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Is faster, better when teaching skills based management courses?
A comparison of compressed and full-term course delivery methods

Abstract: This study investigates students' self-perceptions of learning related to their participation in either a 3- or 15-week skill-based graduate coaching course. The results indicate students enrolled in the compressed course saw a significant increase in their coaching skills from pre-test to post-test; students enrolled in the full-term did not see the same statistically significant increase. Further, students in the compressed course had statistically significant higher counseling and challenging skills than the full-term students. These findings are relevant to the debates surrounding the benefits accrued from obtaining an MBA.

Keywords: coaching skills, self-assessment, management education, immersion learning, compressed semesters.

JEL codes: A23, I21, M53, Y80.

Introduction

In this paper we revisit the question of whether a compressed teaching format is a more effective tool for teaching soft management skills. Specifically, we evaluate the impact of two formats on an MBA-level coaching class. We begin by framing what follows in the much larger debate on how to make business school curricula more relevant, and then tie that debate to two specific issues: (1) a growing corporate demand for soft-management skills, and (2) immersion techniques in modern language training, and by extension, compressed formats in business curricula. Our analysis examines value of compressed formats for at least one important soft-management skill: coaching.

1. Why the question is important

While demand by American businesses for Master of Business Administration (MBA) has fluctuated since the degree's introduction in 1908 (Hahs, 1999; Cudd & King, 1995), typically trending with the business cycle, the number of MBA's annually awarded has grown from 3,200 in the mid-1950's to over 100,000, comprising nearly a third of all master's degrees awarded (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001; Hahs, 1999; Linder & Smith, 1992a). At first glance this tremendous growth speaks to an enviable level of success, reflecting as some suggest (Kanter, 1995) the growing trend toward life-long learning and the need to stay informed in an era of rapid change in the business world.

But accompanying these numbers is a growing vocal criticism, from within academic and corporate circles, that MBA programs are failing to deliver in two key areas of deeper success: what effective managers need most – useful skills, leadership and ethical behavior – and career enhancement (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Both of these trends have added to the normal competitive pressures for business schools to reevaluate the focus of their programs, moving from an emphasis on hard (quantitative) courses (e.g. accounting) toward an emphasis on soft (qualitative) courses, such as coaching and team building (Cudd & King, 1995), or even to consider non-traditional models that emphasize short, intense modules for practicing managers, interspersed with longer periods of on-the-job reflection and application (Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Reingold, 2000) and even extending the development of leadership skills beyond the MBA degree through a peer coaching e-learning network (Smits & Stanley, 2010) that encourages life-long learning and relationships.

Whether motivated by a desire to deliver business education that is more efficient or more effective and relevant, one common result is an effort to minimize the amount of time spent in a classroom and away from the workplace. Thus, most major business curriculum restructuring efforts, initiated during the mid-1990's (Hahs, 1999; Eberhardt & Moser, 1997; Cudd & King, 1995; Grimbly, 1993; Linder & Smith, 1992b), considered and adopted new ways of teaching and delivering course content. While the more non-traditional and thought-provoking changes (Mintzberg, 2004) were largely rejected (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002), many schools started inviting businesses to participate in the development of programs of study and also invited local business leaders to teach individual courses (Hahs, 1999). Case studies, the log-standing hallmark of the Harvard program (Mintzberg, 2004), proliferated and became a primary vehicle for encouraging students to become active participants in their own learning (Desiraju & Gopinath, 2001). Some programs incorporated service learning as a way to link education to experience and build a sense of civic responsibility (McCarthy, Tucker & Dean, 2002). Others went completely on-

line, alleviating the need for students to leave their workplace or home (Wankel & DeFillipi, 2002; Hahs, 1999).

In the mid-1990's, compressed semesters returned to business school schedules, providing students with the opportunity to complete a course in as little as a few weeks. This trend, however, received little attention in the literature regarding its efficacy or impact on student self-perceptions of learning.

As Davies (2006, p. 6–7) has suggested a great deal of the literature on intensive teaching approaches is limited to doctoral dissertations and second tier research. He also notes an interesting irony: the paucity of research concentrated on business education, the very discipline "…in which intensive teaching is often practiced." Another limitation as noted by Austin and Gustafson (2006) is focused on the grade earned as a measure of learning. Good examples of these are Caskey (1994), Rayburn and Rayburn (1999) and Ewer *et al.* (2002). We also believe based on our own review of the literature that much of the research focuses on undergraduate classes and rarely looks at "soft" skills. In this article, the findings from a comparison of two groups of graduate business students, in which the course delivery lengths were different for each group, are presented.

2. Changing business curricula and the compressed semester

2.1. Motivations for change

Corporate stakeholders, along with the AACSB, have played an important role in driving curriculum change. In the past decade and a half, corporate stakeholders, in particular, have exerted pressure on business schools to produce graduates that would meet their immediate staffing needs, reflecting their unwillingness to hire recent graduates who require additional training on subjects that should have been covered in business school courses (Linder & Smith, 1992a).

Grimbly (1993) notes that businesses are frequently frustrated with MBA graduates, who are extremely bright and passionate, yet have only developed their analytical and technical skills. Mintzberg (2004, p. 35–40) refers to this as one form of the "wrong ways" in which content and methods are used in MBA programs. Among broader concerns, he cites on common but troubling "chain": the reduction of management to decision-making, decision-making to analysis and analysis to technique. In addition to problem solving that was too technical in its approach, Grimbly's survey results highlighted several other recurring areas of graduate under development: poor people skills, an inflexible view of the business world, and failure to understand that career success is not instantaneous. Even more troubling was the finding that many of the businesses surveyed believed that graduates of six-

week executive education programs or strong undergraduate business programs were just as good, maybe even better, than recent MBA graduates (Grimbly, 1993).). Finally, even graduates of MBA programs frequently recognized the marginal contribution of what they learned to the daily realities of work, frequently citing the lack of "soft skills" (Hill, 1992).

2.2. Restructuring business school curricula

In Cudd and King's 1995 study, 84.2% of the participating business schools planned to implement a "moderate to extensive overhaul of their program sometime between 1995 and 2000" (p. 45). Business schools focused on three broad areas for restructuring to address the issues raised by the business community.

First, an emphasis on soft skills emerged, including: written and oral communications skills, interpersonal relationship skills, supervision, team building, coaching, and leadership skills (Eberhardt & Moser, 1997; Hahs, 1999; Cudd & King, 1995). Of the schools planning to restructure their programs, 40.4% indicated that the planned emphasis of their programs was shifting from teaching hard courses to soft courses, while 32.2% indicated that an increased emphasis on soft courses had already taken place (Cudd & King, 1995).

Second, Ainsworth and Morley (1995, in Hahs, 1999) noted a shift toward providing students the skills to integrate theory and practice so that they can address the complex management issues they will face in the work-place. Thus, business schools focused on application over theory as a way to demonstrate the practical value and usefulness of the knowledge their students were acquiring (Ainsworth & Morley, 1995, in Hahs, 1999). Reflecting this shift, Cudd and King's results (1995) indicated that 51.6% of business schools were emphasizing application over theory in their courses and that more than half of the respondents were considering increasing the application emphasis over the next five years.

Finally, business schools focused on delivering their degrees in ways that were more efficient. Their first efforts, dating to the late 1970's focused on reducing the time away from the workplace by offering weekend and late night MBA and Executive MBA programs. In the 1990's, this was further extended to minimizing the amount of time spent in a classroom. The use of web and other instructional technologies to supplement class time, as well as for complete course delivery, emerged (Hahs, 1999). At the same time, business schools began to take a serious look at the use of compressed semesters to deliver courses to decrease the time required to earn a degree.

2.3. Immersion and the compressed semester

Immersion education in foreign language instruction emerged nearly 30 years ago as a way to overcome perceived shortcomings in its pedagogy (Kinberg, 2001; Walker

& Tedick, 2000). In particular, schools developed immersion education to address the perception that students were unable, "to use the target language for authentic communication" (Kinberg, 2001), in spite of spending months memorizing vocabulary lists and rules of grammar.

According to Kinberg (2001), an immersion program can be defined as one where the target language is the medium of instruction, rather than its topic. Swain and Johnson (1997, in Walker & Tedick, 2000) list eight core features that all immersion programs have in common and ten variable features that they address. Of particular interest to management educators are: delivery time length, the ratio of instruction delivered in the student's native language versus the target language, resources available, attitudes of the students toward the target language, and the status of the target language in the immersion context (Walker & Tedick, 2000).

Applied soft skill management courses are like foreign language courses in that they require students to develop a new vocabulary, understand the rules for using that vocabulary, and construct a framework within which they can successfully use the rules and vocabulary. Thus, compressed semester offerings of applied skills management courses can create environments that are very similar to an immersion environment. The short time span of the course increases the students' daily use of the target language (e.g. coaching terminology and concepts) both within and outside of the classroom. Applied courses are often taught by using the techniques to be learned in the instruction process, which in turn increases the amount of time the student spends using the target language. Also, compressed courses result in the application of tremendous resources early in the program, such as the instructor, readings, and feedback, and access to them is increased due to the short nature of the term.

3. Study design

This study looks at the impact of differing course delivery times for a graduate level coaching class offered through the business school of a major southeastern university on the students' self-perceptions of their coaching abilities. We completed the first phase of this research effort during a compressed (mini-mester) summer term while the second phase was completed during a full fifteen week fall term.

In the sections that follow, we first outline the course and delivery methods and data collected. Next we examine whether the two class sections were roughly comparable and discuss the selection of Kinlaw' Coaching Skills Inventory. Following that we examine the key research questions guiding this study. First, compared to a standard full-term course, does a compressed-term course yield bigger gains in coaching skills as measured by Kinlaw's Coaching Skills Inventory? Second, are the gains the same for all five of the skill areas? Finally we lay out areas requiring fu-

ture research and discuss some additional observations from our experience that have implications for management educators in teaching and delivering skills based management courses.

3.1. Course and delivery methods

Two consecutive sessions of a Coaching for Leadership course, an applications focused, soft skills course, were selected to participate in the study. One of the investigators taught the two sessions. Section A was offered during a compressed summer semester, meeting daily for three weeks, Monday through Friday, from 4:15 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. Section B was offered during a traditional fall semester for fifteen weeks, meeting weekly, every Monday evening from 4:15 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.

We structured the content of the course the same way for both sections. Understanding the framework of managerial coaching within work settings was an important part of the initial class discussion and the course progressed around five broad categories: core skills, tutoring skills, counseling skills, mentoring skills, and confronting/challenging skills. The tutoring and core skills components of the course can be classified as theoretical and grounded students in the basic principles for conducting coaching sessions. The primary vehicles for teaching these two areas were the use of assigned readings, class lectures, and participation in class discussions. These vehicles provide a basic set of working definitions as well as a richer understanding of how these translate into specific behaviors within differing contexts. Finally, students then put these theories to use when practicing the applied areas of the course, keeping the course true to an immersion-based approach. The remaining three skill areas, counseling, mentoring, and confronting/challenging are applied skills. While these build on the working definitions from the first two sections of the course, these skills are gradually honed over the last part of the course by participating in a series of one-on-one coaching sessions with other students and observing expert coaching demonstrations.

3.2. Data collection

Participants completed a pre-test administration of the CSI on the first day of the course and a post-test on the last teaching day of the course. Participation was voluntary and students remained anonymous. Students self-reported the last six digits of their student ID number for the purpose of matching pre- and post-test results and their GMAT score, if known (31 of the 47 who completed both the pre- and post test), on the cover page of the survey. We discarded the ID numbers from the analysis after the matching was completed. No demographic data or other data beyond this was collected.

3.3. Participants

All of the students participating in the study pursued a degree at the graduate level in a business or business-related major. Section A (compressed term) consisted of 30 students, 24 of whom successfully completed both the pre- and post-test administrations of the Coaching Skills Inventory (CSI). Section B (full term) consisted of 26 students, 23 of whom successfully completed the pre- and post-test administrations of the CSI.

Before assessing any potential impact a compressed format might have on perceptions of coaching skills, it is important to provide reasonable evidence that the two groups are initially similar. Within the confines of the data collected, we examined two areas: scores on the pre-test and self-reported GMAT scores. The t-Tests comparing the class means on both the pre-test and reported GMAT scores are shown in Table 1. In both cases no significant difference between the two groups

Table 1. Class means and student's t-test: self-perceptions of coaching skills (Aggregate CSI) & self-reported GMAT scores

	Compressed	Full	t-Score	df	Probability
Pre-Test Aggregate CSI Mean	3.77	3.68	−0.749	45	0.458
Self-Reported GMAT	581	600	1.175	29	0.251

was found, indicating that both groups entered the course with similar self-reported GMAT scores and self-perceptions of their coaching skills. In addition, as noted in Table 2, the correlation between GMAT scores and the pre-test scores for the two groups combined was not significant ($r = −.064$, significance = .73). There may be other variables such as "level of maturity" or "previous experience" that reflect capacity to develop coaching skills but which cannot be eliminated in this study.

Table 2. Mean aggregate CSI pre- and post-test scores

	Compressed	Full
Expert Aggregate Mean	4.01	4.01
Pre-Test Aggregate CSI Mean	3.77	3.68
Difference from Expert Score	0.24	0.33
Post-Test Aggregate CSI Mean	3.93	3.64
Difference from Expert Score	0.08	0.37

Acceptable difference does not exceed ± 0.4000 (Kinlaw & Denis, 1999).

3.4. Instrument

The organization of the course along five basic coaching elements (contact and core communication skills, counseling skills, mentoring skills, tutoring skills, and confronting and challenging skills) was the primary driver for selecting Dennis C. Kinlaw's Coaching Skills Inventory. The instrument is divided into those five components thus directly corresponding to the content areas of the coaching course being completed by the students. Each of the components contains ten statements and a Likert-scale for indicating a skill level, ranging from one ("very uncharacteristic") to five ("very characteristic"). Participants completed the survey by circling a corresponding skill level for each of the 50 statements.

Compared to the other two self-assessment alternatives considered, Hargrove's Masterful Coaching Feedback Tool and the McBer Coaching Process Questionnaire, Kinlaw's inventory had the best-reported reliability coefficients (Kinlaw, 1999; Jones & RiCharde, 2005). The Coaching Skills Inventory builds upon Kinlaw's research (Kinlaw & Denis, 1989) and its validity has been tested against "superior" coaches.

The average aggregate score for the superior coaches studied by Kinlaw was 4.01. Kinlaw suggests that any rating that exceeds or falls below this average by more than 0.40 points should be explored as the instrument may be been interpreted incorrectly by participants or participant's self-perceptions of ability may be out of alignment. Both sections' pre- and post-test average aggregate means were within this

Table 3. Pre- to post test change in means and paired *t*-test by term

	Pre-test	Post test	*t*-Score	*df*	Probability
Compressed Term Means	3.77	3.93	1.896	23	0.071
Full Term Means	3.68	3.64	0.533	22	0.599

range. This result indicates that the instrument and the corresponding scores collected from the students are aligned with the instrument developer's expectations.

One weakness of all three of these inventories is that they are learning tools rather than formal tests of skill sets. In addition, there is a long-standing discussion across a wide range of disciplines about the accuracy of self-assessments when compared to observed measures of competence or objective tests (Falchikov & Boud, 1989; Wilson, 1999; Kruger & Dunning, 1999; Eva *et al.*, 2004; Dunning *et al.*, 2004; Davis *et al.*, 2006). For example, in a meta-analysis of quantitative self-assessment studies in law, engineering, guidance counseling, behavioral science, psychology and medicine, Falchikov and Boud found correlations between self and external assessments of student performance ranging from .05 to .82, with a mean of .39. One interesting aspect of their findings is that students in advance courses appear

to be more accurate at self-assessment than those in introductory courses. Wilson, in contrast, reports correlations of .70 and above between self-ratings of speaking proficiency in English as a second language and objective tests. Under ideal conditions, expert observer ratings would address this issue and provide an opportunity to explore an interesting and relevant methodological issue. However, given class time and resource constraints we were not able to include observational assessments in the current study.

4. Results

Compared to a standard full-term course, does a compressed-term course yield bigger gains in coaching skills as measured by Kinlaw's Coaching Skills Inventory? To answer this question, we looked at the aggregate means of the two sections' pre- and post-test administrations of the CSI. Using a paired t-test, students enrolled in the compressed semester saw a statistically significant increase, $t_{(23)} = 1.896$, $p = .071$, in their aggregate coaching skills self-perception scores from that of their pre-test score. Students enrolled in the full term semester did not see the same statistically

Table 4. Term means and independent t-test: post test aggregate CSI

	Compressed	Full	t-Score	df	Probability
Pre-Test Aggregate CSI Mean	3.93	3.64	−02.194	46	0.033

significant increase, $t_{(22)} = 0.533$, $p = .599$, when looking at the difference between their pre- and post-test scores. Furthermore, using an independent t-test, students enrolled in the compressed semester skills-based management course had statisti-

Table 5. Means & independent t-test results comparing compressed & full-term post-test scores for each skill set

Skill Area	Compressed Term Mean	Full Term Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Core	3.99	3.80	1.129	48	.264
Tutoring	3.92	3.77	.957	48	.343
Challenging	3.86	3.50	2.218	48	.031
Counseling	3.94	3.55	2.248	48	.029
Mentoring	3.77	3.51	1.600	48	.116

cally significant higher overall self-perception scores, $t_{(46)} = -2.194$, $p = .033$, than the students enrolled in the traditional fifteen week semester.

Are the gains the same for all five skills? Given how the course is structured, we would expect to see some variations in the post-test gains by skill set. The primary course methodology for teaching core and tutoring skills is through assigned readings, class lectures and participation in class discussions. While there is some opportunity to practice their application in the one-on-one coaching sessions, the focus is on understanding the principles. Thus we would expect the compressed format to have less effect. In contrast, the primary methodology for teaching counseling, mentoring and confrontation-challenging skills is the one-on-one coaching sessions. The focus is on using the skills in an applied setting, and we would expect to see the compressed format to result in bigger gains in these skill.

As can be observed from Table 6, the data generally support the suggested pattern. A comparison of the posttest scores on each of the CSI's five dimensions shows that students in the compressed term had statistically significant higher self-perceptions of their counseling and challenging skills than full term students. Statistical significance, however, was marginal in the mentoring skills area, and there was no significant difference in their posttest self-perceptions related to the core and tutoring skills.

Table 6. Means & paired *t*-test results comparing pre- & post-test scores for each skill set by term compressed term

Skill Area	Pre-test Mean	Post Test Mean	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Core	4.03	3.99	−.320	24	.752
Tutoring	3.79	3.92	1.169	24	.254
Challenging	3.67	3.86	1.554	24	.133
Counseling	3.68	3.94	1.692	24	.104
Mentoring	3.45	3.79	2.460	24	.021

Full Term

Skill Area	Pre-test Mean	Post Test Mean	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Core	3.88	3.80	−.816	24	.422
Tutoring	3.77	3.77	.000	24	–
Challenging	3.58	3.50	−.623	24	.539
Counseling	3.54	3.55	.075	24	.941
Mentoring	3.61	3.51	−.846	24	.406

Table 7. Correlations for Pre- & Post Test CSI Skill Sets and GMAT

	Self Reported GMAT-score	Initial Contact Skills	Initial Counselling Skills	Initial Mentoring Skills	Initial Tutoring Skills	Initial Confronting Skills	Final Contact Skills	Final Counselling Skills	Final Mentoring Skills	Final Tutoring Skills
Initial Contact Skills	r = -.093 Sig. = .620 n = 31									
Initial Counselling Skills	r = -.051 Sig. = .786 n = 31	r = .404 Sig. = .005 n = 47								
Initial Mentoring Skills	r = .069 Sig. = .710 n = 31	r = .347 Sig. = .017 n = 47	r = .240 Sig. = .105 n = 47							
Initial Tutoring Skills	r = .232 Sig. = .209 n = 31	r = .362 Sig. = .012 n = 47	r = .348 Sig. = .017 n = 47	r = .495 Sig. = .000 n = 47						
Initial Confronting Skills	r = .024 Sig. = .900 n = 31	r = .412 Sig. = .004 n = 47	r = .345 Sig. = .018 n = 47	r = .486 Sig. = .001 n = 47	r = .537 Sig. = .000 n = 47					
Final Contact Skills	r = -.275 Sig. = .134 n = 31	r = .514 Sig. = .000 n = 47	r = .310 Sig. = .034 n = 47	r = .188 Sig. = .206 n = 47	r = .468 Sig. = .001 n = 47	r = .478 Sig. = .001 n = 47				
Final Counselling Skills	r = -.295 Sig. = .107 n = 31	r = .391 Sig. = .007 n = 47	r = .364 Sig. = .012 n = 47	r = .189 Sig. = .204 n = 47	r = .523 Sig. = .000 n = 47	r = .423 Sig. = .003 n = 47	r = .684 Sig. = .000 n = 47			
Final Mentoring Skills	r = -.150 Sig. = .420 n = 31	r = .393 Sig. = .006 n = 47	r = .231 Sig. = .119 n = 47	r = .415 Sig. = .004 n = 47	r = .406 Sig. = .005 n = 47	r = .254 Sig. = .085 n = 47	r = .480 Sig. = .001 n = 47	r = .590 Sig. = .000 n = 47		
Final Tutoring Skills	r = -.203 Sig. = .274 n = 31	r = .310 Sig. = .034 n = 47	r = .222 Sig. = .133 n = 47	r = .121 Sig. = .418 n = 47	r = .448 Sig. = .002 n = 47	r = .144 Sig. = .333 n = 47	r = .522 Sig. = .000 n = 47	r = .695 Sig. = .000 n = 47	r = .652 Sig. = .000 n = 47	
Final Confronting Skills	r = -.240 Sig. = .193 n = 31	r = .483 Sig. = .001 n = 47	r = .240 Sig. = .104 n = 47	r = .162 Sig. = .277 n = 47	r = .399 Sig. = .006 n = 47	r = .606 Sig. = .000 n = 47	r = .658 Sig. = .000 n = 47	r = .655 Sig. = .000 n = 47	r = .512 Sig. = .000 n = 47	r = .543 Sig. = .000 n = 47

Looking at the groups individually, the overall self-perception score increases experienced by the compressed term students, as measured by their pre- and post-test scores, were statistically significant for mentoring skills, marginally significant for counseling and challenging skills and not significant for core and tutoring skills. Again this tends to support the expected pattern. For the full semester group, no single CSI dimension saw a statistically significant increase.

5. Discussion

The results of this study suggest that students enrolled in the compressed term version of the course were able to progress rapidly in their coaching skills development and thus maintained higher self-perceptions as measured by the CSI than peers in the full term course. Students in the compressed semester course also saw a statistically significant increase between the pre- and post-test administration of the CSI. Further, students in the full-term course saw little or no change in their individual applied skills self-perception scores as measured by the CSI. Of the primary proposed advantages of the immersion approach, as articulated by Swain and Johnson (1997, in Walker & Tedick, 2000), our research offers supporting evidence that a reduced delivery time can have a positive impact on achieving important learning objectives when the focus is on applying skills such as mentoring, counseling, challenging and confronting others, but has little effect when the focus is mostly on conceptual understanding, reflected in the our case by the results for core and tutoring skills.

For us, this is a subtle but important contribution as well to the broader ongoing discussion of emersion approaches, helping define what type of material lends itself to these approaches, especially when soft skills are involved. While it is possible that there is something else that is unique to core and tutoring skills that caused the result, this could be explored further by revamping the focus of these sections to be more application oriented. We were not able to answer that question in the context of the current study, but feel it is an interesting question deserving future attention. Finally, another contribution, less substantively significant but worth noting is that our research addresses the topic of emersion in the form of a condensed format specifically in the context of an MBA curriculum.

There are, of course, other important features of immersion that our study was not able to address but are worthy of future research attention. For example:
– Does an increase in the use of the language of coaching (target language) over the native language of business improve students' ability to apply coaching skills?
– Does a positive student attitude toward the target language (coaching) have a positive impact on their initial self-perception of skill levels or their end-of-course assessment?

- Does the attitude of the instructor toward a condensed format impact the learning outcomes?
- Is there a demonstrated relationship between the status of the target language in the students' natural context and the students' self-perception?
- What impact does increasing various types of resources such as exposure to coaching experts have on desired learning outcomes?
- More broadly, what are the underlying mechanisms that can increase the efficacy of condensed formats and other forms of emersion?

While not directly tested in our research, we believe there are some additional observations from our experience worth noting. First, the students in this study had ample time to practice what they were learning; they were in fact making the content of the course the medium for delivering the course. Thus management educators offering applied skills based courses in compressed periods need to offer their students ample opportunities for practice. Similarly, instructors in full-term periods may wish to increase their overall practice time, emulating the immersion environment.

Second, it is important to provide ample access to a variety of resources: readings, lectures, in-class discussions, and demonstrations by expert coaches. An instructor can enrich the classroom environment by conducting each class meeting like a coaching session and taking particular care to answer student inquiries in the language of coaching. While we applied these instructional strategies to both sections, the impact of extending resource access and the use of the coaching language for full-term sections needs to be explored, possibly through the use of web-based tools or increased peer interactions.

Finally, all of the course's resources were either conducted in, or provided in, the target language of coaching. This forced students in the compressed session to be fully immersed in the terminology and increased their awareness of the rules governing coaching. However, the lack of change in self-perception related to the theoretical components of the course indicates that alternative content presentation models may need to be employed for both the compressed and traditional term students to enhance their learning.

It is important to note that there is also the risk that many of the students in the compressed section may have inflated the assessment of their own abilities, in spite of being immersed in the language and rules of coaching. In particular, this inflation may have been exacerbated by the fact that the course was taught in such a compressed time frame. Maybe the emersion students did not have enough time to fully synthesize the material or fully grasp the intricacies and nuances of what superior coaches do, but simply believed their coaching abilities improved as a result of completing the course. Further study is required to address this potential limitation and to isolate the variables that can contribute to inflation of self-assessment. Additionally, longitudinal studies should be conducted to measure the long-term

efficacy and retention of knowledge by students enrolled in compressed semester, applications focused, soft skills management courses.

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