accessed support from a public agency. This illustrates the importance of informal contacts in business preparation, however little is known about the impact of informal contacts on the experiences of business owners.

2.6.5 Formal business advice and support

Business support provision agencies, such as Business Link and Chamber of Commerce, are organisations which have been established to assist entrepreneurs and provide them with support for business start-up and development. Solutions to support and educate entrepreneurs appear to be a primary objective of both academics and policy makers (Greene, Katz and Johannisson, 2004). Despite support initiatives being at the top of the agenda, barriers and obstacles to appropriate business support remain.

One of the few studies to examine business owners’ needs regarding business support provision was conducted by Stokes (2001). The study involved four focus groups (with five to six respondents in each) to explore the training and advice needs of owner-managers’ in West London. Respondents stressed the importance of flexible delivery of business support, believing time to be one of their biggest barriers to training. Respondents claimed that a multi-faceted approach was appealing, with a mixture of distance learning (via books or online), face-to-face tutorship and mentoring by other mediums such as e-mail. The advantage of this approach was felt to be the opportunity to learn in different ways at flexible times. However, respondents did emphasise the importance of face-to-face tutorship as the most effective way of communicating information. It was felt that personal interaction and body language could not be replaced by a computer. Respondents also emphasised the importance of shared learning with other business owners and they felt there was a need for greater networking amongst small firms and were interested by the idea of discussion pages or chat rooms. The study
concluded that it was particularly important that support was tailored to suit the needs of the individual so that they could make immediate practical use out of it. However, this study did not particularly examine the needs of female entrepreneurs.

Research suggests that women tend to require finance, accounting, business management and general business training (Schwartz, 1976; Stevenson, 1983; Winter, 1980). In addition to accounting and finance, women at the start-up phase also require information about sources of financing, advertising and sales (Gundry, Kowalke and Robertson, 1992). Despite the importance of providing support for entrepreneurs, there appears to be a lack of empirical research examining women’s views regarding the content and delivery of business support, particularly in the UK. This is a gap in the literature which needs to be addressed in order to provide women with a ‘voice’ so that they can be involved in the future design of business support programmes.

2.6.5.1 Lack of engagement

Business support service providers acknowledge that the number of women who approach them for support remains low (Schmidt and Parker, 2003). This lack of engagement is concerning considering that one of the key barriers to women’s business development is a lack of relevant business skill and knowledge. The literature has identified a variety of reasons why women do not access the support that is currently available. These reasons include social background, lack of confidence, lack of physical access, childcare responsibilities and ethnicity, a lack of understanding and doubts about the relevance of the services being offered and a lack of confidence and trust in these agencies (Fielden et al., 2003; Ram and Smallbone, 2001).

Table 2.3 highlights the discrepancy between men and women business owners who access mainstream provision across the regions. On average, businesses which have a female majority were half as likely to access support from their local Business Link, than organisations which had a male majority. However, these findings only show the percentage of support accessed through Business Link. Despite Business Link being one of the main providers for business support, there are other formal business support providers, such as Chamber of Commerce. In addition, these findings only show usage at a particular time point. It would have been useful to conduct a longitudinal study to examine female and male usage rates over a period of time to see if any changes occurred. Furthermore, these findings do not show the effectiveness of support received.
Table 2.3 Usage of Business Link by Gender and Region 2004/5 (per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Female Majority (%)</th>
<th>Male Majority (%)</th>
<th>Even Gender (%)</th>
<th>Unknown Gender (%)</th>
<th>Refused to provide gender (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire &amp; Humber</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prowess 2005

2.6.6 Confidence and Self-Efficacy

In addition to barriers relating to funding and finance, networking and previous education/work experience, women also face personal/dispositional barriers, such as personal attitudes, i.e. lack of confidence regarding business ownership. Personal attitudes can be a barrier which reinforces the majority of the obstacles and barriers previously listed. A lack of self-confidence can prevent female entrepreneurs from accessing support, networks and funding and it can also prevent women from perceiving their business as a viable concern, therefore potentially limiting their business development. A lack of self-confidence is generally viewed as a considerable barrier for women contemplating or operating a small business (Shragg, Yacuk and Glass, 1992; Still and Guerin, 1991; Blisson and Nelson, 2003). Kalleberg and Leicht (1991) state that women may have less confidence in their business ability, compared to men, and are less likely to feel that they can influence the performance of their business. After reviewing the literature, Birley concluded that, “on only one important factor do males and females appear to differ significantly: self-confidence” (Birley, 1989: 33). Women’s lack of self-confidence may be expressed by lower perceptions of entrepreneurial control and abilities. While Birley’s review of the literature was conducted nearly twenty years ago, the finding that women lack self-confidence regarding business ownership is still apparent. Research has shown that women are more likely than men to limit and restrict their ultimate career choices because of a lack of confidence in their abilities (Bandura, 1992). In addition, women often dismiss entrepreneurial endeavours because they believe that they do not have the required skills necessary to embark on an entrepreneurial career (Chen et al., 1998; Wilson et al., 2007). An individual’s uncertainty regarding success would appear to be inextricably linked to their belief that they have the ability to succeed (self-efficacy) (Wilson et al., 2007).
It may also be important to address women’s lack of familiarity with the business world, therefore focusing on areas where women’s weaknesses are found, such as finance, marketing, sales, planning and interpersonal skills, self-confidence (DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Fielden et al., 2003; Harding and Cowling, 2004; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000). Despite this research, there is an absence of longitudinal studies examining women’s business learning and development and how programmes can help to improve self-efficacy, self-confidence and entrepreneurial skills in particular areas. The majority of the literature appears to centre on highlighting the areas where women lack confidence and where they have potential weaknesses, however there is limited available research examining how this can be overcome and how programmes can be designed to help women to build self-confidence.

In the pre start-up and start-up phases of business, women’s lack of confidence and fear of failure can prevent them from viewing entrepreneurship as a viable career alternative. The GEM UK (Levie and Hart, 2009) report examined, amongst other factors, entrepreneurial perceptions of males and females with regard to entrepreneurship. The results show that ‘fear of failure’ remains higher among females (40.4 per cent) than it is among males (34.2 per cent). This figure has also increased from 36.7 per cent among females from 2007 to 2008. In addition, to the statement ‘I personally know someone who has started a business’ 30.3 per cent of males stated that they had whilst only 21.2 per cent of females agreed. Furthermore, in response to the statement ‘I have the skills knowledge and experience to start a business’, 58.7 per cent of men and only 38.8 of women agreed with the statement.

It is evident from the literature that barriers to female entrepreneurship are wide ranging, for example access to finance (Carter, Brush, Greene, Gatewood and Hart, 2003; Shaw, Carter, and Brierton, 2001), role conflict between work and family roles, more significant than for men (Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Welter, 2004; Hollowell, Mellors and Silver, 2006), lack of business experience and knowledge (Haynes, 2003; Watkins and Watkins, 1984; Carter et al., 1997) and reduced social capital (Kramer, 1992; Buttner and Rosen, 1988; Katz and Williams, 1997). In addition to these barriers, research suggests that women’s lack of confidence can prevent them from viewing entrepreneurship as a viable career option and from accessing the support and advice available (Harding, 2006). Female entrepreneurs’ uncertainty regarding business ownership is often linked to their belief that they do not have the ability to succeed (self-efficacy) (Wilson et al., 2007). Business support provision is one method to help women overcome some of the barriers that they face. Some authors suggest that business support can aim to overcome some of the barriers to access by tailoring the provision to women’s
needs (Roomi, 2005; Stranger, 2004; Carter, 2000; Fielden et al., 2003; Harding, 2004; Tillmar, 2007). However, there is an absence of empirical research examining the impact of tailored support for women business owners, therefore making it difficult to draw any definite conclusions.

Research has shown that individuals who have higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy have higher entrepreneurial intentions (Wilson et al., 2007: 390; Chen et al., 1998; DeNoble, Jung and Ehrlich, 1999; Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000; Scott and Twomey, 1988; Segal, Borgia and Schoenfeld, 2002; Wang, Wong and Lu, 2002). Self-efficacy can be seen as “an individual’s cognitive estimate of his or her capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to exercise control over events in their lives” (Chen, et al. 1998: 296; Wood and Bandura, 1989). Women often have lower entrepreneurial self-efficacy and lower entrepreneurial intentions, when compared with men. Wilson et al. (2007) provide reasoning for this in the sense that even when women believe that they have some of the skills needed to be an entrepreneur, they tend to choose another career path if they believe they possess stronger skills in that area, therefore, they may self-limit in gathering career information and experiences that lead to becoming an entrepreneur. Actual skill levels appear to matter less than self-perceptions of those skills (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli, 2001; Betz and Hackett, 1981; Scherer, Brodzinski and Wiebe, 1990), particularly when those perceptions are shaped by gender stereotypes (Wilson et al., 2007). Women tend to have lower expectations with regard to success in a wide range of occupations (Chen et al., 1998; Wilson et al., 2007; Chowdhury and Endres, 2005; Gatewood, Shaver, Powers and Gartner, 2002; Eccles, 1994). However, significantly lower levels of self-efficacy among women have been found in careers which have typically been perceived as “non traditional” for women (Krueger and Kickul, 2006; Zhao, Seibert and Hills, 2005; Wilson, Marlino and Kickul, 2004; Bandura et al., 2001; Betz and Hackett, 1981; Scherer, et al., 1990). Some entrepreneurship research suggests that stereotypes which associate entrepreneurs with traditionally masculine characteristics may in fact be responsible for reported low entrepreneurial intentions among women (Gupta and Bhave, 2007). Women may be more strongly influenced by perceived skill deficits regarding entrepreneurship than their male counterparts (Bandura et al., 2001) and female entrepreneurs’ lack of confidence regarding entrepreneurial success may indeed be a barrier to their own development. According to Segal et al (2002:53), “research implies that levels of entrepreneurial intentions of such groups (women and minority groups) are related to their levels of perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Enhancing their perceptions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and outcome expectations may strengthen the entrepreneurial intentions of women and minorities.”
2.6.7 Gender and entrepreneurship

In order to understand the interplay of both individual and societal factors and the gendered nature of entrepreneurship, Ahl (2006) examines the discursive practices apparent in organisations and suggests that “discourse is never neutral—it has power implications for the object of which it speaks in that it forms what is held as knowledge or truth” (Ahl, 2006: 597, Foucault, 1969/1972). An example of a dominant discourse of women is that they are viewed as being primarily suited for childcare, for example, society fits into this way of viewing women and are therefore likely to favour a situation where the man is the breadwinner and the woman is the caregiver (Ahl, 2006). Entrepreneurship is also gendered, research has found that entrepreneurs are generally described in stereotypically masculine terms, for example, ‘strong-willed’ and ‘resolute’, while feminine characteristics, for example, ‘sensitive to the needs of others’, ‘gentle’, ‘shy’, and ‘yielding’ are the direct opposites of espoused entrepreneurial characteristics (Ahl, 2006). The typical stereotype of entrepreneurs is seen to be associated with traditionally masculine characteristics and women are not seen as fitting this image of a ‘typical’ entrepreneur (Gupta and Bhawe, 2007). Research has shown that women who are more proactive will be less inclined to become an entrepreneur after exposure to an entrepreneurial masculine stereotype (Gupta and Bhawe, 2007). Furthermore, research has shown that training programmes for entrepreneurs tend to be perceived as male dominated and patronizing, with little evidence of ‘female management styles’ (Fielden et al., 2003).

“Gender-neutral training and development programmes are often highly gendered and gendering, encouraging the take up of particular versions of femininity and/or masculinity (Swan, Stead and Elliott, 2009: 434). Swan et al (2009) go on to assert that we need to understand how men and women differ in relation to their own identities and the politics of inclusion, this means that we need to examine how gender, women and feminism are explained and understood in the world of entrepreneurship. Simpson and Lewis (2007: 84) state that “in order to maintain their privileged positions, dominant discourses must silence and devalue competing meanings and interpretations. The dominant discourse of enterprise and entrepreneurialism, currently privileged in many areas of organisational life can therefore be seen to be constructed on a valorization of masculine values and attributes”. Therefore, it is important to redress this dominant discourse, by providing women with a platform and an opportunity to have their voices heard and their views acted upon.

In order to do this it is important to understand how workplaces and practices are gendered. To illustrate this, Lewis (2008) examined the differences of nurses on
baby units and the differing gendered practices in day and evening shifts and how the unit was inhabited at night and how this differed for day shifts. Those on the evening shifts created their own gendered practices in the sense of creating informal social relations which were particularly intense. The findings from this study suggest that the changes in the organisations processes in the night unit created a different organisational space which helped to transform the emotions of staff, making them feel supported. The study showed that feminine philanthropic norms prevailed on the night shift. The informal social relations and methods of coping on the night shift had a number of impacts on the night staff. For example, the nurses on the night shift were more likely to feel part of a team and they had similar personal profiles, tending to be married with children. As Fahey (1995: 690) states “when one considers the many forms and instances of private in the public sphere, that sphere emerges not as a single, vast, open social space but as a complex, multi layered warren of zones and sub spaces with different degrees and forms of privacy attracted to them and different forms of inter connections between them.” Therefore, an examination of how female entrepreneurs create the spaces within which they operate and the norms which are apparent in these spaces are important additions to the current literature, particularly pertaining to female entrepreneurs learning and development.

Ahl (2006) calls for research examining how programmes are designed, and how they position the woman entrepreneur. In addition, asking questions such as, are the programmes really beneficial for women, or do they cast women in the category of the helpless and needy? The study documented in this thesis goes some way to addressing these issues, by demonstrating the effectiveness of a support programme for women and providing a model of coaching which can be used to facilitate female entrepreneurs development. This study also calls into question the previous models of coaching which are largely based on practitioners’ experiences, or have been evaluated within an organisational context which use male norms to evaluate the effectiveness of such programmes. The study presented in this thesis shows how coaching can be developed for women, particular for their needs and requirements.

2.6.8 Summary of Section 2.6: Barriers encountered by female entrepreneurs
Liberal feminist theory and social feminist theory provide differing perspectives as to why women are disadvantaged in entrepreneurship. Some suggest that female entrepreneurs are confronted with situational/structural barriers (liberal feminist theory); whereas others suggest that women face dispositional barriers (social feminist theory) which can prevent them from starting or developing their business (Fischer et al., 1993). Dominant discourses inherent in entrepreneurship create
barriers to the development of female entrepreneurship and need to be addressed in order to redress the gendered nature of entrepreneurship.

The main barriers faced by female entrepreneurs are based on access to funding and finance, domestic responsibilities and maintaining a work/life balance, a lack of human capital, which relates to previous work experience and education and a lack of social capital which includes women’s networking ability (Carter et al., 2007; Carter and Rosa, 1998; Aldrich, 1989; Green and Cohen, 1995; Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Welter, 2004; DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000; Verhuel and Thuri, 2001). Despite the importance of informal sources of support, little is known about entrepreneurs’ experiences of such support. Formal business support provision is available to help and guide entrepreneurs; however the number of women using such support remains low (Williams and Cowling, 2009). Research has suggested that women are not accessing support because of issues such as a lack confidence, lack of knowledge, lack of physical access, and a lack of understanding about the relevance of the services (Fielden et al., 2003; Ram and Smallbone, 2001). Despite this there appears to be a lack of research examining what women actually want from business support services, both in terms of content and delivery of business support.

A lack of confidence in abilities is a further barrier faced by female entrepreneurs which can prevent them from viewing entrepreneurship as a viable career option and from accessing business support and advice which are available, and can in fact underpin many of the obstacles and barriers previously mentioned. More specifically, research has shown that women tend to have lower entrepreneurial self-efficacy and lower entrepreneurial intentions than their male counterparts. Therefore, female entrepreneurs’ low self-efficacy regarding entrepreneurial success can be considered a barrier to success.

A review of the literature has shown that there is limited research examining the impact of barriers to women’s entrepreneurial success, such as access to finance, balancing work and family roles, lack of human and social capital and a lack of self-confidence/self-efficacy. Furthermore, there is an absence of empirical, longitudinal research examining techniques which can help to alleviate some of the problems faced by women business owners and methods which can help to overcome barriers to success.

The individual, which is usually identified as male is most commonly the focus of research, therefore the invisibility of women in entrepreneurship contributes towards and also reinforces the dominant discourse of entrepreneurship (Hamilton,
Howorth, and Rose, 2006). Ogbor (2000) asserts that the discourse in entrepreneurship acts as a technique by which power is sustained and prevents any understanding of entrepreneurial diversity as it remains uncritical of the social, cultural and institutional forces which shape the patterns and development of entrepreneurship.

2.7 Summary of Chapter 2: Entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship, overcoming barriers to female entrepreneurs development: an overview

In 2008, female total entrepreneurial activity (TEA) was 3.4 per cent of the adult population, compared to 8.6 per cent male entrepreneurial activity. Furthermore, the UK has one of the lowest ratios for female established business ownership compared to TEA of the G8. Furthermore, the gap in fear of failure between males and females has widened (Levie and Hart, 2009).

While female and male entrepreneurship share characteristics, they are distinct areas and should be viewed in this way. The statistical data showing that female entrepreneurship is increasing has perhaps masked the fact that men continue to play more of an active role in entrepreneurship compared to women (Wilson et al., 2007). Marital status and families can be a motivating factor and an obstacle for women deciding to set up a business. Female entrepreneurs tend to be aged between 35 and 44 (Harding, 2006) and are typically highly educated (Harding, 2006). There appear to be two perspectives to women’s motives for starting up in business, firstly, that female entrepreneurs are pulled into self-employment, by the promise of increased flexibility. Secondly, there are female entrepreneurs who have been pushed or forced into self-employment because of job loss or difficulty finding employment (Belcourt, 1988).

Barriers to female entrepreneurship are wide ranging and cover the whole spectrum of business development, from pre start-up to maturity. These barriers can be seen as situational and dispositional barriers (Fischer et al., 1993). Women face barriers relating to access to finance, domestic responsibilities, human and social capital, access to support and self-confidence. Business support provision is one way which women can overcome some of the barriers that they face. However, the number of women who access business support remains low (Fielden et al., 2003). A review of the literature has found that there is a lack of empirical research examining what women require from business support and how they would prefer business support provision to be designed. In addition, there is a paucity of empirical research examining the effectiveness of business support provision which is currently provided. Furthermore, self-confidence and self-efficacy are internal barriers which female entrepreneurs experience, however, there is little available literature or empirical studies examining how this can be
rectified. A review of the literature has demonstrated the need for empirical studies examining the gendered nature of business support provision and the development of female entrepreneurs and for understanding how female entrepreneurs experience business support.

The main areas of investigation absent from current academic literature are shown in Table 3.4.
CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW (PART 2):
Coaching as a technique for developing the workforce and entrepreneurs

3.1 Introduction
Coaching has a long history that can be traced back to Socrates, who believed that
individuals learn best when they have ownership of a situation and take some form
of personal responsibility for the outcome (Whitmore, 2002). Coaching is a
personalised form of development activity (O’Connor and Lages, 2004), which
focuses on improving performance (Jarvis, 2004). The majority of coaching
literature typically focuses on large organisations (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003;
Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Whitmore, 2002; Megginson and Clutterbuck,
1995). Despite the importance of coaching as a development tool, empirical
research examining the effectiveness of coaching is scarce, with an absence of
longitudinal research using control groups (Smither and London, 2003).

This chapter will provide a detailed review of the coaching literature. Firstly, the
chapter will focus on defining coaching and its different forms and the similarities
and differences between coaching and other development interventions, such as
mentoring. The chapter will then focus on the coaching relationship, particularly
exploring the process, forms of delivery, requirements of the coach and the
coachee, selecting a coach, boundaries in coaching relationships, barriers to
effective coaching, learning and development in coaching, unsuccessful
relationships and coaching in small businesses.

3.2 What is coaching?
Although the origins of coaching date back centuries, its use and effectiveness as
a method of professional learning and development has only been the focus of
academic and business literature in the past few decades. Interest in the potential
for coaching in organisations largely derives from the North American management
writers of the 1980s, for example Thomas Leonard, who is one of the key players
in personal and business coaching. Tim Gallway (1986: 2000) was the first to
document the movement of coaching from the sporting arena to business,
presenting a method of coaching which could be applied to almost any situation.
Gallway’s innovative work has been extremely influential and underpins many of
the current approaches to coaching (Whitmore, 2002).

Coaching is a developmental intervention that is increasingly being employed in
organisations, which can enable individuals to adjust to major changes in the
rapidly evolving business environment (Giglio et al., 1998; Whitmore, 2002; Zeus
and Skiffington, 2003; Hudson, 1999). Proponents of coaching state that it can
help to support individuals in making the necessary steps to advance in their careers and perform at optimum levels in roles that require large changes in skills and responsibility.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Training and Development Survey (2004) of more than 500 respondents, demonstrated that organisations are now moving away from classroom-based training and placing increasing importance on other forms of learning and development, such as coaching. The survey highlighted that there had been a 51 per cent net increase in the use of coaching over the last few years, and a 42 per cent net increase in the use of mentoring and buddy schemes. The reliance on traditional, formal classroom based training is now becoming a rarity (Parsloe and Rolph, 2004). In contrast, coaching in personal, training and organisational contexts has increased considerably throughout the last decade (Carter, 2001; Fournies, 2000).

Coaching is centred on unlocking an individual’s potential to maximise his or her own performance. Improving the individual, with regard to performance and the development of skills, is crucial to an effective coaching relationship (Gallway, 1986). Parsloe (1999:8) defines coaching as “a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. To be successful a coach requires knowledge and understanding of process as well as the variety of styles and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place.”

3.2.1 The increasing popularity of coaching

Coaching, alongside mentoring, has become increasingly recognised, particularly in the United States, but also recently in the UK (Clutterbuck, 1999). The ability to learn and adapt quickly is becoming progressively more important in today’s rapidly evolving business environment and targeted interventions such as coaching can enable individuals to adjust to major changes in the workplace (Hudson, 1999).

The importance of life-long learning is now recognised, particularly in today’s constantly changing, fast moving business environment (Hudson, 1999). Features of the modern organisation, such as flatter organisational structures and lower job security, result in newly promoted individuals often having to make large changes in skills and responsibility. Coaching has the adaptability to support different individuals and different learning styles, so can be used to support more individuals within the organisation than traditional forms of training (Jarvis, 2004). The development needs of individuals are diverse and the ‘one size fits all’ model of development is inappropriate, while coaching provides a flexible responsive
development approach that can be tailored and delivered to individual needs. However, there is an absence of research examining diverse models of coaching.

Over recent years there has been an increasing trend, whereby individuals take greater responsibility for their own development (Parsloe and Rolph, 2004). If individuals are to do this, they need support and advice and the coaching relationship appears to provide employees with the appropriate support they need in order to achieve their developmental aims (Whitmire, 2002). Individuals are now demanding different forms of training and development and tend to be more motivated when training is relevant to their job and responsibilities (Jarvis, 2004). Coaching focuses on particular work issues and improving job performance, thus it can be tailored to relevant aspects of work, having the ability to connect short-term strategies to longer term plans for the individual and organisation (Hudson, 1999). Coachees ideally receive direct advice, assistance and attention which fits with their own time schedules and objectives and, unlike one off training activities, coaching can provide continuing support for personal development plans (Jarvis, 2004).

A study conducted by Arnott and Sparrow (2004) of over 1000 (n=1,153) organisations across the UK, found that organisations used coaching for three main reasons: supporting a strategic initiative, supporting leadership development, responding directly to individual requests. This is also supported by the recent CIPD Training and Development survey (2004), which demonstrated that organisations are now placing increasing importance on creating and fostering cultures that support learning and development. The CIPD survey findings showed that respondents felt that it was imperative for line managers to play a significant role in advising on and supporting development activity. However, the survey concluded that 66 per cent of respondents claimed that there was no formal written strategy for coaching activities taking place in their organisation, and only six per cent claimed to have one that covered all staff. Furthermore, only five per cent claimed to have line managers that had been trained to coach their team members. These findings suggest that organisations may claim to recognise the importance of coaching, but do not necessarily develop the appropriate culture that is required for coaching to be effective.

3.2.2 Defining coaching

Surprisingly, to date, there is no clearly agreed definition of coaching (Grant and Cavanagh, 2004). One of the most frequently used definitions of coaching and the one which is used in this study is provided by Parsloe (1999:8) who states that coaching is “a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. To be successful a coach requires knowledge and
understanding of process as well as the variety of styles and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place.” This definition has been used for this study as it embodies the main aspects of coaching, that if learning and development occur, then this will result in improved performance, however it does not specify what learning has to take place and in what context, e.g. an organisation. The definition provides a good basis in order to understand coaching and coaching relationships by emphasising the importance of learning, however it is also important to examine how this learning takes place and how this learning will ultimately impact on performance. An understanding of the learning processes involved in coaching is necessary to understand how this development intervention is used in practice. A description of how people can learn in coaching is provided later in this chapter (section 3.4.6). This section provides some detail as to the main processes involved when individuals learn and how this can be related to coaching practices. Despite this link and the importance of learning in coaching relationships, a review of the literature has shown that there is limited empirical research examining exactly how learning takes place in coaching, particularly for different groups of individuals.

In addition, the definitions of coaching that are provided and which are typically used in the coaching literature do not allow for differences in coaching different groups of individuals and the impact of other variables, such as gender and ethnicity. A review of the literature suggests that coaching and coaching relationships tend to follow a set approach with set goals and objectives to be achieved throughout the relationship. Without an examination of coaching for a variety of individuals and in a variety of different settings it is difficult to draw any complete conclusions as to the relevance of these definitions in practice.

Coaching is generally viewed as a form of mentoring, or as a certain aspect of mentoring, but simply having a more narrowed focus, generally relating to an individual’s specific job task or responsibilities or skills (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). A discussion regarding the differences of coaching and mentoring is provided in section 3.4.1. Megginson and Boydell (1979) refer to coaching as ‘on the job activity’ whereby one individual will give guidance to another to help them to improve their performance. Clutterbuck (1992) concurs with this narrower view of coaching, stating that coaching is one of the core skills of mentoring, however this view is not held by all authors in this field, for example many practitioners use the terms coaching and mentoring interchangeably. Popper and Lipschitz (1992) assert that coaching has two components, firstly, improving performance at a skill level and secondly, establishing relations that allow a coach to develop the coachee’s psychological development (Popper and Lipschitz, 1992).
Coaching can be applied to a variety of areas, such as motivating staff, problem solving, relationship issues, team building, and staff development. Effective coaches challenge limiting beliefs and reinforce positive beliefs, by providing tasks that are followed by feedback. Moreover, coaching is a collaborative relationship, with an emphasis on equipping staff to enable them to fully develop themselves and to facilitate a shift in their knowledge and behaviour.

Coaching is a fluid relationship, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. While the primary focus is on the current performance of the coachee, the aim of the relationship is also to explore patterns of behaviours and assumptions and beliefs which have been formed through past experiences, whilst also examining how the coaching relationship can impact future progress and development (Kenton and Moody, 2001).

**Figure 3.1 - Fluid relationship of coaching**

![Fluid relationship of coaching](image)

Source: Kenton and Moody (2001: 5)

Coaching is essentially a conversation, a dialogue between a coach and a coachee, which takes place within a productive and results oriented context. Coaching is centred on learning; however a coach should not be seen as a teacher. The role of the coach is to listen, ask questions and provide information, so that coachees ultimately learn how to correct their own behaviour and how to generate their own questions and answers. In summary, coaching is centred on asking the right questions, rather than providing the right answers. A coach must engage in a collaborative relationship with the coachee, so that the coaching pair can establish and clarify goals and develop an effective plan of action (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003).

Simply conducting a search on the internet provides a vast number of web pages devoted to coaching and how it is seen as a fast-growing branch of the training and development industry. In general, coaching is a way to promote learning and development and can provide numerous benefits for organisational and individual
development, however is coaching just a new way of describing training? Although coaching has been poorly researched to date (Schlosser, Wend, Bhavnani and Nail-Chiwetalu, 2006), some practitioners and researchers have shown that coaching is a unique form of development which has numerous positive outcomes (Orenstein, 2006; Wasylshyn, Gronsky and Haas, 2006; McGovern Lindemann, Vergara, Murphy, Barker, Warrenfeltz, 2001; Smither and London, 2003). However, longitudinal research using a control group to examine the efficacy of coaching in various settings is limited (Grant and Cavanagh, 2004; Hamlin, Ellinger and Beattie, 2006; Evers, Brouwers and Welko, 2006). As Orenstein (2006:107) states “in view of the enormous growth in practice, a substantive literature regarding the field has remained relatively limited. Even more limited are contributions regarding the outcome evaluation and the efficacy of executive coaching.” This lack of outcome evaluation is concerning particularly considering the recent increase of coaching as a development intervention. Without rigorous research examining the efficacy of coaching it is difficult to draw any conclusions on its impact both in terms of organisational and individual development. Wasylshyn et al. (2006:76) state that “in the absence of empirical study, it will be difficult for this application of psychology in business to maintain a place of respect and credibility among leadership development resources.”

3.3 Theoretical roots of coaching

Coaching has a number of conceptual and professional roots; however it has two major antecedents. Firstly, the psychosocial theories of adult development, including psychosocial stage theories, secondly, the social theories of adult development/humanistic approach and thirdly, the behavioural approach (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009). Whilst coaches and coachees do not enter into a psychoanalytical relationship, these theories have informed coaching thinking and application (Hudson, 1999). These theories will now be outlined.

3.3.1 Psychoanalytical and psychosocial theories

Freud believed that the motivating forces in people’s lives were driven and motivated by the unconscious and considered these unconscious forces as symbols, which he studied indirectly through the interpretation of dreams (Freud, 1965) (See Freud (1949) for a full explanation and discussion of the principal tenets on which psychoanalytic theory is based). According to Freud, the unconscious is the ultimate source of our motivations, either simple desires for food or sex, neurotic compulsions, or the motives of an artist or scientist. However, we are often driven to deny or resist becoming conscious of these motives, and they are often available to us only in a disguised form. Despite the importance of Freud’s work, there are many who criticise his theory and its emphasis on sexuality. All things whether they be positive, or negative, good or bad appear to
be based on and stem from the expression or repression of the sex drive. This has been questioned, as many believe there are other processes at play. For the purposes of this review the author will simply describe Freud and Jung's theory in relation to coaching, a detailed description and criticisms of Freud and Jung's theory can be found in (Hudson, 1999).

Freud's explanation of symbolic thinking is important in the coaching field. The language used in coaching is often symbolic and reveals more than the actual 'word' itself. In this sense, coaches must learn to read the coachees' non-verbals, for example, body language and silences. By doing so, the coach can help the coachee to become increasingly self-aware, by uncovering unconscious ideas which can help the coaching process and ultimately enable the coachees to achieve their objectives (Hudson, 1999).

Similarly, Jung's theory of life as a progression in consciousness and self-awareness has close links to coaching. Jung believed that psychology was the study of the universal symbolism in adult life, viewing the second half of life as a time when individuals progress and a time when a person's true identity will emerge (Jung, 1955). This has connections with coaching, for example Jung refers to the second half of life as a spiritual awakening. Coaches and coachees often experience this spiritual awakening and development and therefore it is imperative that the coach can facilitate this process (Hudson, 1999).

It is often important to know how people evolve throughout their life, as this information may be critical for the coaching relationship. The theory of adult development is borne from developmental psychology and arose in the late 1950s. Van Gennep, an anthropologist, discussed extensively the rites of passage which individuals travel through and argued that these rites of passage often result in individuals taking on a new social role (Van Gennep, 1961). A coaching relationship is often established when a coachee is experiencing a rite of passage, or a coachee may pass through several rites of passage during a coaching relationship (Hudson, 1999).

### 3.3.2 Social theories of adult development/Humanistic

The responsibility of a coach is often to facilitate development and organisational planning and training (Hudson, 1999). Because of this facilitation, coaches can use major social theories of adult development to enable them to gain a deeper insight into their coaching task and responsibilities. Human systems' theories relate to the contexts and environments of human beings, for example families, work organisations, networks and social movements, to name just a few (Hudson, 1999). These theories examine and explore the roles that individuals play between
and among their various systems, stating that adult development will occur when human systems experience some form of system change. Adult development occurs when two or more systems e.g. biological, psychological and interpersonal, cause disequilibrium in an individual’s life. The human system theory suggests that it is the timing of these events which can lead to development and growth, or indeed regression or even dysfunction. Such an event trigger could be marriage, parenthood, divorce or being hired/fired (Hudson, 1999).

There has been some linkage made between adult development and developmental relationships, such as coaching and mentoring (Hunt and Michael, 1983; Kram, 1983), however the actual connection remains largely unexplored (Chandler and Kram, 2005). Adult development theories explore the individual’s personal and professional goals as well as their needs and capabilities (Kegan, 1982, 1991, 1994) and the developmental tasks which one may face during one’s lifetime (Erikson, 1963, 1968).

Within social context theories, adults are examined in the context of their social lives i.e. families, careers, socio-economic system and political system. A development “crisis” as Hudson (1999: 86) refers to it, can be a disruption related to some element of the social systems of an individual’s life. Kurt Lewin (1945) proposed the concept of ‘re-education’, believing that adults learn and keep learning new ways of thinking in three areas: cognitive change (perceptions, information, expectation and beliefs); value modification (beliefs, feelings and sense of approval and disapproval); and motoric action (behavioural skills, interpersonal skills) (Lewin and Grabbe, 1945; Hudson, 1999). Lewin goes on to propose a number of principles to guide this process of ‘re-education’ throughout adulthood and suggests that for individuals to change they must first look at the way that they perceive themselves and their various situations. Lewin refutes the use of classroom learning, believing it to be of limited value because it relies too heavily on the possession of knowledge and by doing so does not rectify false perceptions, bad feelings or social decision-making (Hudson, 1999). In contrast, one-to-one relationships, such as coaching are based on self-awareness and changing negative or unhelpful behaviours and therefore may be more suited to learning (O’Connor and Lages, 2004; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003).

3.3.3 Behavioural
An example of behavioural coaching is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The central concept of CBT is based on the view that how people interpret an event or situation will affect the way that they feel about a situation and ultimately how they behave. Therefore, if you change the way that a person thinks about a situation you will ultimately change the way that the person acts and feels. Therefore, the
route to emotional change is through cognitive and behavioural change (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009).

3.4 The main characteristics of coaching

The following section will examine the main characteristics of coaching. Illustrating the way in which coaching differs to other forms of development interventions, e.g. mentoring, and the various forms of coaching relationships. This section will also examine the processes involved in coaching and the various approaches which can be taken, followed by the roles of a coach and coachee and decisions regarding selecting a coach and matching coaches and coachees, and various forms of delivery, e.g. online. Finally, boundaries and barriers to coaching and benefits and limitations of coaching relationships will be discussed. However, it must be noted that the majority of coaching literature tends to take a one size fits all approach to coaching, Parsloe and Leedham (2009) have moved away from this way of theorising coaching and present some interesting information relating to different coaching practices for different groups. Reference to this material will be made throughout this section.

3.4.1 Differences and similarities between coaching and other development interventions

Coaching is often compared with other forms of development activity, such as mentoring, counselling and general training. Whilst coaching does share some similarities with other interventions, it also has unique characteristics. The various similarities and differences between coaching, mentoring, counselling and training will now be explored.

3.4.1.1 Coaching and mentoring

It is important to establish the difference between coaching and mentoring as the terms are often used interchangeably. To ensure that the correct approach is being used, it is necessary to distinguish between the role of coaching and the coach and the role of mentoring and the mentor. While the functions of mentoring and coaching relationships invariably overlap, they are two separate forms of developmental work relationships (Benabou and Benabou, 2000). Coaching is directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and skill, by a form of tutoring or instruction (Goldsmith, Lyons and Freas, 2000; Whitmore, 2002). Mentoring is, in effect, one step removed and is concerned with the longer-term acquisition of skills in a developing career (Kram, 1985; Chao, 1997). Coaching is often viewed as skills related, and specific abilities are often directly linked to outcomes (Cranwell-Ward, Bossons and Gover, 2004). Coaching relationships have been shown to differ in a number of ways from mentoring relationships. Table 3.1 highlights the main differences between coaching and mentoring.
relationships including the duration of the relationship, in that coaching relationships typically focus on shorter-term development, whereas mentoring is based on a longer-term relationship. In addition, the focus of coaching and mentoring relationships differ. Coaching relationships tend to be task specific, focusing on specific skills development, whereas mentoring relationships tend to be based on a broader individual and organisational focus. Thus, coaching is concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and the development of skills, whereas mentoring concentrates on the longer-term organisation of skills in developing a career (Parsloe, 1999).

### Table 3.1 Differences between Coaching and Mentoring relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship generally has a set duration.</td>
<td>Ongoing relationship/ long period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally more structured in nature and</td>
<td>Can be more informal, meetings can take place as and when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meetings are scheduled on a regular basis.</td>
<td>mentee needs guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term and focused on specific</td>
<td>More long term and takes a broader view of the person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development areas/issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching is generally not performed on the</td>
<td>Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basis that the coach needs to have direct</td>
<td>mentee. Often a senior person in the organisation who can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience of their client’s formal</td>
<td>pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occupational role, unless the coaching is</td>
<td>out of reach opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific and skills focused.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on development/issues at work.</td>
<td>Focus on career/personal development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agenda is focused on achieving specific</td>
<td>Agenda is set by the mentee, with the mentors providing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and immediate goals.</td>
<td>support and guidance to prepare them for future roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching revolves more around specific</td>
<td>Mentoring revolves more around developing the mentee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development areas/issues.</td>
<td>professionally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jarvis (2004: 20)

3.4.1.2 Coaching and other forms of development

Coaching and counselling are often viewed as similar forms of development interventions; however there are some fundamental differences which need to be addressed. Zeus and Skiffington (2003) illustrate the main differences and similarities between the functions of coaching and counselling highlighting similarities between the two interventions, for example, both use assessment and are client centred. The differences between coaching and counselling tend to be focused on the power relationships between counsellor/client and coach/coachee and the focus of the relationship, in that counselling tends to be focused on past issues, whereas coaching is centred on forward action and setting goals for the future.

Coaching is also often compared with training, whilst they do share some similarities in terms of developing individuals, there are some fundamental differences. For example, the training agenda tends to be fixed by the trainer, whereas in coaching the individual sets the agenda and it can be fluid and flexible. Coaching works with the client to clarify their own values, enhance motivation and
looks for areas of change, whereas in training, change comes from the outside in. Within a training programme, some trainees will benefit from the programme while others unfortunately will not, therefore training is not completely successful for all trainees. In contrast, the coaching intervention is personalised and geared towards the individuals’ needs and aspirations, therefore it is more focused on the individual and in turn can lead to better results. The coaching process includes ongoing feedback and continuous learning. Training can often reinforce traditional, hierarchical management styles, whereby one individual will provide a set programme which will be followed by trainees, whereas coaching is a more democratic and collaborative process. Coaching is about sustained behaviour changes, whereas training tends not to bring about majors shifts in thinking and action (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003:14). Training appears to be based on a fixed, general and hierarchical intervention, compared to coaching, which is based on a collaborative, flexible relationship designed specifically for the individual needs of the coachee.

3.4.2 Different forms of coaching
There are a number of different approaches to coaching, or niche types of coaching, which have been developed over recent years. These have mainly derived from the sporting model, some of which are directed at individual coaching relationships and some of which take a team approach. While these approaches are frequently used in the business world, few have been empirically tested and their effectiveness remains to be fully established. A review conducted by CIPD (2004) found the most common types of coaching used by CIPD members to be performance and skills coaching. However the study also found that 50 per cent of respondents stated that they didn’t clearly understand the differences between the different types of coaching (Jarvis, 2004). Generally the three forms of coaching which the literature refers to are life skills, business and executive coaching (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). These forms of coaching will now be explored.

3.4.2.1 Life skills
Life skills’ coaching was first developed in the 1960s and preceded that of business and executive coaching. Life coaching involves an individual relationship between a coach and coachee to bring about some form of life transformation and focuses on personal, professional, health and relationship issues. This form of coaching is centred on supporting individuals who want to make some form of significant life change (O’Connor and Lages, 2004). It is focused on clarifying values and visions and setting goals for the future in order to achieve a more satisfying and successful life (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Life skills coaching can cover a range of areas, for example, partnership coaching, retirement coaching, singles coaching, fitness coaching, wellness coaching and quality of life coaching. Coaches help coachees
to explore what they want in and out of life and how they might achieve their aspirations (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; Jarvis, 2004). The majority of life skills coaching relationships last between three to six months and the sessions are typically on a weekly basis (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003).

3.4.2.2 Business coaching
Business coaching can be applied to all types of businesses, and range from individual and team coaching in large organisations to coaching of owners and managers of small and medium sized businesses. Business owners and managers often find that they are consumed with the day-to-day management and running of a business and do not have time to look at the ‘big picture’ (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Business coaching can include examining interpersonal and communication skills, time management, balancing work and personal life issues, increasing productivity, customer service development and identifying gaps and obstacles to efficiency (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Business coaching concentrates primarily on individuals, not on the business systems, however coaching will ultimately impact and improve the results of a business indirectly (O’Connor and Lages, 2004).

3.4.2.3 Executive coaching
Executive coaching is centred on developing fast track and high performing leaders and specifically relates to the coaching of executives and senior managers (O’Connor and Lages, 2004). The belief is based on the theory that by improving the performance of senior management, the organisation will ultimately improve. Kilburg (1996) defines executive coaching as “a helping relationship between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals…within a formally defined coaching agreement” (Brotman, Liberi and Wasylyshyn, 1998: 41). Executive coaching is centred on the dynamics of being near, or at, the top of an organisation and fully recognising the need for constant improvement. Some areas of executive coaching include leadership development, interpersonal development, career coaching, executive strategic planning and problem solving (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Executive coaching is often delivered by coaches who are external to the organisation (Jarvis, 2004).

It is important that executives have an objective and neutral individual with whom they can discuss opportunities and challenges. O’Neill (2000) states that there are four essential ingredients of executive coaching. Firstly, there needs to be a result orientation to the problem, e.g. consideration of the current business challenges, this ensures that there is a focus on outcomes. Secondly, there needs to be
partnership, for example, the coach becomes a partner and joins the executive on a journey towards increased effectiveness and greater competence. Thirdly, the coach needs to enable the executive to examine and explore the specific leadership challenges that he or she faces. This examination can be extremely difficult, as it requires the executive to concentrate on their own actions rather than focusing on others for results. Finally, the coach links the behaviours of the team to their overall goals and highlights the need for the executive to establish specific expectations of the team.

3.4.3 The coaching process

There is an array of articles and textbooks illustrating and explaining the process and phases of coaching. These tend to vary from three to six steps in length (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Whitmore, 2002; O’Neill, 2000; Kilburg, 1996). Stages of the coaching process generally include: establishing rapport and trust within the relationship, establishing self-awareness and self-belief, establishing the goals and objectives, establishing values and the beliefs of both the coach and the coachee, finding the necessary resources to build and sustain the relationship effectively, monitoring and re-evaluating objectives and progress, developing and completing tasks, providing ongoing support and feedback for the coachee. The coaching models and frameworks currently available appear to assume that all coaching relationships are homogenous and fail to differentiate between crucial factors, such as the impact of internal and external coaches, or issues arising from cross-cultural relationships and/or gender. Furthermore, organisational differences and individual relationships may require additional stages in order to address specific goals and challenges.

When considering the importance of the phases of coaching, it is also necessary to examine how coaching relationships evolve over time. Mentoring research has shown that an evolving relationship between the mentor and the mentee will ultimately have an impact on the development functions that are provided during the various stages of the mentoring relationship (Chao, 1997; Kram, 1985). Coaching is not a stagnant relationship; it will develop and change over time as the coachee develops. Although coaching relationships tend to last for a shorter period of time, the change over this period is still an area that requires further exploration and needs to be included in models and frameworks of coaching. The majority of models that have been produced to date tend to follow a linear approach, yet as Goldsmith (2003: 16) states, “behavioural change is almost always ‘non linear’” and all individuals will have setbacks when developing and changing behaviour. If the organisation as a whole does not realise that setbacks are inevitable, then support may be withdrawn when this occurs. Thus, what needs to be developed is a more fluid model that takes account of individual
differences and which can be adapted to individual coaching relationships. It is essential that coaching models take into consideration the setbacks that may occur in a coaching relationship and acknowledge that all relationships develop at different rates.

There are many coaching structures and frameworks available for practitioners to follow, however the lack of empirical research in this area can often make it difficult for coaches to apply these frameworks and structures confidently in practice. As Grant and Cavanagh (2004: 1 and 2) state: ‘in terms of coaching experience, there appears to be an increasing awareness among coaches of a need to ground their practice in a solid theoretical understanding and empirically tested models, rather than the standardised implementation of ‘one size fits all’’. Coaching is a highly personalised development activity (O’Connor and Lages, 2004), therefore it is necessary to evaluate coaching relationships and the impact a coach has on a coachee’s progress in various settings.

3.4.3.1 Coaching approaches

There are a number of diverse coaching approaches (Law, Ireland and Hussain, 2007), for example, the GROW model and neurolinguistic programming (NLP). The GROW model looks at; what do you want to talk to me about (Goal)? What’s actually happening here (Reality)? What could you do about it (Options)? What are you definitely going to do about it (Wrap-up)? (Downey, 2003). NLP is a technique which is the study of what works in thinking, language and behaviour. NLP is used as a coaching intervention in organisations in order to enhance learning abilities, set goals, improve relationships and manage thoughts and emotions more effectively (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003: 11).

Whilst coaching is a flexible method of developing individuals, the models and frameworks which are used to communicate the development intervention need to be responsive to individual differences. Models appear to fall into the trap of taking a ‘one size fits all’ approach, rather than providing a flexible and responsive method of development. This generalist approach does not take account of individual differences and therefore may result in resistance to the coaching process.

3.4.4 The coach and coachee

Communication, commitment and partnership between the coach and the coachee are key requirements of an effective coaching relationship (Hunt and Weintraub, 2002; Parsloe and Wray, 2000). Ensuring that the coaching relationship is based on effective communication and commitment will help the coach and coachee to understand the key objectives and goals of the relationship (Hirsh and Kise, 2000).
Furthermore, there needs to be consensus among all parties with regards to what constitutes success and a successful outcome. A coach and coachee have specific roles to play in a coaching relationship, however “roles may provide the circumstances, but only the relationship can provide the foundation”, the central elements of the coaching relationship are “mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual freedom of expression” (Flaherty, 2005: 47 and 48). Despite the importance of the relationship over the individual roles of a coach and coachee, it is still necessary to look at the various competencies and skills which a coach and coachee must possess in order to produce an effective coaching relationship.

3.4.4.1 The role of the coach and competencies required

A coach has numerous objectives and roles to perform within the coaching relationship, with their main objective being to develop the coachee. Kenton and Moody (2001) identified the core skills of a coach through interviews with coaches and coachees, along with an organisational survey of coaching and data collected from a coaching programme. The study concluded that a coach needs to have the ability to create rapport, be able to pay attention to content and process, keep an open mind, paraphrase and reflect, ask probing questions, identify limiting assumptions and beliefs, and give and receive feedback (Kenton and Moody, 2001; Hunt and Weintraub, 2002; Hudson, 1999). Furthermore, it is a coach’s responsibility to inspire coachees to be their best, to nurture clients in transition, and to facilitate learning and look for new opportunities in the change process (Hudson, 1999).

Coaching focuses on possibilities and potential and is facilitated in a way that the coach can enable the coachee to unlock their potential and maximise their performance (Whitmore, 2002). The success of a coaching relationship is dependent, to a certain extent, on whether the stated goals have been achieved via the development and execution of an action plan and the ability of coaches to provide coachees with constructive feedback (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003).

In organisational coaching, a crucial part of a coach’s role is to educate not only the coachee but also the organisation, particularly in respect of the nature of coaching and the coaching process. Ensuring that there is a clear understanding of the coaching process can help the organisation to gain real benefits from the coaching intervention (Redshaw, 2000). However, Redshaw is not explicit about how a coach should achieve this and does not differentiate between the roles of internal and external coaches. Furthermore, coaching is related to development and change, and change can often be difficult to achieve and is frequently resisted by individuals (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Implementing effective change can be increasingly difficult if the coach has to work with a coachee to obtain
organisational support and resources. Not only must the coach try to ensure that the coaching outcomes are measured, but it may also be their responsibility to develop a culture of coaching within the organisation. However, the literature is unclear as to how the coach can actually achieve such a change in organisational culture and how they should manage the coaching relationship if the organisation’s culture does not support the coaching process.

Coaching is a reciprocal relationship and as such both the coach and the coachee need to give and receive for the relationship to be successful (Hardingham, Brearley and Moorhouse, 2004). The giving and receiving of needs results in the coach and the coachee feeling ‘wanted’ and in turn places more value on the relationship. Hardingham et al. (2004) go on to state that coaches tend to be more effective when they are able to follow and respond to the interpersonal needs of the coachee. Despite the importance of feeling ‘wanted’ and the reciprocal nature of coaching relationship, there is an absence of empirical studies examining the benefits of coaching for the coach.

3.4.4.2 The role of the coachee and competencies required
The coachee also has an important role to play in establishing a positive coaching relationship. A coachee must understand their own development needs and be able to participate in the identification of suitable topics for coaching. In addition, they must be able to collaboratively set challenging, but realistic performance targets and methods of achieving them. Coachees must take responsibility and initiative for their own development and be open, direct and honest in discussions with their coach. It is also imperative that a coachee can accept constructive feedback relating to their skill acquisition and development progress (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Hardingham et al., 2004). The coaching literature details what coachees should ideally bring to the coaching relationship, however it does not provide any information on what individuals actually bring. There is no consideration of the impact on a coaching relationship when the coach or coachee does not bring the required skills or attributes. Examining the desirable skills and qualities of coaches and coachees and then examining what a coach and coachee actually bring to a relationship would help to further our understanding of the coaching process.

3.4.5 Selecting a coach
Selecting a coach is an important part of the coaching process. Coachees select coaches using a variety of criteria, such as coaching experience, track record, personal style, costs, professional standards, knowledge of organisation, evidence of continuing professional development, experience of the industry, coaching
qualifications, supervision of coach, and geographic coverage (University of Central England (UCE), (Arnott and Sparrow, 2004).

Jarvis (2004) describes some key steps to follow when selecting a coach. Firstly, the coachee must assess their individual development needs and from this develop a desired coach profile. The coachee must then produce a shortlist of coaches and invite those chosen to attend an interview; this will enable the coachee to gain some insight into the coach’s experience and skills. Following the interviews, the coachee will make a decision and then meet with the coach to discuss more detailed issues regarding the coaching relationship and the coachee’s needs.

3.4.5.1 Matching
On occasions, an external facilitator will match a coach and coachee. As the matching of individuals in a coaching relationship is critical for its success, it is important that the process is carried out using in-depth information about the coach and the coachee (Jarvis, 2004). Different individuals prefer different learning styles and therefore it is necessary for the individuals and the organisation to understand what these preferred learning styles are to ensure that coaches and coachees are matched successfully (Hay, 2003).

When examining coaching styles it is also important to explore the coach’s background. Liljenstrand (2004) examined the differences in practices and approaches between coaches with a clinical psychology background and coaches who had a background in organisational psychology. A total of 928 coaches from organisations, associations and Internet list servers participated in the study by completing a web-based survey measuring practices and various approaches to coaching. The results showed that the three groups bring unique experiences to the field of coaching. The study highlighted that a coach’s background can result in a number of differences, such as titles used, engagements, sources of hire, fees, annual income as coach, participation in seminars, perceived competitiveness, frequency and length of sessions, means used to conduct coaching, use of assessment tools and techniques, means of evaluating effectiveness, perception of unethical practices, ethical guidelines and certification.

A review of the literature has highlighted that there is a lack of research on the role of the matchmaker in coaching and mentoring relationships (Law et al., 2007). Despite an absence of research in this area, there is a general assumption that homogenous pairing will produce more effective results. Interpersonal attraction research has found that similarity in attitudes, political beliefs and religious beliefs will predict attraction (Byrne and Nelson, 1965). However, Law et al. (2007) found that coaching outcomes are in fact more positive when the coach and the coachee
have different temperaments, and factors such as geographical proximity and professional competence appear to play an important part in successful outcomes.

In organisational coaching, a coachee must first decide on internal or external coaching. External and internal coaches both have benefits and limitations. A coachee must examine their requirements and then choose a coach who is most likely to help them achieve their development aims. Many organisations, particularly smaller ones, do not have the internal capability, therefore it may be more cost effective to hire an external coach rather than train someone internally. However, an organisation which is undertaking a considerable amount of coaching may find it more cost-effective to build up the organisation’s capability (Jarvis, 2004). Aside from cost issues, there are other factors which need to be considered. A two country study (Canada and Australia) conducted by Sue-Chan and Latham (2004) found that there was empirical evidence to support the use of an external coach and demonstrated that self-coaching achieves greater performance compared to peer-coaching. The study concluded that an external coach is superior and the findings highlighted the importance of coaching by a credible source. However, the study did not use a control group which may impact on the credibility of the findings.

Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck (1999) suggest that the decision of whether an internal or external coach should be employed needs to be made on the requirements of the coachee and the organisation. For example, the use of internal coaches may be preferred when a quick intervention is needed and the coach requires detailed knowledge of the corporate culture. In contrast, external coaches may be more appropriate when there are highly sensitive or confidential issues which need to be addressed, or when a coach with extensive, diverse or specific experience is needed. Jarvis (2004) summarises a number of the key preferences for external and internal coaches and illustrates that in different circumstances and situations, organisations may find external or internal coaches more effective. It is essential that organisations determine what their requirements are and the current position of the organisation, before they make a decision between external and internal coaching. External coaches appear to be preferred when the coaching relationship is based on sensitive issues and/or there is a conflict of interests and when the coachee requires expertise from an outside source. However, internal coaches are preferred in situations when company knowledge is important and when availability is an issue and the company does not have the time or resources to hire an external coach.
3.4.6 Learning in coaching relationships and entrepreneurial learning

Coaching is centred on change, and change involves learning. Learning in a coaching relationship can be defined as “a persistent change in an individual's possible behaviour due to experience” (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003:182). It is essential that the coach is aware of the coachee’s level of confidence and fears regarding new learning opportunities and challenges. Challenges that seem too great can result in anxiety that can ultimately lead to resistance, which can result in a lack of motivation and interest in the coaching objectives. It is imperative that the coach asks useful questions regarding the coachee’s past successes and failures relating to learning. These questions can lead to self-awareness and will enable the coachee to tailor their objectives and goals to their particular learning style (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Parsloe and Wray (2000) state that coaching needs to be based on a relationship of shared control for there to be optimum learning and development. Some writers have conceptualized ‘coaching’ as ‘facilitation of learning’ (Mink et al., 1993; Redshaw, 2000; Beattie, 2002).

It is important when considering learning in coaching relationships to examine the various ways in which individuals learn. Parsloe and Leedham (2009) discuss the importance of examining how a coachee/mentee learns before embarking on a development relationship. These learning styles are based on Honey and Mumford’s (1986) work, for example, activist, reflector, theorist, and pragmatist. Parsloe and Leedham (2009) refer to some recent work conducted by SKAI (initials of the founding members) Associates (2007), which suggests the importance of highlighting differences regarding coaching relationships and gender, for example, men and women will stretch and limit themselves in different ways, e.g. men tend to stretch themselves when solving nitty gritty problems, whereas women tend to stretch themselves with regard to creating effective relationships.

In addition to the work of Honey and Mumford (1986), the CIPD (2002) (Reynolds, Caley and Mason, 2002) present four clusters of learning which help to show how people learn in different situations and how these clusters can be discussed in relation to coaching. The four clusters are behaviour, understanding, knowledge construction and social practice. Firstly, behavioral explanations of learning underpin all other explanations of learning presented by the CIPD. Behavioral learning is centered on reinforcement, whereby a reinforcer is viewed as anything which strengthens the desired response, for example, verbal praise, or a good examination or test result. This approach is not concerned with transmitting knowledge, nor with the reflection on personal experience, nor the search for meaning through social practice, it is concerned with objective repetition of behaviors in order to facilitate learning. This form of learning can be achieved in coaching relationships as a coach is often viewed as a reinforcer, providing
positive feedback and praise for their coachee. Secondly, the CIPD refer to learning as understanding, this is essentially related to the active involvement of the mind in learning. Responses are not seen as a conditioned reaction to external stimuli, however they are seen as thoughtful products of perceptions and beliefs and understandings. Therefore the learner is processing the information that is received and is not simply a passive recipient in terms of receiving information. Examples of the cognitive approach to learning are centered on the individual becoming literate in a relevant topic or area and this is typically achieved by exposing them to reference material which will help to develop their understanding of that particular topic. A coach often directs their coachee to relevant sources of information to enhance their understanding of a certain subject area. Thirdly, there is learning as knowledge. This cluster of theories asserts that individuals are active agents of their own learning; therefore learning is not separated from personal action, is it is not viewed as something which is ‘out there’ and therefore independent of the individual. This theory would suggest that the only knowledge which can be created is that which can be defined as personal knowledge, therefore individuals learn by making a personal construction of the meaning out of their individual experience. Campbell (1976: 77) states “learning is possible only when there is active assimilation”. These theorists believe that knowledge is constructed by the individual through their interaction with their environment and dialogue is one of the primary vehicles for knowledge construction. A key issue in learning as knowledge is that social contact is crucial for effective learning to take place as an individual’s thought processes will be shaped by active participation in real situations. The significance of social practice when supporting learning is illustrated through the popularity of professional bodies and associations. One can access valuable personal networks and communities through these bodies and in turn this creates a valuable method for learning. A coach often encourages coachees to learn by doing, as they are encouraged to test different forms of actions and behaviours so that they can examine which is the most appropriate form of action (Hargrove, 2007). Coachees are also encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and to learn through contact with others. Finally, the CIPD refer to learning as social practice. These theorists argue that learning requires a social setting to occur and to be applied. Vygotsky (1978) argued that social interaction was an inseparable part of learning. This cluster of learning is related to coaching in the sense that it is based on a collaborative relationship between the coach and the coachee, whereby the coachee learns from the coaches’ experience. The coach can facilitate learning by encouraging the coachee to learn by doing, only by doing this can they ascertain the most appropriate forms of action.

The clusters defined by the CIPD provide a basis to understand how people learn and how this can be applied to various work environments. Bandura (1986) clearly
demonstrates how self-efficacy can be developed through the four main processes, e.g. enactive mastery, however it is interesting to examine how individuals learn to develop self-efficacy. Because of the lack of empirical research in the area of coaching it is difficult to draw conclusions as to how this learning occurs. There have been few studies to date which examine how, and if at all, learning occurs in coaching relationships. Without evaluating the effectiveness of coaching programmes it is difficult to state that learning has occurred within the relationship. Some studies which have attempted to redress this are discussed later in the section titled benefits and limitations of coaching relationships. Not only is it important to examine learning development within coaching relationships as a whole, it is also important to examine how different groups of individuals learn, so as to ensure that coaching programmes are designed effectively for the target audience.

One of the few studies to examine learning in coaching relationships is that conducted by Hamlin et al (2006). This study presented the results of a cross cultural comparison of empirical findings from several previous managerial coaching effectiveness and managerial leadership effectiveness studies, so as to demonstrate the extent to which being an effective coach is an essential feature of being an effective manager and or leader. As part of this analysis Hamlin et al (2006) illustrated managerial coaching behaviours, such as not providing answers, working together, broadening employees perspectives, stimulating thinking through reflective and prospective thinking, empowering, creating and promoting a learning environment, setting and communicating expectations, and caring behaviours, such as showing empathy. Whilst these findings do show a range of methods which can be employed to enable managers to learn effectively, they do not draw any distinctions between different types of managers and different workplace situations which will have an impact on these behaviours. More importantly for the study presented in this thesis they do not address the issues of entrepreneurs and how they learn in coaching relationships.

Learning in an educational context generally refers to the teaching of specific knowledge, with the learning result being the aim. In an entrepreneurial context, learning refers both to the result, i.e., the knowledge that is created through learning (Kolb, 1984), and the process (Warren, 2006). Knowledge on an individual level comprises knowing about coherences (knowing why), factual knowledge (knowing that) procedural knowledge (knowing how) and the knowledge of relevant persons (knowing who) (Evans, 2005). Studies have found that entrepreneurial learning is complex (e.g., Warren, 2001).
When examining the issue of entrepreneurial learning, Deakins and Freel's (1996) work revealed that the entrepreneur acquires the ability to learn through their own experience and that the learning process is often the result of critical incidents in which the entrepreneur is required to make key business decisions. Williams (1998: 63) states that “learning is goal directed; experiences are the substance for which learning emerges; beliefs – i.e. norms and values and through them behaviour – reflect achieved learning.” In addition, Choueke and Armstrong (1992) study of entrepreneurs found that when asked what format of learning had been most influential in their personal development, respondents stated the following: past experience (95 per cent of the sample), learning from colleagues (61 per cent of the sample), self-learning (54 per cent of the sample). It is evident that ‘experience’ is a major source of learning for entrepreneurs (Sullivan, 2000). If one is assuming that entrepreneurial learning is, on the whole, ‘experiential’ then one needs to consider that entrepreneurs will require specific skills and will inevitably encounter critical incidents, which were discussed earlier, at certain times in their entrepreneurial career (Sullivan, 2000). Entrepreneurs learn through ‘learning by doing’ and reflection (Deakins and Freel, 1998; Cope and Watts, 2000).

Since the 1990s, an increasing number of studies have reviewed entrepreneurship from a gender perspective (Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991; Brush, 1992; de Bruin et al., 2007b). However, this has not yet covered entrepreneurial learning and cognition (Ettl and Welter, 2010). Rae (2006) asserts that learning is an elementary part of the entrepreneurial process, in which human and social aspects are as important as economic factors. Individual learning processes are affected by individual sense making and cognitions, implying that amongst other factors at the individual level (e.g., human capital, experiences, professional background) and environmental level (e.g., politics, institutional support, social background), gender is a crucial factor which influences entrepreneurial learning.

Ettl and Welter (2010:67) state that “learning of female entrepreneurs during personal and business development is understood as developing competencies, generating knowledge and gaining experience referring to the entrepreneurial person herself and/or her company.” It is clear that learning does not occur in a vacuum and learning phases are often triggered by critical events in a lifetime (Cope, 2005). Ettl and Welter’s (2010) qualitative study (n=14) found that the female entrepreneurs might restrict themselves because of a lack of self-confidence or unsupported fears of failure. Business support organisations may add to this by paying insufficient attention to the diversity of female entrepreneurs. Research has shown that entrepreneurial learning, albeit possibly triggered by negative events, needs a positive and supportive environment for higher learning outcomes to emerge (Cope, 2005). It is evident from this study that it is important
that business support incorporates the diverse experiences of female entrepreneurs, particularly as female entrepreneurs often lack familiarity with the business world and their self-efficacy levels are often low in terms of business experiences. Therefore, it is important that they have support throughout their experiential learning and have access to individuals who are able to support them through the critical incidents and stages of running a business. Despite the importance of learning in coaching relationships, there is a lack of empirical studies examining how individuals learn in coaching relationships and more specifically how entrepreneurial learning can be developed through coaching. In addition, the coaching models which have been discussed have not been validated through publication in peer-reviewed journals. Many published coaching models have not been based on empirical data. The study presented in this thesis attempts to unpick some of these issues, showing how entrepreneurial learning can be developed for female entrepreneurs through enhancing their entrepreneurial self-efficacy within a coaching relationship.

3.4.7 Forms of coaching delivery
Coaching can be delivered in numerous forms, such as face-to-face, via telephone and online, each of these methods has benefits and limitations.

3.4.7.1 Face-to-face coaching
Face-to-face coaching is the traditional form of coaching delivery. Face-to-face coaching reminds the coach and the coachee that words are only one aspect of communication. This form of delivery can enable the coach and coachee to access unspoken issues that may become apparent through a face-to-face encounter. The coach can watch the coachee’s body language to help with the choice of questions and these cues may also help to demonstrate whether the coachee is interested in certain issues and whether they are motivated by the coaching relationship as a whole (Whitmore, 2002). The coach will also be more aware of any anxiety that the coachee may have, this can help to either confront or avoid issues that could impact on the success of the coaching relationship. However, there can be disadvantages, face-to-face coaching can be immensely impractical when considering today’s busy schedules. Geography also needs to be considered as geographical distance may significantly reduce a coachee’s choice of coach.

Recent research examining the Internet and whether people like each other, which has led to the development of the Inflated Expectation Theory (Walther, 2006), found that people who meet and communicate on the Internet like one another more than those who meet face-to-face (McKenna, Green, and Gleason, 2002). Further, liking appeared to be less in individuals working in online groups where
photographs were available. Additional personal information has also been shown to contribute negatively to overall ratings of liking in other studies (Law et al., 2007). Therefore, the fact that more information will lead to less liking means that an individual will be more likely to be disappointed when there is increased exposure to their online partner (Law et al., 2007). These findings suggest that face-to-face coaching may not be the most effective form of delivery for all individuals.

3.4.7.2 Telephone coaching
Telephone coaching is now used extensively (Caplan, 2003), as it is seen as a cost effective method of delivery. It is cost effective for both the coach and the coachee as they only have to pay for the focused coaching session and not for travelling. Despite the advantages of telephone coaching, there can be some problems that need to be addressed when adopting this approach, for example, there is a loss of appearance, facial expressions and gesticulations. Davis (2002) states that individuals communicate at about 40 per cent of their ability when on the telephone; this is because facial expressions and gesticulations cannot be seen. However, anecdotal evidence has suggested that when using the telephone for coaching, individuals undergo a major shift in that they find other ways of communicating effectively, such as using vivid descriptive language (Davis, 2002). Telephone coaching also enables individuals to become much more effective listeners, although it is essential that the coach and coachee take care regarding rate of speech (Davis, 2002).

3.4.7.3 Online/E-coaching
Online, or what is sometimes referred to as E-coaching, moves the process of this development intervention online and through this expands the possibilities (Rossett and Marino, 2005). Despite the possibilities of online coaching, there is a dearth of research relating to such coaching schemes, in contrast to the recent increase in such innovative methods of delivery (Caplan, 2003). There are numerous advantages to e-methods of development, such as cost and time savings, removal of geographical boundaries, increased flexibility with regard to choosing time for learning, sharing and questioning between groups of individuals, and interaction and debate can be organised through email, discussion groups, chat rooms, and visual tutorials. E-coaching can also prove to be extremely collaborative as professionals from across the globe can work together to pool their expertise through the use of discussion threads. Social interaction can also be maintained by individuals sharing ideas, solving problems and sharing information (Rossett and Marino, 2005; Caplan, 2003).
Online, or what is sometimes referred to as e-coaching can enable coachees to receive direct advice and assistance which fit with their own time schedules and objectives and it has the potential to overcome many of the domestic barriers that inhibit individuals from accessing traditional forms of support. Information technology opens numerous avenues and has many benefits for developmental tools such as coaching. Bierema and Merriam (2002:214) state, "all sorts of barriers such as time, work responsibilities, geographical distance and lack of trust often reduce if not halt interaction". Information technology can help to overcome many of these barriers and provide a method of communication which can provide an effective alternative to traditional forms of delivery. Considering the problems that female entrepreneurs face in terms of work and home life balance, discussed in the previous chapter, online coaching may provide an effective alternative for women accessing support which does not require them to leave their homes, therefore they can access support at a time and place which is more convenient. However, it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions regarding this as there is limited research examining how women use online methods in coaching relationships.

A study of email coaching conducted by Vail (2004) examined the themes of email coaching; which included the participant’s perception of the quality, benefits and viability of the email process. Thirty consultant trainees and four coaches participated in the course and completed feedback forms which indicated their perceptions of the email process. The coaches’ email responses to the consultant trainees were also analysed using grounded theory methods and were triangulated with the feedback form which had been completed. The study found that coaches typically provided directive responses, particularly with regard to information, suggestion and positive feedback. Consultant trainees rated their coaching experiences positively and reported that their skills developed significantly in all the areas targeted. Consultant trainees rated emails as easy to access and comfortable to use for the coaching process. The findings suggest that practitioners found email coaching to be a practical method to use and it was beneficial for the development of participants’ consultation skills. While Vail’s (2004) study presents some interesting findings, coaching in an organisational setting may be very different to individual coaching, where the coach and coachee do not work for the same organisation.

Coaching and mentoring share a number of similar characteristics, therefore mentoring literature can be used to inform investigations into coaching. E-mentoring has been defined as “a relationship that is established between a more senior individual (mentor) and a less skilled or experienced individual primarily using electronic communications and that is intended to develop and grow the
skills, knowledge, confidence and cultural understanding of the protégé to help him or her succeed while also assisting in the development of the mentor” (Single and Muller, 2001:108). Whilst e-methods of delivery in general have received little interest in the literature, there are a greater number of studies examining e-mentoring schemes when compared to e-coaching.

Hunt (2005:9) states that “e-mentoring is a recent development in the field of mentoring and one which is already showing significant advantages over more traditional forms. E-communication can be very liberating for both participants and some of the traditional difficulties in face-to-face mentoring, such as power differences, gender and race issues are simply not present in a virtual environment.” Hunt (2005) goes on to state that there are many benefits of e-mentoring, such as the asynchronous nature of email which allows individuals time for reflecting on the content of discussions before responding. A record of the discussion is also kept for later reflection and learning. Writing out an email message also allows people time to consider what they are discussing in more depth. Furthermore, location is not an issue in e-mentoring as mentees have the ability to be matched with an e-mentor outside of their geographical boundaries (Boyle Single and Single, 2005). Time is also easier to manage and there are no costly meetings to arrange. There can also be elimination of what is called unproductive ‘windshield time’, driving to and from appointments (Boyle Single and Single, 2005). Finally, barriers relating to gender, ethnicity and power can be removed.

Some suggest that e-mentoring should only take place when face-to-face mentoring is impractical (O’Neill, Wagner and Gomez, 1996). Therefore, e-mentoring should not replace face-to-face mentoring, but it can provide mentoring opportunities that may not otherwise be feasible (Boyle Single and Single, 2005). Some suggest that because e-mentoring relationships have fewer reinforcement cues, as mentors and mentees do not meet up face-to-face and might not even work in the same country, there is less opportunity for mentors and mentees to actively encourage the maintenance of a relationship online (Sproull and Kiesler, 1995). For example, it is easier for individuals to sign up to an e-mentoring programme and then to ignore email messages (Kasprisin, Boyle, Single and Muller, 2003). However, one must consider that some individuals may prefer the ‘distance’ which online methods offer and prefer to have limited information regarding their coach/mentor or coachee/mentee (Law et al., 2007).

Arguments for the mixed method approach, i.e. face-to-face and online methods used in conjunction with one another, are similar to those suggested in Media Richness theory. This theory states that methods of communicating such as email
are ‘lean’, whereby participants in an electronic development programme do not receive the depth of communication from individuals they are interacting with as they would if they conducted their communication face-to-face (Simon and Peppas, 2004). However, Media Richness theory does not allow for the passage of time, whereby individuals will learn more about the medium which they are using and the individual they are interacting with. Social Information theory dictates that cohesion within a group and the satisfaction of group members will increase over time with all types of electronic support, despite what level they are grouped at with regard to their ‘media richness’ (Burke et al., 2001). Duarte and Snyder (1999: 26-27) suggest that “social presence is not inherently good or bad . . . less social presence sometimes can be better because it reduces interpersonal distractions, such as appearance, mannerisms, and being reminded of previous negative interactions with the person or group.” As users gain increased experience of using email and understand and appreciate the challenges and opportunities which are associated with this medium, they will employ special techniques in order to establish mutual understanding between themselves and the person they are interacting with (Clark and Brennan, 1991).

A study conducted by Smith-Jentsch, Scielzo, Yarbrrough and Rosopa (2008) compared the impact of peer-mentoring that took place either face-to-face or through electronic chat. Mentees included 106 college freshmen randomly assigned to a senior college student mentor and to one of the two communication modes. The study found that electronic chat resulted in less psychosocial support, career support, and post-mentoring mentee self-efficacy for those with male but not female mentors. This would suggest that female mentors are better suited to electronic communication, when compared with male mentors. The reasons for this appeared to be because males condensed their language to a greater extent than did females when conversing via electronic chat condition, when compared with face-to-face mentoring. Furthermore, the study found that mentoring pairs in the electronic chat condition had more interactive dialogue than did those in the face-to-face condition. This study highlights some important findings for female based online programmes and also shows some key benefits relating to online communication, however there are some study limitations which should be noted. Firstly, the impact was only assessed across a three week period, therefore, as the authors state, longitudinal research is required to examine the full impact of online communication. Secondly, the study did not employ a control group, therefore it is difficult to estimate the effectiveness of e-mentoring compared to receiving no development intervention.
3.4.8 Barriers and boundaries in coaching

Zeus and Skiffington (2003) assert that there are two main forms of resistance to coaching. Firstly, blatant resistance occurs when the coachee displays evident hostility, mistrust and unwillingness to engage in the coaching relationship. The second form of resistance is less obvious, the coachee appears to be compliant and even enthusiastic with regard to the coaching relationship and the agreed goals. However the coachee in practice does not change their behaviours and subsequently the goals are not achieved. Generally, it is easier for the coach to deal with blatant resistance than passive behaviours. Hudson (1999) believes that resistance is most likely to occur during the middle stages of the coaching relationship, when the coachee has put a plan of action in place, but is facing obstacles and problems implementing their action plan. It is essential for the coach to determine at the outset why the relationship is unproductive. If a problem is more deeply ingrained and cannot be simply resolved, it may be appropriate for the coach to refer the coachee to a therapist; these issues can then be explored and worked through (Edwards, 2003).

The coach and coachee may have unrealistic goals and expectations, which can be avoided by ensuring that strict guidelines are adhered to and that a model for strategic and attainable goals is followed. The coach may respond to self-imposed pressure or perceived pressure from the coachee and their organisation to achieve ‘a quick fix’. Responding to this pressure can lead to the outcome being superficial, rather than ensuring sustained and embedded behavioural change (Colombo and Werther, 2003). Coaching demands and causes fundamental change in the way individuals perceive themselves and others, this shift in perception may take some time, or it may come as a revelation. Some people find that coaching questions can be intimidating and therefore the coach may face some resistance from the coachee. Whitmore (2002) lists a number of barriers to coaching, for example, people can often be cynical of any new approach, the process takes too long, a coachee expects and wants to be told what to do, and coaches often don’t know what questions to ask. In order to address some of these barriers, it is necessary to understand their reasons and causes to ensure that they are addressed in an appropriate manner.

The mentoring literature suggests that it is also important to recognise that relationships can be perceived as unsuccessful without the existence of the types of negative experiences described above (Scandura, 1998). For example, relationships where both coach and coachee like and respect each other may still have a negative impact on the coachee if the relationship is not achieving the desired goal. In this respect, both parties may enjoy their meetings and discussions, but the reality is that nothing is being achieved. For mentoring
relationships, this can potentially have a detrimental affect on the client’s career advancement and may impede the succession planning process (Scandura, 1998). Therefore it is essential that any evaluation of coaching is clearly related to the individual skills and responsibilities of the coachee’s role.

Research conducted by Kenton and Moody (2001) found that in the initial stages of the coaching relationship it is essential to establish boundaries. Establishing boundaries requires the coach and the coachee to determine exactly what the coaching relationship is and what its objectives are. Kenton and Moody (2001) found that there was a mixed response when asking whether coaches saw a distinction between mentoring, counselling and coaching. Some coaches were very clear when specifying to their client (coachee) that this was not to be a counselling relationship, as they did not have the relevant skills or experience. However, other coaches stated that they would allow the discussion and relationship to be directed by the coachee. It is evident that before a coaching relationship begins, the coach and the coachee must establish exactly what is expected and define the boundaries of the relationship.

3.4.9 Benefits and limitations of coaching relationships

Research suggests that coaching relationships can have numerous benefits for coachees, such as increasing the ability to cope with and welcome change and transitions, improving confidence, concentration, relaxation and decision making and removing performance fears and anxieties (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Broadly, the main benefits of coaching appear to be motivational aptitude, i.e. in terms of career advancement and improved commitment to business; knowledge and skills development, i.e. improving skills and abilities, faster learning, and enhanced decision making; managing change and succession; gaining confidence and well being, i.e. improved communication, improved self-awareness and job satisfaction (Law et al., 2007). However there is limited empirical research illustrating the efficacy of coaching (Smither and London, 2003).

Coaching relationship is often centred on monitoring ongoing performance and this performance is often centred on two main components. The first component is improving of performance at the skill level, and the second is establishing relations allowing a coach to enhance the coachee’s psychological development (Popper and Lipschitz, 1992). The first component relates to the transfer of knowledge and the second relates to empowerment, whereby the coach strengthens the coachee’s self-efficacy. An individual’s ability to accomplish a task can be a major source of feelings of success and achievement which in turn can help to enhance self-efficacy. To build self-efficacy a coach must perform four tasks in the course of coaching: identify and define clear parameters of success; build and structure
situations which have potential for success; identify factors which lead to success; and identify inner sources of success (Popper and Lipschitz, 1992: 16).

One of few studies to concentrate on coaching effectiveness and to use pre and post programme tests and a comparison group, examined whether coaching led to a presupposed individual goal (Evers et al., 2006). Sixty managers of the federal government in the Netherlands were divided into two groups, intervention and comparison. Prior to the programme, self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies were measured linked to three specific areas: setting one’s own goals, acting in a balanced way and mindful living and working. Four months later the same variables were measured again with both groups. The study found that the intervention group, the individuals who had been coached, scored significantly higher than the control group on two of the variables, outcome expectancies to act in a balanced way and self-efficacy beliefs to set one’s own goals. This study highlights how coaching can have a positive effect on self-efficacy. All coaches were employees of the federal government and all members of the control group were managers from only one institution. This study appreciates the personalised relationship involved in coaching by concentrating on one organisation; however this may inhibit the transfer of these findings to other settings. Furthermore, the mean age of the control group was significantly higher than that of the experimental group. Evers et al. (2006) suggest that younger managers may be more open to new experiences and ideas, therefore the results of the effectiveness of coaching of the intervention group may not accurately reflect the differences between the two groups.

Manchester Inc, an organisation in the United States which is viewed as the global leader in customised executive coaching programmes conducted a study (McGovern et al., 2001) to quantify the business impact of executive coaching. The study included data on executive behaviour change, organisational improvements achieved and the return on investment (ROI) from Manchester’s customised, executive coaching programmes. The study involved 100 executives, mostly from Fortune 1000 companies, who had previously received coaching from Manchester Inc. One hundred participants were involved in the study (male = 66 and female =34) and were executives in the North-eastern and mid-Atlantic regions of the United States who had completed their coaching between 1996 and 2000. The study used telephone interviews to ascertain participants’ level of satisfaction with the coaching process as a whole and their goals for coaching, how effectively they had achieved these goals and the tangible and intangible benefits to the business that resulted from the coaching relationship. Where possible the study also surveyed the executives’ immediate supervisors or human resource representatives who had observed the coaching experience. To put the coaching
in context, executives were also asked to identify factors other than the coaching which could have contributed to their increased effectiveness and the consequent business results. The companies who provided coaching found that there was an increase in productivity, quality, organisational strength, customer service, reduction in customer complaints, retaining executives who had received coaching, cost reduction and bottom line profitability. The executives themselves found that they had improved working relationships with direct reports, and with immediate supervisors, and they experienced an improvement in team working, and working with peers, and had an overall increase in job satisfaction and a reduction in conflict. This was a retrospective study in that it asked respondents to reflect on a previous coaching relationship, therefore there may be issues with recall bias.

These favourable findings are also supported by a study conducted by Wasylyshyn et al. (2006), which examined the effectiveness of a coaching programme commissioned by a global company for employees who wanted to develop their emotional competence. The study included 33 participants (83 per cent male and 17 per cent female) who had previously been involved with a coaching programme called VISTA, a four phase collaborative programme that involved an employee’s boss and human resource partners as well as the participants and their coach. The four phases of the programme typically involved direct service provided over a nine to twelve month period and included data gathering, feedback, coaching and follow-up. The study found that there was sustained learning and behaviour change among the participants. However, a limitation of this study is that nearly 50 per cent of the VISTA participants were employed in the research organisation; this may have led respondents to report more favourably on the impact of the coaching programme. A further limitation of this study is the small percentage of females, when compared to male respondents.

A quasi experimental pre and post control group study conducted by Smither and London (2003) was used to determine the effects of executive coaching on multisource feedback over time. Participants (n=1,361) were senior managers in a large global corporation which received multisource feedback in the autumn of 1999. The feedback was part of a broader company-wide multisource feedback programme. The senior manager’s supervisor also received a copy of the feedback report. Of these participants, 404 worked with an executive coach to review their feedback and set goals. After receiving executive coaching, 286 of the 404 managers responded to an opinion survey that gathered data relating to their reaction to the coaching process. One year later, the company administered a survey which evaluated the extent of the progress made towards individual goals set by each manager based on the initial multisource feedback. The study found that managers who worked with a coach were more likely than managers who did
not receive coaching to set specific rather than vague goals and to solicit ideas for improvement from their supervisors. Managers who worked with a coach also improved more than other managers in terms of direct reports and supervisor rating. While this study clearly indicates that executive coaching had beneficial outcomes in a number of areas, there are some study limitations, for example, whilst the outcomes were positive, they were only small. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the multisource feedback was shared with the feedback recipients’ supervisor, who may then have used this information to influence promotion. This therefore may have increased the recipients’ sense of accountability to act on the received feedback, even in the absence of a coaching relationship.

When examining learning in coaching relationships, it is also essential to look at how coaching can enhance the use of learning once employees have returned to the workplace. A study conducted by Miller (1990) which examined the effect of managerial coaching on transfer of learning found positive results. The purpose of the study was to test the efficacy of coaching as a way of enhancing the transfer of learning by comparing two groups of employees, one which received the coaching intervention for the trained skills and one which did not. A quasi-experimental field study was conducted with 91 employees who were enrolled on six regularly scheduled classes focusing on interpersonal communication. Three of the classes included the experimental study and three classes were used as a control. Dropout rates resulted in there being 17 experimentals and 16 controls. When returning to the workplace the experimental group received coaching by their managers for a period of four weeks. Pre and post tests were completed by both groups to measure the transfer of learning. Post test completion of the experiment and control group showed no significant differences; however qualitative findings based on anecdotal evidence were overwhelmingly favourable regarding the coaching intervention (Miller, 1990). This is an encouraging finding; however evaluation measures did not compare with the anecdotal evidence.

Whilst it is essential to examine the effectiveness of coaching it is also equally important to examine unsuccessful and dysfunctional coaching relationships. Examining the impact of a dysfunctional relationship on the coach, coachee or organisation, will help to highlight where potential problems can occur and how such problems can be overcome. Overwhelmingly, the coaching literature focuses on ‘successful’ coaching relationships, with little known about unsuccessful coaching relationships and the detrimental effect these can have on the individuals involved. It is highly unlikely that all coaching relationships are idealistic and it is unlikely that they always prove to be helpful and productive for both the coach and the coachee. It is vital to further investigate the issue of negative coaching relationships for the development of coaching programmes.
3.4.10 Summary of Section 3.4: The main characteristics of coaching

Coaching shares similarities with other interventions, such as mentoring and counselling, however it is important to consider that coaching has unique characteristics. Unlike many other forms of development activity, coaching is centred and personalised to the individual and is forward focused.

Stages of the coaching process typically include; contracting, establishing rapport and trust within the relationship, establishing self-awareness, establishing goals and values, finding the necessary resources, monitoring and re-evaluating, completing tasks, and providing ongoing feedback (Flaherty, 2005; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Whitmore, 2002; O’Neill, 2000; Kilburg, 1996). However, the coaching models seem to assume that all coaching relationships are homogenous. In addition, there is an absence of research examining how coaching relationships evolve over time. When considering the current coaching literature, there is a concern that the models and frameworks which are used tend to follow a ‘one size fits all’ approach. A coaching relationship is personalised, therefore frameworks and coaching models may need to account for differences between groups of individuals.

Effective communication and partnership between the coach and the coachee are essential for success. The literature highlights a variety of roles that need to be performed by the coach, with their primary goal being to develop their coachee. Coaching is based on a reciprocal relationship and as such both the coach and the coachee need to give and receive for the relationship to be effective (Hardingham et al., 2004). However, there appears to be limited research examining the benefits of coaching for the coach. In addition, the coachee also has an important role to play in coaching relationships; however there appears to be an absence of empirical coaching research examining the characteristics of a coachee.

Selecting a coach is an important part of the coaching process and there are a variety of issues which need to be considered, such as personal style, costs, professional standards, and geographic coverage (Arnot and Sparrow, 2004). In some instances, the coach and coachee will be matched by an external facilitator. In such cases it is essential that the process is carried out using all the in-depth information available (Jarvis, 2004). In terms of organisational coaching, there is also a decision that needs to be made between internal and external coaching.

Learning is a key element of the coaching process and to understand how coachees develop in coaching relationships it is necessary to understand the learning that takes place. Despite this there have been few studies to date which
examine how learning occurs in coaching relationships. It is important to examine learning development within coaching relationships and specifically how different groups of individuals learn to ensure that coaching programmes are designed effectively. It is also important to examine how entrepreneurial learning can be developed through coaching.

Coaching can be delivered in numerous forms, such as, face-to-face, via telephone and on-line, each of these methods has benefits and limitations. The majority of coaching literature focuses on face-to-face coaching and does not appear to explore the potential of other forms of delivery, such as telephone and online coaching (Rossett and Marino, 2005; Caplan, 2003). There are clearly advantages and disadvantages of telephone and e-coaching which need to be addressed in empirical research. The available literature tends to focus on telephone mentoring and e-mentoring (Hunt, 2005; Boyle Single and Single, 2005), while one can draw comparisons from this data, empirical research specifically focusing on alternative methods of coaching is required.

It is evident from the literature that coaching relationships can have numerous benefits for coachees (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Coaches and coachees must be aware of the various boundaries and barriers evident in coaching relationships, establishing an action plan and expectations at the beginning of the coaching relationship can help to overcome many of these issues. However, there are few longitudinal empirical studies examining the effectiveness of coaching, with the extant literature focusing on large organisations (Evers et al., 2006; McGovern et al., 2001; Miller, 1990). In addition, there is a lack of research examining the impact of dysfunctional relationships.

3.5 Coaching in small businesses
It is widely acknowledged that small businesses are not simply large businesses scaled down, but that they have distinct and unique characteristics (Hill, 2001). If this is the case, it is essential that developmental interventions, such as coaching, are not only examined in the context of large organisations, but are also studied within the small business sector, particularly as small business now contribute so greatly to the UK economy. A review of the literature has shown that there is an absence of literature and empirical studies focusing on coaching in small businesses and entrepreneurial settings. The majority of coaching literature typically focuses on large organisations (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Whitmore, 2002; Hunt and Weintraub, 2002; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). An explanation for this is that the UK has tended to be relatively slow to focus and capitalise on the small business sector, unlike in the USA and Japan (Peel, 2004; Nancarrow et al., 1999). As a result, only over the past five
years have academic researchers begun to focus their attention on the small business research agenda (Hill, 2001).

Conducting research to examine coaching within an entrepreneurial context is important for the development of this management discipline, particularly because managers of small firms tend to be reluctant to participate in external training or support activity (Stanworth and Gray, 1991; Westhead and Storey, 1997; Peel, 2004) and can be reluctant to accept any form of external advice (Curran and Blackburn, 1999). Characteristics such as extreme autonomy and independence will in fact limit the perceived options of support which are open to owner-managers (Smith, Bocock, Loan-Clark and Whittaker, 2002). Therefore, as Peel (2004) states, it is not unreasonable to suggest that within small businesses there is typically little history of linking individual and/or organisational development with formal training and learning programmes and interventions. It is not that small business owners do not engage with learning and development, it is simply that this type of activity is not labelled in the same way as it is in large organisations (Ross, 1993). These characteristics of small businesses produce a range of issues that require further investigation for coaching and mentoring interventions to be successful (Peel, 2004).

In an organisational context, one of few studies conducted to explore coaching in small businesses adopted a case study approach of a small business in the securities industry, based in Wales. The study found that it is important to understand organisational behaviour when designing a coaching programme and that the prevalence of the culture of an individual small business needs to be at the heart of any coaching strategy which is implemented (Peel, 2004). However, a limitation of this work is that it only provides information regarding one organisation and the findings are not based on an evaluation of a coaching programme, rather they state what should be provided in a coaching relationship based on the needs of the organisation and a review of the literature.

One of the few studies to examine individual coaching of entrepreneurs was conducted in Sweden. Tillmar (2007) conducted an in-depth study of an entrepreneurship support coaching programme and found that coaching as a method of support was successful for the development of entrepreneurs. This longitudinal, qualitative case study focused on a project aimed at supporting small-scale women business owners. Data collected included observations during seminars and sessions, and semi-structured interviews with participants and the advisors (coaches). The study found that the coaching method was successful as it helped women to be treated as unique individuals, rather than following a method of support which had been designed to a male norm. The programme included
only three coaches, one female and two males and a total of fifteen female businesses owners (coachees). Furthermore, the programme set a number of requirements of the group of coachees, for example, they wanted representatives from different sectors and different parts of the country as well as from businesses with a high potential. The study only included coachees who owned established businesses, therefore it may be problematic to generalise the findings from this study. It may have been interesting to examine the benefits of the programme for all women business owners, including those at the pre-start-up and start-up stages. In addition, it may have been useful to establish individual coaching relationships, i.e. one coachee for each coach and to design a programme solely for female entrepreneurs, i.e. all coaches and coachees would be female entrepreneurs.

Whilst there is a lack of empirical studies examining coaching and entrepreneurship, there have been some studies examining mentoring, e-mentoring and entrepreneurship. Considering the similarities drawn between coaching and mentoring, it is useful to examine the mentoring and entrepreneurship literature. A systematic analysis of the academic peer reviewed literature which examined e-mentoring of entrepreneurs and small business managers, was produced to inform policy-makers in their decisions regarding the feasibility of implementing an e-mentoring programme and also to provide guidance on possible approaches (Perren, 2002). The review showed that in 2002 there were a limited number of studies evaluating mentoring or e-mentoring for entrepreneurs (Perren, 2002). Articles which have referred to the influence of mentoring or e-mentoring have, on the whole, tended to suggest beneficial outcomes (Perren, 2002). However, some studies, for example Evans and Volery’s (2001) Delphi study, which used a panel of eight experts selected from six countries (Canada, USA, Finland, UK, Australia and The Netherlands), found that e-mentoring is “second-best” and should only be seen as a supplement to face-to-face mentoring. The experts in this study were selected based on their involvement (past or present) in relevant activities (e.g. small business development services, consultants in learning and educational policies, business counselling services, entrepreneurship education and training activities). This study does offer some interesting findings, for example, that a successful online programme requires an effective Internet site and effective programme management. In addition, it is important to understand the specific nature of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship before developing an online service. However, some of the findings must be taken with caution as the study is not based on examining the efficacy of a programme which is currently running; rather it is the views of experts, using their past and present experiences to make judgements on what is effective.
Similarly, Stokes’ (2001) pilot study, which examined the potential of transferring to the UK an online advisory service for small firms, developed and piloted in The Netherlands, found that telementoring should be used in conjunction with other initiatives. This study was based on four focus groups with owner-managers from small businesses in the service industry. The focus groups explored the training and advice needs of owner-managers in West London and specifically explored issues concerned with training provision and SMEs, and the potential of interactive distance learning, or telementoring to break down barriers to formal training. Despite the study emphasising the importance of using other initiatives, particularly with regard to the personal touch in communication, the study also concluded that: “the enormous advantage of interactive distance learning approaches is the flexible nature of delivery which suits busy time schedules and ad hoc questioning, and reflects the kind of informal, on-the-job approach to learning preferred by SMEs. It also means that one-on-one tuition is more affordable…” (Stokes, 2001:323). As with the study conducted by Evans and Volery (2001), these findings are not based on a formal evaluation of an e-mentoring or coaching programme. The study was based on speculation and participants’ own experience of mentoring, rather than on the telementoring project itself. This method of research is understandable considering the recent emergence of e-mentoring as a tool for support. However one must consider that the findings from this study should be taken with “caution as they are largely speculative and claims of efficacy are less robust” (Perren, 2002: 9).

A study conducted by Megginson, Garrett-Harris and Stokes (2003) aimed at assessing whether e-mentoring added value as part of the Business Link for London start-up core offering, found generally positive views to e-mentoring. The programme was conducted over three months, involving 18 mentoring partnerships. This was a mixed methods study which combined questionnaire data and focus group session. The study yielded a ‘reasonable’ return rate (approximately 47 per cent) of evaluation questionnaires. The study found that 75 per cent of mentees and 57 per cent of mentors described their e-mentoring experience as a positive one and that over 60 per cent of mentees and over 55 per cent of mentors cited convenience, flexibility and ease as the major benefits of email-based mentoring, while as many as 75 per cent of mentees (and over 20 per cent of mentors) indicated there was an element of impersonality about this type of communication. Whilst this study does add to the existing literature examining mentoring and small business owners, only four of the mentees in this study were women, therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions on how mentoring impacts specifically on female entrepreneurs. A further study conducted by MentorsByNet (Stokes, Garrett-Harris and Hunt, 2003), was based on a pilot e-mentoring programme which was conducted over three months involving over 40 mentoring
partnerships developing SME managers. The percentages of respondents at pre and post programme are as follows: Mentee (out of possible 46) pre – 19 and post 23; Mentor (out of a possible 41) pre -19 and post 24. The programme culminated in a range of success factors, such as establishing programme goals, programme duration of at least six months, supplementing email based communication with other modes of communication and establishing a good mentoring relationship. While the results from this study are interesting the authors do not draw any conclusions regarding gender differences and the study did not use a control group.

3.6 Summary of Chapter 3: Coaching as a technique for developing the workforce and entrepreneurs

In spite of the rapidly expanding coaching literature and its increasing popularity as a development tool, there does not appear to be a universally accepted definition of coaching (Grant and Cavanagh, 2004). Coaching is centred on change and transformation (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Parsloe, 1999) and takes a narrower focus than development tools such as mentoring, as it focuses on specific responsibilities or skills (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Despite the obvious importance of coaching, there are few longitudinal empirical studies examining its effectiveness (Grant, 2003; Grant and Cavanagh, 2004; Hamlin et al., 2006; Evers, et al., 2006) and there are few empirical studies which effectively establish a link between coaching and improved performance, with the available literature focusing on coaching programmes in the United States with very little in the UK (Evers et al., 2006; Orenstein, 2006; Waslyshyn et al., 2006; Smither and London, 2003; McGovern et al., 2001; Miller, 1990).

Coaching shares similarities with other interventions, such as mentoring and counselling, however it has unique characteristics (Jarvis, 2004; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Grant, 2003). In addition, there are a variety of forms of coaching, such as career, life and team coaching (Jarvis, 2004; Passmore, 2003; O’Neill, 2000). Research suggests that there are a number of stages to an effective coaching relationship, such as contracting and providing feedback (Flaherty, 2005; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Whitmore, 2002; O’Neill, 2000; Kilburg, 1996). However, there appears to be a one size fits all approach to coaching models, and frameworks do not clearly highlight differences between groups of individuals.

Effective communication and partnership between the coach and the coachee appear to be key factors of success in coaching relationships. In addition to the numerous stages of coaching, there are also a variety of methods of delivery which can be used, for example face-to-face, telephone and online. However, there is
limited research examining alternative forms of delivery, such as telephone and online (Rossett and Marino, 2005; Caplan, 2003). The available literature typically focuses on telephone mentoring and e-mentoring (Hunt, 2005; Boyle Single and Single, 2005).

To date there appears to be no formal research into the effects of any form of coaching (West and Milan, 2001). Whilst this dates back to 2001, the current picture of coaching still is largely based on consultant’s experience of the coaching relationship, rather than on empirical research. As Wasylyshyn et al. (2006:76) state “in the absence of empirical study, it will be difficult for this application of psychology in business to maintain a place of respect and credibility among leadership development resources”. Future studies of coaching should include a significant sample of coaching programme clients, a sufficiently wide assessment population and a control group (West and Milan, 2001). As coaching is a highly personalised intervention, it is important for the development of this discipline to examine coaching in all organisational settings, including small businesses (Stanworth and Gray, 1991; Westhead and Storey, 1997; Peel, 2004).

The lack of empirical research examining the effects of coaching and coaching relationships makes it difficult for practitioners to adopt this form of developmental intervention confidently. Unfortunately, research tends to be informed by the limited yet rapidly expanding coaching related literature, which predominantly is based on ‘best practice’ rather than ‘best evidence’ derived from robust empirical research (Grant, 2003; Grant and Cavanagh, 2004). Furthermore, as coaching is often closely linked with mentoring and counselling, this increases its ambiguity. As Grant and Cavanagh (2004:12) state “if the development of theory is to continue in a healthy and rigorous way, reflective practice and empirical research must be the fuel and touchstone of theoretical debate. At present there is precious little solid empirical research validating the efficacy of executive and life coaching”. Only by conducting empirical rigorous research, in a variety of settings with a variety of individuals, to show how individuals learn and develop in coaching, can a clear and comprehensible, non-linear, effective and adaptable model of coaching be readily achieved and adopted by practitioners. The current management literature on coaching presents an excellent starting point, whereby researchers can test and examine these concepts in real settings; it is therefore the belief that empirical research is required so that the theory of coaching can be advanced. The main areas of investigation absent from current academic literature are shown in Table 3.4.

Whilst there have been some studies to show the effectiveness of coaching programmes and e-mentoring, what is evident from a review of the literature is that
there is limited research examining female entrepreneurs’ experiences. Furthermore, there is limited research to examine how individuals learn and develop in coaching relationships, particularly examining different groups of individuals. This form of examination is required to highlight any differences in the learning processes inherent in coaching relationships. Without this examination it is difficult to show exactly how the coaching process can be employed and how it works. A review of the literature has shown that there a number of key ways which people learn, however there is a dearth of empirical research to show how individuals learn in coaching relationships.

3.7 Theoretical framework
As Sullivan (2000) states, understanding entrepreneurial learning processes is essential when designing and delivering business support. It is apparent from a review of the literature that there are a number of ways which people learn and develop, however what is not clear is how people learn in coaching relationships and, more specifically, how female entrepreneurs learn when engaging in coaching. The main factors in relation to the key areas of this thesis which are, female entrepreneurs, coaching, learning and self-efficacy are illustrated in figure 3.3. This figure is designed to illustrate the theoretical integration of this piece of work and to show the various links between the main areas. This visual representation of the integration of these areas helps to show how and why they have been linked in this thesis. This section will describe the theoretical framework used in this study and the links that will be explored between female entrepreneurship, coaching, learning, and self-efficacy.

3.7.1 Self-efficacy and entrepreneurship
This study contributes to learning and theoretical debates, firstly by providing an understanding of the barriers faced by female entrepreneurs and secondly how these relate to women’s needs with regard to business support. These barriers and support needs, section A of figure 3.3, are detailed throughout chapter two.

An individual’s uncertainty regarding the likelihood of success would seem to be inextricably linked to the belief that one has the abilities to succeed (self-efficacy). Research suggests that entrepreneurs who have high self-efficacy may be more successful than those with low self-efficacy (Wilson et al., 2007). Albert Bandura, a psychologist specializing in social cognitive theory became aware in the 1970s that a key element was missing from social leaning theory. In 1977, Bandura published ‘Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioural Change’, where self-efficacy and self-belief were seen as the missing elements. Bandura (1986) advanced the view of human functioning that viewed cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory and self-reflective processes, as having a central role in human
adaptation and change, and viewed individuals as self-organising and proactive, rather than being reactive and shaped by external environmental forces. For example, how an individual will interpret the results and outcomes of their own behaviour will inform and alter their environment and their perceptions, which in turn will change their subsequent behaviour. This is the corner-stone of Bandura’s reciprocal determinism (see figure 3.2). Personal factors, in the form of cognition, affective and biological events, alongside behaviour and environmental influences, create the interactions that result in a triadic reciprocality. From this work, Bandura developed social cognitive theory.

**Figure 3.2 Bandura’s Reciprocal Determinism**

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BEHAVIOUR

PERSONAL
ENVIROMENTAL
FACTORS
FACTORS

(Cognitive, affective and biological events)

(Bandura, 1997: 6)
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When discussing the links between self-efficacy and entrepreneurship it is important to understand how entrepreneurial self-efficacy can be developed. Bandura (1986) described four main processes for enhancing self-efficacy, enactive mastery or repeated performance accomplishments, vicarious experience or modelling, verbal persuasion, and autonomic or physiological arousal, see section C of figure 3.3. Firstly, experiences of mastery, positive experiences and success can lead to increased self-efficacy, whereas failures can undermine an individual's belief about themselves. However, individuals must experience setbacks and failures in order to provide them with learning for the future. Secondly, an individual can learn through vicarious experience. Vicarious experience is centred on learning from another individual's experience. In this case, one can see people who are similar to oneself succeeding through perseverance and effort. This is further intensified when the individual can relate to the individual they are observing. Thirdly, there is social persuasion, where an individual's beliefs can be strengthened when persuaded that they have the capabilities and skills to achieve a particular outcome. Those who are successful at building another individual's self-efficacy do this by raising the individual's beliefs regarding their capabilities, specifically by designing situations for them to achieve success, rather than simply providing positive appraisals and feedback. Fourthly, individuals also rely on their
somatic and emotional states when judging their own capabilities. For example, mood can affect an individual's judgment of their self-efficacy. A positive mood can have a positive impact on an individual's self-efficacy and vice versa. Therefore, one can modify an individual’s self-efficacy beliefs by attempting to reduce stress reactions to particular events and attempting to alter any negative reactions (Bandura, 1977).

While it is clear that there is a wealth of research examining section A and C, there is limited empirical research examining the specific links between female entrepreneurship and self-efficacy, section AC of figure 3.3. Research has clearly shown that there is a link between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions (Chen et al., 1998, Wilson et al., 2007). However, there is a paucity of research examining self-efficacy of female entrepreneurs who have already embarked on an entrepreneurial career. Some research suggests that women who have already chosen to follow an entrepreneurial career have higher self-efficacy than those who do not. In addition, research has suggested that nascent practicing entrepreneurs do not have significantly different expectations regarding their entrepreneurial success than their male counterparts (Chen et al., 1998; Shaver, Gatewood and Gartner, 2001). However, levels of self-efficacy may change after making the career decision to start a business (Wilson et al., 2007). As Bandura states, making a decision is not actually the same as implementing that decision, therefore self-efficacy can have an even greater impact throughout the business implementation stages (Bandura et al., 2001). Markham et al. (2002) state that considering the difficulty of entrepreneurship, levels of high self-efficacy are important throughout the whole cycle of entrepreneurship. Therefore entrepreneurs with high self-efficacy may be more successful than those with low self-efficacy (Wilson et al., 2007). These findings would suggest that there is a need for empirical research examining female entrepreneurs and self-efficacy at pre start-up, start up and developmental stages of business.

3.7.2 Developing self-efficacy through coaching
Chapter three illustrates the key findings from a review of the coaching literature. It is evident from the review that coaching is task specific and focused on learning and change (Jarvis 2004; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003), shown in section B, figure 3.3. Coaching has the potential to provide female entrepreneurs with appropriate learning and development, through a one-to-one relationship and provides an alternative method of learning and development, see section AB, figure 3.3. The reciprocal nature of social cognitive theory allows for therapeutic and counselling interventions to be directed at personal, environmental, or behavioural factors. The successful performance of tasks is fundamental to a strong sense of self-efficacy and coaching is based on the improvement of performance in relation to skills.
therefore showing how coaching can be used to enhance self-efficacy (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Coaching is centred on affecting change and developing the coachee and their beliefs regarding their abilities. Therefore, coaching is based on the fundamental aspects of social cognitive theory and self-efficacy underpins some of the crucial elements of coaching relationships and can be used positively to develop female entrepreneurs, see section BC, figure 3.3. Despite this, there is limited research examining coaching and self-efficacy; even though it has been suggested that it is the key psychological variable in coaching (Popper & Lipschitz, 1992, Evers et al., 2006). Self-efficacy is particularly visible within the process of coaching; Irwin and Morrow (2005: 37) provide the following example to show how self-efficacy can be affected through coaching, "consider the case of a client who is avoiding confronting a relationship in which she has been mistreated. It is conceivable that their self-efficacy is low; even more, that they feel responsible for inducing the mis-treatment. An important role for the coach is to encourage the client to be in the moment, to get her to experience the 'now' as merely where she is in her life without judgment, without detracting from their self-efficacy."

3.7.3 Female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy – Learning through coaching
Whilst Bandura’s four key processes (enactive mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, physiological arousal), provide a clear framework for enhancing self-efficacy, there is little available research examining how an individual actually learns within a coaching relationship. As previously stated, the management development and learning theories do not examine the ‘social’ in social learning, therefore social learning, e.g. coaching, is not examined through gender (Swan et al, 2009). In light of this, it is important to examine how learning development, such as coaching, is defined, experienced and evaluated by women. As Wajcman (1998:49) argues "the dominant symbolism of corporations is suffused with masculine images" (1998; 49) and therefore notions of success are also male dominated. It is important to understand how female entrepreneurs learn and develop in coaching relationships and the processes that are used to develop their self-efficacy within a coaching relationship, therefore addressing section ABC, in figure 3.3. This study attempts to address this by examining a coaching programme based on women’s perceptions and requirements of support and their experiences of coaching relationships.

It is essential when designing any form of development programme that gender differences relating to development and support are considered. Swan et al (2009) assert that we need to examine how gender, women and feminism are explained and understood in the world of entrepreneurship. The male dominant discourse in entrepreneurship often silences and devalues competing interpretations (Simpson and Lewis, 2007). Therefore, it is important to redress this dominant discourse and
provide women with a platform and an opportunity to have their voices heard. A study examining gender differences when coping with stressful life events (Astor-Dubin and Hammen, 1984) found that women employed both behavioural and cognitive strategies, while men, on the whole, relied upon cognitive strategies. Therefore, women may be more inclined to turn to other individuals, perhaps a friend for support, than men. As Astor-Dubin and Hammen (1984: 88) state “women are more likely than men to engage in behaviours that involve external recognition”. When applying these findings to coaching, it becomes clear that men and women may need different types of support, yet the models that are provided do not appear to allow for such gender differences. For example in coaching relationships women may prefer a balance of emotional-based support and task-based support. Therefore examining coaching from the perspective of female entrepreneurs is an essential part of designing a programme which is appropriate for their needs.

In addition to addressing the dominant discourse in entrepreneurship and the one size fits all approach to coaching, it is important to understand that learning is relational, situated and socially produced. However, the category of the ‘social’ in social learning is not examined through gender, race or class, therefore feminist theory and critical race theory are often ignored (Swan et al, 2009). In terms of the coaching literature much of the empirical investigations are not gendered and “masculinity is assumed but unmarked in much social theory” (Swan et al, 2009: 432). There have been attempts in organisational theory to show the extent of the gendering of organisations (Acker, 1990; Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008), however this has not been extended to management learning. Extending this approach to management learning may help to unpick some of the processes involved in learning, for example, one might start to question the division of labour within the workplace and outside of the workplace and how this affects the way women access management development and learning, and on what terms (Swan, 2009). Considering such questions and moving the debate forward in this way will help us to understand the practices and theories of management learning (Swan, 2009). This study attempts to address this issue by examining a coaching programme and exploring how women learn in coaching relationships.

In addition, it is important to consider that an individuals’ self-efficacy may also have an impact on whether a learner chooses to engage in a particular activity and will determine the amount of effort learners invest in a given task (Salomon, 1983, 1984). When examining learning and self-efficacy from a gender perspective, Schunk and Lilly (1984) asked students in Grades 6 and 8 to judge their self-efficacy for learning a novel mathematical task. Following this the students received instruction, practice opportunities, and performance feedback. The study
found that although girls initially judged their self-efficacy for learning lower than did boys, following an instructional programme girls and boys did not appear to differ in achievement or self efficacy for solving problems. The performance feedback showed all of the students that they were learning and as such raised girls’ self-efficacy to that of boys. This highlights the need for understanding how learning can be a different process for men and women. As previously stated, an understanding of female entrepreneurs’ learning processes is essential for designing and delivering appropriate support. If support packages such as coaching are going to be used to develop female entrepreneurs it is important to examine the ways in which people learn and develop and more specifically how individuals, particularly female entrepreneurs, learn in coaching relationships.

A review of the literature has highlighted that despite the relevance of self-efficacy which has been demonstrated through research into entrepreneurship, there is limited research examining the self-efficacy of entrepreneurs at the start-up and development phases of business. There is also an absence of longitudinal studies examining female entrepreneurs’ learning and development and the impact of training and interventions, such as coaching, on self-efficacy, self-confidence and entrepreneurial skills. It is difficult to conduct longitudinal research with individuals starting out in business, as a high proportion of small businesses fail in the first year of trading (Independent, 2006). Despite this difficulty, it is imperative to add to the existing body of literature in this area. This study attempts to address this issue by demonstrating how a coaching programme for female entrepreneurs can be designed to enhance participants’ self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes and how women learn in coaching relationships.
Female entrepreneurs require individual support. Specific areas of development, e.g. finance, marketing, confidence. Current support not meeting requirements.

Coaching can develop female entrepreneurs’ confidence in key areas. Provides one-to-one development. Alternative method of development & learning.

Coaching potential to develop female entrepreneurs SE* through learning and development – overcoming barriers to success.

Improved SE* of female entrepreneurs can help to overcome barriers to success.

Self-efficacy
Enhancing confidence and SE* through learning. Various ways to develop SE* – enactive mastery, verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, physiological states.

Coaching
Task specific. Individual – one-to-one. Focused on learning and change. Based on past, present and future.

Method of development can impact on SE*.
Learning in coaching can enhance SE* and personal development.

*SE – Self-efficacy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas lacking or absent from coaching and entrepreneurship research</th>
<th>Justification</th>
<th>Selected References</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The need for longitudinal research</td>
<td>Coaching literature and research have highlighted an array of benefits and positive outcomes of the coaching relationship. The majority of research available, however, is cross-sectional in design and based on consultant coaches’ experiences of coaching. There is also a growing need to investigate the efficacy of coaching programmes adopting a longitudinal design.</td>
<td>Zeus and Skiffington (2003); Arnott, and Sparrow (2004); Caplan (2003); CIPD (2004); Hardingham et al. (2004); Goldsmith (2003); Goldsmith et al., (2000); Grant and Cavanagh, (2004).</td>
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<td>The inclusion of a control group</td>
<td>The inclusion of a control group is absent from the limited available research. Including a control group in empirical research would add weight to findings showing positive or negative outcomes of coaching.</td>
<td>Grant and Cavanagh (2004); West and Milan (2001); Smither and London (2003)</td>
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<td>Lack of research on coaches</td>
<td>The coach tends to be absent from coaching research. There appears to be a lack of understanding regarding the benefits and development of coaches associated with the coaching relationship.</td>
<td>Evers, Brouwers and Welko (2006); Law et al. (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited empirical research examining the impact of coaching programmes</td>
<td>Research has shown that coaching relationships have many beneficial outcomes. However, there is an absence of studies examining the actual impact of coaching programmes on specific groups.</td>
<td>Evers, Brouwers and Welko (2006); Smither and London 2003; Grant (2003); Grant and Cavanagh (2004); Hamlin et al., (2006); Orenstein (2006)</td>
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<td>More studies examining the impact of coaching programmes in different organisational settings</td>
<td>Coaching is a highly personalised form of development activity and as such requires investigation in a variety of settings and situations. Most coaching literature tends to focus on organisational coaching.</td>
<td>Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995); Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002); Whitmore (2002); Hunt and Weintraub (2002); Zeus and Skiffington (2003); Tillmar (2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work required to investigate new methods of coaching i.e. online</td>
<td>Most empirical work on coaching has examined face-to-face coaching relationship. There is an absence of literature and in particular empirical studies examining other forms of delivery, for example, telephone and online. Whilst there are some studies examining the various forms of delivery in mentoring relationships this does not appear to be the case in the coaching literature.</td>
<td>Stokes (2001); Evans and Volery (2001); Sullivan and Duffy (2000); O’Neill et al. (1996); Law et al. (2007); Sheffield Hallam University (2003) – Stokes et al., 2003</td>
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### Areas lacking or absent from coaching research

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<tr>
<th>Areas lacking or absent from coaching research</th>
<th>Justification</th>
<th>Selected References</th>
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<tr>
<td>Absence of research examining entrepreneurship support and programmes and their effectiveness, specifically for female entrepreneurs</td>
<td>There is currently a lack of research examining the impact of training programmes on female entrepreneurs, this is particularly the case for female entrepreneurs. Empirical research examining the efficacy of business support is required.</td>
<td>Fielden et al., (2003); Buttner and Rosen (1988); Carter, Anderson, and Shaw (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More research to go beyond the examination of barriers faced by female entrepreneurs</td>
<td>There is currently substantial research examining the barriers faced by female entrepreneurs. Whilst there is no doubt that these barriers exist, there is an absence of empirical research examining how women can overcome these barriers. For example, self efficacy is seen as being important for entrepreneurial success, and female entrepreneurs often lack self efficacy. However, studies examining self efficacy often focus on students and their entrepreneurial intentions.</td>
<td>Harding (2006); Boyd and Vozikis (1994); Wilson Kickul and Marlino (2007)</td>
</tr>
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4.1 Introduction
This chapter will look at the research aims and objectives and provide a detailed description of the research design, data collection and data analysis techniques used for stage one and stage two of the study.

The study consisted of two phases; firstly, a needs analysis which consisted of thirty semi-structured interviews with female entrepreneurs and secondly, an exploration of the impact of the Tailored E-Coaching (TEC) programme on a group of coachees (n=30), compared to a control group who did not receive the coaching intervention (n=26). Stage one and stage two of the research process will be presented individually. Firstly stage one of the research process will be discussed, including specific research questions, parameters, sampling, sample demographics, data collection and procedures for stage one. Secondly, stage two will be discussed, again highlighting the specific research objectives and questions followed by parameters, sampling, sample demographics, data collection and procedures for stage two.

The research reported in this thesis formed part of a study conducted by the Centre for Equality and Diversity at Work, Manchester Business School, co-funded by the European Social Fund. The author of this thesis was the researcher for this co-funded study and used the study as the basis for this thesis. The research design, data collection, analysis and conclusions reported in this thesis were all conducted solely by the author.

4.2 Research aim and objectives
The aim of this longitudinal study was to examine the potential of coaching to develop female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy through learning and development. This was achieved by firstly conducting a needs analysis, exploring the potential of an e-coaching programme for female and secondly examining the impact of an e-coaching programme on female entrepreneurs’ development, compared to a control group. The study specifically examined female entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes towards development, pre and post programme and compared to the control group. In addition, the study examined female entrepreneurs’ views regarding formal and informal sources of business support. Due to the limited research in this area, the research questions discussed in stage one and stage two were designed to elicit information, rather than testing hypotheses (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998), as it is problematic to test hypotheses when there is little known about the area under
study and there is little empirical data which has previously been collected (Stacey, 1969).

The research objectives were as follows;

1) Conduct a needs analysis to ascertain female entrepreneurs’ requirements of business support provision in the North West of England (by analysing qualitative interview data).

2) Conduct a needs analysis to investigate the potential of an e-coaching programme for the provision of business support for the learning and development of female entrepreneurs in the North West of England (by analysing qualitative interview data).

3) To identify the impact of informal and formal support received by participants on an e-coaching programme compared to a control group who did not experience the programme over a period of time (6 months) (by using descriptive statistics and by analysing qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire data).

4) To investigate the impact of an e-coaching programme on the process of learning through entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitude measures of participants on an e-coaching programme compared to a control group who did not experience the programme over a period of time (6 months) (by using descriptive statistics and by analysing qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire data).

5) To investigate the perceptions of coach and coachee participants in relation to their learning experienced through an e-coaching programme (by using descriptive statistics and by analysing qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire data).

6) To provide recommendations from the monitoring and evaluation of an e-coaching programme for the development of future e-coaching programmes (by using descriptive statistics and by analysing qualitative interview data and quantitative questionnaire data).

Research objectives 1 and 2 will be discussed along with the specific research questions in stage one section, and research objectives 3, 4, 5 and 6 will be discussed alongside their research questions in stage two section.
4.3 Philosophical underpinning

Research philosophy is the way in which data regarding particular phenomena should be gathered, analysed and used. This section will examine the philosophical underpinning, specifically addressing the ontological and epistemological stance used for this study.

Ontology relates to how one views the social world (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). When considering ontological positioning, this study has taken a realist approach (Hammersley, 1992). Subtle realism suggests that the social world exists independently of individual subjective understanding, and it is only accessible to the researchers via the respondents’ interpretations of their social world. Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 19-20) state that:

"we don’t feel that diverse perspectives negate the existence of an external reality which can be ‘captured’. Rather, we believe that the external reality is itself diverse and multifaceted. The diversity of perspectives thus adds richness to our understanding of the various ways in which that reality has been experienced, and our underlying aim is to apprehend and convey as full a picture."

The different experiences of individuals will ultimately mean that they will have different types of understanding. Different people experience reality differently and it is important to create a full picture of that reality. In short, the philosophy of "subtle realism" attempts to represent reality rather than to attain "the truth" (Silverman, 2001). All research involves subjective perception and different methods produce different perspectives, however there remains an underlying reality which can be studied. Mays and Pope (2000) suggest that the philosophy of qualitative and quantitative research should be one of "subtle realism", which can be described as an attempt to represent the reality of a phenomenon rather than to attain "the truth". When adopting this position, the researcher can examine and assess differing perspectives which are offered by different research processes. This position has been adopted in this study, with the aim being to represent the reality of female entrepreneurs’ experiences and requirements regarding business support and also the reality of an e-coaching programme by not only measuring the impact of the programme but also examining how the programme was received.

It is also important to address the main academic debates regarding the nature of knowledge and how this knowledge is acquired (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The main epistemological approaches are positivism and interpretivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Positivists believe that reality can be observed and described from an objective standpoint (Levin, 1988) and can be explained scientifically according to rational logics (Gilbert, 1993). Quantitative research is largely associated with positivism. In contrast, Interpretivists do not believe that the social world is
“governed by regularities that hold law like properties” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:23), but that researchers and the social world interact (May, 1999). Therefore, it is impossible to conduct independent, value free research. Interpretivists believe that research participants understand the social world in different ways and as such, researchers utilize a variety of methodologies to gain an understanding of these differing interpretations (Bryman, 2001). Qualitative methods are typically associated with the interpretivist approach and generate understanding, rich description and emergent concepts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As Ritchie and Lewis (2003:20) state, “while researchers can ‘strive’ for neutrality and objectivity, we can never attain this aspiration fully (nor indeed, do we believe that this is possible in other types of social research). This can be linked to subtle realism, where personal interpretations are important, particularly when considering participants’ perspective of reality and the researchers’ understanding of respondent’s views and description of events”.

This study used a mixed method approach to data collection. Proponents of a mixed-method approach argue that rigidly following a particular epistemological viewpoint may in fact undermine the researcher’s ability to choose and implement the most appropriate research design for the specific issue(s) being studied. Therefore they call for a balance between philosophy and pragmatism (Silverman, 2001). Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods helps to ensure that any variance is attributed to what is being studied and not due to the method itself (Creswell, 2003).

4.4 Research design

The first stage of this study was a qualitative exploration ‘needs analysis’ examining what female entrepreneurs in the North West of England wanted from business support and the potential of an e-coaching programme. This was achieved by collecting qualitative data from thirty female entrepreneurs from across the North West of England. Themes arising from this qualitative data were then used to develop the e-coaching programme. The second stage of this study involved investigating the impact of the e-coaching programme, specifically examining entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes.

4.4.1 The Mixed Method approach

The design of this study was based on Creswell’s (2003) “sequential exploratory strategy.” The research was conducted in two stages, with an initial stage of qualitative data collection and analysis, followed by a stage of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Figure 4.1 provides a summary of the research design.
Figure 4.1  Research design

STAGE ONE – NEEDS ANALYSIS

STAGE ONE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT
Qualitative data collection and analysis – Pilot study (Conducted June 04 – Sept 05)

STAGE TWO - MAIN STUDY

STAGE TWO EXPLORING THE IMPACT
Quantitative & Qualitative data collection

TIME POINT ONE MAY/JULY 2006

TIME POINT TWO OCT/FEB 2007

Literature review
Female entrepreneurship Coaching

Formulation of semi structured interview
(Based on Literature Review)

Piloting & refining interview questionnaire
n = 2

Semi-structured interviews
n = 30

Design and development of e-coaching programme and evaluation

Registration & matching

Piloting & refining questionnaire
n = 4

Questionnaire survey T1
Completed
n = 30 coachees (intervention)
Female n = 26 (control)

Questionnaire survey T2
Completed
n = 24/22 coachees n= 21 coaches (intervention)
Female n = 15 (control)

Semi-structured interviews T2
n = 18 (11 coachees & 7 coaches)

Statistical Analysis (SPSS 15)

Write up

Source: Based on Creswell (2003)
The design of this study required a longitudinal approach to data collection. Longitudinal data can be defined as “data gathered during the observation of subjects on a number of variables over time” (Ruspini, 2002: 1). A longitudinal study can be designed as repeated cross-sectional studies which are carried out regularly using different sample, however the most “truly longitudinal” design (Ruspini, 2002:2) is that when data is collected from the same subjects over time. Despite the advantages of a longitudinal approach there are a number of potential, problems which need to be considered, for example attrition often occurs, whereby participants leave the study, this can distort any findings produced. Panel conditioning may also occur in such studies. This relates to participants responding differently at different time points simply to provide a different response to their previous one. Whilst it is evident that there are some problems which can occur in longitudinal studies, there are still many advantages particularly for studies which are aiming to examine change over time (Ruspini, 2002). Therefore this approach was chosen for this study.

The rigid use of either quantitative or qualitative research methods does not allow for flexibility and movement between the two methods of data collection. King, Keohane and Verba (1994) provide a theoretical framework for research which combines both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Quantitative methods of data collection provide the “what” answers to questions and qualitative methods of data collection provide the “why” answers. They go on to assert that:

“these differences are rooted in the problems being investigated, but both approaches share the common goal of making descriptive or explanatory inferences on the basis of empirical observation” (King et al., 1994: 7).

The mixed method approach, or what is some times referred to as triangulation, enabled the author to use qualitative and quantitative methods; this ensured cross-validation and corroboration of findings within a single study (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Silverman, 1993). As Silverman (1993: 156) states, triangulation is “where different bearings give the correct position of an object”. Furthermore, triangulation is aimed at deepening and widening understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and is a widely recommended way of conducting social research (Denzin, 1970) and helps to cancel out the “method effect” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007:147) which is inevitable when using one form of method. The use of multiple methods can also help ‘to overcome problems of bias and validity’ (Blaikie, 1991: 115), as the researcher can examine a phenomenon from more than one angle (Macdonald and Tipton, 1996; Denzin, 1989). By examining data from multiple angles, the researcher can illuminate aspects of the phenomenon which may have been neglected or overlooked in a single method approach. Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 21-44) acknowledge that,
“qualitative and quantitative data do not calibrate, but see this as a manifestation of the different ways in which each method contributes to an understanding of the research question”. Researchers suggest that the real value of conducting a triangulated study is that it can extend understanding, adding depth and breadth to the analysis (Fielding and Fielding, 1986; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 44). Triangulation can also provide “security… through giving a fuller picture of a phenomenon, not necessarily a more certain one” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:44).

A mixed method approach in longitudinal research is often supported because it enables the researcher to examine broad trends and change whilst also providing rich, complex and detailed meanings, contexts and processes. The importance and the potential to understand the area in question by working across the qualitative and quantitative spectrum has been described as a crucial component of research (Giele and Elder 1998; Ruspini 1999).

4.5 Ethics
The study fully adhered to the British Psychological Society (BPS) guidelines (http://www.bps.org.uk/the-society/code-of-conduct/) (see appendix one for BPS guidelines). Although not a member of the British Psychological Society (BPS), the author endeavoured to adhere to the BPS and the University of Manchester’s ethical guidelines to ensure good practice. The author’s supervisor and co-supervisor are members of the BPS.

All participants who took part in the study were provided with information regarding confidentiality at the beginning of the interviews and prior to commencing the e-coaching programme. Information regarding the research process was also published on the website so that participants could access any information about the research at any given time. Participants were also provided with the author’s contact details and were informed that they could contact the author at any time to discuss the research process and/or any issues arising from the programme or the data collection.

All participants were assigned an evaluation code at the start of the programme and this evaluation code was used throughout the duration of the study.

4.6 Participant consent (stage one and stage two)
Participants were informed of the research process at both of the networking events. For those individuals who could not attend the networking events (discussed in further detail in chapter five), they were contacted by telephone by the author who discussed the research programme and the various measures which they would be expected to complete as part of the programme, this helped to
ensure that the participants were providing informed consent (Gilbert, 1993). The information which was discussed was also outlined in a formal consent form (see appendix two-five).

The author also explained to participants that the programme was part of a European Social Fund programme and also part of a PhD, and explained the aims and objectives of the research, the research process, who would be undertaking the research, and how the findings would be disseminated. Participants were also provided with details of how to access the report following the publication of the main findings. The author also discussed any ethical considerations and assured each participant of confidentiality, so as to enable the participants to provide their informed consent (Gilbert, 1993). Participants were informed that despite the importance of the study and the importance of completing all the research measures over the two time points, that they could withdraw from the study without notice at any time.

The control group were also contacted by telephone and were informed of the research process and how they had not been registered on the programme as a coachee, but had been invited to take part as a member of the control group. Control group participants were informed that they would be subject to the same research measures throughout, but would not participate in the e-coaching programme. The control group were provided with all the necessary information, for example the research process, aims of the research, and were assured of confidentiality.

4.7 Stage One

This section will present details pertaining to stage one of the study. The specific research objectives and research questions will be outlined, highlighting some key literature which supports the research questions. Following this, the section will present details regarding parameters and sampling. The section will then go on to present the details of the data collection and analysis.

4.7.1 Research objectives and questions

*Research objective one - Conduct a needs analysis to ascertain female entrepreneurs’ requirements of business support provision in the North West of England.*

*Research objective two – Conduct a needs analysis to investigate the potential of an e-coaching programme for the provision of business support*
One of the key barriers to women’s entrepreneurial activity is a lack of relevant skills and knowledge. Female entrepreneurs do not lack drive, ambition or ability; however, they tend to see fewer opportunities and rate their abilities lower than men (Harding, 2007). Research suggests that male and female entrepreneurs possess different human capital at the business start-up phase (Boden and Nucci, 2000; Changanti and Parasuraman, 1996; Srinivasan, Woo and Cooper, 1994). This lack of familiarity with business can impact on women’s knowledge regarding financial aspects of business ownership, marketing and planning (DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Fielden et al., 2003; Harding and Cowling, 2004; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000).

The main barriers faced by female entrepreneurs appear to be based on access to funding and finance, on domestic responsibilities and maintaining a work/life balance, and on a lack of human and social capital. Despite the importance of informal sources of support, little is known about entrepreneurs’ experiences. Formal business support provision which is offered by organisations such as Chamber of Commerce and Business Link is available to help and guide entrepreneurs; however the number of women accessing this support remains low. Research suggests that women tend to require support relating to finance, accounting, business management, information about sources of financing, advertising and sales. In addition, women tend to lack self-confidence, or have negative self-perceptions regarding their business abilities (Schwartz, 1976; Stevenson, 1983; Shragg et al, 1992; Stranger, 2004). However, women are not accessing support because of issues such as a lack confidence, lack of knowledge, lack of physical access, and a lack of understanding about the relevance of support services (Fielden et al., 2003; Ram and Smallbone, 2001). Despite the problems faced by women attempting to access support, there appears to be limited research examining what women actually want and need from business support services, both in terms of content and delivery. It is important to understand the issues faced by female entrepreneurs in order to provide the support needed to develop female-owned businesses (Gatewood et al., 2003). Business support providers can overcome some of the barriers to access by tailoring support for women (Roomi, 2005). Despite the importance of tailoring support to women’s needs, there appears to be a lack of research examining women’s views regarding the delivery of business support and how business support providers can go about tailoring business support provision to female entrepreneurs’ needs.
Studies relating to female entrepreneurs and their experiences tend to focus on describing barriers and obstacles to success (Fielden et al., 2003; Carter and Rosa, 1998; Carter et al., 1997; Lee-Gosselin and Grise, 1990; Buttner and Rosen, 1988). Despite the importance of such research it is also necessary to examine the extent to which business support provision is meeting women’s needs and also what they expect form effective business support provision in terms of design and delivery. Examining what female entrepreneurs particularly want from business support and then designing entrepreneurship programmes based on this evidence may help to overcome the specific barriers faced by female entrepreneurs.

Coaching practice tends to be informed by ‘best practice’ rather than ‘best evidence’ (Grant, 2003; Grant and Cavanagh, 2004) and tends to focus on large organisations (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Whitmore, 2002). Coaching is a highly personalised form of development, therefore it is important to examine this development tool in all organisational settings, including small businesses (Stanworth and Gray, 1991; Westhead and Storey, 1997; Peel, 2004). There are a limited number of studies examining coaching and entrepreneurship, however mentoring literature suggests that e-mentoring can have positive outcomes, particularly when used in conjunction with other initiatives, e.g. face-to-face (Perren, 2002; Evans and Volery, 2001; Stokes, 2001). Despite the importance of coaching as a development tool, there is an absence of research examining the development of coaching programmes for specific groups and individuals. This absence of research makes it difficult for practitioners to apply these frameworks and structures confidently in practice. As Grant and Cavanagh state, (2004: 1&2) “in terms of coaching experience, there appears to be an increasing awareness among coaches of a need to ground their practice in a solid theoretical understanding and empirically tested models, rather than the standardised implementation of “one size fits all””

The following research questions addressed these issues:

Research question 1 - What are female entrepreneurs’ experiences of accessing business support?

Research question 2 - What are female entrepreneurs’ requirements of business support provision?

Research question 3 - What do female entrepreneurs think of the potential of an e-coaching programme for the provision of business support for the learning and development of female entrepreneurs?
4.7.2 Parameters
The Enterprise Directorate of the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform’s was used, therefore any female entrepreneur who operated a business with 0-49 employees could be considered. For a detailed discussion of small business definitions see chapter two. The study was restricted to coachees who were based in the North West of England; however this restriction was not applied to coaches, who were based across the UK. Because of the issues regarding entrepreneurship definitions, outlined in chapter two, and the fact that it is often difficult to place individuals in an entrepreneurship or small business owner category, particularly at the pre start-up phase, no specific definition was used in advertising the study. Therefore to some degree women were self-selecting, women who decided to take part in the study defined themselves as female entrepreneurs.

4.7.3 Sampling
The primary sampling technique used for this study was that of snowballing, whereby participants were self-selecting. This method of sampling is often used when there is no adequate list for a sampling frame (Gilbert, 2001: 63). For this study, it was impossible to draw up a definitive list of female entrepreneurs. Snowball sampling requires contacting a number of people in the population who are being studied and asking them to nominate other individuals within that population with the required characteristics (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Access to participants was gained in a variety of ways. Initially business support organisations were contacted and female entrepreneurs were recruited through this channel. These organisations included, Business Link, Bolton Business Ventures, Chamber of Commerce, Train 2000, Rural Women’s Network, Promoting Women’s Enterprise Support (PROWESS), and Manchester Business Consortium.

For stage one of the study, a sample of thirty female entrepreneurs was chosen. The author felt that thirty female entrepreneurs would provide a large enough sample to ensure a range of female entrepreneurs were included, for example, stage of business, type of business, and business experience, i.e. previous business experience and length of time in operation.

4.7.4 Demographic Information
The following section outlines the demographic details of the thirty female entrepreneurs who were interviewed for stage one of the study.
Table 4.1 illustrates the personal demographics of female entrepreneurs. The mean age of female entrepreneurs was approximately 42 years of age with ages ranging between 22 and 55 years old. The majority of respondents were white British (n=28, 93 per cent), with two respondents describing their ethnicity as British Afro-Caribbean. On the whole, respondents were educated to high standard with approximately three quarters (n=24, 80 per cent) having obtained a degree, diploma or masters. Marital status was evenly split between female entrepreneurs with half married or living with a partner and half single, divorced, or separated. A high proportion of respondents (n=19, 63 per cent) had children. Of the 19 respondents who had children eleven (58 per cent) were married or living with a partner.
Table 4.2  Stage one – Business Demographics of female entrepreneurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Age (Years)</th>
<th>Respondents N=30 (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre start up</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 +</td>
<td>5 (17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Sector</th>
<th>Respondents N=30 (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>26 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailing</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Respondents N=30 (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17 (57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous business experience</th>
<th>Respondents N=30 (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 (47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 illustrates the business demographics for female entrepreneurs. The data show that there was a variety of business experience, with respondents from various stages of business ownership, for example, three respondents (10 per cent) were at the pre start-up phase, seven (23 per cent) of female entrepreneurs had been operating their business for under one year, and twenty respondents (67 per cent) had been operating their business for more than one year. Just over forty per cent (n=13) of respondents in the study had employees. Of the 17 respondents who had been operating a business under two years, only two respondents (12 per cent) had employees. Whereas, of the 13 respondents who had been operating a business over two years eleven respondents (85 per cent) employed staff. The majority of respondents in the study (n= 26, 87 per cent) had businesses in the service industry and just over half (n=16, 53 per cent) had previous experience of running a small business.

4.7.5  Interview schedule design – stage one

Semi-structured interviews were used in stage one as there has been limited research conducted in the area of female entrepreneurs’ requirements regarding business support provision and the potential of coaching as a method of support for entrepreneurship. The content of the semi-structured interviews was based on the extensive literature review in chapters two and three of this thesis.

Semi-structured interviews were used in stage one and stage two of the data collection. The semi-structured interview allows for flexibility as it enables the interviewer to pursue issues that are of particular importance and significance to the area under study (May, 1997). This interviewing technique also allowed the
author to explore and clarify relevant comments made by the respondents. The semi-structured interview enabled the author to ask questions in the same way each time, whilst at the same time maintaining flexibility with regard to the sequencing of questions and the depth of exploration. Furthermore, the semi-structured technique allowed respondents to discuss pertinent issues and maximised the potential for interactive opportunities between the author and respondents, so as to establish a sense of rapport. Semi-structured interviews also allowed for probing which is important particularly when considering the nature of this study and allowed respondents to answer on their own terms, more so than the standardised interview (May, 1997).

The following section outlines the development of the semi-structured interview schedules for female entrepreneurs used in stage one. A copy of the interview schedule used in stage one of the data collection can be found in appendix six.

Interview schedule

Demographics (business and personal)

Do you access formal business support and if yes, what is it?
Do you access any informal business support, and if yes what is it?
What type of support do these organisations provide and what types of services have you accessed?
What is your view of the support that is offered by these services?
What is your view on the accessibility of these organisations?
Are there services or training which you think would be useful for you which are currently unavailable?
What type of services would be useful at this point in your business development?
What are your views on the individual providing the business support service?
What are your views on the potential of coaching relationships for business support?
What skills and qualities do you think are desirable in a coach?
How would you define coaching?
How often would you want to access support from a coach?
What is the average length of time you would expect for the coaching sessions?
At what stage of business do you think a coaching programme would be most effective?
What do you perceive the advantages and disadvantages of e-coaching to be?

4.7.6 Interview Procedure

All participants (n=30) were interviewed by the author. Participants were informed of the project aims and objectives before they were officially invited to take part in the study. All interviews were conducted at a location that was most convenient for
the participants, either at their home, place of work or by telephone. The majority of interviews were conducted over the telephone as this was most convenient for the respondents. The duration of the interviews was approximately thirty minutes. The interviews took place between December 2004 and May 2005. The key themes outlined above were used to examine and explore the relevant topics and to ensure that the interviewer covered all pertinent issues. All responses were recorded by the author, either tape-recorded or by taking notes, whichever method was preferred by the participant and whichever method was most convenient at the time of the interview. Clarification of answers was sought when necessary.

4.7.7 Piloting the interviews
For stage one, interviews were piloted with two female entrepreneurs. Only minor amendments were required, however piloting the interviews was extremely useful, particularly when attempting to determine the time needed for interviews and if there were any areas which needed further clarification, or where there were potential areas to probe.

4.7.8 Data Analysis - Semi-structured interview data analysis (stage one and stage two)
The qualitative data analysis discussed in this section relates to qualitative data collected at stage one and stage two (see appendix seven and eight for analysis codes for qualitative content analysis). Qualitative data analysis is unique in that data analysis is not a discrete stage of the research process. Qualitative data analysis is an on-going process that occurs simultaneously with data collection and remains throughout the life of the project (Marshall and Rossman, 1998). In this study, qualitative data analysis began with the first interview and continued throughout the study. The author continually developed her understanding and generated new ideas regarding the research issues with each new interview. Content analysis was used to analyse all semi-structured interview data.

Content analysis requires an a priori (‘before the fact’) design (Neurendorf, 2002). An a priori design requires the researcher to develop their coding scheme prior to data collection and analysis. Neurendorf (2002) goes on to state that a deductive scientific approach to research requires the researcher to make decisions on variables, and their measurements and coding must be decided upon before observation takes place. However, it is important to consider that existing theory or research from a literature review may not provide a complete picture of the content to be examined. It can also furnish a ‘powerful conceptual grid’ (Atkinson, 1992: 459) from which it is difficult to escape. Lofland and Lofland (1984: 134-135) also point to problems which can occur when sticking to a rigid set of codes when analysing qualitative data, they state that “splitting the materials into mundane,
analytic and fieldwork files will facilitate staying “on top” of what is happening and evolving an analysis. But it also tends to obscure that nebulous quality called ‘context’. Therefore, designing a coding system prior to analysis can on occasions be unhelpful, particularly when the existing research does not give a complete picture of the phenomena under investigation.

To overcome some of these issues the author initially adopted an a priori approach to data analysis, whereby a set of codes were designed prior to analysis. These codes were developed from the extensive review of the literature. However, as there was limited empirical research in a number of key areas of the study and this study was essentially exploratory (Kuhn, 1970), emergent coding was also conducted when analysing the data. For example, in stage two of the study, the author was aiming to examine the impact of the coaching programme on coachees’ development, therefore coding schemes relating to the benefit of the coaching programme were designed and coding was subsequently revised to reflect the emerging themes from the pilot interview data. Emergent codes relating to the process of coaching were included, for example, removing negative behaviours. However, on the whole the author kept to a list of codes which had been previously established. This balance between a priori and an emergent design enabled the author to decide on variables prior to interviews, but also allowed for some flexibility.

Following the design of a coding scheme this study adopted an analytic hierarchy approach to data analysis. The stages of this approach include: identifying themes and concepts; labelling and tagging data by set concepts and themes; sorting data by theme or concept (cross sectional analysis); summarising or synthesising data; identifying and refining categories; detecting patterns and clustering; developing explanations (answering how and why questions) (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Using this hierarchy was useful in the analysis of semi-structured interview data, as it provided a process to be used throughout data analysis (see Figure 4.2).
Content analysis began with the first interview and was conducted throughout the duration of the study. This method employs a human based coding system that codes either words or phrases, depending on the responses of participants. This process of coding interview material is critical as it is considered to be the heart and soul of the analysis process (Ryan and Bernard, 2000), or as Miles and Huberman (1994) state, “coding is analysis.”
Analysis of the interview data began with the process of familiarisation, whereby the author was immersed in the data (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). Each transcript was then read through again and general themes were noted. As the themes emerged from the data, they were then categorised into main themes or sub themes and headings were developed to represent the data. As the transcripts were being analysed, additional codes were attached to words and/or phrases and grouped into these themes and sub themes. Through the analysis of the interviews, the author also ensured that a flexible approach was adopted to emergent codes.

Berelson (1952:18) defined content analysis as a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”, therefore requiring the process to be objective and systematic. In contrast, Krippendorff (2004: 20) states that although quantification is important, qualitative methods have proven successful too and “reading is fundamentally a qualitative process, even when it results in numerical accounts”. One of the most common notions in qualitative research is that content analysis is based on a word frequency count. This would suggest that in any interview transcript, the words that are mentioned the most frequently typically reflect the greatest concerns. While this may be true in some studies, there are occasions when this may not be the case. For example, synonyms may be used throughout a document and this may lead a researcher to underestimate the importance of a particular concept (Weber, 1990). It is also important to note that each word may not equally represent each category. However there appears to be no procedure to ascertain the weighting of each word. In addition, it is important to note that some words can have double meanings; in this case it is important for the researcher to clarify with respondents their particular definition of the word that is used. Considering these issues prior to analysis is an important part of the process, ensuring that one is aware of this limitation prior to conducting analysis. Throughout the analysis the author ensured that quotes were examined in the context of sentence(s) in which the words were used so as to provide meaning to the data and to ensure that some of the limitations listed above were addressed.

Computer-aided text analysis was considered, particularly using the data analysis software tool QSR NUD*IST version 6. This analysis tool organises coded texts based on a concept of nodes that are grouped in a hierarchical tree structure (Gahan and Hannibal, 1998). This software can be extremely useful for analysing large sets of data; however data analysis software packages can encourage the researcher to “take shortcuts” (Weitzman, 2000: 807-808). In addition, tagging and coding which is often used in software packages can remove segments from their context (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) and “in most content analyses the researchers
at some point find they need to fall back on human interpretive abilities” (Shapiro, 1997: Krippendorff, 2004:126). Taking responses out of context can be extremely misleading and is something which should be avoided when analysing data.

4.7.8.1 Reflexivity
Mason (1996:6) stated that reflexive research means that “the researcher should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their “data.”” This is particularly important in a longitudinal study whereby the researcher is in contact with participants over a period of time. It is important to highlight the issue of the researcher’s presence within this study. The author not only had prime responsibility for collecting, analysing the data and writing this thesis, but also provided administrative support and management to the TEC programme. Programme participants were aware of this, therefore it must be noted that this may have had an impact on the data collected. The author had met a number of the participants throughout the coaching and evaluation process and therefore had built some form of relationship. When collecting the data and analysing the data the author ensured that they kept to strict guideline, for example interview schedules, anonymising transcripts and adhering to analysis guidelines so as not be influenced by external information. As Hertz (1997, p. viii) noted, “the reflexive researcher does not merely report the “facts” of the research but also actively constructs interpretations (“What do I know?”), while at the same time questioning how those interpretations came about (“How do I know what I know?”).

4.7.8.2 Reliability
Member checking was achieved by asking respondents to validate findings. The author summarized key issues arising from each area and then asked respondents if they felt the key points were a true reflection of their experience. Observer error was a potential problem as one interviewer conducted all interviews. However, this was deemed necessary as the author felt that it was important to fully immerse oneself in the data. Interviews were conducted at a range of different times and days throughout the week covering a period of six months at stage one and approximately three months at stage two. The participants generally made the decision when and where the interview would take place, this was to maximise convenience for the participant. Taking this approach helped to alleviate the problems of subject error.

A further consideration is that of subject bias. As discussed in the section on reflexivity, throughout the programme the author had made contact with the participants numerous times and therefore was able to comment on the perceptions of the participants on the programme. All of the coaches and
coachees were very open with their feedback and because they understood the importance of developing a programme and conducting rigorous research they all appeared to be motivated to provide open and honest feedback. Therefore the author, to some extent, could conclude that the respondents were not trying to please and therefore did not believe there was ‘acquiescence bias’ i.e. preferring to say yes. However, to ensure that this issue was addressed, the questions were open ended and respondents were not merely asked to respond to yes or no questions. This resulted in participants being required to provide evidence for their responses.

There may have been a problem with recall bias, particularly at stage two as a number of respondents had completed their coaching relationships up to three months before the interview. This time delay was due to arranging a convenient time for interview. The author endeavoured to overcome this by using prompts and providing the participants with sufficient time to recall past events. It was useful to allow respondents to ‘tell their story’ as this enhanced recall. However, one must consider that respondents may have used their latest experience of coaching and/or formal business support to inform their answers.

Respondent validation was also used, whereby respondents were asked to validate key themes emerging from the data. This is a technique which some state should not be used for validation, but can be “treated as yet another source of data and insight” (Fielding and Fielding, 1986: 43). Respondent validation did help to provide further insight into the respondents’ experiences and helped to ensure that the author had viewed respondents’ answers from the correct perspective. For example, in stage one – needs analysis, respondents were asked if they believed networking to be important. Many women stated that they thought it was essential, leading the author to believe they were part of a network, particularly when they said they had signed up to networking groups. However, when checking this, the author found that women were not networking on a regular basis.

4.8 Stage Two
This section will present details of stage two of the research process. The specific research objectives and research questions will be outlined, highlighting some key literature which supports the research questions. Following this, the section will present details regarding parameters and sampling, followed by data collection and analysis.
4.8.1 Research objectives and questions

The research objectives for this study were formulated on the basis of the literature reviews outlined in chapters two and three. Each research objective followed by the relevant research questions will now be discussed.

Research objective three - To identify the impact of informal and formal support received by participants on an e-coaching programme compared to a control group who did not experience the programme over a period of time (6 months).

Research objective four - To investigate the impact of an e-coaching programme on the process of learning through entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitude measures of participants on an e-coaching programme compared to a control group who did not experience the programme over a period of time (6 months).

Despite the importance of business support for women and women’s reluctance to engage with such services, when compared to men, there is a lack of research examining the effectiveness of support services. There appears to be limited research examining specific skills and business support provision, for example, examining the extent to which business support provision is developing entrepreneurial skills. Therefore this study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of business support in relation to key entrepreneurial skills and tasks.

Research has indicated that one of the most important support groups for female entrepreneurs tended to be their spouses and significant others (Moore and Buttner, 1997; Caputo and Dolinsky, 1998; SBS, 2004). This illustrates the importance of informal contacts in business preparation. However, little is known about the impact of informal contacts on the experiences of business owners and how perceptions of this support change over time.

In addition to barriers relating to funding and finance, balancing work and family roles, networking, and previous education and work experience, women also face barriers such as personal attitudes, i.e. lack of confidence regarding business ownership (Carter, 2000). A lack of self-confidence is generally viewed as a considerable barrier for women contemplating or operating a small business (Shragg et al., 1992; Still and Guerin, 1990). Research suggests that women may have less confidence in their business ability, compared to men (Wilson et al., 2007; Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991). An individual’s uncertainty regarding success is inextricably linked to their belief that they have the ability to succeed (self-efficacy).
This research was aimed at ascertaining the specific areas of skills development and therefore used an entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale to examine this in detail. As this study was attempting to measure change in relation to coaching relationships and coaching relationships are task based and task focused, it is essential to examine how individuals rate themselves in terms of achieving positive outcomes in specific tasks. While some of these skills’ areas will overlap, it is also important to examine these areas in isolation, particularly as self-efficacy is task specific.

Research question 4 - How do coachees and coaches rate formal and informal business support provision, over a six month period, relating to a variety of development areas, compared to a control group who did not experience an e-coaching relationship? (Areas are financial planning marketing, strategic planning for the short and long term, accessing funding and finance, networking, defining short and long term business goals, taking calculated risks, making business decisions under risk and uncertainty, balancing work and home life, time management, and developing new business ideas).

Research question 5 - What, if any, impact does the programme have on coachees’ process of learning through entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and general entrepreneurial attitudes relating to a variety of development areas, compared to a control group who did not experience an e-coaching relationship?

Research objective five – To investigate the perceptions of coach and coachee participants in relation to their learning experienced through an e-coaching programme.

It is essential that developmental interventions, such as coaching, are not only examined in the context of large organisations, but are also studied within small businesses. A review of the literature has highlighted that there is an absence of literature and empirical studies focusing on coaching in small businesses and entrepreneurial settings. The majority of coaching literature typically focuses on large organisations (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002; Whitmore, 2002; Hunt and Weintraub, 2002; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Conducting empirical research with entrepreneurs and gaining an understanding of the perceptions of coachees and coaches in this environment will provide evidence for future models of coaching and will help policy makers to understand the experiences of female entrepreneur coaches and coachees in relation to learning and development of self-efficacy, which will help the future development of business support provision.
One can not suggest that because there is limited research in this area, small business owners do not engage with learning and development, it is simply that this type of activity is not labelled in the same way as it is in large organisations (Ross, 1993) and therefore little is known about development and small business. These characteristics of small businesses produce a range of issues that require further investigation for coaching and mentoring interventions to be successful (Peel, 2004).

**Research question 6 - What are coachees’ and coaches’ perceptions of the impact of the coaching relationship in relation to their learning and development?**

**Research objective six - To provide recommendations from the monitoring and evaluation of an e-coaching programme for the development of future e-coaching programmes.**

A review of the literature has highlighted the diverse range of models and frameworks which are used to guide practitioners and organisations in the use of coaching and coaching relationships. Despite the wealth of toolkits produced, there is a paucity of empirical research examining the impact of this development intervention, therefore this study was unique. The available literature does not explore the possibility of coaching programmes for individual groups and does not appear to clarify the purpose, design, or the impact of the coaching relationships. This absence of research makes it difficult for practitioners to adopt coaching confidently.

In summary, there is a dearth of empirical research examining the quality of coaching programmes and the impact the programmes have on coachees and coaches. As there is no current academic literature which has examined this particular type of coaching relationship, this study addressed the following questions in order to inform academic literature and develop a more in-depth understanding of coaching relationships for female entrepreneurs.

**Research question 7 - How do coaches and coachees evaluate the effectiveness of the programme and e-coaching?**

**Research question 8 - What are coaches’ and coachees’ views regarding the future design of e-coaching programmes?**

**4.8.2 Parameters**

See stage one methodology for a more in-depth description of parameters used in this study. The study was restricted to coachees who were based in the North
West of England; however this restriction was not applied to coaches, who were based across the UK. The study was advertised and to some degree women were self-selecting. Therefore, women who decided to take part in the study defined themselves as female entrepreneurs.

Coachees included those who were at the pre start up stage, which was seen as the point at which women were contemplating the idea of setting up in business, or start-up when they had actually made the decision to start up a business, or those who were at a business development stage, i.e. developing into a new market. Coaches were able to self recruit, so women were able to define themselves as coachees. Coaches were women who were established and experienced female entrepreneurs, with a minimum of approximately two years business experiences, or those who had substantial coaching experience. These two distinctions were decided upon to ensure that all coachees’ needs were covered. In addition, it was felt there should be an element of self-selecting for female entrepreneurs who wanted to be coach or coachee.

4.8.3 Sampling
The primary sampling technique used for this study was that of snowballing, whereby participants were self-selecting – see stage one methodology for a full description.

For stage two of the study, participants were invited to take part in this programme by means of the publication of a variety of adverts in a number of local newspapers, journals, newsletters, websites and informal and formal contacts (see appendix nine). The advert clearly set out the objectives of the research and the background to this study. Participants were invited to contact the author to discuss the research in more detail and to receive an application form for the programme (see appendix ten and eleven).

Thirty eight coaches and thirty eight coachees were matched at the start of the programme. This number was chosen firstly because the author felt that this offered a range of female entrepreneurs and also because this was felt to be a manageable number of participants considering this was a one-to-one relationship. Fewer female entrepreneurs may have caused problems in terms of attrition. Eight participants withdrew from the programme in the early stages of the coaching programme, i.e. they did not formally start their coaching relationship. As such, the baseline, i.e. demographics, short and long term goals and development aims are only presented for the thirty participants who formally commenced the relationship. Demographics for the participants are provided in chapter six. The main reasons for withdrawing from the programme were either because their coach did not feel
that they could commit enough time to the programme, or coachees had personal reasons for not starting. A further three coachees did not complete the full six month coaching relationship; reasons for withdrawing from the programme were mainly due to personal issues, e.g. pregnancy, or bereavement. The author was unable to obtain responses from three of the coachees who had completed the programme.

4.8.4 Control group
The control group comprised twenty-six female entrepreneurs who were either at the pre start-up, start-up, or development stages of business (as with the coachees). Demographics for the control group are shown in chapter six. The use of a comparison/control group can inform the selection of research populations and thus aid theory development, which will ultimately solidify the findings (Pole and Lampard, 2002; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 50) state; “control is particularly relevant in evaluative studies where the design may involve comparison between an ‘action’ or ‘treatment’ group which received or used the intervention being evaluated and a control group which did not, so that the effect of the intervention can be investigated”.

The female entrepreneurs who participated in the control group were contacted through an open day for business start-ups held by Train 2000, which is a business support organisation based in the North West of England. The author approached women who attended this event and asked them if they would participate. The business service providers from Train 2000 distributed flyers for the project to business start-ups they visited, this had a snowballing effect and women in business start-ups passed information to other women in their networks who also became control group members. In addition, entrepreneurs who contacted the research team to become a coachee after the programme had commenced were also asked to become control group members. The control group members were informed that the author would like to contact them again in six months time. In total, 26 women completed time point one questionnaires. At time point two the control group was contacted again to complete the second questionnaire. In total, 15 female entrepreneurs in the control group completed questionnaires at time point two.

4.8.5 Demographics
This section will show the demographics for the coachees, control group and the coaches at T1 and T2, followed by the demographics for the sample of coachees and coaches interviewed at T2.
4.8.5.1 Demographics for coachees, control group and coaches (T1 and T2 – quantitative data)

Table 4.3 shows the personal demographics of the coachees and the control group members. All participants and control group members were female. The age range for coachees was 25 to 56 years of age, with a mean age of 41 years, for the control group ages ranged between 27 and 58, with a mean age of 42 years. The age range was slightly less for the coaches, e.g. 32 to 57 years of age, with a mean age of 43 years. The majority of coachees (n=24, 80 per cent) were white British, as were the majority of the control group (n=21, 81 per cent) and the majority of coaches (n=26, 87 per cent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3</th>
<th>Personal Demographics – coaches, coachees and the control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Percentage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Coachees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Coachees</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>13 (43)</td>
<td>8 (31)</td>
<td>11 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
<td>7 (27)</td>
<td>13 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
<td>8 (31)</td>
<td>6 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Coachees</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British – White</td>
<td>24 (80)</td>
<td>21 (81)</td>
<td>26 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Irish</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other white background</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic/mixed background</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African or Caribbean</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed white and Black</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African/Asian</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Coachees</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>10 (33)</td>
<td>9 (35)</td>
<td>18 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with partner</td>
<td>5 (17)</td>
<td>10 (38)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>10 (33)</td>
<td>6 (23)</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Separated</td>
<td>5 (17)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent children</th>
<th>Coachees</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21 (70)</td>
<td>6 (23)</td>
<td>22 (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
<td>4 (15)</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 (17)</td>
<td>7 (27)</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (31)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Educational Level/Attainment</th>
<th>Coachees</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCSE/O’levels</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>5 (17)</td>
<td>5 (19)</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>9 (30)</td>
<td>12 (46)</td>
<td>11 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate diploma</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>10 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifteen (50 per cent) of the coachees were married or living with a partner, compared to nineteen (73 per cent) of the control group. Of the ten (33 per cent) coachees who were single, six (60 per cent) were under the age of forty.
Approximately two thirds of the coaches were also married or living with a partner (n= 19, 63 per cent). Nine coachee participants (30 per cent) stated that they had dependent children, of which only four were married, two were single and three were divorced, whereas approximately 46 per cent (n=12) of the control group members had dependent children.

In terms of education attainment twenty (67 per cent) coachees were educated to degree level or above, eighteen (69 per cent) members of the control group were educated to the same standard and twenty five (83 per cent) of the coaches were also educated to degree level or above.

Chi-square analysis was conducted on the personal demographics of the coachees and the control group. The p values reported in Table 4.4 show that the data did not demonstrate any statistically significant difference between the coachees and the control group in terms of age, education, children and marital status and ethnicity, with all Pearson Chi-square results above 0.1.

Table 4.4 Chi-square analysis results for personal demographics (coachees and control)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Demographics</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.944</td>
<td>0.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.654</td>
<td>0.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.534</td>
<td>0.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.950</td>
<td>0.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.657</td>
<td>0.589</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Business demographics of coachees and the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Age (Years)</th>
<th>Coaches N = 30 (Percentage)</th>
<th>Control N = 26 (Percentage)</th>
<th>Coaches N =30 (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre start-up</td>
<td>10 (33)</td>
<td>13 (50)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start up (&lt; 1 year)</td>
<td>14 (47)</td>
<td>12 (46)</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 &lt; 2</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 &lt; 4</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 +</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sector</td>
<td>Services 25 (83)</td>
<td>23 (88)</td>
<td>30 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retailing 5 (17)</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Yes 4 (13)</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 26 (87)</td>
<td>23 (88)</td>
<td>22 (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous business</td>
<td>Yes 15 (50)</td>
<td>15 (58)</td>
<td>16 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
<td>No 15 (50)</td>
<td>11 (42)</td>
<td>14 (47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 provides some business profile data for the coachees and the control group members. The majority of the coachees (n=24, 80 per cent) were at the pre start-up stage or had been operating for under one year, slightly more of the
control group members (n=25, 96 per cent) had been operating for the same time. The majority of coaches (n=28, 93 per cent) had been operating a business for more than one year. Participants had businesses in a variety of sectors, ranging from textiles, hairdressing, internet sites, public relations, coaching, and photography. However, the majority of coachees (n=25, 83 per cent) and the majority of the control group (n=23, 88 per cent) and coaches (n=30, 100 per cent), were based in the service industry. The range of businesses highlighted the diverse group of participants who signed up to the programme and reflects the diversity of female business ownership in general. The majority (n=26, 87 per cent) of coachees and the control group (n=23, 88 per cent), and coaches (n=22, 73 per cent) did not have any employees. There was a fairly even split between coachees, control group and coaches who had previous business experience of running a business and those who did not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.6</th>
<th>Chi-square analysis results for business demographics (coachees and control)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Demographics</strong></td>
<td><strong>Df</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business age</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous business experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with the personal demographics, the chi square analysis for business demographics (Table 4.6) showing, business age, sector, employees and previous business experience did not show any statistical significant differences between the coachees and the control group.

4.8.5.2 Demographics for coachees and coaches (T2 – qualitative data) Table 4.7 shows the demographics of the eighteen participants (coachees n=11: coaches n=7) who were interviewed at time point two. The sample of coachees for interviews at T2 covered all but one of the age ranges and therefore provided a coverage across all ages, however when based on the overall sample they were more concentrated in the older age groups, this was also the case for the coaches. All participants were either White British or White Irish, similar to that of the overall group. On the whole, marital status of coachees and coaches interviewed at T2 reflected the overall sample. The interview sample also included coachees and coaches with a range of educational attainment. Whilst the coaches and coachees interviewed at T2 only included a sample of coaches and coachees it appeared from this demographic data that the sample was a good representation of the overall groups.
Table 4.7  Personal demographic data – coaches and coachees (T2 – interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coachees N=11</th>
<th>Coaches N=7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 59</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>4 (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British White</td>
<td>10 (91)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Irish</td>
<td>1 (9)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>3 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with partner</td>
<td>1 (9)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced / Widowed</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>3 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent children:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>9 (82)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSEs/O-Levels</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Levels</td>
<td>1 (9)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgrad diploma</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>1 (9)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8  Business demographic data – coaches and coachees (T2 – interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coachees N=11</th>
<th>Coaches N=7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Age (Years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre start-up</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start up (&lt; 1 year)</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 &lt; 2</td>
<td>1 (9)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 &lt; 4</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 +</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Sector:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (73)</td>
<td>6 (86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous business experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>5 (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4.8, the sample of coachees for interviews at T2 covered all but one of the business age ranges and provided a good split between pre start-up and start-up. Similarly the coaches interviewed had a range of business experience. All coaches and coachees were based in the service sector, this is not surprising considering the majority of the overall sample was based in the service sector. There was also a good representation regarding employees for both coaches and coachees interviewed at T2. There were approximately an equal number of
coachees having previous business experience, similar to the overall sample. However, for the coaches there were a larger majority at T2 interviews who had previous business experience. Overall, as with the personal demographics, the business demographics show a satisfactory representation of the full sample.

4.8.6 Questionnaire data

Three questionnaires were used to examine the impact of the e-coaching programme, focusing specifically on a number of key areas, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy, general entrepreneurial attitudes (including locus of control). An additional questionnaire was distributed at time point two which was aimed at monitoring and evaluating the e-coaching programme. Rating scales were used in the questionnaires to measure the skills’ development of coachees and the control group. The application forms which were completed at the start of the programme (time point one, baseline) were also used to collect data regarding the coachees and control group.

4.8.6.1 Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy and Business Support questionnaire design – coachees and control (time point one & time point two)

The entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy questionnaire used in this study was adapted from the questionnaire used by Chen et al. (1998) (for a further discussion of this see chapter 2). The entrepreneurial roles and tasks included in the entrepreneurial self-efficacy questionnaire used by Chen et al. (1998) was based on the work of Long (1983), Miner (1990, 1993) and Kazanjian (1988). Chen et al. (1998) compiled a list of roles and then conducted further interviews to rate the list of entrepreneurial roles and tasks, following this twenty six items were retained. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy was then measured in relation to the items and from these items five factors were used to group the individual roles; these were marketing, innovation, management, risk taking and financial control. Innovation and risk taking came out as particularly important in the study by Chen et al. (1998), however managerial competence can still be seen as a complementary skill. As this study is exploratory and there is limited empirical research in this area, the author decided to include all five factors examined by Chen et al. (1998). In addition, the study by Chen et al. (1998) was examining the differences between founders and non founders, whereas this study aims to examine the impact of a programme and the skill changes over time.

In addition to these entrepreneurial skills, the literature has highlighted social capital and networking as important issues for female entrepreneurs. Research suggests the importance for entrepreneurs of networks and the social capital which can be found in such networks (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; De Carolis and Saparito, 2006). Despite the importance of networking, women’s networking
activity is significantly lower than that of men, with women frequently excluded from traditional networks or lacking information about such networks (Katz and Williams, 1997; Kramer, 1992; Buttner and Rosen, 1988). Therefore networking questions were included in the questionnaire.

Female entrepreneurs are also often expected to perform a ‘balancing act’ between their work and domestic roles (Shelton, 2006; Aldrich, 1989; Parasuraman et al., 1996). Research suggests that women tend to experience greater role conflict between work and family life than their male counterparts (Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Welter, 2004) and childcare is often cited as a reason for women's lack of participation in entrepreneurship (Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Welter, 2004; Hollowell et al., 2006). Therefore it was also important to examine work/life balance.

Self-efficacy regarding business ownership can be measured by simply referring to self-efficacy of business ownership in general. Alternatively, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which is the focus of this study, can be measured by referring to specific tasks which are important for running a business. Predicting all the tasks involved in business ownership would lead to increased predictive power of the outcome, however it is impractical to do this, therefore one must find a balance. Gist (1987: 481) asserts “it would be more promising to generalize self-efficacy perceptions by aggregating across a number of related but domain specific measures (e.g. a cluster of specific competencies within verbal skills), than by attempting to devise a broad omnibus test. An omnibus measure is likely to offer convenience, but this probably will be at a greater expense to predictive power”.

The questionnaire (see appendix twelve and thirteen) was aimed at examining participants’ views regarding their entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the efficacy of formal and informal business support provision measured at two time points. The questionnaire covered the following areas: financial planning, marketing, strategic planning for the short and long term, accessing funding and finance, networking, defining short and long term business goals, taking calculated risks, making business decisions under risk and uncertainty, balancing work and home life, time management, and developing new business ideas. Firstly, coachees and the control group were asked whether they felt they had the ability to perform a number of tasks (entrepreneurial self-efficacy). Secondly, they were asked to state whether formal and informal business support provision, e.g. Business Link/Chamber of Commerce, friends, family, the Internet, had helped them to develop in the areas identified. Coachees and the control group were asked to rate whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a likert scale from one to five (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), and a not applicable option.
This rating scale enabled the author to measure change with regard to skills’ development (May, 2001). The questionnaire for the coachees and control group was phrased slightly differently; asking one additional question within each of the domain areas in the coachee questionnaire, this was to ascertain whether coachees expected a coach to provide them with help to develop each specific area.

4.8.6.2 General Entrepreneurial attitudes’ questionnaire design – coachees and control (time point one & time point two)

The second questionnaire examined general entrepreneurial attitudes and locus of control (see appendix fourteen). This questionnaire included a number of items to ascertain how female entrepreneurs were feeling at that particular time, examining a range of entrepreneurial attitudes. This questionnaire was distributed at two time points to measure whether any change had occurred regarding the areas covered. The seventeen items were: self confidence, capability of achieving business goals, innovative, motivated, ambitious for greater business success, aware of business support, supported in business, isolated, satisfied with business progress, satisfied with work/life balance, positive about future business plans, and six locus of control questions.

The entrepreneurial self-efficacy questionnaire, previously discussed, was administered to examine entrepreneurial self-efficacy beliefs regarding specific tasks. Alongside specific entrepreneurial tasks, the author wanted to examine general views regarding entrepreneurship. An attitude is a positive or negative view about a thing, person or event. Respondents may rate their ability highly and this would lead one to believe that because they have high levels of self-efficacy they also have positive entrepreneurial attitudes, however the author wanted to confirm if this was the case for this group of individuals. The entrepreneurial self-efficacy questionnaire was focused on whether participants felt that they were to develop certain skills, whereas the general entrepreneurial attitudes questionnaire examined this in more depth by asking if they felt satisfied with their general level of skill in a certain area and whether on the whole they felt self-confident.

Research has shown that it is possible to distinguish entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs by using the Entrepreneurial Attitude Scale (EAO), which consists of constructs relating to achievement, self-esteem, personal control, and innovation (Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner & Hunt, 1991). As the EAO is theoretically well grounded, these general themes were adopted in this questionnaire (achievement, control, innovation and self-esteem) (Gibson and Harris, 2008). Furthermore, Robinson et al. (1991), using a sample of 54 entrepreneurs and 57 non-entrepreneurs found that the four subscales were able to accurately predict
entrepreneur classification in 77 per cent of cases. The general entrepreneurial attitudes’ questionnaire used in this study included questions centred around these core themes, for example, innovation – asking respondents to rate their levels of innovation, personal control – asking respondents to rate their locus of control relating to chance, powerful others and internal control, and self-esteem - asking respondents to rate their levels of self-confidence. Alongside these questions, the general entrepreneurial attitudes’ questionnaire also asked a range of other questions which had been identified in the literature as important for female entrepreneurs, for example isolation and awareness of business support.

As stated, the general entrepreneurial attitudes’ questionnaire also included questions relating to locus of control. These questions were included to determine whether the coaching relationship had an impact on participant’s locus of control. Research has shown that an individual may have strong internal locus of control (belief about their general ability to control outcomes), but low self-efficacy for certain specific tasks/skills (Wilson et al., 2007). Therefore, the author felt that it was important to examine both entrepreneurial self-efficacy and locus of control. Research also suggests that barriers to female entrepreneurs, such as a lack of business training and previous managerial experience (Hisrich and Brush, 1984; Bowen and Hisrich, 1986), might well undermine women’s self confidence and women’s perceived control internality (George, 1991). Furthermore, locus of control has been shown to be of great interest in entrepreneurship research, and internality has been identified as one of the most dominant entrepreneurial characteristics (Venkatapathy, 1984). Locus of control has also been found to be important for distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs (Brockhaus, 1980). Locus of control questions were asked to determine whether the coaching relationship had an impact on participant’s locus of control across the two time points.

Studies of locus of control have typically used Rotter’s (1966) Internal-External scale in a two-dimensional, forced-choice format and/or Levenson's (1974) Internal-External scale in three-dimensional, Likert format. Nelson (1991) found that female entrepreneurs have significantly more internal locus of control, when compared with the general population. The assumed two-dimensionality of the locus of control construct (i.e., internal vs. external control) has however been questioned repeatedly. This questioning has given rise to more complex theories (Lefcourt, 1981), while the internal factor of Rotter’s I-E scale has remained, the external factor has now been split into two dimensions: chance and powerful others (Levenson, 1974; Kaufmann, Welsh and Bushmarin, 1995). The addition of powerful others to the locus of control scale has given a third alternative for respondents who might have the tendency to have higher external locus of control.
Sapp and Harrod (1993) examined the reliability and validity of the locus of control scale. The study used a nine-item locus of control scale constructed from Levenson’s (1974) original 24-item scale. Principal components and second order factor analyses of responses from 129 under-graduates showed a satisfactory reliability and construct validity of the reduced scale. Additionally, structural equation analysis using a scaled measure of perceived risk supported the predictive validity of the reduced scale; therefore Levenson’s (1974) locus of control scale was used in this study because of its reliability. Similar to a study conducted by Boydston, Hopper and Wright (2000) which adopted Levenson’s (1974) three dimensional scale, the scale used in this study included questions to examine each locus of control dimension: Internal Control, Chance, and Powerful Others. This questionnaire used a five item rating scale from strongly disagree through to strongly agree and a not applicable option to examine internal control, control by powerful others, and control by chance (Levenson, 1974).

4.8.6.3 Programme evaluation questionnaire design – coaches and coachees (time point two)
To examine the impact of the e-coaching programme, coaches and coachees completed an evaluation/impact questionnaire on completion of the programme (time point two). The literature review highlighted that there was a lack of empirical research examining the effects of coaching and coaching relationships. In addition, there was an absence of literature and empirical studies focusing on coaching in small business ownership and entrepreneurial settings, with the majority of coaching literature focusing on large organisations (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995; Whitmore, 2002; Hunt and Weintraub, 2002; Zeus & Skiffington, 2003). To address this gap in the research, this questionnaire was used to ascertain the effectiveness of the programme, specifically examining a number of components, for example the coaching relationship, participants satisfaction and development, online method of delivery, and frequency of contact (see appendix fifteen). The majority of questions in the evaluation questionnaire were rated on a Likert scale from one to five, one being “strongly agree”, five being “strongly disagree” and a not applicable option.

4.8.7 Piloting the questionnaires
Each questionnaire was piloted with two coaches and two coachees. Piloting the questionnaire enabled the author to determine whether respondents understood the questions or whether they found them to be confusing. The layout of the questionnaire was changed because of the feedback obtained through piloting. Originally the questionnaire listed each question followed by the range of response options underneath. This format was seen as time consuming as it required the respondent to read the range of options one to six for each question. Therefore, it
was decided to put the likert scale at the end of each question on the right hand side of the page, so that it was clear that the response set was the same for each question.

4.8.8 The questionnaire procedure

Questionnaires were distributed to all coachees and coaches prior to the programme starting (baseline, time point 1: May - July 2006), and at the end of the programme (6 months, time point 2: October – February 2007) see Figure 4.3. Participants were also asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire at time point two. Time point two data was collected over a five month period as not all coaching relationships started in May.
Figure 4.3 Questionnaires distributed at stage two, time point one and time point two

The baseline questionnaires were distributed to participants at the welcome events and participants were asked to complete them during the day and hand them back before leaving. Participants who did not have time to complete the questionnaires on the day took them away and completed them and then returned them either by email or by post. Time point two questionnaires were more difficult to gather. Firstly, only a small group of women were able to attend the closing event, therefore only a limited number of questionnaires were handed back at the event. The remaining questionnaires were chased either by telephone and/or email and were chased every two weeks. Secondly, because a number of women had completed their coaching relationship by this stage, it was difficult to motivate participants to complete the questionnaires.
4.8.9 Interview schedule design (coaches and coachees) - Stage two – time point two

Interviews were conducted with eighteen participants at time point two. One would typically start the interview asking the respondents to report on biographical details such as age, marital status, ethnicity etc. Biographical questions asked at the beginning of interviews can be used to ‘ease’ participants into the interview process and to establish rapport (Shaughnessy and Zechmeister, 1997). However, the author had previously collected biographical data in the application forms and therefore did not need to include this section of questions in the interview schedules. A copy of the full interview schedule can be found in appendix sixteen.

Interview schedule

*Can you describe your coaching relationship?*

*Can you describe how you learned from your coach and how they developed you?*

*What impact has the relationship had on your business development/personal development so far?*

*What did your coach have that was of value to you?*

*Did you encounter any problems with the relationship?*

*How much contact did you have with your coach?*

*How would you define coaching?*

*Do you think your definition has changed since your participation in this programme? If so, in what ways and how?*

Respondents were asked to state how they defined coaching. It was important to examine what women understood by coaching, as this highlighted any similarities or differences regarding women’s personal definitions and textbook definitions of coaching. Respondents were then asked to state whether they felt that their definition of coaching had changed since their participation on the programme, and, if so, in what way. Coaches’ and coachees’ definitions may have changed throughout their coaching relationship. If this was the case, it was important to highlight this and understand why. This would also enable the author to examine whether the relationships had changed over time, for example had the coach and coachee developed into a coaching relationship over time, or had they developed into another form of relationship over the six-month period.

As stated previously, there is an absence of empirical studies examining coaching in a business and entrepreneurial setting (Evans and Volery, 2001; Stokes, 2001; Sullivan, 2000), therefore it was important to examine the impact of the coaching relationships. Respondents were asked to comment on what their coach/coachee had of value to them, how the coaching relationship had specifically benefited their
skills’ development and if they had experienced any problems in the coaching relationships.

Interview schedule

*What was your experience of the online element of the programme?*

*Did you have previous experience of using e-methods?*

*What has been the main method of meeting?*

*If we were to run a similar programme in the future, is there anything you would like to add or change?*

There is an absence of research relating to e-coaching schemes, despite the fact that there has been a recent increase in such innovative methods of delivery (Caplan, 2003). Therefore it was important to examine whether the online method was suitable for coachees’ and coaches’ needs. Respondents were also asked if they had previous experience of using ‘e’ methods for coaching and whether this had been an advantage or disadvantage. This would show whether past experiences had any impact on the coach/coachees’ experience of the programme and if previous experience of using ‘e’ methods was of benefit to those participating on the programme.

Respondents were asked about the frequency of meetings and were asked to state how much contact they had with their coach/coachee and if they were satisfied with the level of contact. This question provided an examination of how the coaching relationship was conducted throughout the six months and enabled the author to examine what was effective in terms of frequency of contact. Whilst this programme was essentially an e-coaching programme, respondents were able to supplement this with telephone or face-to-face coaching at certain times throughout the relationship, therefore respondents were also asked to comment on their main method of ‘meeting’.

**4.8.10 Piloting the interviews**

For stage two, the interviews were piloted with one coach and one coachee. Only minor amendments were required. For example, the author asked respondents to state whether they felt satisfied with their coaching relationships. This question was changed as respondents felt that the word ‘satisfied’ was too general. The revised interview asked respondents to comment on the impact of the relationships in terms of their development. This question enabled coachees to be more specific about their development over the six month period.

**4.8.11 Interview Procedure**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen (coachees = 11 and coaches = 7) programme participants. The coaches and coachees were chosen
by randomly sampling names from the list of participants. The list was split between coaches and coachees to ensure that all groups of participants were interviewed. Participants were then contacted either by telephone or email to invite them to take part in this section of the study. On initial contact, some coaches and coachees were too busy to take part in an interview, or they were on holiday or away on business. The author then continued to randomly sample participants until it was felt that a sufficient sample had been recruited, i.e. until saturation, whereby no new themes were occurring. The interviews were conducted at time point two following completion of the time point two questionnaire.

All of the interviews were conducted over the telephone as participants felt that this was the most convenient method and it was regarded as the most practical and cost efficient way of accessing participants. The author contacted the participants prior to the interview and requested their participation and then arranged a convenient date and time to conduct the interview. Participants were provided with details regarding the interview format and were given an approximate length of time for the interview. Providing participants with this information allowed them to ensure that they scheduled appropriate time in their diary for the interview to take place. Participants were asked for permission for the author to tape record the interview and were then assured that their responses would be treated in confidence. Gilbert (1993) states that when conducting standardised interviews it is not necessary to tape record, however non standardised interviews usually require recording as the researcher will be joining in with the conversations and without recording the interview data may be lost. As the interviews were semi-structured, the author tape recorded them to ensure that they could focus on the conversation.

The semi-structured interviews enabled the author to cover general themes and allowed respondents to discuss pertinent issues. Semi-structured interviews enabled the author to concentrate on set themes; however the order of questions was not the same for each respondent. For example, some respondents wanted to provide information regarding their coaching relationship in the initial stages of the interview. While the author did endeavour to keep to a similar order, it was possible to change the order of questions if this was appropriate for the coach/coachee during the interview (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

At the close of each interview, the author asked participants if they had any further questions regarding the study and then thanked participants for taking time to participate in this part of the study. Following the interview, the author checked that the tape had recorded and then transcribed the interview. As with the interviews conducted in stage one, all responses were recorded by the author,
either tape-recorded or by taking notes, and clarification of answers was sought when necessary.

4.8.12 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative analysis of the data was carried out using SPSS for Windows version 15.0. Paired sample t-tests were used to analyse the data from time point one and time point two for the coachees and the control group, in order to measure change over time. Consideration was given to one way anova as a generalization of the t-tests, designed to determine the significance of the differences among three or more (rather than just two) group means (Colman and Pulford 2006). However as this study was only comparing the means of two groups it was felt that the paired sample t-tests would be appropriate for this analysis. Normally a cut off of significance would be 0.05, however when smaller samples are used (e.g. n=20) then it is important to be aware of the possibility that a non-significant result may actually be accounted for by insufficient power (Pallant, 2005). Stevens (1996) suggests that when a smaller sample is used it may be necessary to set a cut off of 0.10 or 0.15 rather than the traditional 0.05 level. For this study, a cut off point of 0.10 was used. Items showing p values < 0.05 will be shown as statistically significant and p values < 0.10 will be shown as trends.

Negatively worded items that had been included in the general entrepreneurial attitudes’ questionnaire and locus of control questionnaire to help prevent response bias were reverse scored for the purpose of analysis. The paired sample t-tests were conducted on individual questionnaire items, e.g. financial planning and marketing. Specifically, the direction of this change (i.e. increase or decrease in the mean scores) was determined from these tests. An important concept when conducting significance testing is whether to use a one-tailed or two-tailed test of significance. When a study hypothesis states the direction of the difference or the relationship, then a one-tailed probability would be used. However this study was not testing a hypothesis and was not assuming a direction of the tests before the results were analysed, therefore a two-tailed test was used.

Following the analysis, the author considered using the Bonferroni post-hoc correction as this is often used when conducting multiple tests to ensure that type 1 errors do not occur. However, as this study was an exploration rather than testing a hypothesis it was felt the Bonferroni would not be an appropriate test to use. Some argue that many researchers do not use Bonferroni’s adjustment because they would rarely be able to reject a null hypothesis and there is a constant concern about making a false statement, by doing this they may overlook many differences and relationships that actually exist (Perneger, 1998). Nakagawa (2004) states that the use of Bonferroni procedures may be causing the tendency
not to present nonsignificant results. This may occur because researchers feel that presenting more tests with nonsignificant results may make previously 'significant' results 'nonsignificant' when using the Bonferroni procedures. Therefore, it is clear that the more detailed research (i.e., research measuring more variables) that researchers conduct, the less probability they will ultimately have of finding significant results. Moran (2003) has named this paradox as a "hyper-Red Queen phenomenon". The "prime directive" for social science research is to discover relationships, therefore some argue that it is better to risk making a few wrong statements, than to overlook relationships which show significance, but do not meet critical alpha significance level after applying Bonferroni's adjustment (StatPac, 2009).

t-values for each item have been presented in the findings alongside the p values for each item. On the whole, any t-value which is greater than +2 or less than -2 is acceptable and the higher the t-value, the greater the confidence we have in the coefficient as a predictor. t-values which fall between +2 and –2 have been highlighted in the text (in italics in chapter six). These items must be treated with caution. As individual questionnaire items were analysed, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was not computed (Colman and Pulford, 2006).

Before conducting statistical tests, it is important to examine the distribution of the data. When the data are not normally distributed, some state that a non-parametric test is more suitable (Colman and Pulford, 2006). However, parametric tests, i.e. t-tests are more sophisticated and more robust than non-parametric tests, therefore even when a dataset appears to show non normal data, parametric tests are still preferred, particularly when there is a large enough sample and/or the data are not too skewed. There is no clear distinction of what is a large enough sample, some say if there are more than two dozen (24) this is seen as a large enough sample. In this study the dataset was checked for normal distribution, the Kurtosis tests and skewness tests seemed to show that the data was still within normal limits as nearly all of the individual questions were within the range of +2 and -2 and all were within the +3 and -3 range, which is typically defined as the cut off points for normal data. However, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro tests showed that there was a statistically significant deviation from normality. Because small sample sizes were used in this survey, the author felt that it was important to check the reliability of the t-tests and therefore also conducted Wilcoxon ranked signed tests on a number of factors. This was completed to show whether there were any factors which were showing as significant in the t-test and not in the Wilcoxon ranked signed tests or vice versa. The outcome was that the results from the t-tests and the Wilcoxon ranked signed tests showed similar significant levels for the same questions.
Factor analysis was considered for this study as there were a number of variables used in the entrepreneurial self-efficacy questionnaire which may show relationships between variables. However this study was not aimed at examining the relationships between the variables and how much each contributed to the overall entrepreneurial self-efficacy. As the items included in the questionnaires have all been highlighted in the literature as contributing to entrepreneurship, the author wanted to examine the changes over time for each individual area, to examine the impact of the coaching relationship, therefore factor analysis was not considered appropriate.

4.9 Summary
This mixed methods study consisted of two stages. The first stage consisted of thirty semi structured interviews, and the second stage of the study consisted of two time points. Quantitative data were collected from the coachees and the control group at T1 (baseline) and T2 (six months, completion of programme). Qualitative data was collected from the coaches and coachees at T2 to achieve the objectives defined in this study.

The research conducted in stage one of this study was aimed at examining what women wanted from business support and the potential of an e-coaching programme as an alternative to traditional forms of business support that had previously been accessed. The literature review highlighted that there was limited empirical research examining female entrepreneurs’ experiences and requirements of business support provision. In addition, coaching within an entrepreneurial setting is also an under-researched area; therefore it was necessary to gain women’s views on the potential of such support before designing a coaching programme. In order to understand the experiences of business support provision, it was necessary to conduct semi structured interviews with thirty female entrepreneurs to gain an understanding of their experiences regarding business support, so as to examine its advantages and limitations and ascertain respondents’ requirements for the provision of business support.

The questionnaires were used to obtain quantitative data relating to changes over time, specifically in relation to entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes. Quantitative data was analysed using paired sample t-tests (Field, 2005; Pallant, 2005). Analysis of the interviews at both stages was conducted using content analysis (Weber 1990; Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 1980).
The demographics reported in this study are in line with previous female entrepreneurship literature, therefore one can conclude that the samples used for stage one of this study are similar to the samples used in previous entrepreneurship studies.

The demographic data for the coachees in stage two of the study was very similar to that of respondents in stage one, the mean age for coachees was 41 years of age, 42 for the control group and 43 years of age for the coaches. On the whole there were also similarities found between the coachees, coaches and control group demographics. The mean age ranged between 41 and 43 years of age.

In terms of the business demographics, there were some differences between the coachees and the control group. Half of the control group (n= 13) were at the pre start-up phase, whereas a third of the coachees (n=10, 33 per cent) were at a similar stage and two thirds of coaches (n=20, 67 per cent) had been operating a business for more than two years. The majority of coachees, control group and coaches were based in the service sector and the majority did not have any employees. There appeared to be a fairly equal split between coachees, control group and coaches who had previous experience and those who did not. Chi square analysis conducted on the personal and business demographics for coachees and the control group showed that there were no significant differences between each group in any of the categories highlighted above.

4.10 Design of the Tailored E-Coaching (TEC) programme
This section will present the design of the TEC programme based on the results from stage one of this study. Firstly, the programme design will be illustrated, including the main objectives and how the design relates to the key findings detailed in the previous section. Secondly, this section will present details regarding the implementation of the programme, including the application and matching process and the design of the website used for the online element of the programme.

4.10.1 Main objectives of the TEC programme
The main objective of the TEC programme was to develop and deliver a programme of support based on the analysis of interview data collected in stage one of this study. Therefore, the programme was designed around five general themes:

- Provide individualistic support through a one-to-one coaching relationship.
- Provide female focused support – coaching provided for women by women.
- Provide long-term support – coaching relationship will last approximately six months.
- Providing a networking opportunity – a discussion forum which could be accessed by all participants.
- Online coaching to overcome physical barriers and issues regarding location and access.

Table 4.9 illustrates the key findings from stage one and how these findings were used to develop the basis of the e-coaching programme.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage one findings</th>
<th>Solutions and programme design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of business support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Use of e-methods to overcome problems with location, opening times and travelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening time and locality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Shared experiences between female entrepreneurs to enhance awareness of business support. Also, a place to advertise business and events on the website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge regarding support available.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in geographical regions</td>
<td>All participants provided with a one-to-one coaching relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills required</td>
<td>Coaches with a range of backgrounds and experience. For example, coaches with specific coaching experience, i.e., confidence building/interpersonal etc, and coaches with substantial business experience. All coaches need to have started a business (classed as a female entrepreneur).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>One-to-one coaching relationship as opposed to team coaching, or one coach assigned to ten coachees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Continual relationship with the same individual for a period of six months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailored</td>
<td>Objective setting for each individual coachee- not pre determined. One coach per coachee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female focused</td>
<td>A coaching programme designed for women and provided by women. Female entrepreneurs can share experiences. Coachees receive coaching from an individual with similar characteristics (female entrepreneur).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency and duration of meeting</td>
<td>General consensus that the frequency and duration of meetings should depend on individual. On the whole, respondents stated that every two weeks to one month would be appropriate. Coaches and coachees were advised at the start of their coaching relationship that it was important to contract, but that a maximum of one meeting per two weeks would be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage of business development</td>
<td>Throughout business development. Start up particularly important, therefore programme aimed at pre start-up and start-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantage of e-methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use</td>
<td>E-methods available for use in the coaching relationship. Participants provided with guidance as to how to use software. In addition, IT support provided at opening event and on an individual basis once the relationships have commenced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to reflect.</td>
<td>E-methods provide time to respond and also time to read over previous conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record of discussion</td>
<td>Provide software that allows coaching pairs to keep a record of discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages of e-methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>Programme participants invited to use a blended approach, i.e. online, telephone and face-to-face. Programme material to emphasise the importance of using the online software, but not a compulsory part of the programme. Provided alternatives, for example, initial, review and closing meetings face-to-face may need to take place for some coaching pairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misinterpretation of the written word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualities of a coach</td>
<td>Application forms highlight qualities and experience to ensure qualities are matched – e.g. expertise and communication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, many of the areas highlighted from the stage one findings, for example, women’s lack of awareness regarding business support, the specific requirement of skills e.g. marketing, finance, networking, work and home life balance and self-confidence, were all examined in the questionnaires which were used to examine changes in entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes. An evaluation questionnaire was also used to examine the impact of the programme, in particular examining the online element to verify if the programme had met with the original objectives.

A total of 60 participants signed up to the programme (30 coaches and 30 coachees) and individual coaching relationships lasted approximately six months. The programme provided female entrepreneurs with a one-to-one coaching relationship, a forum for networking, discussing and debating issues and a database of information and news which was pertinent to women’s business ownership. Coaches and coachees were also invited to a ‘Networking Event’ (discussed later in this chapter). Participants who were unable to attend the networking event were provided with an opportunity to meet their respective coach/coachee face-to-face. This meeting enabled participants to conduct initial contracting before the coaching relationships commenced. Participants were provided with contracting themes and a Personal Development Form (PDF – see appendix seventeen). This form enabled the coach and the coachee to highlight the relevant objectives to be achieved over the six month coaching relationship and to provide ratings against these objectives, for example, high, medium and low.

Participants were invited to a celebratory networking event at the end of the programme. This provided an opportunity for participants to meet face-to-face and to share their coaching stories with other programme participants. The event included inspirational speakers and presentations from coaches and coachees.

4.11 Implementing the programme
The section will outline the implementation of the e-coaching programme, following the needs analysis conducted in stage one. Implementation consisted of recruiting participants, designing the e-coaching programme and matching coaches and coachees.

4.11.1 Definition of coaching applied in the online coaching programme
As illustrated in the coaching literature review (chapter three), there is not one clear, distinct definition of coaching, which is commonly used. Coaching can mean different things to different people and definitions are wide and varied. For the purpose of this programme and research, Parsloe’s (1999: 8) definition was used
“coaching is a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve.” This definition was chosen as it was not directly related to organisational or executive coaching and therefore can be used in a business ownership setting. In addition, female entrepreneurs in the needs analysis stage had a range of different needs and requirements in terms of what they wanted to achieve from a coaching relationship. The word ‘development’ in Parsloe’s definition can encompass the wide range of development needs of female entrepreneurs.

4.11.2 Application and matching process

Female entrepreneurs applied to the programme by responding to the various adverts which were sent out (discussed in sampling – chapter four). Potential participants contacted the research team and confirmed an interest in taking part in the programme. Following this, potential participants were sent an application form which also served to collect data to help with the matching process. The application form asked participants a range of questions, such as their short and long-term goals and what they wanted to achieve by taking part in the coaching relationship. The application forms also asked participants to describe their current business and background. This application form was crucial for the author to ascertain the suitability of participants and would also prove to be invaluable for the matching process (see appendix ten and eleven). There is little available research examining the matching of coaches and coachees. Mentoring research focusing on matching has shown that mentees who are demographically different from their matched mentor tend to rate the relationship as unsatisfactory (Kram, 1985). Demographic factors such as age, gender and ethnicity were therefore considered for this study.

The application forms also asked coachees to state what their coaching needs were and similarly coaches were asked what they felt their strengths were with regard to coaching. Cohen and Light (2000) state that matching solely on the mentees’ needs and the mentors’ skills may not be sufficient in order to ensure a successful match and suggest that one must also consider personality factors. In light of their recommendation, the application forms also asked participants to complete questions examining their attitudes and preferences, for example, defining success professionally or personally and development aims. These questions enabled the author to gain a more in-depth insight into the experiences of coaches and coachees. In a number of circumstances, the author also liaised directly with the participants to gain more information. Matching computer software was considered, but the author felt that hand matching (whereby the project team matched coachees and coaches using their judgement from the information provided in the application forms) was a more suitable method to employ. This
decision was made as the author had made personal contact with a number of participants, and therefore had in-depth information which may have been difficult to summarise using computer software. Summarising such important information may have had a negative impact on the matching of coaches and coachees.

Coachees were asked to state what their short and long-term goals were, rather than asking coachees to state whether they were at the pre start-up, or start up stages. This decision was made as firstly, the open ended questions enabled the author to gather more in-depth data regarding the participants and this helped to match coaches and coachees. Secondly, the author felt that the in-depth information would provide a more detailed picture regarding the stage of business development.

Over eighty female entrepreneurs applied to the programme, however only seventy six participants were matched (thirty eight coaching pairs). The remaining individuals were not matched with a coach or coachee as the application forms did not provide an appropriate match. These entrepreneurs were contacted to discuss these issues and were signposted to other business support organisations. Eight participants also withdrew from the early stages of the process, therefore thirty coaching pairs remained.

4.11.3 Networking events

Coaches and coachees were invited to a ‘Networking Event’ at the start of the programme. Participants were invited to attend one of two networking events which were held in May and July 2006; as previously stated, this enabled them to meet face-to-face with their respective coach/coachee. If they were unable to attend either of these events then the project team arranged a convenient face-to-face meeting between the individual coach and coachee. This event provided an opportunity for participants to discuss the programme model and any hopes and fears regarding the coaching relationships (see appendix eighteen for event agenda). The opening events were also provided as an opportunity for participants to network and meet other women on the programme. Participants were also provided with a programme pack which included a coaching handbook (see appendix nineteen). The handbook discussed the aims of the programme, what is coaching, differences between coaching and mentoring, the coaching relationship, what is required to be an effective coach and coachee, the various phases of coaching, the coaching structure and forms of coaching delivery. Finally, the handbook also detailed the programme model and the e-coaching website.
4.11.4 The website

Once participants had registered on the programme and had been assigned a coach/coachee, they were then provided with a username and password to gain entry to the website – see appendix twenty.

Once participants had gained access to the website they were then provided with information as to how to download the spark software on to their home/work computers. The spark software enabled participants to have instant online discussions with their coach/coachee. Spark software is similar to email in that it allows individuals to communicate online, however the contact is instant and messages are sent and received much quicker than with traditional email systems, spark is similar to MSN and Skype software.

Alongside the coaching relationships, coaches and coachees were also provided with the opportunity to network and discuss issues with other participants on the programme. All participants had access to a discussion forum on the website, where they could post suggestions, topics of interest, or create discussion threads with other programme participants. This area of the website enabled participants to network with other women on the programme. Participants were also provided with contact details for a variety of business support organisations and an area where participants could advertise their business/products or services, or an event/conference or activity. Finally, there was a help area and contact details section. The help area provided participants with information regarding what to do and who to contact if they experienced any Information Technology problems, or any problems downloading the spark software. The website also had a contact sheet which provided contact details for all relevant project team members, and for example, who to contact if there was a problem with the coaching relationship, or if the participant had an administrative problem.

4.12 Summary of TEC Programme

The TEC programme was a six month e-coaching programme designed to provide business support provision for female entrepreneurs in the North West of England. The model was based on a one-to-one relationship, whereby one coach would be matched with one coachee. Thirty eight participants were matched using the application forms, however, only thirty coachees and coaches formally commenced their coaching relationships. The programme was essentially designed to provide coaching via an online programme, similar to MSN, however participants were not prevented from taking a blended approach to their coaching relationship, i.e., telephone and face-to-face coaching.
The next chapter will present the findings from stage one of the study which developed the research design of the programme.
CHAPTER 5
STAGE ONE – QUALITATIVE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW RESULTS
AND DESIGN OF TEC PROGRAMME

5.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from the thirty semi-structured interviews conducted during stage one of the study. The interviews were designed to elicit in-depth information of direct relevance relating to research objectives one and two. The qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and the author adopted a human based coding system (Creswell, 2003; Neurendorf, 2002; Weber, 1990). The design and analysis of the qualitative interview schedules has been documented further in chapter four.

Firstly, this chapter will examine participants’ experiences of accessing formal business support provision. Secondly, the chapter will examine what respondents require from support, and respondents’ views relating to coaching and e-coaching as a viable alternative to more traditional forms of business support. The structure of the analysis was based on the themes highlighted in the semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix six). These themes will be used as main headings (1) experiences of business support provision (2) form and type of support required (3) potential of an e-coaching programme (4) viability of e-methods of delivery. This chapter presents the results of the content analysis, in conjunction with supporting quotes from female entrepreneurs to provide an in-depth picture of female entrepreneurs’ experiences. Within each section the number of respondents who referred to certain themes has been noted along with percentages. Percentages are shown to provide a picture of the proportion of respondents in the study who referred to a specific theme. The quotes which have been used to illustrate themes are presented in a way that protects the respondent’s anonymity. Thus, the names of individuals have been omitted from quotes. Finally, this chapter will present the design of the TEC (tailored e-coaching) programme illustrating how key findings from stage one were used to develop the basis of the e-coaching programme. This section will also present details regarding the programme design and delivery.

5.2 Experiences of business support provision (Formal & Informal)
This section will examine female entrepreneurs’ experiences of traditional forms of business support provision: exploring the type of support accessed and availability of current business support.
5.2.1 Formal business support

Respondents were asked to comment on their experience of accessing formal business support provision, which was described as organisations such as Business Link and Chamber of Commerce. Business Link is a government-funded service designed to promote enterprise (descriptions of these organisations are provided in chapter two). These organisations offer business support and advice to business owners.

The majority of respondents in this study accessed some form of formal business support, as Table 5.1 illustrates. Respondents tended to access one or two organisations and support agencies, which shows that respondents in this study were active in terms of accessing formal business support provision. The majority of respondents (n=25, 83 per cent) had accessed some form of formal business support over the past twelve months. Business Link and the Chamber of Commerce were accessed by all of the respondents who had accessed some form of support (25, 83.3 per cent). At the time of the interviews, nine of the thirty respondents (30 per cent) had accessed more than one business support organisation, typically Business Link and Chamber of Commerce in their local area.

Table 5.1 Business support accessed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Support accessed</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Link</td>
<td>17 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>8 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (including, Department of Trade and Industry, Manchester Business Consortium)</td>
<td>9 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5 (16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A general theme among respondents was that these organisations provided practical advice and support, for example looking at finance and accounting and marketing issues.

"The Chamber of Commerce provides advice regarding setting up a business: they give you a lot of training and background information, for example, cash flows and marketing advice, the basic principles of setting up a business. Business Link is similar to this it’s more about the process: they don’t necessarily look at the softer side, for example, how to go about achieving success." (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)

From analysis of the interview data of the five respondents (17 per cent) who did not access any support, there appeared to be a fairly equal split regarding marital status (three respondents married, and two respondents were either single or divorced). Regarding educational attainment, there did not appear to be any significant similarities or differences among the respondents who had or had not accessed any form of business support provision. For example, the five
respondents who did not access any support had a range of educational backgrounds from GCSE to master’s level. Therefore there does not appear to be a theme regarding the support accessed and the level of educational attainment or marital status. In addition, there did not appear to be a theme regarding accessing support and previous business experience, with three out of the five respondents who had not accessed business support having previous business experience.

5.2.1.1 Issues regarding access to business support provision

It was evident from analysis of the interview data that most respondents were accessing the various business support on offer to them, as only five respondents had not accessed any formal support. Respondents were then asked to comment on any problems experienced when accessing business support, for example access and availability. Table 5.2 illustrates the key issues which respondents referred to, these were location, lack of awareness, opening times, and differences regarding geographical region. Just over a third of respondents (n=11, 37 per cent) were unaware of the support and advice which was available to them in their particular area, particularly during the initial stages of business development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness/knowledge</td>
<td>11 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>11 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening times</td>
<td>6 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing work and home life</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences regarding geographical region</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was noted earlier, table 5.3 shows five respondents in the study (16 per cent) had not contacted any formal business support organisations. Four out of the five respondents who had not accessed any support stated that lack of awareness and knowledge of what was available was a key issue. Business support provision can be a useful source of advice and information for business owners at the pre start-up and initial, start-up phases, but as the following quote describes, there are often issues regarding a lack of awareness about the support provided by formal support organisations.

“No, I don’t know of any, there isn’t really any support” (50-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

“First of all, the hardest thing is where to find support. I only got involved with the Chamber of Commerce by chance and even then this was six months into my business set up. When you work for yourself you are isolated and so you don’t know what is out there and don’t know where to turn to.” (46-year-old female entrepreneur, two-year-old business, service sector)
The three respondents at the pre start-up phase had all accessed business support provision. This may suggest that business support provision is targeted to those at the pre start-up phase of business development, or it may simply suggest that the three respondents recorded in this study were actively involved in accessing support and advice. It was evident that once respondents had made initial contact with support agencies, it was then easier to find out what was available. Making links with one organisation appeared to open the door to other available support, however the initial contact was often made difficult as respondents did not appear to know where to go in the first instance.

“Once you have tapped into the support it’s easier to get what you need, however, most women in business for the first time don’t even know what they need in the first place.” (46-year-old female entrepreneur, two-year-old business, service sector)

“You have to know where it is, if you don’t know where to go it’s really difficult.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)

Eleven respondents (37 per cent) mentioned location as an issue which could result in problems when accessing support, for example, the time taken to travel to support organisations. Of these eleven respondents, eight had children. Therefore this may suggest that accessing support outside the home and the pressure of balancing work and family life, particularly for those respondents with children, may be a difficult balancing act to achieve.

“Women who are setting up their own business probably have a family and other commitments, difficult to manage all of this and access support.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector).

“They would be better if they were more local - you give up a lot of time travelling.” (51-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

The business support provision could also be a geographic lottery. Of the eleven respondents who discussed location as an issue, three respondents specifically made reference to certain regional areas receiving effective and well advertised support and other areas receiving less effective support. The findings suggest that respondents based near city centres, for example Manchester and Liverpool, often had access to increased business support provision, compared with businesses which were based outside of the city centres and in particular those based in rural areas.

“Businesses in Liverpool can access lots of information but it depends on your postcode.” (39-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector).
In addition, a number of respondents (n=6, 20 per cent) also stated that the opening times of business support organisations often limited their ability to access such organisations. The typical nine to five, week day opening times were not suitable for all female entrepreneurs. It was evident that respondents wanted a more flexible approach to accessing business support.

“They can be a bit limiting it depends where you work, because they are only open nine until five, you often can’t take time out for support.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)

Having the option of weekend support was provided as a solution to overcome the restrictive opening times of business support organisations.

“Women may want support on a Saturday and the business support organisations tend not to be open then” (46-year-old female entrepreneur, twenty-three-year-old business, manufacturing sector)

For a number of respondents (n=7, 23 per cent), having sufficient time to access support was also a problem. Balancing work and home life was a problem when attempting to access business support provision, of these seven respondents, two had not accessed any business support provision. This was seen as an extra issue which needed to be factored in when accessing support outside the home. The issue of time pressures and not having protected time to research available business support was clearly an issue for respondents in this study. In addition, it was often difficult for respondents to pin point the type of advice that they required as they were unsure as to what questions they should be asking.

“Don’t think any of them (business support organisations) are particularly obvious, I am sure there are lots of providers, but you have to find out what you need and then go out and try and find someone to help you with that need. This is really difficult, when you are busy and don’t have the time to go looking for it.” (41-year-old female entrepreneur, five-year-old business, service sector)

5.2.2 Informal business support
Alongside formal business support provision, there is also informal support and advice which business owners can access. Informal business support was classified in the interviews as advice and support accessed through family, friends and the internet. The numbers of respondents accessing informal support through friends, family and the internet is shown in Table 5.3. The majority of respondents
(n= 27, 90 per cent) had accessed some form of informal support and this was seen as an important source of advice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal support accessed</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>17 (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>16 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>24 (80)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Have I accessed informal support…I have asked people about accountants and solicitors, so yes in that respect. I have a friend who set up a business a few years ago, so I get some hints and tips from her.” (34-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

“Only in terms of talking informally with people in the same situation as me and swapping and sharing ideas and things like that.” (48-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

Over half of the respondents in the study (n=16, 53 per cent) had a family member who had experience of setting up their own business and it was evident that having this source of support provided respondents with advice and direction.

“My partner has his own marketing and sales company so that has helped.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)

“My dad has been a huge source of advice and support. A lot of it is just common sense really, but I’ve found this the most valuable thing, and from friends, just running ideas past them to see if they think it was a good idea, basically to get a first impression.” (28-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

Over three quarters of respondents (n= 24, 80 per cent) had accessed support via the internet. Support accessed via the internet included finding specific information on business websites, such as the various processes involved in starting up a business, for example, accounting techniques, and also accessing business discussion forums, for example, Aurora and Women in Business Network. The following respondents discussed the internet as a source of advice:

“I tap into internet discussion forums, such as Aurora and a few others, you can pose questions, things like that.” (37-year-old female entrepreneur, eighteen-month-old business, service sector)

“The internet is helpful to find information about business start up.” (38-year-old female entrepreneur, seven-year-old business, service sector)

Informal support appeared to be a useful source of guidance and advice for respondents in this study.
5.3 Form and type of support required

This section will present analysis of the interview data regarding the form and type of support which respondents in this study wanted.

5.3.1 Specific skill requirements

Respondents were asked what they felt their business support needs were in terms of skill development, Table 5.4 shows the requirements which respondents highlighted. Half of the respondents (n=15) in this study stated that they wanted support regarding finance and accountancy issues. Of these fifteen respondents, twelve were educated to degree level or above. This would suggest that educational attainment does not necessarily prepare women for running their own business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence and self-esteem</td>
<td>16 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and accountancy</td>
<td>15 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>14 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and home life balance</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fourteen respondents (47 per cent) stated that they wanted marketing advice and support, for example:

"Training should be given for marketing and financial managers, keeping your accounts, something more practical." (51-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

"At the moment finance is the main critical one and marketing." (37-year-old female entrepreneur, pre start-up, service sector)

In addition to specific business skills’ experience, e.g. marketing and finance, a number of respondents stated that they wanted some personal development, this was linked to the topics regarding interpersonal skills and self-esteem. A number of respondents (n=16, 53 per cent) stated that they wanted help to develop confidence in their own abilities. Four respondents also stated that they needed advice and support regarding their work and home life balance and wanted to find new ways of tackling this issue.

"Each support process is different for each client/coachee when coaching, a woman in business could just have a problem with self-esteem, and you wouldn’t be able to get support for this from a business support organisation." (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)
“Trying to manage work and home life is often difficult, business support doesn’t always look at the whole person.” (37-year-old-female entrepreneur, one-six-month old business, service sector)

This highlights the range of skill requirements and the need for what is often termed ‘softer’ skills development, such as self-confidence and self-esteem.

“Women need to share experiences, have mutual support and practical support, this will help for confidence building.” (38-year-old-female entrepreneur, seven-year-old business, service sector)

The range of quotes illustrates that confidence was an issue for respondents at all stages of business development from early in the business life cycle to seven years as the above quote illustrates.

5.3.2 Individualistic approach
Approximately two thirds of respondents (n=19, 63 per cent) in the study stated that business support provision should be tailored specifically to individual businesses. Respondents clearly stated that business support provision needed to be focused on the individual, rather than aiming support to a group of individuals. Focusing and tailoring support for one individual may help to overcome misunderstandings and misconceptions regarding business planning and development. When asked about the content of formal business support previously accessed, just over a third of respondents (n=9, 36 per cent – 25 out of the 30 who had accessed) felt that the business support provision, e.g. Chamber of Commerce and Business Link, provided a broad and general service. This form of general support did not appear to appreciate the individual and unique problems faced by women in business.

“Business support services tend to provide group or generalist advice. They don’t get to know you or your business very well.” (28-year-old female entrepreneur, eighteen-month-old business, service sector)

“Women need advice and support which is tailored to them. If you can discuss your particular problems with somebody then this would be a better way of receiving support.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

Discussing issues with an individual was seen as an effective way of accessing business support and respondents felt that individual support would help to tease out problems which perhaps would be overlooked in general training programmes. General training programmes were seen as an effective way of creating a platform to work from, to provide the general basis for business development, but respondents felt that this support then needed to be underpinned by individual development for specific business issues.
In addition to individual support, just under two thirds of respondents (n=18, 60 per cent) made reference to the need for support on an ongoing basis with the same individual. Therefore respondents understood the importance of having regular support which could reflect the changing needs of their business on an ongoing basis. Respondents stated that they wanted business support provision to provide a follow-up service, and a longer term relationship.

“The Chamber of Commerce is easily accessible, but I have not been back recently, they should perhaps follow up with people, it’s not good that they don’t do that.” (48-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

“Ongoing support keeps you on track and keeps you motivated, regular support is important.” (48-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector).

Building relationships with the same business support advisor was seen as a crucial factor for the development of business support. The challenges faced by respondents in this study often changed on a day-to-day basis and therefore it was important to receive support from an advisor who was aware of these changing needs. Providing one-off support was seen as ineffective as this would not provide any opportunity for follow-up evaluation, for example, ascertaining whether the courses and training had been implemented in an effective way.

“You tend to access courses and training as a one off, the training is good, but then that’s it you’re left on your own to apply it in practice. These organisations should really contact you after to see whether the training was of use and if you had any problems after the course.” (35-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

“Business is changing all the time, there are all sorts of problems now, it’s a different world to what it was when I started and women need support which reflects this.” (55-year-old female entrepreneur, thirty-six-year-old business, service sector)

“I feel very isolated. That is the hardest part. I am even thinking of getting a part time job… you do end up feeling like you are on your own.” (34-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

The lack of follow-up provided by business support agencies often impacted on female entrepreneurs feeling of isolation. Feeling isolated was an issue raised by a third of respondents (n= 10, 33 per cent) and making the transition from working in a large organisation to setting up a business was understandably difficult. Over half of the respondents who referred to isolation as a problem were single or divorced. A lack of family support may further intensify the feelings of isolation and loneliness when setting up a business. By keeping in regular contact with an
advisor and/or other business owners, respondents in this study believed that this would help them to feel that they had someone to turn to.

One-to-one support was seen as important and regular contact should be maintained with one person, as respondents felt that this would provide some consistency and would facilitate effective working relationships.

“It would be nice to have one business advisor who you kept.” (51-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector).

Having a link with one individual would provide women with some continuity of advice and would be a point of call for information and support. Women felt that the support would be particular to their needs and that the person providing the support would know and understand their business in greater detail and would therefore be able to provide guidance that was meaningful, useful, appropriate and effective.

5.3.4 Social capital and networking
All respondents expressed the need to network and discuss and share problems with other women in business, this form of networking was seen as important for progress and development. Half of the respondents (n=15, 50 per cent) in this study were actually involved as part of an ongoing networking group, eight of these respondents had been operating a business for more than two years, therefore, there did not appear to be evidence to suggest that stage of business development had an impact on networking activity. The following quotes highlight the importance of networking, but also the problems which some respondents faced when attempting to access networks.

“Women need to learn how to network. Networking can help women in so many ways.” (28-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector).

“You really have to go out and find networks which are suitable for you, they don’t come and find you… would be nice if they did. A problem for women, particularly those setting up, is that they don’t have the time to dig for information about networks, and sometimes they find one which isn’t suitable, this will really put them off finding another network in the future.” (35-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector).

“Networking support would be useful. It’s very difficult for women just to walk into a room and network.” (41-year-old female entrepreneur, five-year-old business, service sector).

Issues relating to finding appropriate networks and also having the confidence to attend a networking group were seen as particular problems for female entrepreneurs. These reasons may indicate why respondents stated that
networking was important, but half were not actively involved in networking groups. Creating women-only networks was also seen as a way of helping women to gain access to role models, as women would have contact with other women who had similar experiences and had faced similar barriers and problems. Creating networks for women may also help women to build sustainable relationships.

“Networking is important and learning from other female entrepreneurs’ experiences, listening to their experiences can be a huge help.” (41-year-old female entrepreneur, five-year-old business, service sector).

Respondents appeared to recognise that networking can be crucial to the success of their business. Developing relationships with a range of different people both formally and informally was seen as a way of accessing support and guidance. However, this study showed that whilst respondents did understand and appreciate that networking is important for business success, they did not always have either the information or the confidence to access networks.

5.3.5 Importance of female focused support
Two thirds of respondents (n=20, 67 per cent) highlighted the importance of receiving support from other women as they could share similar experiences. Respondents in the study felt that they had different motivations and pressures than men.

“It’s a man’s world out there - men and women think differently so you really need individual coaching and moral support from another woman.” (48-year-old female entrepreneur, fifteen-year-old business, service sector)

The respondents who highlighted the need for female focused support made reference to the fact that their needs were different to men’s needs and that each business was unique and therefore required different support and advice. Respondents appeared to have different motivations for starting out in business, for example, balancing work and home life.

“Often women starting up a business do so for lifestyle reasons, this is not a choice that men are faced with, therefore mutual support from other women can be very helpful.” (38-year-old female entrepreneur, seven-year-old business, service sector)

The issue of balancing work and home life pressures was seen as a problem particularly faced by women, therefore it was important to receive support which was sympathetic and understanding of these dual roles. Respondents emphasised the issues associated with work and home life balance and how it is often difficult to balance work pressures and domestic responsibilities. Respondents felt that
this was an issue which was often particularly relevant to women in business and therefore business support needed to reflect this.

“Because you are female you might be married with kids - they think that you are not putting in 100% - harder for females ... It would be good to talk to other women I think and maybe it’s just this way for me, but I think it’s harder for women setting up a business than it is for men. It would be good to get together with other women to talk about these problems.” (34-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

Respondents often felt that the support that was provided was offered by men and tended to be male dominated. Respondents generally felt that men may have problems understanding the unique experiences of female entrepreneurs, therefore they would have difficulty empathising with their situation.

“Seen a lot of men not women, think perhaps it would be nice to have a woman’s point of view.” (31-year-old female entrepreneur, six-month-old business, retail sector)

Support provided for women by women was viewed as an effective way for female entrepreneurs to access advice and support from an individual who had understanding of their personal experiences. Having some form of understanding and shared experience appeared to be a factor which needed to be considered by business support provision to ensure that women feel that they are being offered effective support.

Half of the respondents (n=15, 50 per cent) in the study made particular reference to the need for role models. While they felt it was important to hear the experiences of inspirational role models, it was also essential that women could relate to the experiences and lifestyles of other women. Providing achievable role models appeared to be a way of helping respondents to see how barriers could be overcome and how practical elements of setting up a business and balancing home and work life could be achieved. Respondents felt that achievable role models were fundamental to the growth of female entrepreneurship and it was evident from the study that respondents believed it would be beneficial for women starting out in business to have other successful women to relate to. Two respondents (7 per cent) made reference to presentations and seminars that had been given by successful women in business. They appeared to find listening to other women’s experiences extremely motivational and they felt that it often provided an impetus to continue with business development, or to branch out into something different. The following respondent expressed this point:

“I have been to a number of presentations, which have been held through networking groups, such as, BNI, Business Networks International. I have found listening to other women’s experiences really useful and having role models is especially useful and inspiring. I attended one presentation by
the owner of Coffee Republic, she said ‘leap and a net will appear’ I found this really useful.” (51-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

“Listening to women’s experiences is a great way to see how it really is. I have attended a number of conferences where they have had inspirational speakers: they have been women who have set up their own business. I go home feeling really motivated and hopeful about the future.” (35-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

Once again this was not only an issue raised by respondents at the early stages of business development, which highlights the need for female role models for all respondents at all stages of the business development process.

5.4 What is the potential of an e-coaching programme?
This section will examine views regarding coaching as a form of business support, including the skills and qualities required in a coach, frequency of contact and at what point coaching would be effective in terms of business development.

5.4.1 Coaching as a form of business support
Two thirds of respondents (n=20, 67 per cent) believed that a coach should have experience of being in business and should understand the process of starting up a business. This understanding would help to provide appropriate feedback and advice in the coaching relationship.

“Having someone to talk to is good…helps you feel like you’re not alone. The coach needs that experience and the background and expertise so that they can really help you and ensure that they are asking the right questions.” (39-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector).

“I think it would provide a personal service and a service which is dedicated to the needs of women. It would be a personalised relationship, helping individual women achieve their individual needs.” (38-year-old female entrepreneur, seven-year-old business, service sector).

“Coaching can provide personal attention: business support tends to offer more widespread support.” (41-year-old female entrepreneur, five-year-old business, service sector).

Respondents felt that coaching could provide personalised support and advice. Approximately two thirds of respondents (n=19, 63 per cent) in the study stated that coaching could provide a tailored service which was designed specifically for the individual and coaching appeared to be viewed as a personalised service, when compared with the traditional business support which respondents had accessed. A number of respondents (n= 6, 20 per cent) stated that a female entrepreneur in a coaching role could use their own experience and expertise to point coachees in the right direction. This in-depth understanding of starting up a
Discussing various business options and strategies and sharing experiences regarding what worked and what failed appeared to be a useful way of providing women with business support. This is often defined as vicarious experience; in this situation an individual learns from the experiences of another. Respondents appeared to feel that this was an effective way of obtaining advice.

Over half of respondents (n=17, 57 per cent) felt that having one-to-one support could help to build relationships and would also provide the coach with time to get to know their coachee and their business. Having an individual coach appeared to be an effective way of discussing issues and finding the root cause of problems. Respondents felt that by having an in-depth knowledge of an individual’s business, advisors would be able to address, as the quote above states, the ‘nitty gritty’ of the issue, rather than providing a superficial approach to support. Having one-to-one support with another female entrepreneur may also help to overcome some of the negative perceptions that women have regarding business start-up and may help to establish and sustain confidence. This also links back to women’s previous experiences of business support, where they referred to individualistic and personalised relationships being effective methods of delivering support and advice.

"Coaching would be a great deal more helpful to me than perhaps something like the Chamber of Commerce. They don’t tend to get to the nitty gritty things. For example, you might have a problem which you don’t have a solution to and it’s only when you break down that problem into bits you might see that it’s actually a marketing problem rather than something else which you first thought of. Coaching would be a useful way of finding things out." (46-year-old female entrepreneur, two-year-old business, service sector)

5.4.2 Skills and qualities of a coach

Respondents in the study were asked to state what they felt were the most desirable skills and qualities of a coach. They were provided with the opportunity to list any skill or quality which they felt was relevant, rather than asking them to rank a specific set of skills. Table 5.5 outlines the key skills and qualities of a coach.
Table 5.5  Qualities and skills of a coach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualities/skills</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>20 (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communicator</td>
<td>17 (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational and inspirational</td>
<td>13 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>6 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The key skills and qualities were expertise and effective communication, these skills were mentioned twice as often as any other skill and there appeared to be consistency across the sample, e.g. women at the pre start-up, start-up and development stages all rated these qualities and skills as important. Two thirds of the respondents (n=20, 67 per cent) in the study stated that they wanted a coach who had expertise and relevant experience. This shared experience is an issue highlighted frequently in this chapter and appears to be a key theme running through the interview data.

“The coach themselves need to be perceived as being well connected and that they have been through similar issues, the coachee needs to benefit from the coach’s expertise.” (41-year-old female entrepreneur, five-year-old business, service sector)

“A coach should help with signposting...experience, someone who is actually in business.” (33-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

Thirteen respondents (43 per cent) believed a coach should be motivational and encourage their coachee. Respondents also wanted a coach who showed empathy (n=7, 23 per cent). The respondents felt that this empathy would come from the shared experience. Respondents also wanted a coach to be objective (n=3, 10 per cent) in their feedback and advice that they provided.

“A coach needs to be able to encourage ideas, needs to encourage their coachee to develop.” (50-year-old female entrepreneur, six-month-old business, service sector)

“They need to be objective and take themselves (the coach) out of the equation, this is very hard but they need to do this.” (48-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

“Empathy, professionalism, combination of support and challenge. Access to and provision of resources, for example, models etc. and how to find things out for themselves, may involve an element of training if appropriate but there needs to be objectivity.” (38-year-old female entrepreneur, seven-year-old business, service sector)

Once again the above quote demonstrates how respondents appeared to want a coach to be supportive, but also challenging with regard to meeting objectives and targets. A number of respondents (n=6, 20 per cent) stated that it was important
for the coach to be honest and highlight both the positive and negative experiences of starting out in business, as this would provide a true picture of business development.

“Don’t paint a beautiful picture of the first days of starting a business, you have to be totally honest, need to be open and honest and don’t be scared to say it as it is, don’t give women setting up a new business false hope, this isn’t helpful. Starting up a business is like being on a roller coaster, and women need to know this.” (51-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

“Someone to tell you the horror stories.” (39-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

Being honest about the specifics of starting out in business and the emotions involved appeared to be important for respondents in this study. This honesty would provide women with the reality of what business start-up had to offer and the challenges they were likely to face. This level of honesty could only be achieved by an individual who had experienced the start-up process and once again highlights the need for shared experiences.

Respondents believed that a coach should provide assistance and support and should enable the coachee to answer questions and find solutions to problems themselves, acting as a facilitator in the development process. This was seen as an effective way to build self-confidence. Respondents believed that coaching should be focused on the coachee’s goals and that a coach needed to guide their coachee to help find solutions. Respondents also believed that a coach and coachee should work together effectively, rather than a one sided relationship which was led by the coach.

“Coaching is more about enabling you to do things for yourself not necessarily offering solutions.” (35-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)

“Coach and client work together to set goals and help the client to move forward to make changes and the right decision for themselves, it’s not about the coach telling the coachee what to do, the coach asks all the right questions to help.” (48-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

5.4.3 Frequency of contact with coach
The majority of respondents (n= 24, 80 per cent) felt that frequency of contact depended on the coach and the coachee and this was something that should be decided on between the coaching pair. It was also important to ensure that sessions were scheduled in the diary in advance.
“It depends on what the individual needs. It’s important to schedule sessions... I would imagine that it needs to be on an ad hoc basis and this again can be arranged by email. Perhaps at the beginning it is good to do it every two weeks or so.” (48-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

“It depends on the individual and at what stage of business they are at and what they want, this will depend on their objectives.” (38-year-old female entrepreneur, seven-year-old business, service sector)

Respondents did make some suggestions on the frequency of meetings when they were asked on average what would be a suitable arrangement. Table 5.6 shows the range of answers provided by respondents in the study. On the whole, respondents felt that every two weeks to a month would be suitable for the frequency of coaching sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of coaching sessions</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every week</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every two weeks</td>
<td>14 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every month</td>
<td>11 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every two months</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every six months</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 5.7 illustrates, thirty minutes to one hour was seen as the most appropriate length of a coaching session. However, a fifth of respondents (n=6) did state that it would depend on the individual coach and coachee, once again highlighting the importance of deciding this contact at the start of the coaching relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of coaching sessions</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fifteen minutes</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirty minutes</td>
<td>5 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forty five minutes</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One hour</td>
<td>10 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one hour</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends</td>
<td>6 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of respondents (n= 9, 30 per cent) felt that the coach and coachee should draw up some form of contract at the outset to overcome any problems, such as frequency of meetings. By having a contract, both the coach and the coachee would be clear about their commitments, this appeared to be an important part of the process, particularly when trying to establish rapport and trust. The following respondent expressed this view:

“I think that is something the coach and the client need to establish straight off. Women who are just setting up might want contact on a weekly basis, but other women may only want support every now and again. I think what
is important is that they both set out at the outset what they want and what they can give.” (55-year-old female entrepreneur, thirty-six year-old business, service sector)

5.4.4 At which stages of business development is coaching most effective?
On the whole, respondents felt that coaching would be effective at all stages of development. Respondents believed that there were elements of the coaching relationship that would be appropriate throughout business start-up and development. These elements ranged from practical advice on start-up issues to personal development and issues with balancing home and work life post business start-up. Respondents in the study felt that a coaching relationship would provide a basis for all types of support.

“All the way through, coaching is an ongoing process. They may need more regular sessions at the beginning but then perhaps less after that. But you definitely need a structured programme that can really ensure they have support.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)

“At the start-up phase, women may need lots of practical support, however, they may need help with formulating their business ideas later on.” (38-year-old female entrepreneur, seven-year-old business, service sector)

These quotes highlight how coaching can be effective at all stages of business development, however some distinctions were made about the importance of coaching either at the start-up or at the growth and maturity stages. When asked at what point of the business process respondents felt coaching would be particularly helpful, a number of respondents (n=12, 40 per cent) felt that it would be most useful at the start-up phase, as this was a stage of business development which required increased guidance and support. The start-up phase was also seen as a stage when women felt particularly isolated.

“It’s difficult at start-up, you feel more alone then, so it would be good at that point I think.” (28-year-old female entrepreneur, 18-month-old business, service sector)

5.5 Viability of e-methods of delivery
This section addresses the key issues raised by respondents in this study with regard to utilising e-methods when delivering coaching support, taking account of both the advantages and disadvantages as outlined in Table 5.8.
Table 5.8 Advantages and disadvantages of e-methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages e-methods</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
<th>Disadvantage e-methods</th>
<th>N (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenience of access</td>
<td>23 (77)</td>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience of timing</td>
<td>14 (47)</td>
<td>Misinterpretation of written word</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record of discussion</td>
<td>9 (30)</td>
<td>Non verbals</td>
<td>6 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less pressured/time to think</td>
<td>5 (17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5.1 Advantages of e-methods

Respondents were asked to provide their views on e-methods of delivery for development interventions such as coaching. In general, respondents were extremely positive about the use of e-methods for delivering business support such as coaching. The main advantage of online support appeared to be based on accessing business support provision from home which would eradicate travelling time and would allow women to access support which did not interrupt their daily routine. This convenience was a point raised by over three quarters of respondents in the study (n=23, 77 per cent) and is reflected in the words of the following female entrepreneur:

“A major advantage is the accessibility: women can access it (online coaching) all the time… this is good as it means they can access when the kids are in bed.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector).

In addition to the convenience of accessing support at home, approximately half of the respondents (n=14, 47 per cent) in the study viewed online coaching as a way in which they could access support at a time which was convenient to them.

“You don’t have to interrupt your daily life: you can do it (online coaching) in your own time.” (40-year-old female entrepreneur, pre start-up, service sector).

“Accessibility out of hours, comfort factor, women need to be flexible –you can access it at any time, if arranged with your coach, for example at night etc.” (48-year-old female entrepreneur, fifteen-year-old business, service sector)

A further advantage of online methods commented on by some respondents (n=5, 17 per cent) was the opportunity to have time and space to think, as this would help the coachee to reflect on what was being discussed and may also help the coach in terms of providing time to gather information to provide assistance to the coachee. The reflection time offered by electronic methods of communication was seen as extremely useful for providing coaches and coachees with the time to digest information. Respondents felt that this was a crucial advantage of online
coaching when compared with face-to-face and telephone coaching, as it would provide them with an opportunity to advance at their own pace, rather than feeling pressured at a face-to-face meeting. Respondents suggested that asynchronous communication online could provide the time to reflect on questions before asking or answering.

“No pressure on anybody, much more thorough, there is not a time limit on expressing how you feel.” (51-year-old female entrepreneur, four-year-old business, service sector)

“An advantage of online coaching is that coachees have to write down something first, this gives them time to think and makes them define their problem because they are actually writing it down.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)

Respondents also emphasised the advantage of keeping a record of discussion when conducting coaching online. This was seen as a way of reflecting on key points which had been discussed and would provide details reading any action plans.

Online methods of communicating would also require respondents to write things down and therefore may provide them with a valuable opportunity to reflect on their issues and problems. Often writing/typing can help individuals to clarify their thoughts and emotions can help to organise thoughts.

5.5.2 Disadvantages of e-methods

When commenting on the potential of online methods of communicating, respondents were also asked what they felt were possible limitations or disadvantages of this form of communication. In general, it appeared that respondents were very positive regarding e-coaching and felt that it would be beneficial for women in business, however respondents did highlight some disadvantages. For example, eight respondents (27 per cent) stated that they would find e-coaching too impersonal and would miss the face-to-face interaction and six respondents (20 per cent) felt that it might be difficult to build up a conversation and relationship online due to the lack of body language and non verbals.

“Building rapport, with online coaching you’ve only got language on email, you can only build rapport so much, you won’t have the body language and the conversation which makes it more personable.” (32-year-old female entrepreneur, one-year-old business, service sector)

Four of the respondents (13 per cent) interviewed felt that the written word could also be misinterpreted; this may be due to the lack of non verbal cues when communicating online. Where there was a potential for misinterpretation,
respondents felt that face-to-face contact or telephone contact could help to remedy this problem. The following quote expresses these concerns:

“The written word can be open to misinterpretation, doesn’t allow for dialogue, perhaps it can be supplemented with telephone coaching.” (38-year-old female entrepreneur, seven-year-old business, service sector)

5.6 Summary of Stage One Findings

Figure 5.1 provides an illustration of the main findings from the literature review and the key findings from stage one of the study. The majority of respondents in the study tended to access formal support from Business Link and Chamber of Commerce, with only five respondents stating that they had not accessed any support. This traditional form of business support was seen as useful for providing specific training courses; however there appeared to be problems regarding access. As is illustrated in figure 5.1, problems relating to access tended to stem from a lack of awareness regarding what was available, and differences regarding the level of support across regional areas. All of these issues made initial contact with business support providers problematic. In terms of specific skill requirements, respondents wanted to access support which was related to specific business skills, for example marketing and accounting, however they also stressed the importance of developing confidence.

The current availability of support appeared to be generalised and therefore did not always reflect the individual and unique problems faced by female entrepreneurs. The general approach provided by business support tended to focus on business issues, such as marketing and finance. While these are important areas for women to receive support, the advice provided was often delivered in a generalised way. This generalised support prevented respondents from accessing advice which was specifically tailored to the needs of their business. Sharing experiences with other women was seen as an effective way of delivering business support. In addition to tailored business support, respondents also wanted longer term relationships offered on a one-to-one basis by the same advisor. Respondents felt that access to the same individual, over a longer period of time, would enable female entrepreneurs to build a relationship with that person and this would help the coach to understand the specific needs of the individual and the business they were working with. Respondents also made reference to the importance of informal business support, accessed through family, friends and the internet.

In terms of social capital and networking, the majority of respondents in the study felt that networking was important for female entrepreneurs, however only half of the respondents were actually involved in an ongoing networking group. The
reasons for joining a network tended to be related to the advantages of sharing experiences; however issues relating to finding appropriate networks and also having the confidence to attend a networking group were seen as particular problems for female entrepreneurs. Respondents also emphasised the importance of role models which could help to encourage, inspire, motivate and provide an impetus for development. The importance of female focused support was also emphasised by respondents as this was seen as a way of accessing support from an individual who had knowledge of their experience and someone who shared similar business experiences. Expertise and experience of starting up a business were seen as important for providing effective support.

With regard to coaching as a form of business support, respondents believed that coaching could provide a personalised service, unlike the formal support provision offered by organisations such as Business Link and Chamber of Commerce. Respondents felt that it was important for a coach to have similar experiences so that they could base their coaching on expertise and point coachees in the right direction. On the whole, respondents felt that coaching could provide an alternative to the formal business support which they had previously accessed. Coaching appeared to be viewed as a collaborative relationship which could provide coachees with confidence in their own abilities. Coaches need a variety of skills in order to be effective, however key issues appeared to be expertise and effective communication skills.

It was evident that respondents felt that coaching was not a one-sided interaction with the coach solely giving to the coachee, rather it was a relationship that provided both parties with a sense of worth and validation. As coaching is a relatively long-term relationship, it is probable that this would help to overcome the problems relating to one-off support and training. With regard to the practical elements of the coaching relationships, contracting was seen as an important issue, particularly regarding frequency of contact.

Online coaching appeared to be a way of providing support for respondents as and when required. There appeared to be an array of benefits relating to online coaching, for example, it could be accessed from home, it would provide time to digest information, and it was possible to return to information as and when required. The support, in order to be effective, should be developed and designed around the woman in question, both in terms of content, duration and access. The lack of face-to-face contact was seen to be a disadvantage of online coaching as it may cause problems when trying to build rapport and issues regarding misinterpretation of the written word were also highlighted.
Figure 5.1 Theoretical framework influencing the design of the Tailored E-Coaching programme and the design of this study.

**Female entrepreneurship**
- Female entrepreneurs experience barriers to success:
  - Access to finance.
  - Access to human capital.
  - Access to social capital and networking.
  - Domestic responsibilities.
  - Confidence and self-efficacy.
- Lack of empirical research examining what women actually require from business support provision in terms of content and delivery.

**Coaching for entrepreneurs**
- Coaching is short term and focused on specific development areas/issues. Is a suitable intervention for entrepreneurs requiring task-based support.
- Lack of empirical research examining coaching, particularly in relation to entrepreneurship and small business ownership.
- Lack of empirically tested coaching models.
- Lack of empirical research examining online methods in coaching.
- Lack of longitudinal studies using a control group.

**Experiences of formal business support accessed:**
- Formal support - Government Funded Agencies
  - Practical training courses: Limitation – Awareness, Access, Availability, Location, Opening times.
  - Informal support – friends, family, internet – effective forms of support.

**Potential of coaching:**
- Coaching personalised service – tailored to needs.
- Learning and sharing through experience.
- One-to-one support with another female entrepreneur.
- In-depth knowledge of business.
- Effective at all stages of business development.

**Specific skills required:**
- Marketing
- Finance
- Confidence
- Work and home life balance.

**Approach:**
- Individualistic not generalised.
- Long-term – not one off.
- Social capital and networking.
- Female focused.

**Qualities of coach:**
- Expertise
- Communication
- Empathy
- Honest
- Motivational
- Encouraging.

**Method of delivery:**
- Frequency of contact – contract, ad hoc.
- Convenience, written record.
- Impersonal, misinterpretation.

**The Study/Research Design**
- Investigation of the impact of an e-coaching programme on female entrepreneurs
  - Longitudinal design
  - Inclusion of control group
  - Mixed method design
CHAPTER 6
STAGE TWO – QUANTITATIVE RESULTS (T1 &T2) AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS (T2)
(Coachees, Control group and Coaches)

6.1 Introduction
This chapter presents quantitative and qualitative findings from stage two of the study time point one (start of the Tailored E-Coaching (TEC) programme) and time point two (completion of the TEC programme), which are aimed at addressing research objectives three to six. Firstly, this chapter will present the quantitative data collected from the matching forms at T1, specifically examining coachees’ and control group members short and long-term goals and development objectives for the coaching relationships. Secondly, the chapter will describe the analysis of the quantitative data collected from the coachees and the control group at T1 and T2, examining formal and informal support, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes. Finally, the chapter will present quantitative and qualitative findings (T2) relating to the coaching relationship, programme design and delivery, and recommendations for future programmes.

The quantitative data was collected via questionnaires (entrepreneurial self-efficacy and, formal and informal business support, general entrepreneurial attitudes and programme evaluation); see Table 6.1 for a breakdown of responses at each time point.

Table 6.1 Responses by group and time point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coachees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy and business support</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General entrepreneurial attitudes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy and business support</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General entrepreneurial attitudes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The shortfall of six coachees was due to three coachees who did not complete the full six month coaching relationship; reasons for withdrawing from the programme were mainly due to personal issues, e.g. pregnancy or bereavement and a further three coachees who the author was unable to obtain completed questionnaires from at T2. The shortfall of eleven control group members were all based on the author being unable to obtain completed responses at T2. In addition, it must be noted that on a number of occasions respondents did not compete all of the
questions included in each questionnaire. The response rates provided above refer to the questionnaires and not individual questions.

Paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine changes over time, i.e. from T1 to T2, for both the coachees and the control group who completed questionnaires at both time points (coachees n= 24 and control n=15) (Howitt and Cramer, 1997; Pallant, 2005). The results from the paired sample t-tests will be presented for each individual questionnaire examining both coachee and control group responses. This section will also report the results from the statistical analysis of the coach evaluation questions from T1 to T2. General statistical evaluation data will also be presented, this data was collected at T2 (coachees n=22 and coaches n=21 completed this questionnaire) and will provide an overall picture of the views regarding the e-coaching programme and coaching in general. This chapter will present findings relating to research objectives three to six.

The type of statistical analysis techniques used in this chapter are discussed in detail in chapter four (methodology) although reference is also made in this chapter to the statistical analysis techniques employed. The findings for each questionnaire are reported in turn and the results from the statistical analysis highlighted numerous statistically significant outcomes which are presented. The alpha level of significance was regarded as below five per cent (p<0.05) (Colman and Pulford, 2006). However, due to the small sample size and the problem of ‘Type II’ error which can occur because of this (i.e. failing to observe a difference when in truth there is one), data will also be shown at below ten per cent (p<0.10); where appropriate, this will be presented to show trends rather than statistical significance (Field, 2005; Pallant, 2005). t-values which fall between +2 and – 2 have been highlighted in the text (in italics in chapter six). These items must be treated with caution.

Qualitative data were collected in the form of eighteen semi-structured interviews conducted at time point two (coachees n=11, coaches n=7). The interviews were designed to elicit in-depth information of direct relevance relating to research objectives five and six. The qualitative data were analysed using content analysis and the author adopted a human based coding system (Creswell, 2003; Neurendorf, 2002; Weber, 1990). The design and analysis of the qualitative interview schedules are documented further in chapter four (methodology). The structure of the analysis was based on the themes highlighted in the semi-structured interview schedule (appendix sixteen). The sub themes were (1) demographic information(personal and business) (2) coaching definition (3) coaching relationship (4) coaching programme This chapter presents the results of the content analysis, in conjunction with supporting quotes from participants to
provide an in-depth picture of female entrepreneurs’ experiences. The quotes used to illustrate themes are presented in a way that protects the respondent’s anonymity. Thus, the names of individuals have been omitted from quotes. For each section the number of respondents who referred to certain themes has been noted along with percentages, these percentages are shown to provide a picture of the proportion of participants in the study who referred to a specific theme.

6.2 Baseline data – coachees and control group

Coachees and the control group were asked to complete matching forms at T1. Data collected from the matching forms for the coachees (n=30) and the control group (n=26) are presented in the following sections. The data is specifically focused on short and long-term goals and development aims for the coaching relationships.

6.2.1 Short and long-term goals - coachees and control group

Coachees and the control group were asked to state in an open question, i.e. they were not provided with a list of specific objectives, their short and long-term goals. First responses were analysed. Fourteen coachees (47 per cent) stated that their main short-term goal was to start and establish the business (see Table 6.2). Approximately a quarter of coachees (n=7, 23 per cent) stated that they wanted to increase their client base. Nine coachees (30 per cent) stated that they wanted to increase their income. Previous business experience did not have an impact on the different short and long-term business goals. The majority of the control group (n=21, 81 per cent) stated that their short-term goals were setting up and establishing their business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.2 Coachees’ short-term goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up and establish their business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing income and financial freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing client base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regard to long-term goals, coachees appeared to state quite general goals (see Table 6.3), many of which were similar to short-term goals, for example, eight coachees (27 per cent) stated that they wanted to have financial freedom and security and twelve coachees stated that they wanted to develop their business. A number of the coachees also stated some specific long-term objectives. For example, five coachees (17 per cent) wanted to achieve the goal of having an excellent reputation in their market and only three coachees (10 per cent) wanted to employ staff in the long-term.
Table 6.3 Coachees’ long-term business goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-term goals</th>
<th>Coachees N = 30 (percentage)</th>
<th>Control N=26 (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having financial freedom</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
<td>4 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing their business</td>
<td>12 (40)</td>
<td>16 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having an excellent reputation, quality service</td>
<td>5 (17)</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ staff</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and home life balance</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The control group had slightly different long-term goals, when compared with coachees. The highest number of responses regarding long-term business goals were related to developing the business (n=16, 62 per cent), with the fewest responses relating to work and home life balance (n=1, 4 per cent). These differences regarding long-term business goals may be due to the fact that a larger majority of members of the control group were at the pre start-up and start-up stages of business development, when compared with coachees (96 per cent and 80 per cent respectively), therefore the control group may have had more general business goals compared to the coachees, as they were in the initial stages of development.

6.2.2 Development aims - coachees

Coachees and the control group were specifically asked to state what they would like to achieve from an e-coaching relationship. Similar to the short and long-term goals question, coachees were able to provide an open response to this question. Coachees and the control group provided up to three aims and all were analysed. In contrast to the objectives which were outlined earlier, the development aims appeared to be more specific, see Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Coachees development aims for the TEC programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development aims</th>
<th>Coachees N = 30 (percentage)</th>
<th>Control N=26 percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business planning</td>
<td>17 (57)</td>
<td>17 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>12 (40)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>12 (40)</td>
<td>5 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing, e-marketing, sales and promotion</td>
<td>12 (40)</td>
<td>12 (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice regarding funding and finance</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
<td>14 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to prioritise goals and objectives</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over a half (n=17, 57 per cent) of coachees stated that they wanted to look at business planning. Twelve coachees stated that they wanted to concentrate on improving their motivational skills and twelve coachees (40 per cent) stated that they wanted to concentrate on marketing, e-marketing and sales. Twelve
coachees also stated that they wanted to concentrate on building their confidence. Four coachees (13 per cent) stated that they wanted to develop regarding accessing funding and finance and three coachees (10 per cent) wanted to concentrate on prioritising goals and objectives. The control group had similar development aims for the coaching relationship, for example seventeen (65 per cent) stated that they wanted to concentrate on business planning and twelve (46 per cent) stated that they wanted to concentrate on marketing and sales. However, in contrast only five control group members (19 per cent) stated that they wanted to concentrate on improving their confidence. Furthermore, in contrast to the coachees, over half (n=14, 54 per cent) stated that they wanted to develop their skills regarding accessing funding and finance. As with the short and long-term objectives, previous business experience did not appear to impact on development aims. The only response which did show a difference was that of business planning, i.e. over two thirds of coachees who stated this as a development aim had not had any previous business experience.

6.3 Formal support

This section presents findings from the formal support questions within the entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy questionnaire. The formal support questions measured coachee and control group responses to how, if at all, their current business support provider i.e. government funded advice agencies, had helped them to develop in a range of business and personal skills. Paired sample t tests were conducted with the coachees and the control group as individual study groups examining the changes over time from T1 (baseline) to T2 (6 months).

6.3.1 Coachees (T1 to T2)

The analysis showed no statistically significant findings or trends in relation to coachee responses over time to the formal support questions.

6.3.2 Control group (T1 to T2)

There was one statistically significant finding in relation to the control group responses to the formal support questions. In addition, the data showed numerous trends which are shown in Table 6.5. Statistically significant differences were revealed among the control group in relation to work and home life balance (t=2.57, df=14, p<0.022), i.e. the control group rated formal business support provision as more effective in developing their ability to balance work and home life at T2 when compared to T1. However, when examining the mean results it is clear that the control group still disagreed with this statement at T2.
Table 6.5  Comparative control group responses to ‘formal support’ at T1 and T2
Response scale: 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My current business support provider helps me to develop</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73. work and home life balancing skills</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. access funding and finance skills</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. ability to define my short-term business goals</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. short-term strategic planning skills</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. marketing techniques</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, there was a trend found among the responses of the control group in relation to accessing funding and finance ($t=2.10$, $df=14$, $p<0.054$), i.e. the control group were more likely to state that the formal support provision had developed their ability at T2. Thus the control groups’ perceptions of the effectiveness of formal business support provision in the area of accessing funding had increased throughout the duration of the programme. Also, there was a trend revealed among the responses of the control group to defining short-term business goals’ across T1 and T2 ($t=2.05$, $df=14$, $p<0.060$), i.e. the control group were more likely to agree with this statement by T2. These findings show that the control group rated formal business support provision as more effective in the areas of accessing funding and finance and defining short-term business goals at T2. In addition, there was a trend shown among the responses of the control group in relation to short-term strategic planning skills across T1 and T2 ($t=1.86$, $df=13$, $p<0.085$), i.e. the control group were more likely to feel that formal support provision had developed their skills by T2. Thus, the control groups’ perceptions of the effectiveness of formal business support provision in the area of short-term strategic planning had increased throughout the duration of the programme.

Finally, there was a trend among the responses of the control group to the marketing techniques question across T1 and T2 ($t=1.81$, $df=13$, $p<0.094$), i.e. the control group were more likely to agree with this statement by T2. Therefore, the control groups’ perceptions of the effectiveness of formal business support provision in the area of marketing had increased throughout the duration of the programme. Despite these results showing increases from T1 to T2, on the whole, the control group still rated the support provided by formal business support providers as ineffective when developing key skills.

6.4 Informal support
This section presents findings from the informal support questions in the entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy. The informal support questions measured coachees’ and control group responses to how friends, family
and the internet had helped them to develop a range of business and personal skills. Paired sample t-tests were conducted with the coachees and the control group as individual study groups examining the changes over time from T1 to T2.

6.4.1 Coachees (T1 to T2)
There was one trend reported in the coachee responses to the informal support questions, as shown in Table 6.6. This was in relation to financial planning skills across T1 and T2 (t=1.84, df=23, p<0.079), i.e. coachees were more likely to state that friends had developed their ability to conduct financial planning by T2. Thus, friends appeared to be more effective at developing financial planning skills on completion of the programme T2 when compared with T1. However, it must be noted that the mean at T2 was still over 4, therefore the majority still disagreed that friends were an effective form of support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends &amp; family help me to develop my…</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. financial planning skills (friends)</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.2 Control group (T1 to T2)
There were a number of statistically significant findings in relation to the control group responses to the informal support questionnaire, as can be seen in Table 6.7. Statistically significant differences were found among the control group’s responses regarding friends and work and home life balancing (t=-3.38, df=14, p<0.004), friends and developing new business ideas (t=2.82, df=14, p<0.014), and friends and short-term business goals (p<0.097) i.e. the control group perceived friends as more helpful in these areas at T1 than at T2. The effectiveness of informal sources of support in these areas appeared to have reduced over time, or perhaps the need for these sources diminished over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends &amp; Family help me to develop my…</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74. work and home life balancing skills (friends)</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88. ability develop new business ideas (friends)</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. ability to define my short-term business goals (family)</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.8 shows statistically significant differences and trends found among the control group responses regarding the internet. Statistically significant differences were revealed in relation to the internet and networking skills (p<0.048), i.e. the control group perceived the internet was less helpful in this area at T2 compared with T1. A trend was also noted in relation to the internet and developing new business ideas (t=-1.919, df=14, p<0.076), i.e. the control group were more likely to agree with this statement at T1 compared with T2. These findings show that the control group initially rated support in these areas as neutral; however at T2 they were increasingly likely to disagree that this support had helped them to develop in the area of innovation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet helps me to develop my</td>
<td>Mean 3.00</td>
<td>Mean 3.87</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.162</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>networking skills</td>
<td>SD 1.56</td>
<td>SD 1.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90. ability to develop new business ideas</td>
<td>Mean 2.93</td>
<td>Mean 3.60</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.919</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.49</td>
<td>SD 1.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.5 Entrepreneurial self-efficacy

This section presents findings from the entrepreneurial self-efficacy questions in the entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy questionnaire. This examined coachees’ and control group responses to a range of business and personal skills questions to measure entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Paired sample t-tests were conducted with the coachees and the control group as individual study groups examining the changes in relation to entrepreneurial self-efficacy over time from T1 to T2.

#### 6.5.1 Coachees (T1 to T2)

Table 6.9 highlights the statistically significant differences revealed among the responses from the coachees from T1 to T2. Significance was shown in relation to developing long-term business goals (t=2.98, df=21, p<0.007), and defining short-term business goals (t=2.65, df=22, p<0.015) i.e. the coachees believed their ability to define their business goals had improved throughout the duration of the programme. There was also a statistically significant difference revealed among the coachees’ ability to deal with risk and uncertainty (t=2.91, df=22, p<0.008) and marketing (t=2.44, df=23 p<0.023) i.e. the coachees believed their ability to deal with risk and uncertainty and their ability to conduct marketing had developed over the duration of the programme.
Table 6.9 Comparative coachee responses to ‘entrepreneurial self-efficacy’ at T1 and T2
Response scale: 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am able to….</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. define my long-term business goals</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. make business decisions under risk and uncertainty</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. define my short-term business goals</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. conduct marketing</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. balance my work and home life</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. network with other business owners</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, a statistically significant difference was revealed in relation to balancing work and home life (t=2.42, df=22, p<0.024) i.e. the coachees believed their ability to balance work and home life had improved throughout the duration of the programme. Further, a statistically significant difference was revealed among the coachees’ attitude to networking (t=2.40, df=21, p<0.026) i.e. the coachees believed their networking skills had improved from T1 to T2.

6.5.2 Control group (T1 to T2)
Analysis of results showed that there were no statistically significant findings for the control group in relation to the entrepreneurial self-efficacy questions in the entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy questionnaire. Therefore, the control group had not experienced a significant increase or decrease in terms of entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

6.6 General entrepreneurial attitudes
This section presents findings from the general entrepreneurial attitudes questionnaire. This questionnaire examined a range of statements relating to the general entrepreneurial attitudes of coachees and the control group, for example satisfaction with business progress and capability of achieving business goals and perceptions regarding general confidence levels. Paired sample t-tests were conducted with the coachees and the control group as individual study groups, examining the changes over time in relation to the general entrepreneurial attitudes from T1 to T2.

6.6.1 Coachees (T1 to T2)
Table 6.10 shows a highly statistically significant difference among the coachees with regard to satisfaction of work and home life balance (t=4.00, df=22, p<0.001) and self-confidence (t=3.54, df=22, p<0.002) i.e. the coachees are more satisfied with their work and home life balance and appear to rate themselves as more self-confident following completion of the programme at T2 when compared with scores
at T1. The mean values show that coachees were more likely to strongly agree, rather than agree with the statement ‘I am self-confident’ at T2 when compared with T1.

Further, a statistically significant difference was revealed in relation to awareness of business support (t=2.23, df=22, p<0.036) i.e. the coachees were increasingly likely to be aware of what business support was available at T2 when compared with the results at T1. Further, a statistically significant difference was revealed in relation to achieving business goals (t=2.22, df=21, p<0.038) i.e. the coachees were more likely to feel that they could achieve their goals at T2 compared with T1. Also, a statistically significant difference was revealed in relation to satisfaction with business progress (t=2.09, df=21, p<0.049) i.e. the coachees rated their satisfaction with business progress as higher at T2 compared with T1. A trend was also revealed among the coachees in relation to motivation (t=1.82, df=22, p<0.083) i.e. the coachees felt more motivated at T2 compared with T1.

With regard to locus of control questions, a statistically significant difference was revealed among the coachees regarding the statement ‘when I achieve my business goals it is usually because I have worked hard for it’ (t=2.09, df=20, p<0.049) i.e. the coachees believed that they had more control over their business goals through working hard, rather than achieving goals by chance, over the duration of the programme. In addition, a trend was revealed among the coachees regarding the statement ‘whether or not I am successful in business depends mostly on my ability’ (t=1.75, df=20, p<0.090) i.e. the coachees believed that their achievements depended mostly on their ability rather than on outside forces at T2 compared with T1. Further, there was a trend revealed among the coachees’ responses to the statement ‘I feel in control of my business’ (t=1.75, df=20, p<

### Table 6.10 Comparative coachee responses to ‘general entrepreneurial attitudes’ at T1 and T2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel….</td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
<td>df T p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. satisfied with work and home life balance</td>
<td>3.22 1.20</td>
<td>2.26 0.96</td>
<td>22 4.00 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. self confident</td>
<td>2.26 0.96</td>
<td>1.61 0.72</td>
<td>22 3.54 0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. aware of business support available</td>
<td>3.09 1.04</td>
<td>2.57 0.99</td>
<td>22 2.23 0.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. able to achieve my business goals</td>
<td>2.55 1.06</td>
<td>2.05 0.79</td>
<td>21 2.22 0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. when I achieve goals it is usually because I worked hard for it</td>
<td>1.95 0.67</td>
<td>1.62 0.74</td>
<td>20 2.09 0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. satisfied with my business progress</td>
<td>3.05 1.09</td>
<td>2.50 1.06</td>
<td>21 2.09 0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. motivated</td>
<td>2.04 0.98</td>
<td>1.78 0.74</td>
<td>22 1.82 0.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. whether or not I am successful in business depends mostly on my ability</td>
<td>2.43 0.93</td>
<td>2.10 0.63</td>
<td>20 1.75 0.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am in control of my business.</td>
<td>2.48 0.93</td>
<td>2.24 0.89</td>
<td>20 1.75 0.096</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
0.096), i.e. the coachees were more likely to feel in control of their business at T2 compared with T1, therefore, showing a general increase in internality of control.

6.6.2 Control group (T1 to T2)

Analysis of the questionnaire data showed that there were no statistically significant findings in relation to the control group responses to the general entrepreneurial attitudes questionnaire, however analysis of the data did show some trends, as can be seen in Table 6.11. For example, there was a trend revealed among the control group to feeling supported in business (t=-2.12, df=13, p<0.054) i.e. the control group were less likely at T2 to feel supported in their business when compared to T1. Also, there was a trend revealed among the control group to positive feelings regarding future business plans (t=-2.12, df=13, p<0.054) i.e. the control group felt less positive about future business plans at T2 when compared with T1. There was also a trend found in relation to self-confidence (t=-2.11, df=13, p<0.055), i.e. the control groups’ self-confidence had decreased from T1 to T2.

Table 6.11 Comparative control group responses to ‘general entrepreneurial attitudes’ at T1 and T2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel…...</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. supported in my business</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. positive about my future business plans</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. self-confident</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. motivated</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. success in business is mostly a matter of luck</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was also a trend found in relation to motivation (t=-1.97, df=14, p<0.068) i.e. the control group rated their motivational skills lower at T2 compared with T1.

Finally, there was a trend found in relation to one of the locus of control statements, ‘success in business is mostly a matter of luck’ (t=1.79, df=13, p<0.096) i.e. the control group believed that they had more control over their business goals through working hard, rather than achieving goals by chance at T2 when compared with T1. As this was a negatively worded question scores were reversed for analysis.

Despite the decreases in general entrepreneurial attitudes it is clear from the data, when examining the mean values that, on the whole, the control group strongly agreed, or agreed with many of the statements at T2, however the analysis shows that their agreement decreased over the duration of the six months from T1 to T2.
This suggests that members of the control groups’ general entrepreneurial attitudes decreased over time.

6.7 Coachees - coach evaluation (T1 to T2)

This section outlines the results from the paired sample t-tests on coachees’ responses to coach evaluation questions. Paired sample t-tests were conducted at the two time points over the course of the programme, T1 (baseline), T2 (six months). As the control group did not receive the coaching intervention, these questions were only analysed for the coachees.

Table 6.12 shows that there are a number of statements which showed statistical significance among the responses of coachees from T1 to T2, e.g. access to funding (t=-5.31, df=19, p<0.0004), and calculated risks (t=-3.63, df=21, p<0.002) i.e. coachees were more likely to perceive that their coach would provide them with skills in each of these areas at T1 than they reported receiving at T2. In addition to the statistically significant differences, analysis of the data also showed some trends in relation to the coach evaluation questionnaire. For example, a trend was revealed among coachees to long-term strategic planning (t=-1.85, df=20, p<0.079) i.e. coachees were more likely to perceive that their coach would provide them with development for long-term strategic planning at T1 than they reported receiving at T2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My coach develops my ability</td>
<td>Mean 2.65</td>
<td>Mean 4.00</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-5.31</td>
<td>0.0004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. access funding and finance</td>
<td>SD 0.93</td>
<td>SD 1.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. take calculated risks</td>
<td>Mean 2.29</td>
<td>Mean 3.33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-3.63</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. make business decisions under risk and uncertainty</td>
<td>SD 0.55</td>
<td>SD 1.11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-3.43</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. to network</td>
<td>Mean 2.21</td>
<td>Mean 3.16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-2.56</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. financially plan</td>
<td>SD 0.98</td>
<td>SD 1.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. develop my work and home life balancing skills</td>
<td>Mean 2.62</td>
<td>Mean 3.38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-2.36</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. strategically plan for the long-term</td>
<td>SD 1.20</td>
<td>SD 1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. develop my work and home life balancing skills</td>
<td>Mean 2.22</td>
<td>Mean 2.74</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-2.23</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. strategically plan for the long-term</td>
<td>SD 1.67</td>
<td>SD 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. develop my work and home life balancing skills</td>
<td>Mean 2.22</td>
<td>Mean 2.81</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-2.95</td>
<td>0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. strategically plan for the long-term</td>
<td>SD 1.67</td>
<td>SD 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from the paired sample t-tests conducted on coachees to the items that were included in the coach evaluation questionnaire show that coachees were more likely to consider that their coaches would provide them with an array of coaching functions which were identified in the questionnaire at T1, but less likely to consider that their coaches had in fact provided these functions at T2.
6.8 Summary of paired sample t-tests results

The results from the paired sample t-tests showed a number of significant differences and trends across the two time points, for both coachees and the control group. Table 6.13 presents the main findings from this analysis. There were no statistically significant items relating to the formal support questions in the *entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy* questionnaire for coachees. Data for the control group showed a statistical significance and a number of trends which all showed that effectiveness of formal business support had increased from T1 to T2, however, the mean values show that the control group were still likely to disagree that formal business support had developed their skills at T2.
Table 6.13 Summary of statistically significant items and trends (changes from T1 to T2) among coachees and the control group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>COACHEE T1 to T2</th>
<th>CONTROL T1 to T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>Decrease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal business support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>Work and home life balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Accessing funding and finance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Defining short-term business goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Short-term strategic planning skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Marketing techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal business support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Friends - financial planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>Friends - Work and home life balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88.</td>
<td>Friends - develop new business ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Family - define short-term business goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Internet – networking skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.</td>
<td>Internet – develop new business ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Define my long-term business goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>Make business decisions under risk and uncertainty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Define my short-term business goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Conduct marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>Balance my work and home life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Network with other business owners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General entrepreneurial attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Satisfied with work and home life balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Aware of business support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Achieve my business goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When I achieve goals it is usually because I worked hard for it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Satisfied with business progress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Whether or not I am successful in business depends mostly on my ability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>In control of my business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Supported in my business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Positive about my future business plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Success in business is mostly a matter of luck</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*  p<0.1 - Trend
** p<0.05 - Statistical significance
*** p< 0.01 - Statistical significance

In terms of informal support, there was only one trend shown in the responses from the coachees, this was in relation to friends and financial planning. Coachees were more likely to agree with this statement at T2 compared with T1, however coachees still disagreed with this statement at T2. With regard to the control group, there were a number of statistically significant items found in relation to
informal support. It appeared from analysis that on the whole, the control group rated informal support received via the internet, friends and family as less effective at T2 compared with T1.

When examining the findings from the entrepreneurial self-efficacy questions in the entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy questionnaire, the results showed that the coachees improved their entrepreneurial self-efficacy levels in a number of business areas from T1 to T2, for example, marketing, networking with other business owners and defining short-term business goals. In contrast, there were no statistically significant findings from the control group responses across the two time points.

The general entrepreneurial attitudes questionnaire showed a number of statistically significant findings, and on the whole the coachees had more positive attitudes at T2 compared to T1, specifically in relation to general self-confidence levels, satisfaction with work and home life balance, awareness of business support, motivation and satisfaction. Coachees also showed an increase in internality of locus of control in two statements. In contrast, there were no statistically significant findings for the control group; however there were trends which showed a general decrease in entrepreneurial attitudes from T1 to T2, specifically in relation to self-confidence, motivation, positivity and support. The control group showed an increase in internality in one locus of control statement.

The coach evaluation questionnaire showed a number of statistically significant findings. Generally coachees rated the support received from coaches as lower at T2 compared to T1. These results may suggest that coachees had high expectations regarding their coach’s input at the start of their coaching relationship.

These findings clearly show an increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes across the two time points for the coachees, however, this increase was not experienced by the control group, with findings showing that they had experienced decreased general entrepreneurial attitudes. The results also clearly highlight that the coachees did not show any major shifts in terms of the support they received via formal or informal sources from T1 to T2. The fact that formal and informal support did not show any significant changes may suggest that any differences witnessed in the coachees’ responses to the entrepreneurial self-efficacy questions and general entrepreneurial attitudes questions from T1 to T2 were due to the coaching intervention that the coachees received, rather than other sources of support.
6.9 Coaching relationships, Programme design and Online methods (T2 – quantitative and qualitative data)

This section will examine the findings from the general evaluation questionnaire which was distributed at T2 (coachees = 22, coaches = 21) and the interview data collected at T2 (coachees = 11: coaches 7). The findings presented are based on quantitative data collected from coaches and coachees in response to a variety of questions relating the evaluation questionnaire and analysis of the interview data. This section will discuss perceptions of the coaching relationships, general evaluation of the coaching programme, programme specifics regarding time and duration of meetings, main method of meeting and the suitability of online methods for coaching.

6.9.1 Coaching relationships

The statistical analysis presented has illustrated the areas in which coachees developed entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes across the two time points. These findings were then examined in further detail in the interviews conducted at T2. To add some context to the quantitative data participants were asked a range of questions relating to their coaching relationships and development.

6.9.1.1 Clarifying goals

Coachees felt that their coach had helped to clarify goals and objectives, enabling them to have positive experiences of planning and achieving realistic objectives. The interview data suggests that a number of coachees (n=7, 64 per cent) felt that their coach was effective in helping them to clarify and define their future business goals. This clarity was achieved through discussing business strategies and attempting to tease out the key issues in order to help coachees to plan more effectively for the future. Planning for the future appeared to be an effective way of gaining clarity and a more concrete strategy for future development. One coachee described how her coach used coaching sessions to break down problems through discussing issues and highlighting three main areas for development at the end of each session. These areas for development would then be put into practice following the coaching session and the coachee would feedback on their progress at the following session.

“She helped me with my strategy and planning for the future… I was clearer regarding the direction I wanted to head in. We would talk about where I was heading and what I needed to do to get me there, I suppose having a plan for the future. The next session we had I would discuss what had happened since we last ‘met’.” (coachee, T2)

This clarity enabled coachees to be more confident regarding their business planning and to be more focused when implementing action plans and subsequent business outcomes.
“It made me more confident and made me more focused... and knowing that I had someone there to talk to about it definitely made it easier.”
(coachee, T2)

“I think it's enabled me to actually sit back and examine the extent to which my business is dependent on my own personal development, and my own commitment to it. I think I had some potential blocks and it helped me to start addressing those. I think it also forced me to think possibly more laterally about the direction that the business could go.”
(coachee, T2)

This clarification of goals and the increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy relating to defining business goals was, in part, due to the coaching relationships helping coachees to prioritise their business goals and objectives. A number of coachees (n=5, 45 per cent) stated that because their coaching conversations had helped to clarify issues, they were then able to prioritise short and long-term business and personal objectives. There is an array of issues which need to be considered at the business start-up phase, therefore prioritising tasks and responsibilities is an important part of the business process. Coachees believed that the coaching relationships had provided them with increased direction for business planning and helped them to produce a clear vision for the future of their business:

“She (coach) was able to take confused ideas and make them very plain, without changing the nature of what I was doing... providing clarity and allowed me to see what I was actually trying to do... I am responsible for solutions to problems, it's in my hands, she helped me to understand the way I process and do things. She taught me new skills to get what I wanted.”
(coachee, T2)

This quote also highlights the nature of the coaching relationship, in that it was centred on the coach acting as a facilitator rather than a teacher. The coaches did not attempt to take responsibility for the coachees’ action and objectives, but simply guided them and helped to develop their confidence.

One coachee made reference to the fact that her coach had helped her to see that her current business idea was not viable and therefore required further thinking. The coaching relationship enabled her to refocus her business in another area, she stated:

“It probably made me realise that my idea wasn’t viable any more so you know it probably made me realize I should be doing something else and I think I was making things more difficult than it needed to be.”
(coachee, T2)

Therefore clarifying goals enabled coachees to think more strategically for the future.
6.9.1.2 Shared experiences

A number of coachees (n=8, 73 per cent) emphasised the importance of coaches sharing their experience. This was seen as an invaluable part of the coaching process. Seeing someone similar to themselves succeed in business by sustained effort appeared to increase coachees’ self-efficacy.

“She really inspired me to get the ball rolling. She had been there and done it so I had a lot of respect for her in terms of that. It made me realise that I just needed to get on with it and that I could make it happen.” (coachee, T2)

“My coaching relationship was entirely about having somebody with the right knowledge, attitude and approach and I got the excess - her knowledge and experience were greater than mine. Life experience wasn’t greater but her business experience was. She was willing to share her own experiences with me. I benefited from her knowledge.” (coachee, T2)

Discussing experiences within the coaching relationships was seen as an effective way of coachees accessing valuable knowledge regarding small business ownership. Discussing previous challenges and opportunities was a way of coachees gaining insight into how their coach had developed their business.

Sharing experiences was possible on this programme as women were coaching other women. Each individual was different and had different backgrounds and different experiences, but they were able to share their experience, which suggests that there were similarities between the coaches and coachees. While shadowing did not occur in the coaching relationships, coaches did actively use their experience and contacts to develop their coachees. One coachee commented on the fact that her coach had introduced her to a number of individuals who had helped to increase her understanding of key business issues. For example, she was invited to a marketing seminar which had provided valuable knowledge and key contacts;

“My coach was involved with a marketing practitioner who was very well known in the North West. In fact he does lots of marketing profiles all over the country and Europe, I was invited specifically to a business networking meeting at which he was a guest speaker and my coach was taking part. This evening was very motivational and I was able to network with the people in the room, all of whom were in business and were interested in hearing about my business development. This was a great opportunity for me and a great way to access other people.” (coachee, T2)

Gaining insights into the practices of another business owner can be a valuable experience. Coachees were able to use their coaches’ experiences, particularly by discussing how coaches had found solutions to problems, or how they had achieved success through opportunities. The acquisition of tacit knowledge was enhanced through the fact that the coaches and coachees were discussing specific
business issues, such as planning and development. Being able to see that their coach had achieved business development helped the coachees to realise their own potential and to give them a confidence boost in terms of their own development.

“She had experience, expertise, attitude and the right approach.”
(coachee, T2)

6.9.1.3 Validation
Validation appeared to help increase coachees’ self-efficacy and helped them to think more positively with regard to business development. Coaches appeared to develop their coachees through verbal persuasion, particularly focusing on their goals and objectives. A number of coachees (n=7, 64 per cent) stated that they had experienced an increase in confidence in their own abilities, due to their coach validating business ideas and this confidence helped them to continue with their business development.

“It gave me a confidence boost, I wasn’t expecting or looking for validation, she showed me that I was going in the right direction and that I had actually achieved more than I aimed to...She gave me validation. I am too stubborn to give up. She gave me a confidence boost and underlined the belief in myself on a personal level.” (coachee, T2)

“I think it gave me a bit of courage and affirmation to push things through.”
(coachee, T2)

Coaches were also able to help coachees to view their achievements from a more positive perspective. One coachee described how she had originally felt that she was underachieving and had not met her original objectives. She went on to describe how she had discussed business progress with her coach and how her coach had then presented the information back to her in a way that showed her how much she had achieved. Her coach simply fed back information regarding her three years of trading and her turnover and from this information the coachee had a moment of enlightenment where she realised how much she had achieved in a short time period. This highlights the importance of coaches' verbal persuasion and how susceptible individuals are to this influence. By simply packaging the information in a different way, the coach was able to verbally persuade her coachee that she had in fact achieved more than she originally believed.

“I got what I set out to achieve, but also got more than that. My biggest critic is me. One thing said to [coach] was that I didn’t feel I was making as much money, but when [coach] actually discussed this and looked at average success (1st and 2nd year trading) financially I was not where I wanted to be, but actually I had done well, recovered what I lost.” (coachee, T2)
The increases in positivity regarding future business progress reported in the general entrepreneurial attitudes questionnaire appeared to be as a result of the regular coaching contact which coachees received. Often coaches simply needed to discuss their plans with their coach and to gain advice as to whether this was a feasible course of action. The coaches provided coachees with a sounding board and someone with whom they could discuss ideas and problems. This contact provided coachees with increased confidence in their own abilities and future direction.

“It allowed me to discuss ideas with her and give me the confidence that I was heading in the right direction.” (coachee, T2)

“… as far as my coach was concerned, the best thing she did for me was she almost gave me permission to do what I was planning to do all along.. when I said to her I’m planning to do this, or I’m thinking about doing that or I want to do it this way, she said yes you are thinking it right do that – and she gave me permission to go ahead and that I found enormously beneficial and gave me huge confidence that I’d actually thought it through properly…I got from her just what I needed for the business.” (coachee, T2)

Verifying knowledge appeared to be an important part of building entrepreneurial self-efficacy and developing confidence. Coaches also helped coachees to identify areas of strength and areas which required further development.

“In many ways she reinforced my strengths, but also actually reinforced my weaknesses and what I needed to work on.” (coachee, T2)

6.9.1.4 Removing negative attitudes

Furthermore, when examining the increase in positive attitudes found in the questionnaire, it was found that some of the coachees (n=4, 36 per cent) stated that they had explored some of their previous negative behaviours and attitudes in the coaching discussions. Coaches appeared to help coachees to examine the possibility of adapting negative and/or unhelpful behaviours that were restricting them either professionally or personally. One coachee stated how she felt her coach had helped her to change her valuing system. The coachee reported that her coach had helped her to examine what she actually wanted from her business and what were the important development areas for her. This ultimately helped her to invest her time in the areas of her business which she wanted to improve. As a result, the coachee’s business objectives were more congruent with what she wanted to achieve professionally and personally. This resulted in the coachee feeling more satisfied and positive regarding her business development, as her business plans were aligned to her personal development.

“Part of my valuing system wasn’t good. I tend to be over critical which can lead me to doubt myself. We debriefed about what had happened,
looked at if I hadn’t met my objectives and looked at the reasons why, rather than going straight to the thing that I felt I’d done wrong.” (coachee, T2)

“We also added in some very personal things about her values, the issues that really might be worth looking at to develop her business which she hadn’t perhaps thought before.” (coach, T2)

One of the coachees referred to this development as ‘self discovery’, this appears to be a fitting description for the personal development experienced by the coachees.

“I think probably my self-discovery of me, finding out the core truth about myself really. It was like peeling an onion really where you thought there was a problem and then delving a bit deeper until you get to that core, I think that was the most enlightening thing and motivating and the most powerful really.” (coachee, T2)

Clarifying personal values and goals appeared to provide coachees with some direction regarding their future business development. This process of self-discovery appeared to help coachees to formulate plans for the future and decide how they wanted to proceed with their business. Aligning personal values with business development appeared to be an important factor for coachees. The coaching relationships enabled coachees to understand their motivations for business development and what they actually wanted out of their business. This identification of personal values ultimately impacted on the coachees’ drive and motivation for future development.

“Helped me to realise what it was that I actually wanted to do and where I wanted to go… made me understand more things about myself.” (coachee, T2)

“For my own self development because I had a lot of issues that I probably wasn’t aware how deep rooted they were.” (coachee, T2)

This concentration on personal values is important and highlights the breadth of coaching relationships. It was evident from the analysis that the coaching relationships were guided by the needs of the coachee and it was often important for the coach to examine any personal development needs before commencing the coaching relationships. Removing negative thoughts and behaviours may have been an essential first step before tackling business development issues. One may suggest that coaches helped coachees to manage their emotional arousal related to their business development by providing positive self-talk. The coaching relationships also appeared to help coachees to feel calmer, particularly under periods of stress (n=4, 36 per cent), as the following quotes suggest;
“She probably had ear ache! She can’t shut me up, she was often calming me down.” (coachee, T2)

“She just brought a bit of calming influence over me and made me.” (coachee, T2)

6.9.1.5 Coaching process
At T2, following completion of the TEC programme, approximately two thirds of participants (coachees, n=5, 45 per cent: coaches, n=6, 86 per cent) felt that coaching was based on an empowering relationship which was centred on enabling the coachee to develop their business. The majority of coaches (n=6, 86 per cent) defined coaching as empowering, whereas just less than half of the coachees (n=5, 45 per cent) used this definition, this highlights some differences with regard to the way coachees and coaches define coaching relationships. However, over half of the participants (n=11, 61 per cent) stated that coaching relationships appeared to be based on a coach providing a coachee with direction and enabling them to develop their business.

“[coaching is] not about telling someone what to do, more about enabling the coachee to develop, provide the opportunity for the coachee to grow and develop. I want a coach to take me through the process of enabling me to solve my own problems.” (coachee, T2)

“The coaching mechanism is about skills knowledge and principles to enable an individual to arrive at a series of solutions and actions which are congruent to their desire to progress what they are doing.” (coach, T2).

Two coaches (29 per cent) and five coachees (45 per cent) felt that coaching was a form of development which was centred on facilitating change. A coach was seen as a facilitator, rather than a teacher, and as an advocate who helped to equip their coachee with the necessary skills and confidence to make desired changes. It was evident that participants viewed coaching as a collaborative relationship where the coach and coachee worked together effectively, rather than a one sided relationship which was directed and led by the coach. Coaching was defined as an enabling relationship based on support and knowledge sharing.

“Enabling people to be successful in whatever they want to achieve, better and quicker because they are working with someone than if they were working on their own.” (coach, T2)

“Their (coaches’) expertise actually is in facilitating some sort of change or facilitating someone to finding solutions to their problems and generally they are skilled or trained in that.” (coachee, T2)

Coaches and coachees were asked whether their definitions of coaching had changed since participating on the TEC programme. In general, participants (coaches n=7, 100 per cent: coachees n=7, 64 per cent) felt that their experience regarding coaching had confirmed their original views.
The programme appeared to validate coaches’ views of the coaching relationship. For example, providing confirmation that direct experience of a coachee’s industry was not necessarily important, however it was the coaching skills and the understanding of how it felt to be a woman in business that were viewed as essential.

“Strengthened I think if anything, I was beginning to wonder whether I would have enough experience in the business side of things… but it’s strengthened my view that it doesn’t matter what the topic is the issues are always the same and your approach to the individual which has to be unique to that person, so the skills it’s just strengthened it really.” (coach, T2)

“Understanding having great understanding of where that person is coming from, that’s really important.” (coachee, T2)

“Expertise is a huge thing. At a lot of conferences there are speakers that can’t answer questions that you ask, they know the theory but they’ve not been there and don it, even if they have failed. Experience is number one thing. Anything else is a bonus.” (coachee, T2)

Coaches also felt that participating on the programme helped to validate their opinion about the important elements of coaching, for example, two coaches (29 per cent) discussed the importance of language. This was something that coaches had previously recognised, however conducting a coaching relationship online had strengthened this view and highlighted how the use of language is critical, particularly when conducting coaching using e-methods.

“Only things perhaps I noticed when being a coach is that language is not always as thorough as it should be, always thought of the importance of language, that’s become even more important to me. All principles of language enable a coachee to get real clarity and not necessarily focus on the problems. Some times the problem talk can dominate conversations.” (coach, T2)

“Definitely to have a very clear understanding of the use of and the power of language in the wordings that are being used and the power of language and being able to project that back to the client in a very understandable way… you need to be totally focused on the other person.” (coach, T2)

Four coachees (36 per cent) felt that their original views of coaching had changed since participating on the programme. This appeared to be based on three main reasons. Firstly, they were unsure of what to expect from a coaching relationship and were unsure as to the role that they would play. Secondly, they had some previous experience of coaching, however this tended to be life coaching rather than coaching aimed at tackling specific business issues and business development. Thirdly, their coach brought some thing extra to the relationship which they had not previously considered, for example, discussing negative
behaviours and exploring value systems, e.g. what a coachee wanted out of their business, and what factors were important to them personally.

“I have been involved in life coaching... counselling is more about emotions whereas coaching is more specific, this was a bit of a shock.” (coachee, T2)

“I think maybe the only thing really that I think has changed is that maybe I hadn’t expected a coach to be provocative and challenging in the way that she was.” (coachee, T2)

One coachee described how her coach had been challenging in the sense that she had emphasised the importance of defining her business relationships. The coachee had employed a number of consultants to help her with some work and her coach challenged her to be more focused on the relationships that she was creating with partners and to be more forceful regarding her requirements and the objectives they needed to achieve.

6.9.2 General evaluation of the coaching programme

Findings from the evaluation questionnaire are shown in Table 6.14, this illustrates coachee and coach responses relating to the impact of the programme, e.g. regarding professional and personal development and satisfaction with the coaching programme.

**Table 6.14 Findings from the evaluation questionnaire (coachees and coaches – T2).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions</th>
<th>Coaches N=22 (percentage)</th>
<th>Coaches N=21 (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Benefited from the programme</td>
<td>19 (86)</td>
<td>13 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Programme helped to meet other women business owners</td>
<td>11 (50)</td>
<td>10 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Improved in relation to specific skills</td>
<td>17 (77)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participate in a similar programme in the future.</td>
<td>17 (77)</td>
<td>15 (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recommend this programme to other business owners</td>
<td>20 (91)</td>
<td>13 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Programme helped to develop professionally</td>
<td>15 (68)</td>
<td>12 (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Programme helped to develop personally</td>
<td>18 (82)</td>
<td>13 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I will continue with my coaching relationship</td>
<td>9 (41)</td>
<td>8 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Discussed issues with coach which not discussed with business support provider</td>
<td>13 (59)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Effective relationship with coach/coachee</td>
<td>18 (82)</td>
<td>11 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Satisfied with support received from coach</td>
<td>20 (91)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Online suitable method</td>
<td>9 (41)</td>
<td>13 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Satisfied with frequency of contact</td>
<td>17 (77)</td>
<td>7 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I would consider being a coach in the future</td>
<td>10 (45)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14 illustrates how there were some differences regarding coach and coachee evaluation responses, for example approximately two thirds of coaches
(n=13, 62 per cent) strongly agreed, or agreed that they had benefitted from the programme, whereas the majority (n=19, 86 per cent) of coaches felt that they had benefitted from the programme. This finding is perhaps unsurprising as coaches may have felt that the main objective of the programme was to develop their coachee and as such may not have felt that they had personally benefitted from the programme. Once again, there were also differences between coach and coachee responses to recommending the programme to other female business owners, with the majority of coachees (n=20, 91 per cent) stating that they would and approximately two thirds of the coaches (n=13, 62 per cent). This difference may be because coachees would recommend the programme to other potential coachees as they felt the programme was effective in developing skills, however coaches may be less inclined to recommend the programme to their colleagues as they felt that they benefited less from the programme. It is also interesting to note that the majority of coachees (n=18, 82 per cent) felt that they had an effective relationship with their coach, however just over a half of coaches (n=11, 52 per cent) felt this way. This finding may be due to the fact that the coaches felt that the coaching relationship had not met their original objectives. Equally, as the coaches were less likely to feel that they had benefited from the programme, when compared with responses from coachees, they may have felt that the programme had been less effective. However, this was not reflected in the interview data collected from coaches at T2.

Over three quarters of coachees (n=17, 77 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that they had improved in the specific skills they originally highlighted at the start of the programme. This finding is supported by the fact that coachees experienced increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the areas highlighted as development needs at baseline. This finding shows that coaching pairs kept to their original objectives and that coachees improved in these key areas over the duration of the programme. The majority of coachees (n=20, 91 per cent) were satisfied with the support that they received from their coach. Approximately two thirds of coachees (n=13, 59 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that they discussed issues with their coach which they would not have normally discussed with a business support provider.

The data showed that fifteen coachees (68 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that the programme had helped them to develop professionally and over three quarters of coachees (n=18, 82 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that the programme had helped them to develop personally. This finding suggests that the coaching relationships not only assisted in developing coachees’ businesses, but that they also gained personal development from the coaching relationship, which may also have an impact on business success. Half of the coachees (n=11) strongly agreed
or agreed that the programme helped them to meet other female business owners. This is an encouraging finding considering the importance of networking and social capital. Over three quarters (n=17, 77 per cent) of coachees strongly agreed or agreed that they would participate in a similar programme in the future.

The main objective of the programme was to provide development for coachees, however findings show that to a certain extent the coaches also benefited from the coaching relationships. Over half of the coaches (n=12, 57 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that the programme had helped them to develop professionally and thirteen of the coaches (62 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that the programme had helped them to develop personally. These findings highlight the reciprocal nature of coaching relationships, emphasising that both coachees and coaches can benefit in some way. With regard to networking, ten of the coaches (48 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that the programme helped them to meet other female business owners and approximately three quarters of coaches (n=15, 71 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that they would participate in a similar programme in the future and thirteen coaches (62 per cent) would recommend the programme to other business owners.

Participants were also asked if they felt that six months was a suitable duration for the coaching programme. Thirteen coachees (59 per cent) said that they felt it was suitable and six coachees (27 per cent) said that they did not. When asked for the reasons why they felt this time period was unsuitable five out of the six stated that they would have liked their coaching relationship to have lasted twelve months. Only one coachee stated that she would have preferred a shorter relationship, lasting three to four months. Three coachees did not answer this question. Fourteen coaches (67 per cent) felt that six months was a suitable duration and three coaches (14 per cent) felt that it was not, four coaches (19 per cent) did not answer this question.

Coachees were also asked if they would consider being a coachee, or a coach in the future. All coachees (n=11) stated that they would be a coachee and eight coachees (73 per cent) stated that they would like to be a coach in the future, the following quotes expressed these views:

“Probably would yes I would, In fact maybe next time I would be a coach - absolutely.” (coachee, T2)

“Not a coach, but definitely a coachee.” (coachee, T2)
Of the eighteen participants who were interviewed, eight of them (44 per cent) were still involved in some form of supportive relationship following completion of the programme.

“We have set up an arrangement whereby a couple of times a year, three times a year we have what is called a board meeting just a once off review.” (coachee, T2)

“Yes…She offered to carry on. I have a coaching session once a month.” (coachee, T2)

6.9.3 Method and frequency of meeting
Analysis of the questionnaire data showed that, on average, coaches and coachees met online once a fortnight for one and a half hours, however this did vary between pairs. For example, some coaching pairs met every week for one hour and others met every four weeks for one to two hours. This highlights the highly personalised nature of coaching relationships and how it was important that each coaching pair contracted at the start of the relationship to decide the frequency and duration of contact. Table 7.18 shows that approximately three quarters of coachees (n=17, 77 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with the frequency of contact with their coach. However, just over a quarter of coaches (n=7, 33 per cent) stated that they were satisfied with the frequency of meetings. This finding may suggest that coaching pairs did not fully adhere to the initial contract. Fourteen coachees (64 per cent) conducted more than sixty per cent of their coaching relationship online, with five coaching pairs conducting more than ninety per cent online. When reflecting on the experience of the online method, approximately two thirds (n=13, 62 per cent) of coaches, and nine of the coachees (41 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that an online method of coaching was suitable for them.

All coaches and coachees (n=18) interviewed at T2 used a blended approach of online, telephone and face-to-face contacts.

“I think it was primarily using the spark software, maybe 60% spark and 40% phone, we did have one or two face-to-face meetings one at the very beginning and one half way through.” (coachee, T2)

“We did a mixture of online and face-to-face, probably half and half.” (coachee, T2)

“Yes, the majority of coaching was online.” (coach, T2)

6.9.4 Experience of the online element - advantages
Experience of the online element of the programme was examined in further detail in the interviews (T2). Analysis of the interview data showed a number of advantages and disadvantages of the online element of the programme.
6.9.4.1 Convenience and safety

Five coaches (71 per cent) and nine coachees (82 per cent) referred to the convenience of the online system and the benefits regarding the convenience which it offered. The ease of use which online methods of coaching provided appeared to suit the busy schedules of participants in the study. Respondents felt that being able to access support any time and anywhere was a practical advantage of online communication.

“online coaching is convenient, sharp, and focused it somehow... It seems more practical, seems more action focused... Can do it anytime, anywhere, as long as have PC access and internet.” (coach, T2)

Online communication also appeared to be an effective alternative for individuals who may have had problems communicating face-to-face. This method of communication may help to build coachees’ confidence with regard to expressing themselves. For example, three participants (17 per cent), in the interviews, stated that online coaching may help coachees who are less confident in communicating verbally and may help to facilitate effective communication. Online methods of communication appeared to provide a ‘safe’ place for individuals to interact, particularly in terms of discussing challenging issues or providing constructive criticism.

“Online is a good way for people to express themselves if they have difficulty expressing themselves verbally.” (coach, T2)

“Because it was a different type of media it was safe to be quite constructive critically and quite challenging, felt safer to say things. Face-to-face can be more difficult to be so critical.” (coach, T2)

6.9.4.2 Time for reflection

A further benefit of communicating online appeared to be that it provided coaches and coachees with an opportunity to reflect on what they were discussing and how they would formulate and respond to questions (coaches n=2, 29 per cent; coachees n=2, 18 per cent). This thinking time also allowed coaches and coachees to clarify their thoughts before engaging in discussion.

“I think having the email helped because it gave her time to actually think before she responded, she was able to sit back for a minute and possibly evolve her thoughts more than you do when I think you verbally converse.” (coach, T2)

This reflection time was something which would perhaps be difficult to achieve in face-to-face or telephone coaching sessions. The time which participants have to respond to messages can provide a valuable opportunity to fully digest what has been discussed and to formulate responses.
“It did give me time to put together the questions as you could gain clarity through typing.” (coach, T2)

However, two coaches (29 per cent) thought that this reflection time could be perceived as a negative as it reduced spontaneity and allowed coachees to retype what they were saying numerous times, which may have covered up the real issues and prevented coachees from being totally honest.

“My coachee edited some of what she was saying… Don’t get same level of spontaneity.” (coach, T2)

The importance of structure when conducting online conversations was also emphasised. Coaches stated how it was important to consider the questions which were asked at the start of the session, so as to gauge how the coachee was feeling. Because of the absence of non verbals when communicating online, it was essential for coaches and coachees to be specific in the language that they used and to focus on the words that were used when asking questions, the time for reflection enabled them to do this. Approximately three quarters of coaches (n=5, 71 per cent) and some coachees (n=3, 27 per cent) stated that communicating online required them to be more focused and disciplined with regard to what they were writing, than perhaps they would have been in a face-to-face session.

“I thought it was very good as it kept you focused very much on the words you’re using and you could actually look at them and you could see in the sentence the impact they were actually having.” (coach, T2)

“the things that it (online communicating) did for me were to be more attentive of what I said so I could actually sit and read over what I had said so you could go back on things, because sometimes you can say things that’s not exactly what you mean, so I think it helped me to develop writing skills and thought processes.” (coachee, T2)

6.9.4.3 Method of Recording
A number of coachees (n=6, 55 per cent) and coaches (n=2, 29 per cent) also stated in the interviews that they used the instant messaging software as a way of recording what was discussed in the coaching meetings, so that they could refer back to the information. This is difficult to do in a face-to-face or telephone session; therefore the ability to record information was seen as a benefit of online coaching.

“I think as I type and I think as I write so it was useful to see what I was saying in real time - also found it really useful for reviewing as well before
the next meeting, when I write notes they tend to be scrawled so in terms of holding myself accountable and making clear plans and following them through I thought it was fantastic, it really suited me.” (coachee, T2)

Recording of coaching sessions provided participants with an exact record of what had been discussed and what action had been decided for the next coaching session, this appeared to be particularly useful for the coachee. This conversation history could be used as a diary for coaches and coachees to refer back to at any given time and provided a useful indication for coachees to see how they had developed over the coaching period and what specific skills had been improved. Communicating online was seen as a way of reviewing what had been discussed in the current session and also in previous coaching sessions. It also provided coaches with evidence for certain methods for future coaching relationships, i.e. using specific tools and techniques which may have been beneficial and could be transferred to other coaching relationships.

6.9.4.4 Experience of the online elements - limitations with relationships
One of the main problems reported by participants (n=6, 33 per cent) was the speed of online communication. Despite the fact that the spark software was designed for instant messaging, therefore increasing the speed of communication when compared with email, respondents found the process of typing messages too slow, when compared with face-to-face communication.

“The main problem with online coaching, it felt slow, very slow to communicate the words.” (coachee, T2)

“The main problem with the online method was the slowness of it, it wasn’t really instant enough for a conversation.” (coach, T2)

It appeared from the interview data that participants (n=6, 33 per cent) who had previous experience of using instant messaging software, such as MSN, or SKYPE, found they experienced fewer problems using the spark software and conducting their coaching relationship online. Of those with previous experience, five of the coaching pairs used the online method of coaching for over sixty per cent of their coaching relationship.

“I thought the online method was fantastic it really suited me…yes I did, (have previous experience) but not in a formal arrangement for working with…I use it quite a lot personally… I have used it personally for well over a year.” (coachee, T2)

“I thought it (online communicating) was very good as it kept you focused very much on the words you’re using… I suppose I have been doing it (communicating online) in a more additive way if you like because people constantly talk their issues through with me but I’ve not done it in an official capacity as this is email coaching, but you end up doing it anyway really.” (coach, T2)
Furthermore, it was evident from the interviews that when one of the coaching pair was experienced with using ‘e’ methods of communication, then their respective coach/coachee had fewer problems using the online programme. This again highlights the reciprocal nature of a coaching relationship and how the coachee and the coach benefited from the partnerships.

“She (the coachee) was also IT literate which was brilliant. I often found myself struggling with IT, so that was helpful she managed to help me with a few things on that.” (coach, T2)

Two coaches (29 per cent) and three coachees (27 per cent) also commented on the problems of misunderstanding because of the lack of non verbal communication and how misinterpretation could lead participants to draw incorrect conclusions from discussions. The coaches who commented on the problem of misinterpretation emphasised the importance of being prepared for this and utilising effective questioning.

“Face-to-face and telephone communication is perhaps easier for you to find right question …without verbal clues need to try harder to understand the statement.” (coach, T2)

“I definitely think it’s important to ask questions online because you haven’t got the visual…even on the telephone you can tell the tone of voice, whether they are a bit down or jumping for joy to be doing the session or not, but you just can’t do that with online messaging, so you have to be quite disciplined in terms of getting a feel for the mood and asking the right questions.” (coach, T2)

“It is a little bit difficult because you can sometimes misunderstand the inference and I was ready for that when we started this I knew that was likely to occur.” (coach, T2)

6.9.5 Recommendations for future programmes

Participants who were interviewed at T2 were also asked to comment on recommendations for future programmes and to highlight issues for the development of online programmes. The main themes arising from this data were the use of the programme website and support for coaches.

The programme website had a number of web pages which could be used by participants on the programme. These included a page where participants could advertise their business and any relevant events and a discussion forum, where participants could discuss relevant issues with other programme participants. On reflection, participants did not appear to make full use of the programme website. Only four (22 per cent) of the participants interviewed had utilised the discussion forum.
“Yes I did use the discussion forum - I spoke to a couple of other women and put my details up on the website and sent off some hellos and received some hellos back and all that kind of thing and from the ones I chatted with I have met a couple of ladies since then and we may in the fullness of time be able to do something together.” (coachee, T2)

It appeared that the main reason why participants did not use the discussion forum was that they were not aware of the benefits that it could offer in terms of networking with other participants. It was also evident that participants often preferred more face-to-face contact for networking, particularly for making initial contact.

“In principal I did intend to use the networking section the discussion section and I did actually contribute to one or two discussions, but that never seemed to get off the ground. And I think there was the problem of what did you do with it, what do you say on it, what’s it for that never really became clear to anyone it wasn’t clear what you might get out of it.” (coachee, T2)

“I think possibly a little more face-to-face meetings with the other coachees. I think from a lot of what people were saying at the event I went to is that if coaching is going to be very beneficial then meeting the other coachees would be very useful and perhaps there wasn’t enough of that. I think maybe if that happened the online discussion would have worked.” (coachee, T2)

A number of respondents (n=8, 44 per cent) also referred to the need to have technical experience in order to use the website effectively. A lack of technical knowledge and experience appeared to create a barrier to participants using the discussion forum.

“I didn’t use the discussion forum, perhaps one thing that I didn’t feel techy enough to use.” (coach, T2)

“I actually found it (the discussion forum) difficult to get into all of that and use it but I’m not a computer bod as such, I’m sure people more technically involved with the computer probably would.” (coach, T2)

A number of coaches (n=3, 43 per cent) believed that extra support, specifically for coaches, may have been useful. One coach referred to the potential advantages of having a master/super coach who could be employed to coach a group of coaches throughout the duration of the programme. Alternatively, it may have been useful to set up action learning sets for coaches and coachees, this may also have helped to establish networks and to provide a sounding board and guidance for coaches.

“It may have been good to have been coached – Master coach.” (coach, T2)
“I probably think it would be good to get the coaches together I think I would have appreciated that I liked the first event where we did break into coaches and there was a group about 4/5 of us who discussed about how it would work I would have appreciated another couple of sessions like that.” (coach, T2)

6.10 Summary
Coachee and control group members’ short and long-term business goals tended to be general and difficult to measure and quantify, for example, starting, establishing and developing a business. There were some similarities regarding coachees and the control groups’ responses to development aims, with over half stating that business planning was a development aim. However, there were some differences, for example, 40 per cent of coachees stated that confidence development was a key aim, whereas just less than a fifth of the control group rated confidence building as an important development aim. The results highlighted that coachees wanted business and personal development from their coaching relationship.

Paired sample t-tests examining changes over time (T1 to T2), found that at T2, the control group were more likely to agree that formal business support had helped them to develop in a range of key areas. However, on the whole, the control group still rated the support provided by formal business support providers as ineffective when developing key skills. The coachee responses did not show any statistical significance or trends relating to formal business support provision.

When examining informal support, the control group were less likely to rate informal support at T2 compared to T1. For example, the control group were less likely to agree that informal support had helped them to develop their networking and work and home life balancing skills at T2. Therefore, what may have appeared to be effective support and advice at the outset of business formation (T1) was less effective at T2. Coachee responses showed one trend in relation to friends and financial planning, showing an increase in perceptions of support, however, they still rated this support negatively at T2.

Results from the paired sample t-tests to entrepreneurial self-efficacy questions revealed that coachees experienced increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy in a range of areas at T2 compared with T1. For example, coachees were statistically significantly more likely to agree with statements including ‘I am able to define my long-term business goals’ (p<0.007), ‘I am able to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty’ (p<0.008). In contrast, the control group did not show any increases or decreases in entrepreneurial self-efficacy across the two time points.
Results from the paired sample t-tests to the items included in the *general entrepreneurial attitudes* questionnaire showed that coachees had more positive general entrepreneurial attitudes at T2 compared with T1, for example, ‘I am satisfied with my work and home life balance (p<0.001) and ‘I am self-confident’ (p<0.002). The coachees showed increased internality in three locus of control statements, for example, ‘when I achieve my business goals it is usually because I worked hard for it’ (p<0.049). In contrast, the control group data showed that there was a trend associated with the item ‘I am self-confident’ (p<0.055), with control group members feeling less self-confident at T2 compared with T1. However the control group did show an increased internal locus of control in relation to the statement ‘success in business is mostly a matter of luck’ (p<0.096).

Results from the paired sample t-tests to items on the *coach evaluation* questionnaire revealed a number of findings among coachee responses to coach outcomes. By T2, coachees were statistically significantly less likely to agree with a range of statements, for example, ‘my coach develops my ability to take calculated risks’ (p<0.002). The results from the paired sample t-tests conducted on coachees to the items that were included in the coach *evaluation* questionnaire show that coachees were less likely to consider that their coach provided them with a range of coaching functions at T2 compared with T1. It appears that coachees had high expectations of their coaches at the beginning of the programme, T1, and were less likely to rate the development received from their coach at T2 after they had completed their coaching relationships.

The interview data at T2 showed that the coaching relationships helped coachees to develop their entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes through four main processes. These processes were clarification of business goals, validation, shared experiences and removing negative attitudes. Enabling coachees to clarify goals and expectations for the future and having a coach to discuss issues with and to use as a sounding board, provided coachees with the opportunity to develop positive experiences through clear business goals and direction. Validation was also an important part of the coaching process. Coaches were able to validate their coachees’ actions and goals which in turn impacted on increased levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Validation is particularly important for female entrepreneurs at the start-up phases of business development as this may be a time when women lack confidence in their own abilities. By validating ideas, coaches were able to show encouragement and provide motivation. Coaches also developed their coachees through a shared understanding. Discussing business issues with someone who had previous experience was seen as an effective way for coachees to view the reality of running a business and to
access important knowledge with regard to business ownership. This process was achieved because all participants were female entrepreneurs, therefore coachees could identify with their coach and vice versa. Finally, coaches helped coachees to eradicate negative behaviours and assess valuing systems, which often led to a process of self-discovery. Clarifying personal goals and values also helped coachees to prioritise their business goals and to formulate plans and objectives for the future.

Findings from the evaluation questionnaire showed that on the whole the majority of the coachees and the coaches had benefited from taking part in the programme and coachees stated that they were satisfied with the support they received from their coach. In general, the coaching sessions lasted approximately one and a half hours and coaches and coachees met on average once every two weeks. Over sixty per cent of coaching pairs conducted more than 60 per cent of their coaching online via the spark software and the remainder was conducted via telephone or face-to-face sessions.

Online communication methods for coaching interventions appear to have a number of advantages, for example, time for reflection, convenience and safety, and a method of recording discussions. Notwithstanding the importance of these advantages, online communication in this programme also had some limitations, for example, a lack of non verbals, speed of interaction, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the written word. The findings from this study show that the use of various other areas of the website, including the discussion forum, was disappointing. This appeared to stem from a lack of familiarity with such forums and participants being unsure as to how they could utilise this section of the website. A general consensus among the participants interviewed was that more face-to-face sessions and workshops may have been useful throughout the duration of the programme and that this may have helped to stimulate use of the discussion forum for networking. General recommendations regarding future programmes also included support for coaches, such as a master coach.
CHAPTER SEVEN
DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction
The aim of this unique longitudinal study was to examine the potential of coaching to develop female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy through learning and development. This was achieved by exploring the potential of an e-coaching programme and the impact of an e-coaching programme, specifically examining female entrepreneurs’ learning development with regard to entrepreneurial self-efficacy, general entrepreneurial attitudes and locus of control, compared to a control group who did not receive the coaching intervention.

The study examined the business support requirements of female entrepreneurs and explored the potential of an e-coaching programme of support, therefore providing female entrepreneurs with a voice regarding their business support experiences and needs. Based on the findings from stage one of the study the TEC programme was designed to address the lack of professional and personal support experienced by female entrepreneurs, particularly those at the pre start-up, start-up and development phases. This study utilised the TEC programme to create and develop an academic picture of under-researched areas, particularly in relation to female entrepreneurship, self-efficacy, learning and development, coaching and e-methods of communication. The study was based on a unique programme that provided female entrepreneurs with a one-to-one e-coaching programme specifically tailored to their needs. The programme was focused on improving the support received by female entrepreneurs and explored how coachees learned in their coaching relationships and how this learning impacted on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes, including locus of control. The central feature of the TEC programme was the e-coaching relationship, whereby a female entrepreneur with business and/or coaching experience was matched with another female entrepreneur (coachee) who was at the pre start-up, start-up, or development stages of business.

As this study was the first of its kind, the author believes it is an important step forward as there is an absence of previous longitudinal work investigating the impact of coaching and e-coaching programmes on female entrepreneurs, particularly examining entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes and how coachees learn in coaching relationships. This programme also involved a control group which again adds value to the research as there is a lack of empirical research taking this approach. This study adds to the existing self-efficacy, social cognitive theory, learning, coaching and entrepreneurship theory by showing that coaching can have a positive impact on the entrepreneurial self-
efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes of female entrepreneurs. The aim of this longitudinal study was to examine the potential of coaching to develop female entrepreneurs' self-efficacy through learning and development. The research objectives and questions for this study were derived from extensive literature reviews detailed in chapters two and three.

This chapter will focus on three main discussion points, firstly how the study provided women with a voice, by asking them to comment on their business support experiences and requirements. Secondly, by addressing the gendered nature of entrepreneurship, providing a programme of support which was designed for women and delivered by women and evaluated by examining how women experienced the programme and finally how this thesis has arrived at a female entrepreneurs' perspective of social learning theory and coaching and how the findings illuminate the process of learning in coaching relationships and how this learning can develop female entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

7.2 Sample of participants – stage one and stage two
The mean age of respondents in stage one of this study was 42 years of age. The literature has shown that female entrepreneurs tend to be between the ages of 35 and 44 years of age, therefore the ages of respondents in this study were similar to that reported in the literature (Harding, 2006). In addition, respondents also appeared to be highly educated with more than three quarters (n=24, 80 per cent) educated to degree level and above (EOC, 2006; Davidson, 1997). In terms of marital status, half were either married or living with a partner (n=15, 50 per cent) and the remaining half were either single or divorced. There did not appear to be differences reported in this study when compared with the previous female entrepreneurship literature, therefore one can conclude that the samples used for stage one of this study, on the whole, are similar to the samples used in previous entrepreneurship studies.

The demographic data for the coachees in stage two of the study was very similar to that of respondents in stage one, the mean age for coachees was 41 years of age, 42 for the control group and 43 years of age for the coaches. Specifically examining the coachees, there were also similarities with regard to marital status, with ten coachees (33 per cent) married, and five (n=5 17 per cent) cohabiting. In addition, ten of the coachees were single (33 per cent) and a further five coachees were divorced or separated (17 per cent). In terms of educational attainment, twenty coachees (67 per cent) were educated to degree level or above.

There were also similarities found between the coachees, coaches and control group demographics. The mean age ranged between 41 and 43 years of age.
The majority of participants in each group were White British. More coaches and the control group were married or living with a partner, when compared with the coachees. Some differences were found in terms of number of children. Approximately a third (30 per cent) of coachees stated that they had dependent children, similarly just over a quarter of (26 per cent) of coaches stated the same, whereas approximately half (46 per cent) of the control group stated that they had children. There were similarities found in terms of educational attainment; 67 per cent of coachees were educated to degree level or above, 69 per cent of the control group and slightly higher 83 per cent of the coaches reached this level.

In terms of the business demographics, there were some differences between the coachees and the control group. Half of the control group (n= 13) were at the pre-start-up phase, whereas a third of the coachees (n=10, 33 per cent) were at a similar stage. In addition, there were five coachees (17 per cent) who had been operating a business for over two years, whereas there were no control group members in this category. As expected, a proportion of coaches, two thirds (n=20, 67 per cent) had been operating a business for more than two years. The majority of coachees, control group and coaches were based in the service sector and the majority did not have any employees. There appeared to be a fairly equal split between coachees, control group and coaches who had previous experience and those who did not.

Chi square analysis was also conducted on the personal and business demographics for coachees and the control group, which concluded that there were no significant differences between each group in any of the categories highlighted above.

7.3 Surface conceptualization - Female entrepreneurs and the potential of coaching

Stage one of the study was designed to ascertain female entrepreneurs' requirements of business support provision in the North West of England and investigate the potential of an e-coaching programme for the provision of business support for female entrepreneurs. Women in this study were provided with a platform to discuss their experiences and to examine their business support needs.

This study provided women with a ‘voice’, as respondents had the opportunity to present their experiences and to provide insight into their previous business support engagements and their requirements for future business support (Simpson and Lewis, 2007). Simpson and Lewis (2007: 84) state that “in order to maintain their privileged positions, dominant discourses must silence and devalue competing meanings and interpretations. The dominant discourse of enterprise and
entrepreneurialism, currently privileged in many areas of organisational life can therefore be seen to be constructed on a valorization of masculine values and attributes”. Table 7.1 demonstrates how this study redresses this dominant discourse, by providing women with a platform and an opportunity to have their voices heard and their views acted upon through the development of an e-coaching programme. The main aim of the needs analysis was to ascertain female entrepreneurs’ requirements of business support not only in terms of the content, but also its delivery. As such this study designed and developed a programme of development which was informed by women, rather than preconceived ideas of what female entrepreneurs require. Female entrepreneurs’ needs are often silenced through the gendered nature of entrepreneurship (Simpson and Lewis, 2005). Swan et al (2009) state that gender-neutral training programmes are often highly gendered, which encourages the take up of particular versions of femininity and/or masculinity. This study has contested the normative state of receiving support and design of coaching programmes, by focusing on female entrepreneurs’ needs throughout the design, development and evaluation process. The findings presented in this thesis are based on a programme which has been developed and evaluated based on female entrepreneurs’ norms.

The findings from stage one of the study will now be discussed around the key themes of experience of business support, requirements of business support and the potential of e-coaching for business support.

7.3.1 Experience of business support

The majority of respondents in this study had accessed some form of formal business support provision, usually via Business Link and/or the Chamber of Commerce. The figures reported in this study are significantly higher than those reported by the Small Business Service (Williams and Cowling, 2009), which found that only 55 per cent of women-led recently established business were likely to seek advice. This may show that the women in this study were particularly active regarding accessing business support and advice. The fact that over 80 per cent of women in this study were accessing some form of formal advice is encouraging as it shows that women are actively accessing the support which is available to them and they have an understanding of the importance of business support provision for developing their business. Despite some positive experiences regarding the support provided by formal support agencies, a key problem for respondents was availability and a lack of awareness of what was on offer to them. Specifically, opening times were viewed as restrictive and support was often a postcode lottery, whereby some geographical areas provided a wealth of support and other areas appeared to be lacking in support provision. An additional barrier facing women in business was the locality of business support organisations. First
impressions would suggest that this is not a gender issue. However, when considering that women typically have primary responsibility for childcare and domestic responsibilities (Parasuraman et al., 1996) and they are more likely than their male counterparts to set up a business from home (Loscocco and Smith-Hunter, 2004), basing service provision in central locations, for example, city centres and town centres, can be a barrier to female entrepreneurs accessing support. This is particularly the case for female entrepreneurs who have young children and those who live in rural areas or rely on public transport (Fielden et al., 2003). These access issues made initial contact with business support providers problematic. Therefore although respondents had the impetus to access business support provision, there were often barriers which impeded their access.

A further barrier to business support provision was a lack of knowledge relating to what was available, a finding consistent with that of Fielden et al (2003). The issue of awareness of business support may have been due to the fact that women often lack access to human and social capital when starting out in business, therefore they may lack key sources of knowledge regarding business support (Carter and Williams, 2003; Changanti and Parasuraman, 1996; Cromie and Birley, 1991; Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991; Verhuel and Thurik, 2001; Kaplan and Nierderman, 2006). Respondents in this study appeared to value informal sources of support, such as family, friends and the internet e.g. discussion forums, with 90 per cent accessing some form of informal support. As with formal support accessed this figure is significantly higher than that reported by Williams and Cowling (2009), which found that only 13 per cent of SME employers drew on informal advice from friends or family and only a small number used the internet. However, the findings reported in this thesis are supported by Moore and Buttner (1997) who assert that the most important female entrepreneurs’ support group tended to be their spouses and significant others. The importance of informal relationships with regard to support and assistance is an area of great importance (Low and MacMillan, 1988; Light and Rosenstein, 1995; Aldrich, 1989), and certainly a factor which has been raised in this study. Support which is seen as less formal and less threatening tends to be viewed as more suitable to women and something that they tend to access more frequently, particularly during venture creation (Gigliotti, 2002, Fielden et al., 2003). The issues relating to characteristics of informal sources of business support can be linked to the characteristics of support received via an e-coaching programme, for example less formal and less threatening. These findings clearly show the importance of providing women with a voice regarding their business support experiences. Without this knowledge it is impossible to understand the gendered nature of business support services and how they often developed to fit requirements of male entrepreneurs. Without a complete understanding of
women’s experiences it is impossible to develop services which are truly tailored to their needs.

Table 7.1 Voice and visibility – female entrepreneurs’ business support

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<tr>
<th>Surface</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Visibility</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Female entrepreneurs provided with a platform to discuss their experiences and to examine their business support needs.</td>
<td>Female entrepreneurs not excluded but brought together as one group to address problems with business support. All participants on the programme were women, therefore women were not marginalized by men. No power of the majority to be measured by.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deep</td>
<td>Women’s need silenced through gendered nature of entrepreneurship. Designing a programme particularly for women’s needs ensures that the programme is based on their requirements.</td>
<td>Contested normative state of receiving support and designing coaching programmes. Programme developed and evaluated based on female entrepreneurs norms, e.g. shared experience and verbal persuasion.</td>
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Adapted from Simpson and Lewis (2005:1265)

7.3.2 Requirements from business support

As previously discussed, there is now a need to conduct research examining how programmes are designed. Are the business support programmes really beneficial for women, or do they cast women in the category of the helpless and needy (Ahl, 2006). In this study women were asked to comment on their specific requirements of business support, so as to understand how and why programmes could be beneficial to their development. Figure 7.1 outlines the key skill and delivery requirements highlighted by coachees. These areas are discussed throughout this section.

Respondents from stage one of the study believed that the current availability of support took a generalist approach, which did not attend to the unique problems faced by female entrepreneurs, and general information regarding business issues was not always appropriate for women’s needs (Evans and Volery, 2001). Respondents also believed that it was important to receive as they termed it ‘intangible’ support, whereby they could actually talk through their problems and arrive at a solution (SBS, 2004). Individualistic approaches may be more useful for overcoming barriers when starting up, as support can be tailored to the individual’s specific business needs (Stokes, 2001); as a publication by Prowess (2005) states, a multilateral approach to business support is required to ensure effective business support provision. Respondents in this study felt that their needs would be more
adequately addressed by accessing support on a one-to-one basis. This highlights the need for tailored provision, rather than taking a ‘one sizes fits all’ approach to business support. This one to one support could be provided through a coaching relationship and an online method of communication would provide flexibility.

It was also important for female entrepreneurs to receive ongoing support from the same individual, as this was seen to be an effective way of providing some continuity and consistency and would enable women to build and develop some form of relationship. Female entrepreneurs do not lack the drive, ambition or ability; however they tend to see fewer opportunities and lack familiarity and confidence with the business world (Harding, 2006). The lack of familiarity with the business world may result in female entrepreneurs having reduced access to human and social capital which are essential for business success (De Carolis and Saparito, 2006; Hoang and Antoncic, 2003; Carter et al., 2003; Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986). One way in which business owners can access social capital is through their business networks and relationships. Because women may have fewer business contacts and less access to social capital, providing them with a coaching relationship whereby they can access support from another business woman over a period of time may help to overcome some of the problems experienced by female entrepreneurs, particularly in relation to acquiring relevant contacts. It is essential that businesses are constantly changing and evolving, particularly in the current economic climate, therefore female entrepreneurs’ advice needs may change on a weekly, if not daily basis. Therefore having a coach who can be contacted on a regular basis has the potential to be an effective means of business support. Whilst the need to constantly develop in the current economic climate is not a gender issue, arguably women may require more support through such periods as they often lack familiarity with the business world and, unlike their male counterparts, may not have extensive access to business networks and contacts (Verhuel and Thurik, 2001). Thus, one-to-one support may be particularly important for female entrepreneurs and may be an effective way of helping women to overcome some of the negative perceptions surrounding business ownership and help to establish and sustain confidence.

Respondents felt their business support needs ranged across finance and accountancy skills, marketing, developing general confidence, and strategies to balance their work and home life (Carter and Rosa, 1998; Carter et al, 2001; Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Hollowell et al., 2006). The literature shows that unlike the male entrepreneurs, female entrepreneurs tend to rely on their own savings rather than attempting to access external funding (Carter and Rosa, 1998). This reliance on personal funds is due to a variety of reasons, for example female entrepreneurs tend to have reduced access to financial or advisory support that is
usually dominated by male networks (Carter et al., 2001). The structural barriers which women face when attempting to access finance, coupled with the risk adverse nature of female entrepreneurs, can often leave them at a disadvantage when compared with their male counterparts and specifically lead to reduced confidence in the area of funding and finance. Therefore, alongside the logistics of operating a business, female entrepreneurs also need support which helps to build confidence in these areas. If it is accepted that female entrepreneurs have reduced human capital in terms of business skills, then one may also suggest that they will have less confidence in their abilities in these specific areas. Therefore it is important that women are provided with business support in terms of specific skills, for example, accountancy and also support in developing their confidence in the specific business skills highlighted above. It is important that the support received by female entrepreneurs includes normative or social support (such as mentoring and networking), as well as standard provision of skills training and finance (Deloitte, 2008). The GEM UK (Harding, 2005) report stated that, “if we are to make women’s businesses sustainable, we cannot ignore these softer challenges, as they are fundamental in deterring women from entrepreneurship.” (Harding, 2006: 58). Coaching has the potential to develop specific business skills and also confidence and self-belief. Coaching is focused on specific development areas, therefore it has the ability to focus on specific business skills, which female entrepreneurs may want to hone, and also has the ability to develop wider sets of skills, which may relate to interpersonal skills and developing confidence (Jarvis, 2004; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). In addition, the one-to-one support which respondents highlighted as an important aspect of business support fits a coaching relationship which, in individual coaching, involves one coach and one coachee.

Respondents’ lack of networking often resulted in them having fewer opportunities to gain social capital and that lack of social capital may have resulted in respondents being unaware of the business support which is available to them. Because female entrepreneurs have reduced human and social capital, compared to male entrepreneurs, and their networking activity is often less than that of male business owners, it is important to provide support for women which helps them to develop networking opportunities. Coaching relationships have the potential to help women to participate in networks through the individual contacts they make and also in terms of developing confidence to access networks.

7.3.3 Female focused support
Respondents in the study made reference to the importance of female focused support. This form of support was seen as a way of accessing guidance from an individual who had been through similar experiences and someone who had knowledge of what it was like to be a woman starting out in business. This is a
finding supported by a Prowess (2008) survey, which reported that approximately 80 per cent of respondents were more likely to participate in a business support programme if it was for women only.

Female entrepreneurs emphasised the importance of having someone to discuss ideas with and someone who they could use as a sounding board (Tillmar, 2007). They also wanted to discuss problems and issues with someone who had similar experiences who could empathise with their situation. The findings from this study suggest that gender may be a factor in perceptions of empathy and understanding, with female entrepreneurs viewing other female entrepreneurs as those most likely to provide understanding and appropriate support. Regional areas which have shown the most growth in female entrepreneurship are those where there are networking and mentoring schemes, specifically focused on women, such as in the North East and South East of England (Harding, 2003). This would suggest that female entrepreneurs require business support and advice which is specifically geared towards their needs, rather than mainstream support (Tillmar, 2007). Thus, it is important that individuals providing business support have some experience of self-employment and reflect the gender and ethnic mix of the communities within which they work (Prowess, 2004; Lee-Gosselin and Grise, 1990).

Respondents in this study commented on the need to share experiences with other female entrepreneurs and thus believed that networking with other female entrepreneurs was a way of accessing this form of support. This finding is consistent with the work of Moore and Buttner (1997) who stated that women primarily use networks for sounding boards rather than for gaining actual resources. Previous research examining female entrepreneurship has often highlighted the importance of networking and the impact such activities can have on the success and indeed survival of businesses (Aldrich, 1989; Rosa and Hamilton, 1994; Aldrich and Baker, 1997). Women’s networking activity is lower than of men (Katz and Williams, 1997), and women are more likely than men to set up a home based business (Loscocco and Smith-Hunter, 2004; Danhauser, 1999). This may mean that they have less opportunity to build confidence through networking and developing relationships with contacts, and therefore they may not feel comfortable accessing networking groups. Therefore creating female focused support is an important way to stimulate networking activity of female entrepreneurs. Women may be more inclined to want to join a networking group which they feel will enable them to meet individuals who share similar experiences.

As Lewis (2006) states, it is important to understand how spaces are created within the workplace and the norms which are apparent in these spaces. With regard to female entrepreneurship and development needs it is necessary to understand
how female entrepreneurs want to create these spaces and what the important elements of a supportive relationship looks like. Only by doing this is it possible to create and develop supportive environments for female entrepreneurs which enable them to develop and grow, the findings from stage one of this study provide a deeper understanding of female entrepreneurs’ requirements.

Some suggest that women-only training is important as women’s training needs are different to their male counterparts (Stranger, 2004; Carter, 2000). Roomi (2005) asserts that women-only training programmes can help to improve business performance and increase confidence and self-esteem. This is an important point; particularly as female entrepreneurs often lack the confidence to develop their business. In contrast, some authors suggest that tailoring support can lead to its own problems, for example, gender discrimination based on the fact that women are perceived as receiving preferential treatment over men (Walker and Joyner, 1999). It was evident from the findings in this study that respondents emphasised the importance of receiving support from other women who had shared similar experiences, therefore suggesting that tailoring support to female entrepreneurs’ needs is an important consideration in the design of future business support provision. The findings from this study provide an important evidence base for the development of business support provision for female entrepreneurs. This study has shown that female entrepreneurs require particular forms of support which they may not be able to access from traditional business support provision.

It is also important to consider that some women may prefer to be viewed as an entrepreneur, rather than a ‘female’ entrepreneur. Simply using the term ‘female’ entrepreneurship may indicate that there is a distinction between male and female entrepreneurs and that any activity by women is defined and viewed in accordance with the “standards of an invisible masculine norm” (Lewis, 2006). Female entrepreneurs are subsequently measured against the male standard norm as men are viewed as the majority group, whereas female entrepreneurs are the minority (Lewis, 2006; Kusz, 2001; Pierce, 2003; Robinson, 2000). It is important to consider whether women should prevent themselves from seeing gender as an issue in entrepreneurship. However, discounting gender differences may be detrimental to female entrepreneurs, as this may lead to practices, such as marginalizing or discriminating, being overlooked (Lewis, 2006). Ultimately, it is the individual’s choice as to whether they access tailored women-only training and support and if they find this support to be more beneficial than other forms of business support. Respondents in this study did not appear to discount gender differences and take a gender blind approach to entrepreneurship. This may have been for a variety of reasons, firstly, women on this programme celebrated the fact that the programme and research were designed for women and had actively
signed up to a programme which had specifically stated that it was only for female entrepreneurs. Secondly, the issue of anxieties about self and status discussed by Lewis (2006) may have been reduced in this study as essentially the relationship was between two individuals and therefore issues were not played out amongst a group of individuals. It was the business and personal experience of the coach which was important and that experience was seen as something that only women could provide. Once again, the women in this study had signed up to a women only programme, this may have affected the sample which was used for this study, as arguably these women were already aware of the gendered nature of entrepreneurship and therefore would not assume a gender blind perspective.

The findings from this study provide insight into how female entrepreneurs experience formal and informal business support, and as such is an important addition to the extant female entrepreneurship literature. The findings specifically add to existing research by exploring the experiences of female entrepreneurs and also ascertaining their requirements regarding the support that they receive and the potential of a coaching model of support. There is limited research examining female entrepreneurs’ business support needs and that which has been conducted tends to focus on aspiring entrepreneurs (Fielden et al., 2003), or provides an international perspective (Stranger, 2004). This study was based on examining what women required from business support, rather than simply fitting support needs into a ‘male’ or ‘female’ model of training and development. The findings showed that respondents wanted to share experiences with other female entrepreneurs who they can identify with and receive one-to-one support. These findings would suggest that women-only development and training can provide some advantages for female entrepreneurs. The findings in this study are in line with previous research which has suggested that support for entrepreneurs is often gender neutral or ‘menstreamed’, resulting in training programmes that do not meet the needs of female entrepreneurs (OECD, 2004; Prowess, 2008).

7.3.4 The potential of an e-coaching programme
In line with the current coaching literature, respondents in this study wanted a relationship which was centred on collaboration and facilitation (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003). Respondents felt that it was important for the coach and coachee to work together effectively, rather than a one sided relationship which was being led by the coach. The areas which respondents wanted to cover in their coaching relationships ranged from practical advice on start-up issues to personal development and issues with balancing home and work life. The variety in support needs highlighted by respondents in this study adds further weight to the argument that female entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group and as such they require individual and tailored support.
The emphasis on personalized, one-to-one support underpins the benefits of coaching as an approach by which an individual female entrepreneur can access the type of social support they require at the time they need it. Setting up a business can be an extremely daunting task and there are numerous factors to consider which women may not be aware of at the outset. Having one-to-one support can provide women with the advice that is pertinent to them and can also provide them with an insight into the type of issues that they need to address. This support may help to reduce the fear which many women face when starting out on their own, which can be a major barrier for female entrepreneurs (Levie and Hart, 2009). The needs analysis study showed that e-coaching for female entrepreneurs was a viable method of providing one-to-one support and as such warranted further investigation to examine how this would work in practice.

Respondents highlighted a range of desirable skills and qualities of a coach, these included having expertise, being an effective communicator, showing empathy and being motivational. They also wanted a coach who could be objective and give honest feedback. The qualities highlighted by respondents are in line with current coaching literature (Kenton and Moody, 2001; Hunt and Weintraub, 2002; Hudson, 1999; Whitmore, 2002; Zeus and Skiffington, 2003).

In terms of online support, respondents reported an array of perceived advantages of this method. For example, online support can provide ease of access, whereby women can access support online from home. Accessing support online was seen as an excellent way for women to access business support provision from their own homes (Boyle Single and Single, 2005), and this would prevent women from interrupting their daily routine, and would reduce the time spent travelling to service providers and/or networking events (Megginson et al., 2003). This is often particularly an advantage for women who have childcare responsibilities (Bierema and Merriam, 2002). Perceived disadvantages and limitations of online communication appeared to be based on misinterpretation of the written word; however respondents felt that face-to-face contact or telephone contact on occasions could help to remedy this problem (Headlem-Wells, 2004). Respondents also believed that online coaching would provide coaches and coachees with the time and space to think and to reflect on the information provided/received. This is consistent with Evans and Volery's (2001) Delphi study.

The findings from this study suggest that coaching has the potential to provide female entrepreneurs with business support which is truly tailored to their business needs. The addition of an online element provides ease of access and
convenience which can be extremely important for women who are trying to juggle work and home responsibilities.

7.3.5 Formal and informal business support provision

This study examined coachees’ and the control groups’ perceptions of informal and formal support, by rating efficacy of support in a number of key factors, such as access to funding and finance, marketing, business planning, and time management. The study found that there were no statistical significant differences in the formal support questions for coachees when examining ratings from time point one to time point two, therefore they did not significantly rate business support as more or less effective throughout the duration of the programme. However, there were a range of statistically significant findings for the control group. The paired sample t-tests conducted on the control group responses showed that they were more likely to demonstrate an increase in effectiveness of formal business support provision at time point two when compared with time point one. The results showed statistically significant results and trends in the areas of work and home life balance (p<0.022), funding and finance (p<0.054), defining goals (p<0.060) and strategic planning (p<0.085) and marketing (p<0.094). While there was a shift in responses from T1 to T2, analysis of the mean scores showed that the control group consistently felt that formal business support provision did not help them to develop across a range of skills. The increased perception of formal business support provision may have been due to the control group being more likely to access support from business support agencies such as Business Link and Chamber of Commerce over the six month period, compared to the coachees. The coachees were focused on their coaching relationship and therefore may have been less inclined to access extra formal business support during this time.

It is evident that formal business support provision did not meet the coachees’ expectations regarding a wide range of areas and the control group consistently rated their development as negative. The literature clearly states that female entrepreneurs lack human and social capital (Carter and Williams, 2003; Kaplan and Nierderman, 2006), therefore, business support provision is even more critical for the success of female small businesses. The findings relating to the coachees’ perception of business support provision over a period of time may provide reasons as to why the number of women accessing business support provision is lower than that of men (Fielden et al., 2003). The difference found between the coachees and the control group may also be based on expectations. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the coachees grew in self confidence and experienced increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy; therefore they may have been more inclined to attribute their development to their own hard work and
achievements, rather than to support from an external source. Equally, the fact that they had increased in entrepreneurial self-efficacy may have reduced their need to access formal business support provision. The coachees were clearly feeling more efficacious in a range of entrepreneurial tasks and therefore may not have felt that business support provision could offer any additional service at that time. These findings hold some key questions for business support provision, particularly for female entrepreneurs and suggest that business support providers need to develop their support packages in such a ways as to respond to female entrepreneurs’ needs.

In terms of informal support, there was only one statistically significant item shown in the responses from the coachees, which showed a decrease in the effectiveness of informal support relating to financial; planning and friends (p<0.079). With regard to the control group, there were a number of statistically significant items found in responses to these questions. It appeared from analysis that, on the whole, the control group rated informal support (friends and family) as less effective at time point two compared with time point one, particularly in the areas of work and home life balance (p<0.004), developing new business ideas (p<0.014), and defining short term business goals (p<0.097). In terms of the internet, the control group again rated its effectiveness as reduced at T2, particularly for networking skills (p<0.048) and developing new business ideas (p<0.076). Therefore, the perceptions of the control group relating to the effectiveness of informal sources of support considerably reduced throughout the duration of the programme. These findings may suggest that sources of support accessed through informal sources become less effective as female entrepreneurs progress further with their business. This is an interesting finding, particularly considering that a number of studies have shown the positive effects of accessing informal sources of support, such as family and friends (Prowess, 2008 SBS, 2004; Low and MacMillan, 1988; Light and Rosenstein, 1995; Aldrich, 1989). Despite the importance of informal sources of support for business advice and development, little is known about female entrepreneurs’ experiences of this support and the impact of informal contacts on the experiences of female entrepreneurs, specifically over time. Therefore, the findings from this study add some interesting data to the existing literature by highlighting the areas where informal sources of support are effective and also what types of informal sources of support are deemed the most useful and how these perceptions change over time. The fact that ratings decreased over time relating to support from friends and the internet may suggest that informal support may be particularly useful for female entrepreneurs at the early stages of development but become less so over time. This may be because women require more specific support as they develop their business. The short and long-term goals examined at T1 showed some
differences, with short term goals tending to be more general. Therefore it may be
easier for informal sources of support to meet women’s needs when they have
broad objectives, however as businesses progress, women will have more specific
targets for the future and therefore may need more specific business support and
advice. These findings suggest that even though female entrepreneurs are
accessing informal support, this support is not helping them to develop their
business. This provides further evidence to show the importance of ensuring that
formal business support is deemed effective.

To investigate the impact of an e-coaching programme on the process of learning
through entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitude measures of
participants on an e-coaching programme compared to a control group who did not
experience the programme over a period of time (6 months).

7.4 Deep conceptualization - Developing self-efficacy through coaching
The model of coaching developed from this study was based on women’s needs
and presents a coaching model where female entrepreneurs have created a space
which was based on female entrepreneurs norms, where shared experience,
verbal praise and persuasion and developing through positive experiences are all
ways to learn and develop entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Table 7.1 demonstrates how this study redresses this dominant discourse, by
providing women with visibility by developing a programme which was based on
womens needs and is solely for female entrepreneurs, where they are the majority
and have not been marginalized by men. This section shows how the programme
worked for female entrepreneurs and how female entrepreneurs developed their
entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitudes.

7.4.1 Definitions of coaching
For this study a definition of coaching was adopted and disseminated to all
programme participants at the start of the programme. Parsloe’s (1999:8)
definition was used as it was felt that this definition could be generalised to
different coaching styles and objectives “coaching is a process that enables
learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve”. However,
as with much social science research involving human beings, it was impossible to
ensure that this definition was adopted in the coaching relationship throughout the
six month period. The problem of defining development relationships has been
highlighted by authors in the field of coaching and mentoring. For example, the
mentoring literature suggests that attempting to define mentoring can be viewed as
operating in a ‘semantic jungle.’ (Parsloe and Wray, 2000:8). Considering the links
between coaching and mentoring, it is evident that the problems regarding
definition may also impact on coaching relationships. Development relationships such as coaching may be too complex to ensure that one distinct definition is used (Vance and Olsen, 2002). Coaching relationships may be experienced in a multitude of ways, therefore some authors suggest that if development interventions such as coaching and mentoring are seen to be effective, it should not be necessary for the individuals who are involved in the relationship to agree with a specific list of characteristics and interpretations and therefore to place a label on that relationship (Roberts, 2000). In contrast, there are others who state that definitional clarity is essential to ensure consistency (Mullen, 1994; Russell and Adams, 1997). In light of these comments, the author attempted definitional clarity by addressing this issue when collecting the interview data at T2. For example, the author asked participants to state how they defined coaching and if their definition had changed throughout the duration of the programme. The majority of interviewees stated that the programme had in fact clarified their definition of coaching. This would suggest that the dynamics of the relationships did not change to a vast degree over the six month time period.

7.4.2 Coaching and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

The programme impacted on female entrepreneurs in a variety of areas, these are illustrated in figure 7.1 and show the range of coaching outcomes which were achieved as a result of the coaching intervention. Paired sample t-tests, which compared the differences within groups over time, found that coachees were statistically significantly more likely to positively rate their entrepreneurial self-efficacy levels at time point two, completion of the e-coaching relationship, compared to time point one. The areas which showed a statistically significant increase were related to defining goals (short and long-term) (p<0.015, p<0.007), making decisions under risk and uncertainty (p<0.008), marketing (p<0.023), work and home life balance (p<0.024) and networking (p<0.026). These findings suggest that the coaching relationship appeared to develop coachees and ultimately enhance their entrepreneurial self-efficacy in a variety of areas. These are encouraging findings as the literature clearly shows that despite women’s educational background, they are less likely to have had strategic decision-making experience and/or previous experience in relation to business ownership which can impact on women’s knowledge regarding financial aspects of business ownership, marketing and planning (DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Fielden et al., 2003; Harding and Cowling, 2004; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000). Whilst half of the coachees on this programme did have previous business experience, areas such as improving marketing skills, developing general confidence, and developing strategies to balance their work and home life balance, were all mentioned at baseline as important development aims for the coaching relationships (Carter and Rosa, 1998, Carter et al., 2001; Shelton, 2006; Noor,
These findings highlight how the programme delivered on the areas which were identified as development areas by coachees and how the coaching relationships enabled coachees to learn and develop crucial skills and abilities for business development.

Improving self-efficacy in a given domain reflects an individual's thoughts on whether they have the abilities perceived as important to perform a particular task, as well as the belief that they will be able to effectively convert those skills into a chosen outcome (Bandura, 1989, 1997). Self-belief will ultimately have an impact on the success of implementing these skills in practice, as “people’s beliefs about their abilities have a profound effect on those abilities” (Goleman, 1995: 90).

These findings show that a coaching relationship provided by a coach of the same gender and with business experience can help to develop a coachee’s entrepreneurial self-efficacy. It is evident that female entrepreneurs often lack self-confidence and self-efficacy when starting out in business (Chen et al., 1998; Wilson et al., 2007). Therefore, the fact that this programme helped to develop women’s entrepreneurial self-efficacy shows that coaching can be an effective way of helping women learn important new skills to assist them in the pre start-up and start-up phases of business development which are crucial stages of business development. By removing some of the internal barriers faced by women, programmes developed on the model used in this study can help to create a more level playing field for male and female entrepreneurs.

The increase in networking self-efficacy may have been due to an increase in social capital gained from networking with other participants on the programme. The programme itself may have provided new contacts and networking opportunities for coachees, alternatively the programme and the coaching relationship may have improved coachees’ confidence in terms of accessing networks. Developing networking skills is a key component to entrepreneurial success and as such is a key finding in this study (Burt, 1992; Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; De Carolis and Saparito, 2006; Hoang and Antoncic, 2003). The link between social capital and entrepreneurial success can not be overemphasised (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; De Carolis and Saparito, 2006), therefore a programme which provides a significant increase in self-efficacy regarding networking skills is an important addition to the entrepreneurship and coaching literature and also has wider implications for practice in terms of developing female entrepreneurs’ networking abilities.

As mentioned, the study found that coachees had significantly increased self-efficacy relating to marketing skills. The coaching relationship therefore appears to have helped coachees to look at effective marketing strategies and skills.
Coachees also felt that they had developed their ability to define their business goals at time point two when compared with time point one. The coaching advice and support coachees received may have enabled them to think more specifically about their business direction and progress and this may have ultimately helped to define their future goals. The coaching relationships may have also helped coachees to validate their existing plans and objectives and to establish business plans for the future. This finding is supported by the qualitative data collected at time point two which suggests that the coaches developed their coachees by helping them to clarify their business goals. An increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy regarding business goals may have also been a result of having protected time with a coach to plan strategically for the future. Women's lack of familiarity with the business world can often result in areas of weakness such as planning and interpersonal skills, e.g. self-confidence (DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Fielden et al., 2003; Harding and Cowling, 2004; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000). Therefore, coachees' increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy relating to defining business goals is a crucial finding in this study. In today's constantly changing business environment, it is imperative for all business owners to have effective business plans which must be developed from specific business goals. This programme developed coachees to enable them to gain clarity with regard to their business direction, which can only have a positive impact on the business and also on the coachees' confidence in their business abilities. This is an encouraging finding considering that at baseline coachees did not have very specific short or long-term goals for their business. Therefore, the programme helped coachees to define more specific goals for their future.

In addition to defining business goals, coachees felt increasingly able to balance their work and home life at time point two compared to time point one. This increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy may have been due to coaches providing coachees with techniques in order to balance work and home life more effectively. The improvement in self-efficacy relating to work and home life balance may also have been achieved through the process of improving business planning and strategy. Coachees may have felt that they had more direction regarding their business and therefore wasted less time which may have impacted on work and home life balance. The e-coaching relationship may have also enabled coachees to examine their work and home life balance and to look at more effective ways of managing these dual responsibilities. Alternatively, conducting an online coaching relationship may have provided coachees with more free time to concentrate on home life, rather than accessing support outside the home. Research has shown that women experience greater role conflict between work and family life, than their male counterparts (Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Welter, 2004; Parasuraman et al., 1996) and that childcare is one of the most widely cited reasons for women's
comparative lack of participation in entrepreneurship (Hollowell et al., 2006). Therefore work and home life balance can have a negative impact on the development of female owned businesses. The “resource drain argument” suggests that the amount of time committed to family responsibilities will ultimately reduce the time which is available for work responsibilities (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000: 190). Therefore, the fact that this study has found that women’s work and home life balance had improved following the programme is an important finding, as it provides evidence that an e-coaching programme specifically tailored for female entrepreneurs can help to address the ‘resource drain” issue which appears to be a key obstacle faced by women in business. Furthermore, work and home life balance was a long-term business goal at baseline and therefore was another key area which was achieved following the coaching relationships.

Coachees were also statistically significantly more likely to positively rate their entrepreneurial self-efficacy in their ability to deal with risk and uncertainty. Business start-up can be a time of uncertainty and a time when business owners have to take calculated risks in order to maximise opportunities. In addition, research has suggested that women are relatively more risk averse than men (Jianakoplos and Bernasek, 1998; Sexton and Bowman-Upton, 1990). Therefore it is a positive finding to show that the coaching relationship helped coachees to deal more effectively with uncertain and risky situations.

Women’s perceptions of success are highly correlated with their perceptions of support, suggesting that how a woman measures personal success maybe a moderating factor in the perception of support itself. Rodriguez (2001) concluded that both the provision and acceptance of support are essential for achieving successful entrepreneurial performance outcomes. If the right kind of support is available from the right source of support, that support will be received positively and performance outcomes will be enhanced (Viswesvaran, Sanchez and fisher, 1999). Therefore, considering the increase in perceptions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the findings from this study would suggest that an e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs has provided women with appropriate support from an appropriate business source. In comparison, the control group did not show any statistically significantly results from time point one to time point two. Therefore, the control group did not show an increase or decrease in entrepreneurial self-efficacy across the two time points. This shows that the control group still faced the internal barriers that have been highlighted in the literature and as such may have a negative impact on their business and personal development. The findings show that when female entrepreneurs are provided with individually tailored support they can develop their entrepreneurial self-efficacy.
The findings from this study suggest that the learning which took place in the coaching relationships developed the coachees entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Learning in the coaching relationships appeared to cover a wide range of areas, such as marketing and networking. The coaching methods and techniques which were used by coaches appeared to be an effective way of helping coachees to learn within the coaching relationship. Improving entrepreneurial self-efficacy can help women to prepare for business start-up and development and may ultimately result in women creating successful ventures. This will help to redress the gender imbalance which currently exists between male and female entrepreneurial activity in the UK (Harding et al, 2008). Therefore coaching methods of development appear to be an effective way of redressing the gender imbalance which exists in entrepreneurship, by creating a supportive method of development which is appropriate for female entrepreneurs.

7.4.3 Coaching and General Entrepreneurial Attitudes
Alongside the impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy of coachees, the programme also had a positive impact on general entrepreneurial attitudes, for example, increased satisfaction of work and home life balance (p<0.001), general self-confidence (p<0.002), increased awareness of support (p<0.036), able to achieve business goals (p<0.038), feeling more satisfied with business progress (p<0.049), and a trend reported relating to increased motivation (p<0.083). It appears that coachees felt generally more satisfied and confident in their abilities at time point two compared to time point one. One may suggest that the coaching relationship improved coachees’ views regarding their overall business progress and development. Achieving business goals and witnessing successful outcomes may have also impacted on coachees’ levels of confidence regarding their ability to make strategic business decisions about the future. Coachees’ increased awareness of business support availability may also be due to the relationships coachees experienced with their coach and indeed with other members of the programme, for example the coaches may have been effective at signposting coachees to other business support provision. Coachees’ ability to plan and define business goals for the future and their increased confidence levels may have positively impacted on their general satisfaction with business progress and work and home life balance and may have helped coachees to meet planned business objectives. These findings are also supported by the qualitative T2 data which showed that coaches validated coachees business goals and practices, this may have enabled coachees to feel more satisfied with their progress. In addition, the self-discovery and removal of negative attitudes and behaviours which was also reported in the interview data may have resulted in coachees experiencing increased motivation. These findings show how an e-coaching programme can help women to feel more confident about progress, satisfied with success and
motivated for the future. The aim of business support provision for entrepreneurs is to help them feel that they are supported in a way that enables them to develop their business and help entrepreneurs to feel more in control of their business progress. This programme clearly provided these aims in a number of ways and as such should be considered as a model for future development programmes for female entrepreneurs.

An increase in self-confidence for coachees was an important finding from this study, particularly as women often have a lack of self-confidence and this can be a considerable barrier for women contemplating or operating a small business (Prowess, 2008; Shragg et al., 1992; Still and Guerin, 1990; Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991; Birley, 1989). In comparison, the control group were significantly less likely to state that they were self-confident (p<0.055), supported in their business (p<0.054) and positive about future business plans (p<0.054). The control group also showed a decrease in levels of motivation (p<0.068). The findings which show that the control group experienced a decrease in overall self-confidence, may have been due to a lack of support that they had received over the six month period. This is particularly concerning as the control group rated the support from formal business support provision as more effective across a number of key areas from time point one to time point two (however it was still rated as negative). The formal business support findings which showed that the control group rated support negatively at T1 and T2, supports the general entrepreneurial attitudes finding which shows that the control group felt less supported in their business at T2. The increased self-confidence experienced by coachees following the coaching relationship may have been due to the learning and development which occurred in the relationships. As coachees learned from their coaches and developed crucial skills and abilities they in turn experienced increased self-confidence.

A decrease in self-confidence experienced by the control group is likely to have had a negative impact on their attitudes in relation to their future business plans. In addition to the decrease in self-confidence, the decrease in the perceptions of feeling supported may have also contributed to their negative attitude regarding future business progress. The decrease in self-confidence for control group members may have been due to an increased awareness of the realities of business ownership and/or doubts with regard to their overall level of abilities, particularly as they were not satisfied with their business support. The decrease in motivation experienced by the control group may have been due to a lack of direction for the future. Control group members may have embarked on an entrepreneurial career path and felt motivated during the initial phases of business development, however once they faced the reality of business development, this may have impacted on their motivation to continue. This is concerning,
considering that pre start-up and start-up stages of business development are such crucial stages of business development and business support provision should be aiming to develop confidence in entrepreneurs at these key stages. The fact that the control group did not experience improvement in general entrepreneurial attitudes and in some areas actually experienced a negative shift, may result in women deciding to terminate their entrepreneurial career. This would not only have an impact on the individual but may also be detrimental to the economy as a whole, as these businesses could provide profitable results and employment in the future.

The findings also showed that data collected from coachees by means of the locus of control questions showed statistical significance for a number of key issues, for example, the question ‘when I achieve my business goals it is usually because I worked hard for it’ (p<0.049) showed an increase in internal locus of control. Coachees felt that their success was significantly more likely to be related to their hard work at time point two than at time point one. Increase in internal locus of control in this area may have been due to an increase in confidence in their abilities, resulting in coachees feeling more inclined to attribute their success to their own abilities rather than an external influence. Furthermore, a trend was also found in the question, ‘whether or not I am successful in business depends mostly on my ability’ (p<0.090), again coachees were statistically more likely to state that this was the case at time point two compared with time point one. This highlights that coachees’ internal levels of locus of control statistically significantly increased from time point one to time point two.

The increase internality for the coachees is a positive finding, specifically as locus of control has been empirically found to relate positively to an individual’s entrepreneurial intentions (Chen et al., 1998). Studies have also examined the relation between locus of control and cognition and found that individuals who believe that they have control over their environment are more likely to exhibit perceptual behaviour that will enable them to take advantage of opportunities (Phares, 1962). One must note that there was a trend found among the control group, to the question ‘success in business is mostly a matter of luck’ (p<0.096), with the control group being more likely to disagree with this statement at time point two compared to time point one; this also shows an increase in internal locus of control. There is a dearth of empirical research examining the impact of coaching programmes on personality traits such as locus of control, specifically for women and in the area of entrepreneurship. As Lee-Kelley (2006) asserts, locus of control is relatively but not absolutely stable, therefore it is possible to moderate locus of control orientation through development programmes. This study has found some support for these assertions. The findings suggest that the
A programme did not have significant impact on coachees’ locus of control, across all of the LOC questions, however there were some areas of locus of control which did show significant change over time. The items where the coachees felt they had increased internality of locus of control over time, particularly related to internal versus external locus of control, rather than on issues of luck or powerful others, whereas the control group appear to show increased internality in terms of locus of control relating to luck. Further longitudinal research in the area of locus of control and entrepreneurship, specifically examining differences relating to internal versus external, luck and powerful others is required to fully examine the relationships among these three areas. Despite this, the results in this study are perhaps consistent with literature which states that an individual’s orientation toward locus of control is a relatively stable characteristic, although it can be modified (Holyrod, Penzien, Hursey, Tobin, Rogers, Holm, Mancille, Hall and Chila, 1984; Rotter, 1979; Sadow and Hopkins, 1993). One reason why locus of control is stable may be that the locus of control encompasses all experiences therefore it would take a longer time to change locus of control as it would require changes in perceptions across a number of areas. Although it can be argued that locus of control is not easily modified, it is important to find ways in which individuals can improve their locus of control, as strong internal locus of control is positively related with success in various areas of life (Lefcourt, 1981; Bandura, 1977; Schulz, 1976; Schulz and Hanusa, 1978; Wallston, 1993).

Research has suggested that entrepreneurs tend to have a stronger internal locus of control than the general population (Perry, 1990; Kaufmann and Welsh, 1995; Shapero, 1975; Brockhaus and Nord, 1979). Therefore it is not surprising that the control group also had strong internal locus of control as they would also be defined as starting out on an entrepreneurial career path. As locus of control is a relatively stable trait and affects all life experiences, programmes aimed at improving internality may require a longer period of intense development. Female entrepreneurs tend to lack confidence in their abilities therefore enhancing general entrepreneurial attitudes can ultimately have a positive impact on female entrepreneurs’ experiences and as such can help to their businesses.

### 7.5 Social learning theory and coaching – A female entrepreneurs’ perspective

This study investigated the perceptions of coach and coachee participants in relation to their learning experienced through an e-coaching programme. Figure 7.1 shows the coaching process, potential benefits and outcomes of the coaching relationships. The figure also illustrates the links between Bandura’s four main processes and the CIPD learning clusters and how they can be used as a conceptual framework to guide coaches in developing their coachees.
7.5.1 Coachees’ perceptions of the programme

The quantitative data clearly showed that coachees increased their entrepreneurial self-efficacy in a number of key areas, such as planning, dealing with risk and uncertainty, networking, marketing, and balancing work and home life. To add context to these findings, interview data was collected at time point two to explore how the coaches developed their coachees. The themes arising from the data analysis showed that coachees learned crucial skills and developed through clarification of goals, validation of goals and objectives, shared experiences and self-discovery. These four key areas can be linked to Bandura’s (1986) four main processes of achieving self-efficacy, enactive mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. Coaches adopted techniques which were appropriate for their coachee, both in terms of their development needs and their coaching styles (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009).

Previous research has indicated that one of the key aspects of self-efficacy is that it is not a static trait, rather it is something which can be changed (Hollenbeck and Hall, 2004), therefore supporting the view that targeted programmes for entrepreneurs are important for improving self-efficacy. In addition, research has suggested the importance of education in entrepreneurial self-efficacy, particularly for women (Chowdhury and Endres, 2005; Wilson et al., 2007). The findings from this study support the view that education and development to enhance entrepreneurial self-efficacy are appropriate for female entrepreneurs. The findings in this study are also supported by Wilson et al. (2007:399) who conclude that “a “one size fits all” approach to curricula may not be appropriate and that gender-sensitive programming especially related to women’s motivations, coupled with building their self efficacy may be needed” (Wilson et al., 2004). This study has shown that coaching relationships appear to have a positive impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. This supports the social cognitive literature which suggests that development interventions, such as coaching, can have a positive effect on an individual’s perception regarding their own capabilities (Bandura, 1994). This study not only supports the extant literature, but also provides specific data on female entrepreneurs’ development and entrepreneurial self-efficacy through a coaching programme, over a period of time.

This study examined the link between coaching and self-efficacy and therefore provides insight into how self-efficacy can be developed within a coaching relationship, and as such is a key addition to the existing coaching and self-efficacy literature, see figure 7.2. As Wasylyshyn, Gronsky and Haas (2006:76) state “in the absence of empirical study, it will be difficult for this application of psychology in business to maintain a place of respect and credibility among leadership
development resources”. Research suggests that there is a strong relationship between measures of perceived self-efficacy and performance (Bandura, 1986). If this is to be accepted, the application of self-efficacy to coaching and mentoring is significant. Bandura (1982) states that although self-efficacy is, on the whole, task specific, self-efficacy measurement of one task may be generalised, for example self-efficacy with respect to one task area can be generalised to another task which is interrelated (Gist, 1987). In line with this argument, the findings from this study may suggest that female entrepreneurs’ increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy can also impact on a wider variety of business skills, which have not been measured in the study.
Figure 7.1 Potential benefits and outcomes of coaching relationships (*ESE = Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Coaching requirements – Specific skills</th>
<th>Coaching requirements - Delivery</th>
<th>Conceptual framework</th>
<th>Implementing programme</th>
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<th>Future programmes (extra recommendations)</th>
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<td>Business planning</td>
<td>Female focused</td>
<td>Verbal persuasion</td>
<td>Contract re: duration and frequency of meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial planning skills - Advice regarding funding and finance</td>
<td>Shared experiences</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing skills - Marketing, e-marketing, sales and promotion</td>
<td>One –to-one tailored</td>
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<td>Self-discovery</td>
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</tbody>
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COACHING PROCESS

- VERBAL PERSUASION (behaviour learning)
- ENACTIVE MASTERY (learning as knowledge)
- VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE (learning as understanding and learning as social practice)
- REMOVING NEGATIVE ATTITUDES
The findings from this study also show how female entrepreneurs develop and learn in a coaching relationship. Swan’s (2006) discussion of the focus on emotions in what she calls “therapeutic cultures in management learning” (Swan et al, 435: 2009), suggests that an ‘increasing emotionalization’ in the workplace reproduces emotional capital within management development which is linked to white middle-class femininity. Furthermore, this emotional capital is reproduced in versions of learning and development, such as coaching, however it is only valued when enacted by certain types of white men. This is supported by the fact that the majority of coaching models and frameworks currently available assume that all coaching relationships are homogenous, therefore failing to differentiate between factors, such as gender, and how women experience coaching and the way women learn in coaching relationships. This study attempts to address this by providing a model of development based on coaching, which is particularly designed and experienced by women. The findings from this research add to the existing literature to show how coaching works and how coaches can help to develop self-efficacy and learning and acquire relevant knowledge. Therefore illustrating how women learn in coaching relationships and how they develop their self-efficacy, particularly through the four main processes advocated by Bandura (1986) and how these can be linked to the CIPD’s clusters of learning. The study attempts to address some of the intricacies of how coaching is developed in terms of individual relationships and how coaching is experienced by women, so as to understand how female entrepreneurs learn and develop within a coaching relationship which is solely inhabited by female entrepreneurs and from this understanding develop a picture of the space in which the coaching relationships are developed, see figure 7.2. To illustrate how Bandura’s processes are linked to the CIPD clusters each process will now be discussed.

7.5.1.1 Enactive mastery
Positive experiences and success can lead to increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy, whereas failures can undermine an individual's belief about themselves. Coaches were able to create an environment where coachees felt supported and one where they could gain clarity regarding their goals and objectives. This helped the coachees to build a portfolio of positive experiences which in turn has a positive impact on self-efficacy. This is reflected in the quantitative data which showed an increase in coachees’ ability to define long and short-term business goals and the fact that coaches reported feeling more in control of their business. The acquisition of skills through past experiences and achievements reinforces self-efficacy, therefore contributing to higher aspirations and future performance.

This clarification of goals enabled coachees to have a clearer understanding of what they wanted to achieve and how they wanted to achieve it. Coachees were
able to develop a bank of positive experiences as they achieved continued success. Positive experiences helped to develop self-efficacy regarding business tasks. The extent to which individuals can alter their efficacy through performance often depends on a variety of issues, such as, perceptions of their capability, perceived task difficulty, and the effort expended. The coaches developed their coachees by helping them to provide a clear picture of what they needed to aim for and how they would meet their desired goals. This development was achieved through what the CIPD (2002) refer to as ‘learning as knowledge’ and ‘learning as social practice’. Coachees were able to learn from their interactions with their coach and test out new ways of behaving and new methods of business operation.

‘Learning as knowledge’ describes people as active agents of their own learning. The individual will construct their own meanings from their own experience. Coachees were able to develop their business knowledge through their coaching conversations with their coaches and through actively trying out different actions. Within this cluster individuals are seen as active agents in their own learning and by learning through making constructions from their own personal experience. Therefore knowledge is constructed by the individual’s interaction within their environment. Without the social interaction which was part of the coaching relationship coachees would not have had access to the practical, real life experiences of their coach. Arguably the type of learning which took place would not have been possible from reading an entrepreneurial text book as coachees would not have had access to real life experiences. Equally, social interaction and actually trying out a new skill is seen as an inseparable part of ‘learning as social practice’. Social context is crucial for learning as individual thinking is often shaped by active participation in real situations and individuals are active agents in their own learning and can learn through making constructions from their own personal experience. The relationship was key to the coachees’ development. Coaching is based on a collaborative relationship between the coach and the coachee, whereby the coachee learns from the coaches’ individual experience. When using this approach the coach will often encourage the coachee to learn by doing, only by doing this can they ascertain the most appropriate forms of action (see figure 7.2).

As previously stated, enactive mastery refers to gaining confidence by actually doing the task, in this case, gaining confidence by actually running a business and completing certain tasks. This was developed through ‘learning as knowledge’ and ‘learning as social practice’ as coaches provided their coachees with valuable business knowledge and skills and provided an environment whereby they could test out new ways of working and receive regular feedback through the social engagement which was possible in the coaching relationship. Erikson (2003), states that the best way of learning is by observing, doing and interacting with
others. Coachees experienced some difficulty when setting short and long term goals, to help them to develop their business coaches encouraged setting goals and then observe outcomes. Once they had observed their outcomes they were encouraged to reflect on their progress. This reflection helped coachees to redefine their goals, if required, and this allowed them to experience positive events through the setting of realistic and well defined goals and objectives. In the interviews, coachees reported that their coach had helped them to clarify business goals. This is also supported by the increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy relating to designing short and long-term business goals. By formulating clear business goals, coachees felt better equipped and prepared to deal with the day to day running of their business. The clarification of business goals enabled coachees to learn how to define their business goals in the future and which resulted in positive experiences with regard to setting and achieving goals. Clarity regarding business goals appeared to help coachees use their time more effectively. This is perhaps reflected in the entrepreneurial self-efficacy results which showed an increase in coachees’ abilities to deal with work and home life balance. Arguably the learning which occurred in enabling coachees to gain increased clarity and definition of business goals will help female entrepreneurs to be more successful in their business development and will have a positive impact on the success of female owned businesses.

7.5.1.2 Verbal persuasion
Coaches also used verbal persuasion to develop their coachees. Coaches provided coachees with validation through positive statements regarding their ability by focusing on their achievements and capabilities. By using verbal persuasion, coaches strengthened their coachee’s belief by persuading them that they had the capabilities and skills to achieve a particular outcome. Those who are successful at building another individual’s entrepreneurial self-efficacy do this by raising an individual’s beliefs regarding their capabilities, specifically by designing situations for them to achieve success, rather than simply providing positive appraisals and feedback. Verbal persuasion can be related to the CIPD (2002) ‘learning as behaviour’. This cluster of theories is drawn from the empirical sciences and asserts that changes in behaviour are often the result of an individual’s response to events and the consequences that ensue, i.e. rewards or punishments. A stimulus is met with a response which in turn provides a consequence. When a particular stimulus-response pattern is reinforced (rewarded), the individual will become conditioned to respond each time that particular stimulus occurs. In the case of coaching, the coach is seen as a reinforcer providing positive feedback to their coachee. This positive feedback will help coachees learn that a particular form of action or behaviour has a positive result and therefore should be repeated (see figure 7.2).
Verbal persuasion is particularly useful when it is provided by an individual who is viewed as credible and an expert in the field. The more credible the coach, the more likely the coachee is to believe judgements of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Verbal persuasion can also help to stimulate the coachee to set higher goals than they would have done if they had set them without the aid of a coach, therefore it is centred on changing attitudes or learning new behaviours.

Coaches were not only required to be a sounding board, but they were also expected to provide positive feedback when objectives were achieved. Reinforcement is key to ‘learning as behaviour’ and the reinforcer can be anything that strengthens the desired response, in this case verbal praise. Coaches validated the actions of coachees which in turn increased coachees’ self-efficacy. One method which coaches employed when using verbal persuasion was to provide feedback on coachees’ achievements throughout the development process; receiving feedback often helped coachees to understand how much they had progressed.

7.5.1.3 Vicarious experience

Coaches also provided comparative information about their own attainment, what is often defined as vicarious experiences, whereby the coachees learned from the experience of their coach. In this case one can see people who are similar to themselves succeeding through perseverance and effort; this is further intensified when the individual can relate to the individual they are observing. This identification was achieved in this programme through the coaches and coachees sharing small business ownership experience. The findings from this study appear to be in line with social cognitive theory which suggests that individuals can develop through vicarious learning from observing others’ actions and behaviours (Bandura, 1977, 1986). It is important to state that this vicarious experience did not occur in ‘real’ time through the use of shadowing techniques. Shadowing may have been a useful technique to adopt in the coaching relationships; however it appeared that sharing previous experiences and outcomes through discussion was also beneficial to the coachees. Coachees learning through vicarious experience are dependent on a number of processes. Firstly, attention needs to be paid to the model that is being followed, the coachees needed to pay attention to the behaviour of their coach and the associated consequences. This was achieved through coaches sharing their experiences of achievement and their results. Secondly, there needs to be retention, where the ‘if-then’ rule (e.g. if this happens then that will follow) is stored in the coachees memory and rehearsed. This was possible on this programme as the relationships were ongoing through a six month period, therefore the coachees had an opportunity to rehearse the ‘if-then’
outcomes with their coaches. Thirdly, people need the ability to re-enact what they have learned and need to receive feedback from others. This is essentially what the coaching process is centred on, applying information to practice and then receiving feedback from a coach. Finally, there needs to be motivation, the coachees need to be motivated, this can be achieved through vicarious incentives, where the coachees see their coach receiving desired results. This could be achieved in the coaching relationships as coaches were female entrepreneurs who had achieved some success in the areas they were coaching, therefore the coachees could visualise the desired outcomes through the success achieved by their coach. Vicarious modelling was also achieved through sharing experiences as coaches could discuss their business experiences which helped coachees to access valuable knowledge. Vicarious experience can be related to the CIPD cluster ‘learning as understanding’ (CIPD, 2002) (see figure 7.2). ‘Learning as understanding’ relates to the coachee having an active involvement in their learning. The learner is viewed as a powerful information-processing machine with a task of internalising all the knowledge that they come into contact with. The coaches exposed their coachee to their personal experiences of entrepreneurship. The coachees could gain a deep understanding of the entrepreneurial process because the coach had direct experience of operating a business. Within this cluster of learning the learner is exposed to a variety of reference material to aid their development. This was achieved in the coaching relationships as the coachee was constantly exposed to the experiences of their coachee and as such they were able to gain valuable business understanding and enhance their understanding of the entrepreneurial process as the relationship progressed.

The mentoring literature suggests that mentees can learn from their mentors as role models in a number of ways and role modelling by a mentor should provide vicarious experience for the protégé/mentee (Day and Allen, 2004). This can be achieved through formal observation, job shadowing, feedback on career assignments, discussion of professional challenges and reviewing samples of the mentor’s work (Bell, 1996). Similarly, coaches can provide role modelling in these ways and can often facilitate learning by directly or indirectly role modelling appropriate behaviours and providing performance related feedback (Bandura, 1986). In this study, discussion appeared to be the technique which was most commonly used. Sharing experiences was seen as a crucial part of the coaching relationship and was possible on this programme as female entrepreneurs were coaching other female entrepreneurs. Sharing experiences may have resulted in coachees increased awareness of business support which was reported in the general entrepreneurial attitudes questionnaire.
When designing training, it is important to look at the gender of work groups as it can play an important role in the experience of individuals in group and team situations (Powell and Graves, 2003; Eagley and Karau, 1991). Social identification theories would suggest that individuals who share similar demographics to their team mates, particularly with respect to sex, ultimately have more positive experience than those who are not similar (Tsui et al., 1992). Accordingly, the similarity attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971; Byrne and Neuman, 1992) indicates that ‘sex similarity’ between an individual and his/her teammates will enhance the perceived similarity between that individual and the team (Powell and Graves, 2003). This perceived similarity will strengthen the interpersonal attraction between members and therefore facilitate positive, rather than negative, interpersonal interactions, therefore, in same sex groups individuals will have more positive experiences. These findings suggest that female entrepreneurs may have increased satisfaction of receiving development and training if they can actually identify with the people they are working with. Forming same sex groups for female entrepreneurs may help to alleviate some of the problems associated with sex effects and the negative possible outcomes of sex diversity, whilst at the same time increasing the positive associations of sex similarity effects. These findings provide support for the development of women only training programmes and should be a consideration for future business support initiatives.

7.5.1.4 Physiological arousal
Physiological arousal typically relates to reducing anxiety states and preventing individuals from having a physiological arousal to a variety of different situations. The coachees on this programme did not necessarily have anxiety related problems and the study did not attempt to measure anxiety states, however, verbal persuasion did appear to have an impact on coachees, particularly in relation to removing unhelpful and negative behaviours. Individuals often rely on their somatic and emotional states when judging their own capabilities (Bandura, 1977). For example, mood can affect an individual’s judgment of their entrepreneurial self-efficacy, a positive mood can have a positive impact on an individual’s entrepreneurial self-efficacy and vice versa. Coachees developed through self-discovery and removal of negative attitudes, while this is not specifically linked to one of the CIPD clusters of learning, the author has defined this as ‘learning about self’ (see figure7.2). An individual's psychological state can provide information about susceptibility to failure. Therefore a negative cycle of psychological arousal, negative thoughts and greater arousal can be set into motion. Coaches developed their coachees by removing negative beliefs or unhelpful behaviours regarding their abilities. For example, coaches helped their coachee to determine and define personal values and to highlight and examine what was important in terms of business and personal development. It is imperative that one’s personal values
and behaviours are supportive and appropriate for business development, rather than being in conflict.

Entrepreneurship educators often need to address their students' anxiety and fear surrounding entrepreneurship. Throughout the venture creation stage an individual is subject to a number of negative psychological states, such as anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt. The combination of these negative affective states can lead to lowered self-efficacy beliefs (Segal et al, 2007). Kanfer and Ackerman (1989) showed that helping individuals to attain their self-generated goals was achieved through assessing problems, setting specific goals in relation to problems, monitoring ways in which the environment facilitates or hinders goal attainment, and self-administering reinforcement for progress towards goals, or punishers for failing to work towards goals have all been seen as effective in coping with overcoming negative emotional reaction such as fear and anxiety with those attempting to overcome alcoholism and substance abuse. In this study the coaches attempted to remove some of the negative attitudes which the coachee held regarding their abilities and achievements and as such assessed the problems that the coachee faced and tried to reframe them in a positive way to remove some of the negative attitudes. Therefore, coachees were learning to reframe their experiences in a different way in order to enhance self-efficacy and to eradicate the fear of failure.

Literature suggests that perceived similarities between individuals and organisational values affect outcomes (Adkins and Ravlin, 1996; O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991), therefore one may conclude that this also applies to small business ownership. This is an important factor as aligning personal and business values and goals may have enabled participants in the study to feel that they were working towards objectives which were based on their own personal development; this is may have resulted in coachees increased motivation at T2.

The techniques which coaches adopted in order to help coachees to manage their emotional arousal related to their business development appeared to be through providing positive self-talk from validating business goals and objectives (Sullivan and Mahalik, 2000; Betz, 1992). Counselling literature suggests that counsellors need to teach their clients to replace any negative thoughts with task-focused ones (Sullivan and Mahalik, 2000; Betz, 1992). The one-to-one, ongoing coaching support with another female entrepreneur appeared to help increase entrepreneurial self-efficacy and to overcome negative perceptions (Evers et al., 2006). The literature has shown that particularly in the pre start-up and start-up phases of business, women's lack of confidence and their fear of failure can prevent them from viewing entrepreneurship as a viable career alternative.
(Harding, 2005). This fear of failure can prevent women from embarking on an entrepreneurial career path which can be detrimental for the entrepreneurial economy as it will result in fewer individuals starting up in business and reduced numbers and variety of businesses. The fact that this e-coaching programme appears to have helped participants to overcome some of the negative perceptions associated with entrepreneurship is clearly a positive finding and one which should be noted by those providing business support for entrepreneurs.

Emotional stability refers to an individual's tendency towards being calm, even-tempered and relaxed, and thus has an impact on their ability to face stressful situations without upset (Costa and McRae, 2006). Martocchio (1994:824) found “trainees’ acquisition of declarative knowledge (knowing “that”) was influenced by their levels of anxiety”, with higher levels of anxiety related to lower levels of knowledge acquisition. Similarly, Colquitt, LePine, and Noe’s (2000) meta-analysis found anxiety was negatively related to motivation to learn, post-training self-efficacy, and declarative knowledge and skill acquisition. Kanfer & Ackerman (1989) suggest that an individual’s anxiety will divert resources away from learning. The acquisition of declarative knowledge may not be the focus of executive coaching; however, this evidence suggest that low emotional stability will have a negative impact on coaching transfer as it will undermine both an individual’s motivation during coaching and their self-efficacy to transfer the developmental gains.

7.5.2 Summary - Social learning theory and coaching – A female entrepreneurs’ perspective

This study shows specific examples of how coaching can be used to develop self-efficacy and the learning that takes place within the coaching relationship and as such is an important addition to the extant social cognitive theory literature. The findings from this study provide empirical evidence to show how coaching can work and how female entrepreneurs learn to enhance their self-efficacy. This study provides simple methods which are mapped to Bandura’s (1986) processes and the CIPD (2002) learning clusters and provides information as to how these methods can be used in practice, not only in coaching but also within other development interventions. While the CIPD clusters have been linked with each of Bandura’s processes, it is evident from their description that there are links between each of the processes and each cluster. The links presented in this thesis have been drawn as they most closely reflect the thesis findings.

In line with other research, this study has shown that women want access to female focused support (Prowess, 2008). Despite this, there has been limited research examining the actual development of such support based on women’s
particular support needs, therefore it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions. This study adds to this debate by illustrating how and why female entrepreneurs gain many benefits from female focused support, and the importance of shared experience. This study also redresses the dominance of the gendered nature of organisations and entrepreneurship, showing how a coaching programme, based on female entrepreneurs’ needs, can enable female entrepreneurs to learn and develop. Unlike many business support development programmes, this programme was not developed on a masculine model of entrepreneurship and coaching. This study shows how female entrepreneurs were able to engage in a one-to-one relationship which enabled informal social relations and friendships to develop over time. Female entrepreneurs designed their individual relationships based on their needs and requirements. Therefore, challenging the masculine dominant discourse which is often apparent in the provision of coaching support and business development.

This study provides a different perspective to the typical experience, where emotional states may be derived from those experienced outside of the organisation, but are often left outside because of the prescriptive emotion management demand of the organisation (Lewis, 2008). This programme provides a different perspective by creating a place where women can create their own space of development which is particular to them and is not marginalised because of a male masculinised majority. Women in this study were not expected to adhere to a particular way of behaving, in contrast, they were able to learn and develop in a way which was suited to them, for example through positive reinforcement and shared experiences. Women were able to shape their coaching relationships in a way which was most helpful to them and as such they did not follow a prescriptive approach.
(learning as behaviour)
Positive acts receive positive reinforcement – coachee learns to repeat positive behaviour.
Coach acts as a reinforcer.
Reinforcing strengthens positive behaviours.
Validation of objectives and business ideas.
Learn new way of behaving and thinking.

(learning as knowledge and social practice)
Clarifying goals and objectives and test out new ideas.
Individuals active agents in learning, learning not separated from personal action.
Individuals construct own meanings from experience.
Coachees develop business knowledge through coaching conversations and actively trying out different actions.
Social context is crucial for learning.

(learning as understanding)
A process of understanding as coachee exposed to reference material, i.e. exposed to others coaches’ experiences of entrepreneurship.
Coachees learn through accessing valuable knowledge and understanding others experiences.
Coachee active involvement in their learning/information-processing and internalising knowledge.
Coachees exposed to coaches personal experiences of entrepreneurship - gain a deep understanding of the entrepreneurial process

(learning about self)
Self discovery and removal of negative attitudes.
Learning about self can help to remove negative beliefs or unhelpful behaviours.
Defining personal values/highlighting what was important in terms of business and personal development.
Coachees’ personal values and behaviours supportive and appropriate for business development, not in conflict.

Sources taken from (Bandura, 1986 & CIPD, 2002)
7.6 Evaluations and recommendations for the development of future e-coaching programmes

This section will highlight the key recommendations for future e-coaching programme arising from the study, specifically examining the experience of the online element of the programme.

7.6.1 Coachee evaluations

Participants believed that a coach did not need direct experience of a coachee’s specific industry, but they did need experience of setting up their own business and business development issues. This experience was seen as important because it would enable the coach to fully empathise with the coachee and share their experiences. Respondents felt that it was the coaching skills and the understanding of how it felt to be a woman in business that were important. Some coachees wanted their coach to have business experience, whereas other coachees wanted a coach who specialised in improving interpersonal skills, for example, confidence building. This is an important discussion point as it highlights the diversity of requirements of women in terms of support and guidance and once again emphasises the fact that female entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group. The differences in requirements of coaching support highlight the importance of receiving one-to-one support and the impact of a personalised, individual relationship. It would be difficult to offer this level of support in a generalised group setting. This finding is supported by the coaching literature which states that coaching does not need to be performed on the basis that the coach has direct experience of their client’s formal occupational role (Jarvis, 2004). However, empathy with the coachee’s position is an important characteristic and one stressed by respondents in this study. The experience and expertise which coachees commented on as important characteristics of their coach highlight the need for female focused support, so that coachees can be matched with coaches who have some insight into the experience of female entrepreneurship.

Coaches were asked at time point one to state what support they expected to receive from their coach in a range of areas and at time point two they were then asked to state whether their coach had helped them to develop in these areas. Interestingly, the responses to these questions showed a range of statistical significance, particularly in the areas of accessing funding (p<0.0004), taking calculated risks (p<0.002), making decisions under risk and uncertainty (p<0.002), networking (p<0.020), financial planning (p<0.029), balancing work and home life (p<0.036), and a trend relating to strategic planning (p<0.079). Coachees were more likely to consider that their coaches would provide them with the ability to perform a number of tasks identified in the coach evaluation questionnaire at time point one, but less likely to consider that their coach had provided these functions.
at time point two. This may suggest that coachees had unrealistic expectations at time point one. The fact that coachees felt that their entrepreneurial self-efficacy had increased in a number of areas, but were less likely to state that their coach had provided them with the skills to achieve a range of tasks at time point two, may indicate that the coachees had increased confidence and therefore attributed their development to their own successes rather than attributing their development to their coach’s input. In addition, it is important to note that the coachees did not rate formal business support as more effective in developing their ability in key areas across the two time points. Therefore their increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy does not appear to be because of other support accessed over the period of the programme. Furthermore, the data from the overall programme evaluation questionnaire showed that the majority of coachees felt that they had benefited from the programme; over two thirds felt that the programme had helped them to develop professionally and over three quarters felt that the programme had helped them to develop personally. In addition, the majority (91 per cent) of coachees felt satisfied with the support they had received from their coach. There is a paucity of research examining coachees’ expectations pre and post programme, therefore this is an interesting finding which adds to the existing literature. As stated, coachees inclinations to attribute their success to their own abilities, rather than some external influence, may provide further support for the increase in internal locus of control found in the general entrepreneurial attitudes questionnaire. Examining coaches views pre and post programme have helped to understand coachees’ perceptions and provides some interesting findings for the development of future programmes.

7.6.2 Coaches’ experiences of the programme
The main objective of the programme was to provide development for coachees, however the results from the qualitative and quantitative data collected at time point two show that the coaching relationships also had a positive impact on the coaches’ development. These results are expected considering that coaching is a reciprocal relationship, whereby the coach and the coachee need to give and receive for the relationship to be effective (Hardingham et al., 2004). Whist these findings were predicted, they are an important addition to the literature, as there appears to be limited research examining the benefits of coaching for the coach.

Coaches felt that they had built up a friendship and important contact and felt valued by their coachee. This enabled the coaching pairs to develop strong foundations for their relationship and also for future partnerships. The majority of coaching pairs built up a relationship throughout the programme and many of the coaching pairs became good friends as a result of the programme. Furthermore, these friendships may enable women to tap into additional networks. This
highlights the reciprocal relationship which occurs in coaching and how coaches can also develop and benefit from the relationship. Arguably this relationship would have been difficult to develop if a coach had responsibility for a number of coachees as they would have received less time to engage with their coachees throughout the programme. This refers back to the findings in the needs analysis and the importance of one-to-one coaching relationship that was tailored to individual needs. It appears that coaching relationships can also help coaches to develop their networking potential. Considering the importance of networking and building social capital this is an important finding which should be considered when designing future work in this area.

Coaches also made reference to the importance of coachees validating their expertise. As previously stated, coaching is a reciprocal relationship and as such both the coach and the coachee need to give and receive for the relationship to be successful (Hardingham et al., 2004). The giving and receiving of needs results in the coach and the coachee feeling ‘wanted’ and in turn places more value on the relationship. The programme helped to increase coaches’ confidence in their own abilities, both in terms of coaching skills and practice and also in terms their business ownership experience. This finding was also supported by the results from the evaluation questionnaire which found that approximately two thirds of coaches felt that the programme had helped them to develop professional and personally. Therefore, this e-coaching programme had a double benefit as it not only developed the coachees but also appeared to have a positive impact on the coaches’ development. A key element of coaching relationships is development and learning and it was evident from the findings that not only did coachees develop and learn throughout the coaching relationship, but coaches also found that they increased their learning, particularly when they were challenged by their coachee. It is encouraging that coaches enhanced their coaching techniques and found the coaching relationships a challenge; as one may conclude that this development will benefit their coaching practice in the future (Parsloe, 1999).

The findings from this study regarding the development experienced by coaches are in line with enhancement theory, which suggests that women appear to benefit just as much from giving as receiving support, particularly in relationships which are characterised by a willingness to help and support a close person (Vaananen, Buunk, Kivimaki, Pentti and Vahtera, 2005). Providers of social support can gain a sense of being a worthwhile and valuable person, as the act of supporting (especially for women) is respected and esteemed (Bateson, 1998). Thus, in long-term intimate contacts there is a beneficial impact for the giver and the receiver of social support, contributing to the personal and social resources of both. Coaching appears to have the double benefit of providing affirmation for both coaches and
coachees, thereby impacting positively on the personal and business outcomes of all of the female entrepreneurs involved in this study. This double benefit is another advantage afforded by the coaching relationship. As coaching is a reciprocal relationship, coaches and coachees will both benefit from the impact of the coaching relationship. This lends further weight to the importance of female focused coaching relationships for female entrepreneurs.

7.6.3 Experience of the online element

The TEC programme was aimed at providing coaching relationships which were essentially conducted online, supplemented by telephone and face-to-face coaching sessions. On average, coaches and coachees met online once a fortnight, for one and a half hours and approximately two thirds of coaching pairs conducted over sixty per cent of their coaching relationship online. Participants highlighted the importance of a blended approach in the delivery of coaching, this is a finding supported by the current literature which suggests that e-mentoring should not replace face-to-face mentoring, but should provide opportunities that may not otherwise be feasible (Boyle Single and Single, 2005). Proponents of the mixed method approach believe that communication methods such as email are ‘lean’, therefore participants do not give and receive the depth of communication from individuals they are interacting with, compared to communicating face-to-face (Simon and Peppas, 2004), which would suggest the need for some face-to-face sessions.

Participants who had previous experience of using online methods of communicating found that they experienced fewer problems using the spark software and communicating online. This is supported by current literature which shows as users gain increased experience of communicating by email, they will develop an understanding of the challenges and opportunities which are provided by online methods of communicating (Clark and Brennan, 1991). Research has found that internet experience, for example, with discussion groups, newsgroups etc., can be a significant predictor of the ability of an individual to form online relationships in the future (Carlson and Zmud, 1999; Parks and Roberts, 1998). Ensher, Heun and Blanchard (2003) assert that people who have both online relationship experience (Carlson & Zmud, 1999) and face-to-face mentoring experience (Ragins and Scandura, 1999) will be increasingly likely to combine the two and as a result commence an online mentoring relationship. Considering the similarities between coaching and mentoring, one may suggest that this motivation would be the same for online coaching. These findings may suggest that future programmes need to determine participants’ experience of using online methods of communication. This will help to understand what level of support participants will need before embarking on e- methods of delivery.
In terms of advantages, coaches and coachees felt that the programme, enabled participants to conduct their coaching relationship at any time of the day, reduced travelling time and cost, provided time to think and reflect on formulating and answering questions, provided evidence of the conversation and documentation and was less time consuming when compared with face-to-face meetings, and provided instant support and guidance. In terms of disadvantages, participants felt that there was a lack of face-to-face contact which resulted in coaches and coachees being unable to read non-verbal body language, sometimes inhibiting the flow of information between pairs. In addition, coachees were able to edit their responses before sending them to their coach. Some coaches felt that this was unhelpful as an immediate response may have been more informative. Another benefit of the online software was that it provided coaches and coachees with an opportunity to reflect on what was being discussed in the coaching relationship and provided an opportunity for coachees and coaches to formulate and respond to questions (Hunt, 2005; Evans and Volery, 2001). Similar to previous studies, this study found that coachees used the instant messaging software as a way of recording what was said in coaching meetings so that they could refer back to the information. This is difficult to do in a face-to-face or telephone session, therefore this was seen as a benefit of online coaching (Hunt, 2005).

Whilst there are many benefits of online communication for female entrepreneurs, there are also considerations for future programmes. For example, the nature of participants’ businesses may not have required them to have constant use of a computer which therefore may have reduced their computer and technical abilities. Evidence to support this can be found in the analysis which showed that those who had previous experience of instant messaging had a more favourable view of the online element of the programme. Therefore in future programmes it may be useful to provide taster sessions for participants at the start of the programme. This could help to highlight general problems with using the software and provide a safe environment whereby participants can practice using and communicating via instant messaging service and help to build confidence in using this method of communication. The limitations and problems which occurred in this study are reflected in the online mentoring literature, which suggest that the key challenges for e-mentoring are: the likelihood of miscommunication, slower development of relationship online than in face-to-face, requires competency in written communication and technical skills, and computer malfunctions (Ensher et al., 2003). The literature also suggests that issues of privacy and confidentiality can be a challenge in e-mentoring (Ensher et al., 2003). The issue of confidentiality was not an issue raised in this study, however at the opening events and in initial informal conversations, the author attempted to assure participants that their
conversations would be strictly confidential and only the author and the coaching pairs would have access to individual conversations.

On the whole, the findings from this study support the current coaching, mentoring and online communication literature. This study adds to the extant literature by providing a picture of coaching in relation to female entrepreneurs and their specific perspective of coaching and e-coaching relationships. This study also provides evidence to suggest that rather than online methods of communication simply being used to supplement face-to-face and telephone sessions, they can be used effectively to conduct a substantial amount of interaction in coaching relationships and have a positive outcome.

The interview data revealed that problems with the online method of delivery mainly occurred due to participants feeling uncomfortable using online methods of communications, or because of technical issues that they faced when downloading or using the spark software. This is clearly an area which needs to be addressed if future online programmes are to be developed. The online aspects of many programmes have shown to be a problem in terms of low retention and completion rates (Davy, 1998). Studies have also found that employees in organisational e-mentoring programmes often miss the social interaction that is typically provided by a classroom environment and/or they do not feel comfortable with using a computer. To overcome this issue programmes should advocate the more widespread use of technology such as video conferencing and increased access to greater bandwidth, as these factors may have a positive impact for online programmes. These improvements may enable individuals to watch and learn from their online coaches and mentors, and this could help to overcome some of the current limitations with online communication (Ensher et al., 2003).

While it appears that online coaching can provide numerous benefits, it is important to consider some of the drawbacks of communicating online. For example, technology may create further divisions for women. Not all women will have access to technology and knowledge of software and programmes. Women may feel more isolated in some instances, particularly those who work from home. Research has also suggested that a solely electronically-based communication process may hamper personal interaction in business networks as there may be misunderstanding. If network participants do not use face-to-face meetings to settle any misunderstandings, this may lead to long lasting conflicts (Armstrong and Cole, 2002; Andres, 2002). Modern IT can not substitute for this kind of personal interaction in the context of one-to-one relationships, e.g. coaching programmes, therefore a blended approach to support is considered the most effective method of providing a coaching programme (Olson and Olson 2000).
Whilst this study has shown that there are advantages and disadvantages of communicating online, the main aim of the study was not to compare face-to-face and online coaching, but to explore the impact of a coaching relationship on female entrepreneurs’ perceptions and their experiences of participating in the programme and online communication within their individual coaching relationships.

7.6.4 Recommendations for future programmes

One of the research objectives of this study was to provide recommendations from the monitoring and evaluation of an e-coaching programme for the development of future e-coaching programmes. This was seen as an important element of the study, particularly as there appears to be a dearth of research evaluating coaching programmes. Much of the literature is provided by consultants’ experiences of coaching, therefore the design and the content of programmes and the benefits and impacts of coaching programmes on coaches and coachees are often based on personal experience, rather than grounded in empirical research (Wasylyshyn et al. 2006). Online coaching remains an under-researched field and this study has provided some valuable insights into the development and management of an e-coaching programme. Figure 7.1 illustrates a model which has been developed in line with the findings from this study and recommendations for future programmes. The model shows the various ways in which coaching has the potential to develop female entrepreneurs, what is required from a coaching programme and the various techniques which can be employed by a coach to develop their coachee and finally the expected coaching outcomes based on the findings from this study. The coaching potential and coaching outcomes have been split between business and personal potential; however it is evident that many of the issues highlighted can have an impact on both business and personal development.

From the analysis of the data, there were a number of key factors which led to the success of this programme, these are as follows: tailored support, one-to-one, long-term, personal and professional development, female focused (female coach and female coachee), shared experience, coaches with expertise and experience and developing a supportive but challenging relationship and a blended approach to coaching (including online, face-to-face and telephone). This study found that coaches and coachees appeared to want more face-to-face contact built into the programme and more organised events, similar to the initial meeting day and closing event. Face-to-face meetings throughout the programme may have helped to stimulate online discussion between participants. The majority of coaching pairs also used telephone or face-to-face sessions, therefore this would suggest that a blended approach is more suitable for female entrepreneurs. Action learning sets,
either face-to-face or online, may have also helped to develop relationships and this may have helped to stimulate contact on the discussion forums.

In addition, IT support needs to be provided for each individual at the start of the programme. An overview of the TEC programme website and how to use the spark software was provided at the welcome event, however not all participants were able to attend the networking events which were organised. IT support was on hand for all participants; however it required participants to contact the IT helpline. It may have been more useful for the IT team to contact each individual at the start of the programme. Workshops were also offered to a number of participants, whereby they could attend a morning or afternoon at the University and work through the website and software. On reflection, it may have been useful to make this a formal part of the programme, rather than something which was offered on an ad hoc basis.

A facilitated workshop at the beginning of the programme, perhaps as part of the welcome event, to provide participants with examples of how they could use the discussion forms, i.e. discussion threads etc, may have been useful. Providing such time may have enabled participants to start networking face-to-face which then may have continued online. Furthermore, it may have been useful to run a facilitated workshop based on methods for building rapport online and how to communicate more effectively using online methods. Organising coaches and coachees into a number of small work groups may have also been an effective way of increasing networking and stimulating discussion on the website.

7.6.5 Application to practice
The findings from this study suggest that social cognitive theory can be a foundation for the development of coaching relationships. The study explicitly illustrates how coaching is an effective development intervention which can have a positive impact on learning and as such can develop entrepreneurial self-efficacy and positive general entrepreneurial attitudes. Of the various thoughts which can impact on human functioning and probably the most important part of social cognitive theory, is self-efficacy. An individual's self-efficacy beliefs will determine how they think, feel, behave and motivate themselves. A strong sense of self-efficacy can have a positive effect on an individual's level of accomplishment and personal well being. Furthermore, individuals who have strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to approach difficult tasks in a positive way and to recover more quickly from set backs and failures (Bandura, 1997; Gist and Mitchell, 1992; Pajares, 1997). Empirical evidence has suggested that women are more likely to have lower expectations for success when compared with men in a range of occupations (Eccles, 1994; Wilson et al., 2007) and women may be more strongly
influenced than men in terms of perceived entrepreneurial skill deficiencies (Bandura et al., 2001). The literature suggests that an individual’s perception of having the necessary skills to succeed is shown to be a dominant variable and the effect is independent of other contextual variables (Minniti, Arenius and Langowitz, 2005). Therefore, the increase in self-efficacy experienced by coachees on this programme illustrate a way in which female entrepreneurs can overcome these perceived skill deficiencies. An e-coaching programme provided by women for women which is tailored to the individual, supports female entrepreneurs through the difficult stages of pre start-up and start-up phases of business development, and as such is an important finding for policy makers and business support providers to consider when designing business support for female entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship may not be an effective career path for all women, however it is imperative that when women do embark on this path they have support which is tailored to their needs either to help them to develop a business in a way that is appropriate for them, or to develop their career in a different direction.

The strong relationship between measures of perceived self-efficacy and performance (Bandura, 1982, 1986), suggest that coaching has an important part to play in the development of entrepreneurs. The findings from this study not only add to the coaching, self-efficacy and female entrepreneurship literature, they also provide important findings for the future development of business support provision, particularly for female entrepreneurs. Women can make an important contribution to the economy particularly in relation to small business ownership. Countries which actively promote women entering into business ownership will ultimately share the gains in terms of wider issues, i.e. improving education and health and investing in female entrepreneurs appears to be a way in which countries can increase their economic growth (Harding, 2007). Considering the current economic climate, it is now becoming increasingly important for women to be supported in small business ownership. However, if this support is going to make a difference, it needs to be designed and developed on the basis of women’s needs rather than simply conforming to traditional business support models. The findings from this study clearly show that one-to-one, tailored, long-term support based on a coaching model, with the option of delivering coaching via online methods, is a model which has the potential to have a positive impact on female entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes. The positive impact of this programme, particularly on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, suggests that coaching relationships have the ability to develop female entrepreneurship and, as a result, have a positive impact on the success of small business ownership in general. Increasing female entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy is fundamental, particularly as women often feel less capable than men with regard to setting up their own business and are therefore less likely to
consider business ownership as a viable option (Prowess, 2005). This study is
centred on female entrepreneurs, as it is based on their experiences, provided for
them, delivered by them, evaluated by them and has provided key findings which
can be applied in practice for the development of female entrepreneurs in the
future.

Approximately 60 per cent of participants used the online method of coaching for
60 per cent of their coaching. When considering that participants experienced an
increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy, this would suggest that despite some
problems experienced with the online method of communicating participants were
still able to use this effectively. By having support online via instant messaging
service, women can access support in a non threatening way and can maintain a
relationship which is solely conducted online if that is what they wish. This may be
of particular use to women who are unable to access support outside the home, for
example, some women from certain ethnic groups may be prohibited from
accessing support where they may come into contact with men, and therefore
accessing support from home may be a way of overcoming such problems. Also,
women who have physical disabilities may have difficulty accessing support
outside the home, therefore online support would help to address such access
issues. Despite the obvious benefits which online support provides, policy makers
and academics must also be reminded of the issue of isolation that many women
face when starting up their own business, therefore support programmes need to
be tailored to women’s needs at given times.

This study adds to the literature on self-efficacy, coaching and learning by
providing empirical evidence to show that coaching interventions, including the use
of online methods, can have a positive impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy,
general entrepreneurial attitudes and increased internality of locus of control.
These findings can be substantiated by the fact that a control group did not show
significant increase in all of these areas and in many areas showed a decrease.
This study shows how self-efficacy can be developed through learning in coaching
relationships and provides a model of coaching which has been specifically
developed by female entrepreneurs.

7.7 Limitations of the study
There are four areas of this study which require further consideration: (1) attrition
among study participants (2) the sample size of coachees, coaches and the control
group and data collection (3) self-report data (4) contextual factors (5) CIPD
learning clusters not based on empirical evidence.
7.7.1 Attrition rate

Attrition is a common problem in longitudinal research (Ruspini, 2002) and was also experienced in this study. A number of coachees (n=8) withdrew before the participants fully commenced their coaching relationship and a further (n=3) withdrew at a later stage of the six month coaching relationships, for a variety of personal issues. The participants involved in this research were based across the North West of England, because of the disparate nature of participants and their diverse locations, the author faced problems maintaining contact with all participants, which may have impacted on the attrition rate. Visser (1982) states that when conducting longitudinal psychological studies, a 30 to 50 per cent drop out rate is typical to expect. This study had a 10 per cent attrition rate for coachees who had commenced their coaching relationship, and 42 per cent for the control group.

Despite these problems, when considering similar programmes providing and evaluating e-mentoring, this study actually achieved a good response rate and also unlike other programmes used a control group. At time point two this study had a response rate of 80 per cent for coachees and 58 per cent for the control group. These response rates are an improvement on those reported by Megginson et al. (2003) which was 47 per cent and Stokes et al. (2003) which was 50 per cent for mentees and 29 per cent for mentors.

In future programmes it may be useful to hold continuous workshops, action learning sets or other forms of networking groups. Such contacts may help participants feel fully engaged with the programme from start to finish, therefore aiding response rates. Building more time into welcome and celebration events for participants to complete questionnaires and physically hand them back to the author may have also proved to be an effective solution. A further consideration for improving the response rate may be to include the completion of questionnaires as a part of the evaluation procedure within the individual coaching relationships.

7.7.2 Sample size

Because of the small sample size, a degree of caution should be taken in generalising these findings to female entrepreneurs in general. Also, one should consider the problem of ‘Type II’ error which can occur when reporting data from small samples (i.e. failing to observe a difference when in truth there is one). To attempt to overcome this problem, data was shown at below ten per cent (p<0.10), where appropriate, this was presented to show trends rather than statistical significance (Field, 2005; Pallant, 2005). Despite the small sample, a number of statistically significant findings amongst the coachees and the control group were noted, therefore adding weight to these findings. Similar studies which have taken
a longitudinal approach to data collection have all worked with relatively small samples (Megginson et al., 2003; Stokes et al., 2003).

In addition to the restricted sample size, it may have been useful to collect more qualitative data at T2 to compensate for the response rate. However, the author did conduct interviews with eighteen participants at T2. Interviews at T2 were only required with the participants who had experienced the coaching relationships, so as to provide some context to the data collected on the impact of the coaching relationship. It may be useful in future studies to collect qualitative data from the control group; this is an area which requires further investigation in future studies.

7.7.3 Self-report data
Self-report data was collected in this study and as such there may be problems with reliability. Cook and Campbell (1979) suggest that subjects tend to report what they believe the researcher expects to see, or that they report what reflects positively on their own abilities, knowledge, beliefs, or opinions. The Hawthorne Effect (May, 1999) needs to be considered in this study as it is possible that coaches and coachees rated their experiences and the impact of the programme more positively, as they wanted to express their enthusiasm and positive attitude regarding coaching and the programme. Therefore the impact of the programme, reported by coaches and coachees, may not have been due to the coaching relationship itself but may have been due to their participation in the coaching programme, which made them feel important and therefore lead them to report positive experiences. The author attempted to provide control for the Hawthorne Effect by conducting a longitudinal study (collecting data at two time points) and including a control group of female entrepreneurs. However, one must consider that the members of the control group may have highlighted negative outcomes as they wanted to be chosen for future coaching programmes. The possibility of the Hawthorne Effect is likely to be small and steps were taken to prevent this well known distortion of results. It is however, worth consideration.

The study also used a mixed method approach to data collection, which adds to the credibility of the findings. In order to overcome the issues of self-report, a 360 degree feedback may have been useful to examine data from female entrepreneurs’ peers and subordinates; however, this may have been difficult because many of the participants were sole traders. Despite this difficulty, this is something that should be noted for future programmes as all the data collected in this study was based on participants’ own reflections of their development. A 360 degree approach to evaluation would have been particularly useful for those participants who had employees and/or those with business partners.
In addition, there may have been a problem with recall, as subjects may not be able to accurately recall past events or behaviours.

7.7.4 Contextual factors
This study was constrained to the North West of England (coachees needed to be based in the North West) because of the nature of European Social Funding. It would have been interesting to explore similarities and/or differences across different geographical regions in terms of the impact of coaching relationships. As studies have indicated, there are differences regarding the levels of business ownership across different geographical areas. There are also differences regarding the level of formal business support available in each region. Therefore, it would have been useful to examine the e-coaching relationships in context to different geographical areas. Furthermore, it may have been useful to examine the experiences of rural and urban participants, particularly in relation to the online element, to highlight whether there were any similarities or differences. However, this was a pilot study and as such was aiming to examine key themes for this group of individuals. Future studies now need to be considered in different geographical locations.

7.7.5 CIPD learning clusters
The CIPD (2002) learning clusters are not based on an empirically tested model of learning; however they are based on well established learning theories. The learning clusters have been used in the conceptual framework in this thesis to illuminate Bandura’s processes. The learning clusters help to understand the self-efficacy processes from a learning perspective and add meaning to the findings published in this thesis.

7.8 Recommendations for Future Research
The findings from this study have provided a wealth of data and information regarding the impact of a tailored e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs, compared to a control group. Findings suggest that further research is required to provide a more in-depth picture of the experiences of coachees and coaches, particularly in comparison to the control group, these include 1) longitudinal research, 2) online conversations, 3) matching, 4) 306 degree approach, 5) IT, 6) dysfunctional relationships.

7.8.1 More longitudinal research
This study was restricted to examining the impact of a tailored e-coaching programme on female entrepreneurs (compared to a control group) and their coaches over a period of six months. The results from the qualitative interviews and quantitative data analysis performed on responses from the coachees, control
group and coaches revealed a wealth of interesting data over the six month coaching relationship. Considering time scales and business success, i.e. that approximately 20 per cent of businesses fail within the first year, it may have been useful to conduct the study over a longer period of time (Independent, 2006). Future research could explore changes over time, for example twelve months, to provide more in-depth information on the longer term implications of coaching relationships. This may also help to determine the impact of coaching relationships at individual time points. Specific changes at specific times were difficult to show in this study as the coaching relationships only lasted six months, and therefore it would have been problematic to include more data collection time points within this period. Collecting data over a longer period of time may provide an opportunity to examine specific changes and help to illuminate the impact of the coaching relationship across a period of time. This may also help to identify the optimum length of a coaching relationship.

7.8.2 Online conversations

Textual analysis of online conversations would be an effective way to explore what is actually occurring in the individual relationships and would add context to the data. This method of data collection was considered for this study; however problems with the online software, that could not be rectified, resulted in only a minimum of data being collected in this way. Analysing online conversations would help to uncover exactly what is being discussed in individual relationships and would provide an opportunity to highlight key discussion themes, as was achieved in Lewis’ work (2006) where online exchanges on a discussion forum were used to examine what was being discussed between groups of female entrepreneurs. Analysing online conversations over time would also highlight if and when there are changes or trends occurring between the coaches and coachees over the six month coaching relationship. This method of collecting and analysing data would help to overcome any problems associated with self-report data and would help to examine if there were any contradictions between what was being reported in the questionnaires and interviews and what was being discussed online.

Analysis of online discussion may also help to examine specific elements of the coaching relationship to ascertain the key components which are particularly beneficial to coachees. For example, the interview data at time point two showed how the coaches had developed their coachees and how this fits with Bandura’s (1986) four key self-efficacy processes. In future research, it may be useful to explore these four processes of enhancing entrepreneurial self-efficacy, e.g. enactive mastery, in more depth. This may help to highlight variations between the four areas, for example, considering if coaches were more inclined to implement one particular process. Also, it may help to show at what stage of the coaching
process the coaches implemented these development processes. For example, vicarious experience might be a development tool which is conducted at a later stage in the coaching relationship. This study has shown an increase in entrepreneurial self-efficacy and highlighted the main themes as to how this was achieved in the coaching relationships, however, these findings must be seen as an initial examination of this area and future studies are required to explore the impact of programmes on entrepreneurial self-efficacy in more depth.

7.8.3 Matching

Hand matching was preferred to using matching software as the author felt they had engaged with a number of the participants which helped to generate positive matches. The registration forms which coaches and coachees had completed provided a wealth of data which was used for matching and would have been difficult to summarise and input into matching software. The author also conducted telephone conversations with a number of participants, which again aided the matching process. In addition, it was often necessary to read application forms as a whole document rather than taking specific questions on an individual basis. Reading the answers in context in the application form helped to provide a clearer picture of what coachees wanted from their coaching relationships. For example, what may have been described as a business marketing problem was actually rooted in issues regarding confidence in networking and self-promotion. Self-selecting coaches may have increased commitment to the programme, however, this method of matching can also be problematic particularly if more than one coachee chooses the same coach. In such circumstances, a process of matching needs to be defined before matching can take place. In addition, it may have been useful to match coaches and coachees dependent on learning styles and preferences, this may be an interesting area for future studies.

7.8.4 360 degree approach

In response to one of the limitations of this study, that self-report data only shows participants’ views regarding development, it may have been useful to conduct a 360 degree approach to data collection. Including feedback from other individuals may provide a more in-depth understanding of the impact of coaching relationships and may help to gain a more detailed picture of participants’ development. It may also increase validity as it would provide different perspectives and therefore not solely rely on self-report data. It is important to note that a 360 degree approach may be problematic for studies examining female entrepreneurs as participants may not have work colleagues who they interact with on a daily basis and may not have any employees.
This study aimed to examine the impact of a coaching relationship on female entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy in a range of development areas, therefore it was appropriate to use an entrepreneurial self-efficacy measurement tool. Considering the absence of empirical research examining development interventions such as coaching, and business ownership, it may be useful for future studies to examine other measurements, for example, turnover, market share, and number of employees.

7.8.5 Information Technology
Due to the lack of empirical research examining online coaching, a comparison study to compare different methods of online communication in coaching relationships may have been useful. This study only focused on spark software which is similar to MSN instant messaging, whereby coaches and coachees communicate instantly online. It may have been interesting to study different forms of synchronous and asynchronous (instant and non-instant) e-coaching, as this is an area which requires further exploration (Smith-Jentsch et al., 2008). In addition, it may have been useful to study cohorts of female entrepreneurs using different methods of communication for their coaching relationships, i.e. face-to-face, telephone and online, so as to establish the optimum mix of each of these methods of communicating.

7.8.6 Dysfunctional relationships
Examining the impact of a dysfunctional relationship on the coach and the coachee would have added to the existing research and would have provided empirical research in an area which is currently lacking. Examining dysfunctional relationships may have uncovered interesting information as to how, why and when coaching relationships can become dysfunctional. However, this would have been difficult to examine as it is likely that the participants who were not satisfied with the relationships were those who did not complete the final evaluation at T2. Whilst an attempt was made to contact participants, this did not prove to be successful. Overwhelmingly, the coaching literature focuses on ‘successful’ coaching relationships, therefore little is known about unsuccessful coaching relationships and the negative impact they can have on the individuals involved. Future research should aim to develop an evaluation process which has the ability to examine dysfunctional relationships.

7.9 Summary
In summary, this longitudinal study aimed to explore the potential of an e-coaching programme and also examine the impact of an e-coaching programme on the entrepreneurial self-efficacy, general entrepreneurial attitudes and locus of control of a group of coachees, compared to a control group. The study also aimed to
explore participants’ perceptions and experiences of taking part in the programme. The study produced an array of findings. For example, in relation to the needs analysis stage, the study found that respondents clearly stated that they wanted focused, tailored, one-to-one support which was female focused and respondents reported a number of potential benefits to the online method of delivery.

When examining the impact of the e-coaching programme, findings showed that the coaching relationships had a positive impact on coachees’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy, general entrepreneurial attitudes and locus of control, therefore suggesting that coaching is a development intervention which can be used to enhance self-efficacy beliefs of female entrepreneurs. The control group did not experience any increase or decrease in entrepreneurial self-efficacy; and experienced a decrease in general entrepreneurial attitudes.

The coaches used a variety of techniques which can be linked to Bandura's (1986) processes of enhancing self-efficacy, such as enactive mastery and verbal persuasion.

The online element of the programme received a mixed response with participants reporting advantages, e.g. ease of access, and method of recording and disadvantages e.g. misinterpretation because of non verbal communication. Evaluation of the programme showed that, on the whole, coaches and coachees positively evaluated the programme, benefiting from the relationships both professionally and personally. In general, participants were satisfied with their relationships and 60 per cent of participants felt that six months was a suitable duration for the coaching relationships. Over 60 per cent of coaching pairs conducted more than 60 per cent of their coaching relationships online. This study has shown that online methods of communicating can be used effectively in coaching relationships, however future programmes need to be designed considering the limitations of e-methods, for example, lack of non verbal communication, therefore a blended approach may be more suitable for participants. Despite this, the findings have shown that female entrepreneurs who conducted their coaching online for over half of their coaching contact still achieved increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes.

A number of recommendations were raised, particularly from the qualitative data collected at time point two and these have been highlighted alongside issues which need to be considered for future programmes. The author has also highlighted the main limitations to be attrition rate and self-report data and has illustrated a number of proposed areas for future research based on this study.
8.1 Introduction
This longitudinal study examined the potential and the impact of a Tailored E-Coaching (TEC) programme on the development of female entrepreneurs over a six month period, compared to a control group. The study utilised a longitudinal, mixed method approach, whereby qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analysed. A mixed method approach to this study was chosen as the mix of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection provide a fuller perspective of social change in longitudinal studies (Mingione, 1999; Ruspini, 2002), therefore the results and findings from this study may not have been uncovered if the author had been restricted to one methodology (i.e. qualitative or quantitative data alone) and at one time point.

8.2 The future for female entrepreneurship, learning, self-efficacy, and e-coaching
The study produced an array of findings. The needs analysis, stage one, examined the potential of an e-coaching programme and found that women clearly wanted tailored, one-to-one support which was female focused. Online methods of delivery were seen to provide convenience and ease of use; however limitations such as misinterpretation of the written word were highlighted as potential problems.

The literature clearly shows that women face barriers to success, therefore it is imperative for academics and policy makers to explore ways in which business support assistance can be provided for female entrepreneurs to help them develop and flourish in business. Before this can be achieved we need to know more about female entrepreneurs’ experiences and how they perceive business support, so that this provision can be truly tailored to their individual needs. This study goes some way in addressing this and as such developed and evaluated an e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs.

As stated, female entrepreneurs face many barriers to succeeding in business. Some of these barriers are external, for example, access to finance and others appear to be internal, for example, self-efficacy and confidence. This study has found that an e-coaching programme, one which is tailored to individual needs, rather than offering widespread support to a range of individuals, appears to be an effective way of helping women to overcome some of their internal barriers by increasing entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The findings from this study provide clear recommendations regarding the success of a tailored e-coaching programme for
female entrepreneurs and the importance of providing female focused, one-to-one support within a coaching relationship.

This study has provided female entrepreneurs with a voice and enabled respondents to have a say in the type of business support that they required. Considering the importance of the effectiveness of business support this is an important finding for policy makers and an important contribution to the academic literature. The author provided women with a ‘voice’ by presenting respondents with the opportunity to discuss their experiences. This study has redressed the dominant discourse, by providing women with a platform to have their voices heard and their views taken into consideration and acted upon through the development of an e-coaching programme. The model of coaching which was subsequently developed was based on women’s needs, therefore creating new norms based on women’s experiences.

Specifically, this study has shown that an e-coaching programme targeted at female entrepreneurs can help to increase entrepreneurial self-efficacy and general entrepreneurial attitudes, including an increase in internal locus of control. Over the course of the study coachees improved their entrepreneurial self-efficacy in a range of areas including, marketing skills, networking, short-term strategic planning, defining long-term business goals, balance work and home life, dealing with risk and uncertainty. In terms of general entrepreneurial attitudes coachees appeared to rate their abilities and satisfaction more positively at T2 when compared with T1 in a range of areas, such as self-confidence and satisfaction with business progress. However, the control group did not experience a positive shift in either entrepreneurial self-efficacy or general entrepreneurial attitudes, in fact showing a negative shift in some entrepreneurial attitudes. These are encouraging findings for coaching relationships as entrepreneurial self-efficacy in a given domain reflects an individual’s innermost thoughts on whether they have the abilities perceived as important for task performance, as well as the belief that they will be able to effectively convert those skills into a chosen outcome (Bandura, 1997). The findings from this study suggest that at T2, following completion of the coaching relationship, coachees were significantly more likely to believe that they had the ability to conduct a variety of tasks e.g. business planning, marketing and networking. In addition, the coachees reported positive results to the TEC programme in the evaluation questionnaire.

Women’s limited human and social capital can often have an impact on skill levels, such as planning and interpersonal skills, e.g. self-confidence (DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Fielden et al, 2003; Harding. and Cowling, 2004; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000). Therefore, the increase in
participants’ entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a crucial finding in this study as it provides a solution to help overcome some of the barriers that female entrepreneurs face when starting out in business. Designing and delivering support which is appropriate to women’s needs may also help to inspire and encourage more women to start their own business as they have the opportunity to access support which fits their requirements. Creating more successful women owned businesses would not only provide financial benefits, but it would also help to provide additional networks for women and female role models.

This study has also redressed the dominance of the gendered nature of organisations and entrepreneurship, showing how a coaching programme can enable female entrepreneurs to develop. The study has shown how female entrepreneurs engaged in a one-to-one relationship, which in turn enabled informal social relations and friendships to develop. The majority of coaching models and frameworks assume that all coaching relationships are homogenous; this fails to differentiate between factors, for example, gender. This study addressed this by providing a model of development based on coaching, which has been designed and experienced by women. This focus on female entrepreneurs has provided an important insight into how women learn in coaching relationships and particularly how they develop their self-efficacy. The study has also examined how coaching is developed in terms of individual relationships and as such enhances our understanding of female entrepreneurs’ behaviours and development within a coaching relationship, in an environment which is solely inhabited by female entrepreneurs. This helps to form an understanding of the space in which the coaching relationships have developed.

Importantly, this study shows how coachees can be developed in coaching relationships and how coachees learn so as to develop their entrepreneurial self-efficacy. To aid understanding of the learning and development which has taken place, Bandura’s (1986) processes of achieving self-efficacy and the CIPD (2002) clusters of learning have been used to highlight the learning process. The link between Bandura’s (1986) processes and the CIPD (2002) clusters show how coaching works and how coaches can help to develop self-efficacy and learning. Firstly, in relation to enactive mastery, coaches developed their coachees by helping them to clarify goals and objectives. Clarification enabled coachees to build positive experiences as they achieved success. The extent to which an individual is able to alter their efficacy through performance can often depend on a variety of issues, such as, perceptions of their capability, perceived task difficulty, and the effort expended. The coaches developed their coachees by helping to provide clarity regarding their objectives and this resulted in coachees achieving their desired outcomes. This development was achieved through ‘learning as
knowledge’ and ‘learning as social practice’ (CIPD, 2002). Coachees learned from the social setting that had been developed in their coaching relationship and were able to test new ways of working. Social context is crucial for learning as individual thinking is shaped by active participation in real situations. Individuals are active agents in their own learning and can learn through making constructions from their own personal experience. Enactive mastery refers to gaining confidence by actually doing the task. This was developed through ‘learning as knowledge’ as coaches provided their coachees with valuable business knowledge which would provide them with coaching of key tasks to help them achieve. Enactive mastery was developed through ‘learning as social practice’ as coachees were learning through their social engagement with their coach.

Secondly, coaches developed their coachees through verbal persuasion. This was achieved through the validation of objectives. This development can be linked to ‘learning as behaviour’ (CIPD, 2002), whereby coachees learn through the verbal persuasion which is provided to them by their coach. Reinforcement is the key to learning as behaviour and the reinforcer strengthens the desired response, in the case of the coaching relationships it was verbal praise. Coaches provided feedback on coachees’ achievements throughout the relationships and this helped coachees to appreciate how far they had progressed and to celebrate their achievements.

Thirdly, vicarious modelling was also achieved through sharing experiences. Coaches discussed their business experiences which helped coachees to access valuable knowledge and information. Vicarious modelling can be linked to the CIPD’s (2002) cluster of ‘learning as understanding’. ‘Learning as understanding’ relates to the coachee having an active involvement in their learning. The coaches discussed their experiences of owning and operating a business and through their experiences coachees were able to access important information.

Finally, coachees also developed through self-discovery and the removal of negative attitudes. This is not specifically linked to one of the CIPD clusters of learning, the author has defined this as ‘learning about self’. This learning is an extremely important part of the development process and was certainly experienced by the coachees on this programme. Negative cycles of psychological arousal can have a negative impact on the development of self-efficacy. Coaches developed their coachees by helping to remove negative beliefs and/or any unhelpful behaviours which were hindering the development process.

This study provides insight into how coaching can be used to develop self-efficacy and the learning that takes place within the coaching relationship and as such is an
important addition to the extant social cognitive theory literature. The findings provide empirical evidence to show how coaching works and how female entrepreneurs learn so as to enhance their self-efficacy. This study provides simple methods which have been mapped to Bandura’s (1986) processes and the CIPD (2002) learning clusters and provides information as to how these methods can be used in practice, not only in coaching but also within other development interventions. While the author has linked the CIPD clusters to each of Bandura’s processes, it is clear from their description that there are links between each of the processes and each cluster. The links presented in this thesis have been drawn as they most closely reflect the findings in this thesis. It should also be noted that the CIPD (2002) clusters of learning have not been validated through publication in peer-reviewed journals, as is the case with many published coaching models. However the CIPD clusters have been based on well established learning theories. The learning clusters have been used in the conceptual framework in this thesis to illuminate Bandura’s processes and they help to understand the self-efficacy processes from a learning perspective.

This study also examined the viability of online methods of communicating in coaching relationships. The findings suggest that there are a variety of advantages of this method of communicating; however there are also some limitations which require attention. Communicating online appeared to provide an opportunity to reflect on what was being discussed, this reflection time is important in coaching relationships as it allows the coach and the coachee to fully digest the information which is being discussed. This is an important finding for the development of coaching relationships which supports previous research exploring the impact of mentoring relationships. Policy makers and business support providers should not underestimate the problems that female entrepreneurs encounter with regard to domestic and business responsibilities, i.e. juggling work and family life. Providing support through online coaching enables female entrepreneurs to access support at a time and location which are appropriate and convenient for them, overcoming one of the main barriers to accessing traditional forms of business support, i.e. physical access (Fielden et al, 2003; Schmidt and Parker, 2003). The main limitations of the online element of the programme stem from the lack of non verbal queues when communicating online and how this can cause problems with regard to misinterpreting and misunderstanding. For future programmes video conferencing may be an important addition to distance coaching. This visual display may help to maximise the positive elements of communicating online but also attempt to overcome some of the limitations. Despite some of the problems with the online element of the programme, over half of the coaching participants used the online method for over half of their coaching relationships. The fact that the coachees were still able to achieve positive outcomes and provided positive
feedback regarding the programme, could suggest that online methods can be used positively within a coaching relationship and not simply as a supplement to other forms of delivery. There is limited available research examining online methods of communication in development programmes, particularly in coaching. This study adds to the existing literature by providing participants perceptions of online communication and also highlighting areas which warrant further investigation.

This study has provided important findings which can now be applied to the entrepreneurship and coaching literature and also developed practically in terms of business support provision. The study has found that when female entrepreneurs are provided with a coaching programme delivered by female entrepreneurs on an individual basis they experience numerous positive benefits, and those who do not receive the coaching intervention do not show relevant improvements and in many areas experience a negative shift in entrepreneurial attitudes. Therefore, an e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs has the ability to overcome many barriers faced by female entrepreneurs and as such can help women through the difficult start up phases of business development. Supporting entrepreneurial activity is critical in today’s economic climate, and this is an important time for policy makers and business support providers to support aspiring entrepreneurs (Ernst and Young, 2009).

This study has shown that coaching relationships have a positive impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which suggests that coaching interventions can have a positive impact on female entrepreneurs’ perception of their capabilities (Bandura, 1994). This study contributes to learning and theoretical debates by providing an understanding of female entrepreneurs’ needs with regard to business support and how this can be related to e-coaching. This study also adds to the literature on self-efficacy, coaching and learning by providing empirical evidence to illustrate how coaching interventions, including the use of online methods, can have a positive impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, general entrepreneurial attitudes and increased internality of locus of control. This study has shown how self-efficacy can be developed through learning in coaching relationships and more specifically the links between Bandura’s four main processes and the CIPD learning clusters and how they can be used as a conceptual framework to guide coaches in developing their coachees.

Coaching relationships for female entrepreneurs provide a potential support mechanism which can help to overcome the major barriers which women face when starting out in business. There is a wealth of research illustrating the various problems and barriers which women face and this study provides a solution to
many of these problems. Therefore the findings can be used in a practical sense to provide tailored support for female entrepreneurs, which may help to overcome many of the barriers and problems which have been so widely recognized in the literature (Carter et al., 2007; Carter and Rosa, 1998; Aldrich, 1989; Green and Cohen, 1995; Shelton, 2006; Noor, 2004; Welter, 2004; DuRietz and Henrekson, 2000; Lerner and Tamar, 2002; Still and Walker, 2006; Carter, 2000; Verhuel and Thurik, 2001; Wilson et al., 2007, Chen et al., 1998). The findings from this study also provide results from a programme which has the ability to be rolled out to a variety of female entrepreneurs. Coaching can be tailored to the individual and in this respect has the potential to reach out to all female entrepreneurs and target those individuals who have particular problems accessing formal business support provision, for example, because of disability and ethnicity.

This study was constrained to the North West of England. It would have been interesting to explore similarities and/or differences across different geographical regions in terms of the impact of coaching relationships, so as to provide a more in-depth picture regarding the impact of e-coaching relationships on female entrepreneurs.

The longitudinal nature of this study and the inclusion of a control group resulted in a broad study of an e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs and generated some important findings which contribute to the literature and can help to inform policy makers and business support providers. This study should be seen as basis for further research and it is hoped that it generates future discussions in the area of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, learning, coaching, and online communication. The limitations and recommendations outlined in the previous chapter provide some scope for the development of future research in this area. This study has shown how coaching, learning, self-efficacy, female entrepreneurs and business support can be linked together in a practical package of business support for female entrepreneurs.
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Appendix one – British Psychological Society ethics guidelines

The British Psychological Society (the Society) recognises its obligation to set and uphold the highest standards of professionalism, and to promote ethical behaviour, attitudes and judgements on the part of psychologists by:

● being mindful of the need for protection of the public
● expressing clear ethical principles, values and standards
● promoting such standards by education and consultation
● developing and implementing methods to help psychologists monitor their professional behaviour and attitudes
● investigating complaints of unethical behaviour, taking corrective action when appropriate, and learning from experience
● assisting psychologists with ethical decision making
● providing opportunities for discourse on these issues.

For the full guide follow link: http://www.bps.org.uk/the-society/code-of-conduct/
Appendix two – Consent form – stage one

Stage one - Participant consent note – stage one

The Centre for Equality and Diversity at Work are conducting a study to examine female entrepreneurs’ experiences of business support provision and their views on the potential of an e-coaching programme. As part of this study I will be collecting data regarding your experiences to utilise for a PhD under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Fielden. This is an exploratory study to examine female entrepreneurs experiences and to provide a framework to help develop an e-coaching programme for the support of female entrepreneurs.

The following conditions will be strictly adhered to:

- All data will be treated in strict confidence.
- Information obtained in this research will only be used in this study, related follow up studies and any resulting publications.
- Extracts from interviews may be used in the final thesis of the research but no references will be made to the specific origin of that information.
- All research materials will remain in my personal possession in a locked cabinet.
- No names of individual participants, individuals referred to will be used.
- Data will be collected from thirty female entrepreneurs and will be analysed as a whole group. Therefore, data from specific individuals will not be isolated.

I trust that the above information and conditions will help to negate any concerns or doubts that you may have regarding your participation in this research. It is important that this data is collected to increase understanding in this under researched area and to develop business support provision for female entrepreneurs. Please could you sign below to indicate your approval. However, you are not obliged to participate if you do not feel comfortable doing so and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time.

If you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and cooperation

Carianne Hunt
Research Associate
Manchester Business School
Appendix three – Consent form – stage two (coachees)

Stage two - Participant consent note – stage two - coachees

The Centre for Equality and Diversity at Work are conducting an e-coaching programme and will be examining the impact of this programme on the development of coachees and examining experiences of participants. As part of this study I will be collecting data regarding your experiences to utilise for a PhD under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Fielden. This is an exploratory study to examine the impact of an e-coaching programme on female entrepreneurs. The study will investigate your experiences of the programme and your experiences of the coaching relationship. This will involve administering questionnaires at two time points (time point one at the start of the coaching programme and time point two at the completion of the coaching programme) and interviews at time point two.

The following conditions will be strictly adhered to:

- All data will be treated in strict confidence.
- Information obtained in this research will only be used in this study, related follow up studies and any resulting publications.
- Extracts from interviews may be used in the final thesis of the research but no references will be made to the specific origin of that information.
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- No names of individual participants, individuals referred to will be used.
- Data will be collected from female entrepreneurs and will be analysed as a whole group. Therefore, data from specific individuals will not be isolated.

I trust that the above information and conditions will help to negate any concerns or doubts that you may have regarding your participation in this research. It is important that this data is collected to increase understanding in this under researched area and to develop business support provision for female entrepreneurs. Please could you sign below to indicate your approval. However, you are not obliged to participate if you do not feel comfortable doing so and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time.

If you have any further questions or queries please do not hesitate to contact me.
Thank you for your time and cooperation

Carianne Hunt
Research Associate
Manchester Business School
Appendix four – Consent form – stage two (control group)

Stage two - Participant consent note – stage two - control

The Centre for Equality and Diversity at Work are conducting an e-coaching programme and will be examining the impact of this programme on the development of coachees and examining experiences of participants. As part of this study I will be collecting data regarding your experiences to utilise for a PhD under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Fielden. This is an exploratory study to examine the impact of an e-coaching programme on female entrepreneurs. This will involve administering questionnaires at two time points (time point one at the start of the coaching programme and time point two at the end of the coaching programme). We value your agreement to form part of the control group.

The following conditions will be strictly adhered to:

- All data will be treated in strict confidence.
- Information obtained in this research will only be used in this study, related follow up studies and any resulting publications.
- Extracts from interviews may be used in the final thesis of the research but no references will be made to the specific origin of that information.
- All research materials will remain in my personal possession in a locked cabinet.
- No names of individual participants, individuals referred to will be used.
- Data will be collected from female entrepreneurs and will be analysed as a whole group. Therefore, data from specific individuals will not be isolated.

I trust that the above information and conditions will help to negate any concerns or doubts that you may have regarding your participation in this research. It is important that this data is collected to increase understanding in this under researched area and to develop business support provision for female entrepreneurs. Please could you sign below to indicate your approval. However, you are not obliged to participate if you do not feel comfortable doing so and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time.

If you have any further questions or queries please do not hesitate to contact me.
Thank you for your time and cooperation

Carianne Hunt
Research Associate
Manchester Business School
Appendix five – Consent form – stage two (coaches)

Stage two - Participant consent note – stage two - coaches

The Centre for Equality and Diversity at Work are conducting an e-coaching programme and will be examining the impact of this programme on the development of coachees and examining experiences of participants. As part of this study I will be collecting data regarding your experiences to utilise for a PhD under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Fielden. This is an exploratory study to examine the impact of an e-coaching programme on female entrepreneurs. The study will investigate your experiences of the programme and your experiences of the coaching relationship. This will involve administering questionnaires at two time points (time point one at the start of the coaching programme and time point two at the completion of the coaching programme) and interviews at time point two.

The following conditions will be strictly adhered to:

- All data will be treated in strict confidence.
- Information obtained in this research will only be used in this study, related follow up studies and any resulting publications.
- Extracts from interviews may be used in the final thesis of the research but no references will be made to the specific origin of that information.
- All research materials will remain in my personal possession in a locked cabinet.
- No names of individual participants, individuals referred to will be used.
- Data will be collected from female entrepreneurs and will be analysed as a whole group. Therefore, data from specific individuals will not be isolated.

I trust that the above information and conditions will help to negate any concerns or doubts that you may have regarding your participation in this research. It is important that this data is collected to increase understanding in this under researched area and to develop business support provision for female entrepreneurs. Please could you sign below to indicate your approval. However, you are not obliged to participate if you do not feel comfortable doing so and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time.

If you have any further questions or queries please do not hesitate to contact me.
Thank you for your time and cooperation

Carianne Hunt
Research Associate
Manchester Business School
Appendix six – Interview schedule – stage one

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE STAGE ONE

Subject Code: _______________________

1. **Personal Demographics**

1. Age:

2. Ethnic Group: White British/White Irish/White other/ Mixed (White and black Caribbean)/Mixed (White and Black African) Mixed (White and Asian)/ Mixed (other)/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British/Black other/Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi/ Other Asian Background/ Chinese/Other ethnic group

3. What is your highest educational attainment?

4. Previous job title:

   **Family Background**

1. Marital Status:

2. Number of dependent children:

3. Ages of Children:

4. Do you have other dependents at home?

**2. BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

1. Business address:

2. In what years did you begin your business operation?

3. Do you have any previous experience of running a small business? YES / NO

   If YES, what?

4. Do any of your family members or relative have experience of running small business?
YES / NO If YES, who?

5. Which of the following best describes your business?

   Retailing [ ]  Manufacturing [ ]
   Service [ ]  Other (please specify) [ ]

6. How many employees do you employ?

7. How many hours a week do you work at your business?
EXAMINE CURRENT BUSINESS SUPPORT

To examine current business support available to female entrepreneurs

a. Do you access formal business support

b. If Yes, what is it?

c. If No, why not?

d. Do you access any informal business support

e. If Yes, what is it?
f  What are your views on the current availability of formal business support in your area?

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g  What type of support do these organisations provide?

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h  What are your views regarding access to these organisations?

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4. NEEDS: EXAMINE CURRENT BUSINESS SUPPORT GAPS AND NEEDS

To examine the gaps in the business support currently being provided and explore the specific needs of female entrepreneurs

a  Are there services/training or support which you think would be useful which are currently unavailable?

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b  What are your specific business support needs e.g., accountancy training/marketing advice?

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c  What are your views on the individuals providing the business support?

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5. E COACHING: EXAMINE UNDERSTANDING NEEDS, REQUIREMENTS AND DELIVERY

To explore female entrepreneurs current understanding of electronic development and coaching

**EXPLAIN WHAT e coaching is**

It will provide female entrepreneurs with other female entrepreneurs who can provide support on-line ie via email.

a  How would you define coaching and coaching relationships?

b  What skills/qualities/attributes do you consider to be desirable in coaches?

c  At which stages of business (start up, growth, maturity) do you think a coaching programme would be most effective?

d  What do you think a coach would be able to provide you that the current business support can not?

e  What type of support would you like a coach to provide you with?
f. Are there any other types of support you feel a coach would be able to provide?

h. How often do you think a coachee would want to access support from a coach?
   - More than once a week
   - Once a week
   - Once every two weeks
   - Once every three weeks
   - Once every month
   - Once every two months
   - Once every six-month
   - Ad hoc basis

i. What is the average length of time you would expect a coach and coachee to be online?
   - Less than fifteen minutes
   - Fifteen minutes to thirty minutes
   - Thirty minutes to forty-five minutes
   - Forty – five minutes to an hours
   - More than an hour

j. What do you perceive the advantages of e coaching to be?
k What do you perceive the disadvantages of e coaching to be?

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l Do you think the coachees may face difficulty with an e coaching programme if so what do you think they will be?

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m Do you think the coaches may face difficulty with an e coaching programme if so what do you think they will be?

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n Do you have any ideas of how these difficulties could be overcome?

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o Is there anything that we have not covered here that has been important to your experience as a female entrepreneur or which relates to coaching?

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p Do you know of any other women small business owners who might be willing to take part in this study?

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q If this programme was to be implemented would you be interested in being a coachee?

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Appendix seven – Analysis codes for qualitative analysis – S1
Analysis codes for qualitative content analysis of semi-structured interview materials – stage one (30 female entrepreneurs)

1. Main theme: Demographics (D)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Personal demographics of female entrepreneurs BD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>BDPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Age of female entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Business demographics of female entrepreneurs PD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>PDBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Type of business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2. Main theme: Female entrepreneurs support needs and experiences (BS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Business support experiences (BSe)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td>Formal business support accessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
<td>BSeF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Examination of the type of formal business support accessed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Business support needs (BSn)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td>Content of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
<td>BSnC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Examination of the type of content of support that women want to access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. Main theme: Female entrepreneurs’ views regarding potential of coaching support (CS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Coaching support (CS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td>Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
<td>CSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Examination of the potential of coaching support for female entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix eight - Analysis codes for qualitative analysis – S2 – T2

### Analysis codes for qualitative content analysis of semi-structured interview materials – female entrepreneurs owners (18) (stage two)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Personal demographics of female entrepreneurs BD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>BDPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Age of female entrepreneurs owners</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Business demographics of female entrepreneurs PD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Type</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>PDBT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Type of business</td>
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</table>

1. **Main theme: Coaching programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Coaching definition (CD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>CDU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Examination of how coaches and coachee perceive the coaching intervention, what do they understand by coaching and coaching Have their definitions changed since participating in the programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Coaching Relationship (CR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Benefits (value) of Changes in development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>CRB</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Determination of the benefits and value of the coach/coachee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub theme</strong></td>
<td>Coaching Programme (CP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td>Level of contact with coach/coachee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
<td>CRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Determination of the level of contact with coach/coachee (e.g. weekly, monthly, bi-monthly).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background:
Manchester Business School, in collaboration with the European Social Fund, are providing a unique and innovative FREE e-coaching programme for female entrepreneurs. Standard forms of business support delivery do not always meet the needs of women and can be difficult to access given the demands of running a business. The programme will provide female entrepreneurs owners with a six-month e-coaching relationship and an opportunity to network with other women in business. It will provide benefits in terms of both business and personal development and will be evaluated throughout to ensure continuous improvement.

Aim of the programme:
The aim of this programme is to help women overcome issues of discrimination relating to self-employment, by increasing the employability of women through entrepreneurial activity. This will be achieved through the design, implementation and evaluation of an e-coaching programme, provided by women for women. The project will involve matching coaches and coachees from a variety of different business backgrounds, and will provide a six month e-coaching programme which will be rigorously evaluated throughout. Specifically, the programme will provide women with: tailored and individual, one-to-one support, and an opportunity to network with a variety of female entrepreneurs owners.

What next:
We are looking for coachees (female entrepreneurs at the pre-start-up, start up and developmental stages of business operation), and coaches (successful female entrepreneurs or those who have significant coaching or business development experience).

If you are interested in taking part in this programme, either as a coach or coachee, please contact Jackie Kan on 0161 306 3439 or jackie.kan@mbs.ac.uk to register for the programme.

You can contact Carianne Hunt at carianne.hunt@mbs.ac.uk or 0161 306 3482/07920 295545 or Adel Dawe at adel.dawe@mbs.ac.uk or 0161 306 8782 for more information
MATCHING INFORMATION (Coach)

The following questions will provide information which will enable the project team to match you with an appropriate coachee. If you have any queries regarding any of the questions, please contact one of the project team who will help to clarify any problems or concerns.

Name:................................................................................................................. Age:........

Address:................................................................................................................

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

Tel No:...................................................... Mobile No:..............................................

Email Address:........................................................................................................

Marital Status: .............................................. Age(s) of Dependent Children (if any): ..............................................

Highest Educational Qualification:.............................................................................

Professional Qualifications:........................................................................................

Ethnic Origin
Which one of the following groups do you feel most adequately describes your ethnic origin?

- [ ] White British
- [ ] White Irish
- [ ] Other White Background
- [ ] Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
- [ ] Mixed – White and Black African
- [ ] Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
- [ ] Other Asian Background
- [ ] Black or Black British – Caribbean
- [ ] Black or Black British – African
- [ ] Other Black Background
Your Business

Please provide a brief description of your business.

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Please provide details of your business experience:

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Please provide details of any other experience you feel is relevant in your role as a coach:

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How do you define success professionally or personally?

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What do you feel your current strengths are?

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Which areas of business start-up would you feel most confident concentrating on in your e-coaching relationship.

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The E-coaching Programme

How did you hear about this programme?

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What do you hope to gain from this development programme?
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..............................................................................................................................................................................
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What concerns (if any) do you have?
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What qualities, attributes and characteristics would you want in a coachee?
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Please provide information about your preferences with regard to your coachee, if any. (i.e. industry/age/location)
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Any further information (please provide any further information which you would like us to consider when matching you with a coachee)
..............................................................................................................................................................................
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MATCHING INFORMATION (Coachee)

The following questions will provide information, which will enable the project team to match you with an appropriate coach. If you have any queries regarding any of the questions, please contact one of the project team who will help to clarify any problems or concerns.

Name: ................................................................................................. Age: ........................................

Address: ..................................................................................................................
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Tel No: ................................................................................................. Mobile No:....................... 

Email Address: ..........................................................................................................

Marital Status: .................................................. Age(s) of Dependent Children (if any): ..........................................................

Highest Educational Qualification: ................................................................................

Professional Qualifications: .....................................................................................

**Ethnic Origin**
Which one of the following groups do you feel most adequately describes your ethnic origin?

- [ ] White British
- [ ] White Irish
- [ ] Other White Background
- [ ] Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
- [ ] Mixed – White and Black African
- [ ] Mixed – White and Asian
- [ ] Other – Mixed Background
- [ ] Asian or Asian British – Indian
- [ ] Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
- [ ] Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
- [ ] Other Asian Background
- [ ] Black or Black British – Caribbean
- [ ] Black or Black British – African
- [ ] Other Black Background
- [ ] Chinese
- [ ] Other Ethnic Background
- [ ] Not known
Your Business

Please provide a brief description of your business.

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

If you have had previous experience of running a small business please give details.

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What are your short-term business goals?

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What are your long-term business goals?

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How do you define success professionally or personally?

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What do you feel your current strengths are?

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What do you feel your current developmental needs are? Which areas of business start-up would you most like to concentrate on in your e-coaching relationship.

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The E-coaching Programme

How did you hear about this programme?
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What do you hope to gain from this development programme?
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What concerns (if any) do you have?
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What qualities, attributes and characteristics would you want in a coach?
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Please provide information about your preferences with regard to your coach, if any. (i.e. industry/age/location)
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Any further information (please provide any further information which you would like us to consider when matching you with a coach)
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Appendix twelve – Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy questionnaire – T1 – coaches and control group

ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY AND BUSINESS SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE coachee (T1)

Please rate the following statements by ticking one of the following boxes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Finance**

1. I am able to conduct financial planning
2. I expect my coach to help me to develop my financial planning skills
3. My current business support provider helps me to develop my financial planning skills
4. My friends help me to develop my financial planning skills
5. My family helps me to develop my financial planning skills
6. Internet resources help me to develop my financial planning skills
7. Other please specify………………………………………………..

**Marketing**

8. I am able to conduct marketing
9. I expect my coach to help me to develop my marketing techniques
10. My current business support provider helps me to develop my marketing techniques
11. My friends help me to develop my marketing techniques
12. My family helps me to develop my marketing techniques
13. Internet resources help to develop my marketing techniques
14. Other please specify………………………………………………..

**Planning**

15. I am able to strategically plan for the short term
16. I expect my coach to help me to develop my short term strategic planning
17. My current business support provider helps to develop my short term strategic planning
18. My friends help me to develop my short term strategic planning
19. My family helps me to develop my short term strategic planning
20. Internet resources help me to develop my short term strategic planning
21. Other please specify………………………………………………..

22. I am able to strategically plan for the long term
23. I expect my coach to help me to develop my long term strategic planning skills
24. My current business support provider helps me to develop my long term strategic planning skills
25. My friends help me to develop my long term strategic planning skills
26. My family helps me to develop my long term strategic planning skills
27. Internet resources help me to develop my long term strategic planning skills.
28. Other please specify………………………………………………..
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>I am able to access funding and finance.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>I expect my coach to help me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>My current business support provider helps me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>My friends help me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>My family helps me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Internet resources help me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Other please specify………………………………………………..</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>I am able to network with other business owners.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>I expect my coach to help me to develop my networking ability.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>My current business support provider helps me to develop my networking skills.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>My friends help me to develop my networking skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>My family helps me to develop my networking skills</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>Internet resources help me to develop my networking skills</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>Other please specify………………………………………………..</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management/goals</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>I am able to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>I expect my coach to help me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>My current business support provider helps me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>My friends help me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>My family helps me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Internet resources help me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Other please specify………………………………………………..</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>I am able to define my long term business goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>I expect my coach to help me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>My current business support provider helps me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>My friends help me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>My family helps me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Internet resources help me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Other please specify………………………………………………..</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Risk taking

- **57** I am able to take calculated risks.  
- **58** I expect my coach to help me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.  
- **59** My current business support provider helps me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.  
- **60** My friends help me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.  
- **61** My family helps me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.  
- **62** Internet resources help me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.  
- **63** Other please specify………………………………………………..

### Risk taking

- **64** I able to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.  
- **65** I expect my coach to help me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.  
- **66** My current business support provider helps me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.  
- **67** My friends help me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.  
- **68** My family helps me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.  
- **69** Internet resources help me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.  
- **70** Other please specify………………………………………………..

### Work/life balance

- **71** I am able to balance my home and work life.  
- **72** I expect my coach to help me to develop work and home life balancing skills  
- **73** My current business support provider helps me to develop work and home life balancing skills  
- **74** My friends help me to develop work and home life balancing skills  
- **75** My family helps me to develop work and home life balancing skills  
- **76** Internet resources help me to develop work and home life balancing skills  
- **77** Other please specify………………………………………………..

### Skills

- **78** I am able to manage my time effectively.  
- **79** I expect my coach to help me to develop my time management skills  
- **80** My current business support provider helps me to develop my time management skills.  
- **81** My friends help me to develop my time management skills.  
- **82** My family helps me to develop my time management skills.  
- **83** Internet resources help me to develop my time management skills.  
- **84** Other please specify………………………………………………..
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 I am able to develop new business ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86 I expect my coach to help me to develop new business ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>87 My current business support provider helps me to develop new business ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88 My friends help me to develop new business ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>89 My family help me to develop new business ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 Internet resources help me to develop new business ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>91 Other please specify..................................................</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>
Appendix thirteen - Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business support efficacy questionnaire – T2 – coachees and control group

ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY AND BUSINESS SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE coachee (T2)

Please rate the following statements by ticking one of the following boxes:

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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Finance**

1. I am able to conduct financial planning
2. My coach has helped me to develop my financial planning skills
3. My current business support provider has helped me to develop my financial planning skills
4. My friends have helped me to develop my financial planning skills
5. My family has helped to develop my financial planning skills
6. Internet resources have helped me to develop my financial planning skills
7. Other please specify………………………………………………..

**Marketing**

8. I am able to conduct marketing
9. My coach has helped me to develop my marketing techniques
10. My current business support provider has helped me to develop my marketing techniques
11. My friends have helped me to develop my marketing techniques
12. My family has helped me to develop my marketing techniques
13. Internet resources have helped me to develop my marketing techniques
14. Other please specify………………………………………………..

**Planning**

15. I am able to strategically plan for the short term
16. My coach has helped me to develop my short term strategic planning
17. My current business support provider has helped me to develop my short term strategic planning
18. My friends have helped me to develop my short term strategic planning
19. My family has helped me to develop my short term strategic planning
20. Internet resources have helped me to develop my short term strategic planning
21. Other please specify………………………………………………..
22. I am able to strategically plan for the long term
23. My coach has helped me to develop my long term strategic planning skills
24. My current business support provider has helped me to develop my long term strategic planning skills
25. My friends have helped me to develop my long term strategic planning skills
26. My family has helped me to develop my long term strategic planning skills
27. Internet resources have helped me to develop my long term strategic planning skills.
28. Other please specify………………………………………………..
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>29 I am able to access funding and finance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 My coach has helped me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 My current business support provider has helped me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<td>32 My friends have helped me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<td>33 My family has helped me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<td>34 Internet resources have helped me to develop my ability to access funding and finance</td>
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<td>35 Other please specify………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Networking</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>36 I am able to network with other business owners.</td>
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<td>37 My coach has helped me to develop my networking ability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>38 My current business support provider has helped me to develop my networking skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>39 My friends have helped me to develop my networking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>40 My family have helped me to develop my networking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>41 Internet resources have helped me to develop my networking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>42 Other please specify………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Management/goals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>43 I am able to define my short term business goals.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>44 My coach has helped me develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45 My current business support provider has helped me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46 My friends have helped me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<td>47 My family has helped me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<td>48 Internet resources have helped me to develop my ability to define my short term business goals.</td>
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<td><strong>Management/goals</strong></td>
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<td>50 I am able to define my long term business goals.</td>
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<td>51 My coach has helped me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<td>52 My current business support provider has helped me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<td>53 My friends have helped me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<td>54 My family has helped me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<td>55 Internet resources have helped me to develop my ability to define my long term goals.</td>
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<td>56 Other please specify………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………</td>
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<td>Risk taking</td>
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<td>57 I am able to take calculated risks.</td>
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<td>58 My coach has helped me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.</td>
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<td>59 My current business support provider has helped me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.</td>
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<td>60 My friends have helped me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.</td>
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<td>61 My family has helped me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.</td>
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<td>62 Internet resources have helped me to develop my ability to take calculated risks.</td>
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<td>63 Other please specify………………………………………………..</td>
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<tr>
<td>64 I able to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.</td>
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<td>65 My coach has helped me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.</td>
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<td>66 My current business support provider has helped me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.</td>
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<td>67 My friends have helped me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.</td>
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<td>68 My family has helped me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.</td>
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<td>69 Internet resources have helped me to develop my ability to make business decisions under risk and uncertainty.</td>
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<td>70 Other please specify………………………………………………..</td>
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<th>Work/life balance</th>
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<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71 I am able to balance my home and work life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>72 My coach has helped me to develop work and home life balancing skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>73 My current business support provider has helped me to develop work and home life balancing skills</td>
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<td>74 My friends have helped me to develop work and home life balancing skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>75 My family has helped me to develop work and home life balancing skills</td>
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<td>76 Internet resources have helped me to develop work and home life balancing skills</td>
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<td>77 Other please specify………………………………………………..</td>
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<th>Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78 I am able to manage my time effectively.</td>
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<td>79 My coach has helped me to develop my time management skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 My current business support provider has helped me to develop my time management skills.</td>
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<td>81 My friends have helped me to develop my time management skills.</td>
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<td>82 My family has helped me to develop my time management skills.</td>
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<td>83 Internet resources have helped me to develop my time management skills.</td>
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<td>84 Other please specify………………………………………………..</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Innovation**

85 I am able to develop new business ideas.

86 My coach has helped me to develop new business ideas.

87 My current business support provider has helped me to develop new business ideas.

88 My friends have helped me to develop new business ideas.

89 My family has helped me to develop new business ideas.

90 Internet resources have helped me to develop new business ideas.

91 Other please specify…………………………………………………………
Appendix fourteen – General Entrepreneurial Attitudes questionnaire (T1 and T2) coachees and control group

GENERAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE (T1 & T2)
Coachee and control

Please rate the following statements about how you feel today by ticking one of the following boxes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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1. Self-confident
2. Capable of achieving my business goals
3. Ambitious for greater business success
4. Supported in my business
5. When I achieve my business goals, it is usually because I worked hard for it.
6. Isolated
7. Whether or not I am successful in business depends mostly on my ability.
8. Satisfied with my business progress
9. To a great extent my business is controlled by accidental happenings.
10. Satisfied with my work/life balance
11. In control of my business
12. Positive about my future business plans
13. Success in business is mostly a matter of luck.
14. Aware of business support available
15. It is not wise for me to establish long terms business plans, because things may turn out negatively.
16. Motivated
17. Innovative
Appendix fifteen – General Evaluation questionnaires (T2) coaches and coachees

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE (T2)
(coachee and coach)

Please rate the following statements by ticking one of the following boxes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</table>

1. I have benefited from taking part in this programme.
2. The programme has helped me to meet other female entrepreneurs owners.
3. I have improved in the skills I originally highlighted at the start of the programme.
4. I would participate in a similar programme in the future.
5. I would recommend this programme to other business owners.
6. The programme has helped me to develop professionally.
7. The programme helped me to develop personally.
8. I will continue my coaching relationship.
9. I discussed issues with my coach, which I would not have normally discussed with a business support provider.
10. I had an effective relationship with my coach/coachee
11. I am satisfied with the support that I received from my coach.
12. I feel that an online method of coaching was suitable for me.
13. I was satisfied with the frequency of contact with my coach.
14. I would consider being a coach in the future.

Q15. Did you supplement the online coaching with any other method? Yes / No
Q16. If Yes to Q15, how?

- Telephone
- Face-to-face
- Other (please specify)  

384
Q17. What percentage of your coaching relationship was conducted online, when compared to other methods, such as telephone (e.g. 70% e-coaching – 30% telephone coaching)

Q18. What do you perceive to be the advantages of an online method?

Q19. What do you perceive to be the disadvantages of an online method?

Q20. I felt that six months was a suitable duration for the programme? Yes / No

Q21. If no, what length of time would have been appropriate?

Q22. Did you experience any IT problems? Yes / No

Q23. If yes to Q22, what were they?

Q24. Were you satisfied with the IT support? Yes / No

Q25. If no, what problems did you experience and were you satisfied with the way the problem was handled?

Q26. Please feel free to make any further comments and/or suggestions
Appendix sixteen – Interview schedule – stage two – T2 (Coaches and coachees)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE T2 (COACHES AND COACHEES)

Subject Code: _________________________

1. Biographical details

2. Your business

Brief description of current business………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
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3. Coaching

a. Why did you apply to the programme as a coachee/coach?
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b. How would you define coaching?
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c. Do you think your definition has changed since your participation in this programme?
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d. If so in what ways/how?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
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e. What qualities, attributes, characteristics do you consider to be desirable in a coach?

f. Do you think this has changed since your participation in this programme?

h. What qualities, attributes, characteristics do you consider to be desirable in coachees?

i. Do you think this has changed since your participation in this programme?

4. Relationship (your coach/coachee)

a. Can you provide a brief description of your coach’s business?

b. What ethnic background is your coach (advantages/disadvantages)?
c. What did your coach have that was of particular value to you?


d. Did the relationship meet your original objectives and expectations?


e. If so, in what ways?


f. Did you encounter any problems with the relationship?


g. What impact did the relationship have on your business development/personal development so far (probe in terms of networking, business planning, work life balance, management, risk taking, innovation, interpersonal skills)


h. Do you feel you have made any changes to your business or personal life as a result of your coaching relationship


i. If so what/how)?
j. How do you think your coach benefited from their relationship with you?
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k. Is your coaching relationship still ongoing?
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l. Would you consider becoming a coachee, again, or a coach in future?
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5. Programme

a. How much contact did you have with your coach during the programme (and frequency)?
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b. What has been the main method of meeting (face to face, telephone, online) i.e. how much e coaching?
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c. Did you have previous experience of using ‘e’ methods.
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d. If yes/no has this been an advantage/disadvantage on this programme?
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e. Describe your experience of the online element – did it suit your style/did you encounter any problems

f. Did you use the discussion forum to network with other women?


g. Did you use any other parts of the site – ie contact details of other organisations?

h. Are you still in touch with any other women from the programme?

i. If we were to run a similar programme in the future, is there anything you would like to add/change?

j. Any other comments/views you think may be relevant?
# Personal Development Form

**Name:**  
**Contact Details:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development need/area</th>
<th>Priority: High (H)</th>
<th>Medium (M)</th>
<th>Low (L)</th>
<th>Additional resources, if any, required (external to coaching relationship)</th>
<th>Date to review progress</th>
<th>Further details regarding development need</th>
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</table>

Signed (coachee):

Signed (coach):  
Date:
Appendix eighteen – TEC - programme event – Agenda

EVENT AGENDA

TEC PROGRAMME

Networking Event
Tuesday 2 May 2006

Manchester Business School
Booth Street West

10:00 Registration (MBS West – reception)

10:30 Welcome & Introductions (Main seminar room)

  Aim of the event
  Housekeeping
  Background to the programme (Main seminar room)
  Pilot study
  TEC programme
  Evaluation

10:45 Sandra Smethurst (Main seminar room)
  Inspirational Global Leader - "Maximising Potential"

11:30 Workshop one (Break out rooms – groups)
  Hopes, fears and expectations

12:20 Lunch (MBS Restaurant)

13:10 Workshop two (Break out rooms – groups)
  Objective setting and contracting

14:10 Computer system presentation – Q & A session (Main seminar room)

14:30 Plenary (Main seminar room)

15:00 Close
Appendix nineteen – TEC Programme Handbook

TEC PROGRAMME HANDBOOK

TAILORED E-COACHING PROGRAMME

HANDBOOK 2006

Centre for Diversity and Work Psychology
Manchester Business School
& European Social Fund
1. Introduction

Coaching has a long history which can be traced back to Socrates, who believed that individuals learn best when they have ownership of a situation and take some form of personal responsibility for the outcome that is produced. In more recent times, coaching has played a crucial and effective role in sports, including tennis and football. However, the potential of coaching as a professional and organisational development approach has only been recognised in the last decade. Tim Gallwey was the first to document this movement of coaching from the sporting arena to business, presenting a method of coaching which could be readily applied to almost any situation. His innovative work has been influential and underpins the current approaches to coaching.

Although the origins of coaching dates back centuries, the use and effectiveness of coaching as a method of professional learning and development has only been the focus of academic and business literature in the past few decades.

2. Aim of the programme

The aim of this programme is to help women overcome issues of discrimination relating to self-employment, by increasing the employability of women through entrepreneurial activity. This will be achieved through the design, implementation and evaluation of an e-coaching programme, provided by women for women. The project will involve matching coaches and coachees from a variety of different business backgrounds and will provide a six month e-coaching programme, which will be rigorously evaluated throughout. Specifically, the programme will provide women with tailored and individual, one-to-one support, and an opportunity to network with a variety of female entrepreneurs owners.

3. What is Coaching?

The reliance on traditional, formal classroom-based training is now becoming a rarity (Parsloe and Rolph, 2004). In contrast, coaching in training and organisational contexts has increased considerably throughout the last decade (Carter, 2001; Fournies, 2000). It is centred on unlocking a person’s potential to maximise his or her own performance. Furthermore, improving the individual with regard to performance and the development of skills is the key to an effective coaching relationship (Gallwey, 1986).

Parsloe (1999:8) defines coaching as “a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. To be successful a coach requires knowledge and understanding of process as well as the variety of styles and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place.”

3.1 Differences between Coaching and Mentoring

It is important to establish the difference between these two approaches, as the terms coaching and mentoring are often used interchangeably. To ensure that the correct approach is being used it is necessary to distinguish between the role of coaching and the coach and the role of mentoring and the mentor. While the functions of mentoring and coaching relationships invariably overlap, they are two separate forms of developmental relationships (Benabou and Benabou, 2000). Coaching is directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and skill by a form of tutoring or instruction (Goldsmith et al, 2000; Whitmore, 2002). Mentoring is, in effect, one step removed and is concerned with the longer-term acquisition of skills in a developing career (Kram, 1985; Chao, 1997).
Jarvis (2004) illustrates a number of key differences between the two relationships:

Table 3.1– Differences between Coaching and Mentoring relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COACHING</th>
<th>MENTORING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship generally has a set duration.</td>
<td>Ongoing relationship that can last for a long period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally more structured in nature and meetings are scheduled on a regular basis.</td>
<td>Can be more informal and meetings can take place as and when the mentee needs some advice, guidance or support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term (sometimes time-bounded) and focused on specific development areas/ issues.</td>
<td>More long-term and takes a broader view of the person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching is generally not performed on the basis that the coach needs to have direct experience of their client’s formal occupational role, unless the coaching is specific and skills focused.</td>
<td>Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the mentee. Often a senior person in the organisation who can pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to otherwise out of reach opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus is generally on development/issues at work.</td>
<td>Focus is on career and personal development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agenda is focused on achieving specific and immediate goals.</td>
<td>Agenda is set by the mentee, with the mentors providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching revolves more around specific development areas/issues.</td>
<td>Mentoring revolves more around developing the mentee professionally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jarvis (2004:20)

The main differences between the functions of a coach and a mentor are outlined in the following table.

Table 3.2- Comparative Coach and Mentor Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COACH</th>
<th>MENTOR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protégé learning is primarily focused on abilities.</td>
<td>Learning is focused on attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical or professional focus.</td>
<td>Technical, professional and political focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective use of the protégés existing competencies.</td>
<td>Helps the protégé to realise his/her potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional interaction with the protégé.</td>
<td>More interaction with an affective component.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach usually guides a team.</td>
<td>Privileged relationship with one person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspires respect for his/her professional competencies.</td>
<td>Is a role model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term training.</td>
<td>Long-term development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Benabou and Benabou (2000:2)

Coaching is concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and the development of skills, whereas mentoring concentrates on the longer-term organisation of skills in a developing career by advising and counselling (Parsloe, 1999).

4. The Coaching Relationship

Effective coaching requires both the coach and coachee to fulfil their relative roles. The degree to which this is achieved depends upon a number of variables, including the experience of both parties with regard to coaching relationships, their interpersonal skills, motivation and commitment.
4.1 What is required to be an effective coach?
A coach has numerous objectives and roles to perform within the coaching relationship and their main objective is to develop the coachee. This can be achieved through increasing self-confidence, identifying suitable topics for coaching and developing planned tasks. Coaching is not telling someone what to do and how to do it. Occasionally it involves overseeing what a coachee is doing and advising them how to do it better.

Kenton and Moody (2001) state that a coach requires various core skills to ensure an effective coaching relationship. These are: ability to create rapport, paying attention to content and process, keeping an open mind, paraphrasing and reflecting, asking probing questions, identifying limiting assumptions and beliefs, giving and receiving feedback. However, their research showed that coaches felt that it is not necessarily the skills which are important, but rather the way in which the skills are used. Personal development and self-awareness of the coach is an essential part of their competence.

4.2 What is required to be an effective coachee?
The coachee also has an important role to play in establishing a positive coaching relationship. Coachees must understand their own development needs, be able to participate in the identification of suitable topics for coaching, be able to collaboratively set challenging but realistic performance targets and methods of achieving them, take responsibility and initiative for their own development, be open, be direct and honest in discussions with coaches, and accept constructive feedback relating to skill acquisition and development progress which can be enhanced through self-awareness (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Hardingham et al, 2004).

4.3 Phases of coaching
Many articles and books have been written on the process and phases of coaching. These tend to vary from three to six steps in length (Zeus and Skiffington, 2003; Whitmore, 2002; O’Neill, 2000; Kilburg, 1996). In general the process of coaching includes the following phases advocated by O’Neill (2000):

1) Contract
This can be the most important phase of the coaching relationship, as it is here that the coach and coachee build their relationship and establish credibility.

2) Action plans and objective setting
O’Neill (2000) states that there are a number of areas to cover within the action planning stage:
   - Move the coachee to a specific plan.
   - Help the coachee identify his or her side of the pattern in the situation.
   - Determine the coach’s role in the relationship.

3) Live action
Coaching relationship commences.

4) Debriefing
Evaluation time is essential in any coaching relationship. The coachee needs time to reflect; therefore debriefing time must be built into the coaching sessions. This debriefing allows the coach and coachee to evaluate their effectiveness.

Although these are agreed by many to be the key stages of the coaching process, different coaching relationships may require additional stages in order to address the specific goals. Furthermore, while this describes the overall process, it does not examine the attitudes and behaviours of the coachee that positively or adversely impact on their ability to develop and attain the set goals. Figure one provides a model for establishing the coaching process.
Figure 1– Establishing the Coaching process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COACH</th>
<th>COACHEE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase One</td>
<td>Establish rapport leading to trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Two</td>
<td>Dealing with immediate issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Three</td>
<td>Goals, values &amp; beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Four</td>
<td>Finding resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Five</td>
<td>Re-evaluating habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Six</td>
<td>Tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Seven</td>
<td>Ongoing support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: O’Connor and Lages (2004:75)

4.4 The coaching structure
The structure detailed in Figure 2, provides a clear direction for the coaching relationship and the various tasks and objectives which need to be achieved at each distinct stage. Coaching can be an extremely difficult process for both the coach and the coachee. Following a coaching structure ensures that the relationship remains within the boundaries of the coaching process and enables the relationship to grow and develop, ultimately developing both the coach and the coachee.

Source: Hirsh and Kise (2000:2)
5. Forms of coaching delivery

Coaching can be delivered in numerous forms, such as face-to-face, via telephone and online.

5.1 Face-to-face coaching
Face-to-face coaching is the traditional form of coaching delivery. Face-to-face coaching reminds the coach and the coachee that words are only one aspect of communication. This form of delivery can enable the coach and coachee to access unspoken issues that may become apparent through a face-to-face encounter. The coach can watch the coachee’s body language to help with the choice of questions (Whitmore, 2002). The coach will also be more aware of any anxiety that the coachee may have. This can help to either confront or avoid issues that could be positive or negative for the success of the coaching relationship. However, there can be disadvantages, face-to-face coaching can be immensely impractical when considering the busy schedules of today. Geography also needs to be considered, which may significantly reduce a coachee’s choice of coach.

5.2 Telephone coaching
Telephone coaching is a cost-effective method of delivering coaching. It is more cost-effective for the coach/coachee as they only have to pay for the focused coaching session and not for travelling, but there are problems that need to be addressed when adopting this approach. There is a loss of appearance, facial expressions and gesticulations when conducting telephone coaching. Davis (2002) states that individuals communicate at about 40 per cent of their ability when on the telephone because facial expressions and gesticulations cannot be seen. Although anecdotal evidence has suggested that when using the telephone for coaching, individuals undergo a major shift, in that they find other ways of communicating effectively, for example, using vivid descriptive language. Telephone coaching also enables individuals to become much more effective listeners. It is essential that the coach and coachee take care over rate of speech when conducting telephone coaching (Davis, 2002).

5.3 E-coaching
There is a dearth of research relating to e-coaching schemes, despite the increase in such innovative methods of delivery (Caplan, 2003). There are numerous advantages to e-coaching, such as, cost and time savings, increased flexibility with regard to choosing time for learning, sharing and questioning, interaction and debate can be organised through email, discussion groups, chat rooms, and visual tutorials. E-coaching can also prove to be extremely collaborative. Professionals from across the globe can work together to pool their expertise through the use of discussion threads. Social interaction can still be maintained by individuals sharing ideas, solving problems and sharing information (Caplan, 2003).
6. TEC Programme Model

- Registration: Jan - March
- Welcome Event: May
- Coaching Relationships Commence: May/July
- Coaching Relationships Finish: October/December

7. The E-coaching website

The E-coaching website will look and feel like a standard website. There will be five main areas to the site:

- Home page
- Instant messaging for individual coaches and coachees
- Discussion forum for all participants
- Information page A – this will provide photos of programme participants (if this is agreed by the individual participant) and a brief biography of each participant.
- Information page B - Business support providers/business information – links and contact details of relevant organisations and documents.

The website will be password protected, thereby preventing anyone who is not a programme participant from entering the website beyond the home page. This will mean that only programme participants will be able to access the website and make full use of what is on offer. The instant messaging service will also be password protected so that the individual coach and coachee can only gain access to this area of the site. This will ensure that all discussions between individual coaches and coachees are kept private from the rest of the group.

8. Summary

Coaching as a form of professional development is becoming increasingly popular in today’s changing business environment. Coaching is tailored specifically to an individual’s role, needs and objectives, unlike traditional forms of classroom-based training.

Targeted development interventions such as coaching, enable individuals to adjust to major changes in the rapidly evolving business environment. Coaching can help to support individuals in making the necessary steps to advance in their careers and perform at optimum levels in roles that require large step-changes in skills and responsibility.
9. References


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Appendix twenty – TEC website

Centre for Diversity and Work Psychology (CDWP)
Tailored E-coaching for women business-owners in the Northwest of England

Business Profiles and Notice Board added. If you would like:

- Instant Messaging
- Signposting
- Participants
- Discussions
- Business Profiles
- Notice Board
- Programme Documents
- Info & Publications
- Contact
- Help