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Does Management Education Need a Facelift? The Intersection of Managing, Leading, and Coaching. *Part IV*

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ABSTRACT

This paper is the fourth in a series of five papers that collectively explore management education and its value to workplace preparation. It is part of a multi-phase research study that was introduced in 2021 and is laser-focused on the growing profession of executive coaching. As business educators who are committed to preparing future leaders for the complexity of the workplace, we must ensure that the curriculum remains cutting-edge and satisfies the professional goals of our students *and* the needs of the leaders that will become their employers. The premise of integrating coaching as a component of management education, supports this commitment to workplace preparation. The design of this IRB approved study seeks insight from the primary stakeholders of business education; this includes *senior leaders/employers, management faculty, and post-MBA graduates*. This Part IV paper briefly summarizes the knowledge and insights presented in Parts I, II, and III. Part I provided the *theoretical framework* for the larger study, Part II reported on the insights of *senior leaders* as the future employers of our graduates. Part III reported on the viewpoints of *management faculty* as related to their role as the gatekeepers of business education. **Part IV** reports the results of in-depth interviews with twelve (12) *post-MBA graduates*, now fully embedded in their professional lives. The research results reported in Part IV align with the expectations of the senior leaders, which is that coaching knowledge and skills need to be fully integrated into graduate business education.

Keywords

Pedagogy, MBA Content, Executive Coaching, Leadership Development, Manager Development

1 BACKGROUND and WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT

A research agenda focused on exploring the integration of *executive and leadership coaching*, as a meaningful body of knowledge, into business education, was launched in 2021. The inspiration for the research agenda was the growing discipline of executive and leadership coaching. The coaching profession lives outside of the traditional business curriculum; yet the skills and knowledge of coaching can serve senior leaders as they face their daily challenges and develop their direct reports. Coaching aligns with, and supports, participative leadership and empowerment. It serves leaders as they gain insights on their own thinking; it also serves them as they learn how to motivate and empower their followers. (DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2020; DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2019). The profession of executive coaching has significantly expanded as executive coaches are employed to guide and support both developing and senior leaders. Both internal and external coaches are engaged to support valued talent as they rise-up and prepare for leadership opportunities that require self-awareness and thought-leadership. Yet, these senior and developing leaders had not been introduced to coaching as a legitimate management practice within their business curriculum and education (Filipkowski, Heverin, Ruth, 2019; Jamison, 2018). Currently, training for coach practitioners and internal executive coaches emerges from external organizations, rather than from universities and colleges. *How can this be true? Are business schools lagging behind this shift in leadership preparation?*

Business faculty are the gatekeepers for business education. It is their role to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant in its support of the profession and the needs of industry. As scholars, researchers, and educators, our duty is to keep our thumb on the pulse of our profession as it evolves. With this intention in mind, a multi-phase, multi-paper research study was introduced at the *2021 Northeast Business & Economics Association Conference* (NBEA). The multi-phase study was designed to explore the attitudes of the stakeholders of business education. Those stakeholders are: (1) senior leaders as the future employers of business graduates, (2) management faculty as the gatekeepers of business education, and (3) MBA graduates 5-15 years after graduation. The research questions were designed to explore the interest, the process, and the potential benefit of integrating coaching skills, theories, and knowledge, into management education (Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2021). The goal of this exploration is to answer the

question, *Does Management Education need a facelift? If so, should the coaching body of knowledge, skills, and theories, be integrated into management and business education?*

2 REVIEW OF PARTS I, II, and III OF THIS MULTI-PHASE RESEARCH STUDY

As this is the fourth paper in a five-paper series, it benefits the reader to have a review of the prior three papers before learning the results of the current phase of this study. I encourage those interested, to read the three prior conference papers; the full papers provide more depth as relates to each paper's intended focus.

Review of Part I – Literature Review

Part I introduces the premise that coaching is a growing business profession that lives outside of traditional business education. The reader is presented with the contradiction that it has *not* found its way into the canon of management education. It is suggested that forward thinking leaders, who seek to create a coaching culture, may find resistance or reluctance from many of the emerging or subordinate leaders and managers because these individuals were not introduced to coaching as a legitimate management practice within their traditional business curriculum and management education (Jamison, 2018).

The literature review presented in the **Part I** paper reviews the impact of the global impact on higher education with its go-to excuse for enrollment decline, even though the March 2020, Chronicle of Higher Education reported on the severe market risks being faced by many colleges (Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2020). The influencing factors of Higher Education underperformance is exasperated by Public Doubt in the value of a college education. (The Trends Report, 2019, CHE). The threat of professional organizations that offer industry certifications (e.g., CFA, CPA, PMP) becoming the 'go-to' educational providers is discussed. The influence of the Mega-universities offering low-cost, highly convenient degrees is a further threat to higher education (Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2020). Recognition that there is no universal set of requirements that define premier business education discusses the authorities that have oversight over higher education (Harcleroad, 1980; Harcleroad & Eaton, 2005; Program Registration, 2020; Hegji, 2018). A review of the regional and business accreditors further illustrate the lack of clarity in defining premier business education, leaving the institutions to make their own decisions (AACSB, 2021; AACSB, 2020; AACSB, 2018; AACSB, 2013). The **Part I** paper provides background on the growing profession of Executive Coaching both here in the USA and internationally (ICF 2021; International Coaching Federation, 2020). A review of the research conducted by the International Coach Federation (ICF) and PriceWaterHouseCoopers reveals the further integration of coaching within management practices and the expansion of the profession (ICF, 2020). The literature review illustrates the value of a coaching culture on performance, retention, and organizational development (Filipkowski, Heverin, Ruth, 2019; DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2019; DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2020). A theoretical foundation for coaching and management practice forms in the **Part I** paper. The definition of coaching as *a partnership with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential*, is relevant (ICF website, 2021). The rich history of coaching is discussed, starting with early influences in 1883, aligning with the shift to Humanistic Psychology, and the holistic view of raising human potential with the work of Lewin, Schultz, Abraham Maslow, and the Esalen Institute gurus (Wildflower, 2013; Schultz, 1994; Maslow, 1968). These gurus already have a foot in management education yet ignore the skills and knowledge that coaching offers to our profession. Collectively, the insights drawn from the literature support the need for research that intends to ensure management education remain meaningful and relevant to both the professional goals of students and the needs of the industry employers. (*For full paper, see Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2021*)

Review of Part II – Insights of Senior Leaders

The **Part II** paper reports on the insights gained from senior leaders as a primary stakeholder of business education. Fifteen themes emerged from the research results and are presented under three umbrella concepts. The **first** concept is executive leadership coaching within organizations. Seven themes revealed how executive coaching has become a valued tool for leader development. An intimate insight into the inner workings of leadership development was revealed. Many of the leaders were exposed to coaching either as a recipient being selected as high-potential talent or as an observer of others in the organization receiving coaching. Though there had been some concern that coaching had an unclear negative taint; that perception has faded. Coaching is now viewed as a valued gift for those leaders projecting the most potential. Insightful was how senior leaders often align coaching with mentoring, valuing the coach who has previously walked similar steps that the coachee is now needing to navigate. The desire for a coaching culture was expressed, but it was unclear how it is defined. And the challenge in justifying the cost of coaching, with a defined ROI, requires patience. The **second** concept reveals the expectations of business graduates, after being hired. Three themes shift us from an insider view of coaching within an organization to an external view of what a graduate can expect as he or she transitions from student to employee. Senior leaders shared what is sought during the interview. They desire traits that will allow the candidate to integrate, thrive, and rise within the organization. They want their candidates to be coachable, team-oriented, hardworking, and willing to get involved and fit in. Senior leaders want new hires to be self-aware, know how to disagree by supporting their positions, demonstrate empathy, actively listen, and being able to accept and integrate feedback. Also, the rising leader should demonstrate a genuine interest in *helping* others, as an audition for *leading* others. The **third** concept relates to what senior leaders expect of business educators in preparing graduates to be workplace successful. Five themes paint a picture of what faculty need to do, beyond the student's acquisition of knowledge. They are,

weaken student entitlement, manage student expectations, elevate the need for students to gain real-world experience, ensure the acquisition of skills that allow gained knowledge to be applied, and to actively integrate coaching skills and knowledge into the business curriculum. (For full paper, see Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2022)

Review of Part III – Insights of Management Faculty

The **Part III** paper reports on the insights gained from management faculty as a primary stakeholder of business education. Eleven themes emerged from the research results and are presented under two umbrella concepts. The **first** concept is understanding coaching. Though many faculty had heard of coaching, there was a mixed level of acceptance and awareness. Some had no familiarity with coaching beyond what would align with coaches in the world of sport. As descriptors of what is *not* coaching, were placed in front of the faculty, insights and understanding emerged. The faculty started to align coaching with areas that made sense for them. A connection emerged that improving communication skills is a prerequisite for coaching skills. The faculty acknowledged their role as gatekeepers for their discipline, which requires a collective *thumb-on-the-pulse* of what business leaders and employers need from their future employees. This theme reflects the bridge from the faculty *understanding* coaching to the next umbrella concept where the faculty work to *deliver* the knowledge and skills to their students. The **second** concept tells a story where, at first, the faculty seek where coaching skills and knowledge may *already* exist in the curriculum, next the faculty become more focused on where it *could* be inserted in the current curriculum. It was suggested that undergraduate students may be less ready to learn and demonstrate coaching skills, but rather focus them on being coachable. Graduate students are best prepared to learn how to coach. Next, as the faculty's thinking expanded, a clear affirmation emerged that coaching needs to be *established* as a course, certificate, micro-credential, badge, program, or dedicated MBA track. A theme of revenue opportunities emerged while citing the low cost and low risk that a coaching program presents. It was suggested that coaching is *"like a personal Kaizen process ... to continually improve."* As faculty recognized the value for students, the recommendations emerged that it be embedded in general education because it supports *"critical thinking"* and *"problem solving."* The story continues as the faculty reflect on required expertise in effectively delivering this new curriculum. And finally, the faculty expressed the challenges that higher education faces in creating new curriculum. (For full paper, see Mackenzie-Ruppel, 2023)

3 MBA GRADUATES – A PRIMARY STAKEHOLDER of BUSINESS EDUCATION – PART IV

This paper, **Part IV**, reports on the research stage focused on *Students* as a major stakeholder of business education. Prior phases of this study gained insight from both senior leaders and management faculty. To ensure triangulation of this multi-faceted study of business education, the insights of MBA graduates, 5-15 years after graduation, are presented.

Research Subjects for Part IV

Twelve subjects were interviewed; all had earned a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, and all were firmly established in their professional lives. The students' programs were completed in the USA (10 subjects), France (1 subject) or Spain (1 subject). Of the twelve subjects: 50% were male, 50% were female. Eleven of the subjects had graduated from their MBA program between 5 and 15 years ago, with one outlier who graduated 18 years prior to the interview. The subjects had a collective of 116 years of professional experience after earning the MBA with an average experience of 9.7 years. Their current professional positions included: CFO, CIO, COO, President, SVP, and other leadership titles.

Research Methods

In-depth interviews were conducted to capture the experience, insights, viewpoints, and opinions of the post-MBA graduates. The interviews followed the protocol for a semi-structured interview, which allowed the researcher to probe the subject's answers, while still maintaining the basic interview structure. The interview schedule of questions inquired as to each subject's exposure to coaching either within their graduate business education program or in their professional experience, post-graduation. Also, the subjects were asked *"what can business educators do to better prepare business graduates to (1) contribute to a coaching culture, and (2) use coaching skills and knowledge in their development of others?"*

The interviews were recorded and transcribed without any subject identifiers being captured (the IRB approved protocol was followed). The original recording was destroyed as soon as the transcript was created. The data was systematically collected and analyzed. Content analysis was used to collect the data points from the transcribed interviews. An iterative process was used to reduce the data and allow the themes and patterns to emerge. Grounded theory allowed patterns to form and the theories to be generated. The results are presented as major umbrella concepts with supporting themes that more fully illuminate the insights gained from the study.

4 RESULTS of PART IV

A total of 115 data points were drawn from the recorded transcripts of business professionals who are fully embedded in their careers. They are able to share with us their thoughts and experiences by looking in the rear-view mirror as they reflect back upon the MBA journey. As the 115 datum points was reduced as a content analysis method, (11) eleven themes emerged from this process that provided insights that inform the research question tied to the larger goal of this research. These 11 themes were further reduced, which allowed three major umbrella concepts to define what this primary stakeholder of business education, has

to share about the MBA journey and its linkage to the profession of executive coaching. The three major umbrella themes that emerged from this research provides insight as to (1) essential relationship needed between executive coaching and the college education, (2) how coaching *really* shows up in the workplace, and finally, (3) the influence of the MBA experience on the professional journey of the business professional.

Concept 1: The Relationship of Leadership and Executive Coaching to a College Education

Business professionals who have the lived experience of the MBA journey can provide meaningful insights on whether executive coaching skills and knowledge should be integrated into the MBA curriculum. Recommendations based on experience rather than on plausible predictions, are more strongly grounded. The essential link between business education and executive coaching emerged with strength; the insights provided more than what was sought. The four (4) themes that define this umbrella concept, emerged from 47 datum points. A clearly defined, multi-faceted coaching curriculum should be established at the college-level. One facet provides the student with the foundational knowledge and skills of the coaching profession. Another facet requires that the student participate in a meaningful practicum or internship that results in a sufficient hands-on experience. A third facet is that coaching knowledge be integrated throughout the various courses of the business curriculum and that credentials be awarded that will elevate the student in the marketplace. A related theme is that business students should have access to coaching as a *coachee*, which will allow them to stretch their thinking and to transform their business education into a successful professional career.

Theme 1 – Business Education Should Include a Clearly Defined Coaching Curriculum with Both Foundational Knowledge and Skill Development. A need emerged for business courses that are clearly defined and coaching specific. These courses should educate on the history of coaching, the theoretical foundation for the profession, required skills, the value that coaching brings to organizational leaders, and the need for a coaching mindset within forward-thinking organizations. The education will allow the student to gain insight on self, such as MBTI classification, which is often an insight that coachees build upon. An introductory coaching course could be introduced at the undergraduate level, but the advanced coaching skills and knowledge should be offered at the graduate level. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“Need a specific course where we you can just focus on coaching.”

“I see value in a coaching class. I want them to develop a coaching mindset to coach their subordinates.”

“Teach coaching terms. Teach what coaching is and how to be an effective coach or coachee.”

“MBA students should be exposed to the theory and the concepts. Then they need to have the opportunity to practice, which is where the integration happens.”

“Coaching is absolutely necessary to build a functioning or a high functioning team. So, at any level, coaching belongs in the MBA curriculum.”

Theme 2 – Business Coaching Education Must Include a Practicum, Internship, or Level of Hands-on Practice. A coaching education would neither be complete nor valuable, if a significant hands-on experience was not present. Students must be exposed to *coaching* and to being *coached*. The desired outcome is for the student to develop a skilled practice and to also benefit from conflict resolution, self-improvement, and stretched thinking, which is an outcome of executive coaching. A practicum or internship should be an explicit component in the curriculum. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“If MBA students go through a coaching experience, then they will be more open to it at work.”

“An MBA student may need to coach someone younger, or somebody just entering the program. Or the MBA student can do a two- or three-month internship on the outside where they coach someone else, or they coach someone at their current position at their job and then report back to the professor. Hands on experience is the way to go!”

“Focus on how to coach because it's a practice in business. If you've never done it before, then you'll learn from experience and then you can become a great coach in the future.”

“Students should be taught not just how to coach but should take the opportunity to be coached.”

“It would have helped if we had a coaching class where I was coached and taught how to be coached. The student would learn and understand that coaching is not negative; it's better for you and it's better for the company.”

Theme 3 – Coaching Should be Integrated into All Business Coursework and Offer Credentials that will Elevate the Student in the Marketplace. In addition to a well-defined curriculum of courses, in partnership with a practicum and/or an internship, coaching concepts should be integrated into *all* business courses. Helping students develop a coaching mindset, requires reinforcement throughout the curriculum. It was specifically recommended that credentials be developed and awarded, such as a coaching certificate, that will document the student's coaching skills and elevate the student in the marketplace. It was suggested

that graduates retain access to a career coach for a number of years post-graduation. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“The faculty should emphasize throughout different classes, scenarios where coaching will come into play, and the benefits of coaching.”

“Destigmatize coaching, The key is to normalize coaching, Keep introducing the concepts of coaching and keep using the term and the skills.”

“Learning coaching in college would normalize coaching for the students. Google type companies or gold standard companies that incorporate coaching would value these students’ awareness of coaching.”

“It’s important that coaching be integrated in such a way that it’s not just a teacher-to-student relationship, but it’s also a student-to-student situation.”

“The students will graduate with both the MBA degree and the coaching certificate. This would motivate people to be a part of a program.”

Theme 4 – Coaching as a Service to the Student, rather than a Skill to Learn. A meaningful insight was the integration of coaching as a feature of student advisement or as a service to the business students. Each student may be assigned an internal coach that will model the coaching relationship with the student. This not only helps the student acclimate to being coached but will help the student navigate the career journey and transition from student life. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“Advisors should be trained as coaches to talk about critical goal setting and mindset shifting in the goal setting space.”

“Graduate program should have a built-in coach within the school because that would be one of the best steps of getting people acclimated to coaching as totally normal.”

“The MBA program should acclimate people to the fact that coaching exists. There should be coaching resources in the department where you could get coaching to discuss some of the issues you are facing and how you apply that you’ve learned to your professional career.”

“I was exposed to coaching during my MBA program. In our coaching sessions we would brainstorm and think about values and whether we’re going in the right direction. How do we make sure we are doing something that will make us happy. We had sessions like that.”

“I think MBA programs should offer at least a two-year, post-graduation, mentor continuing coaching program to help you stay focused on your objectives. It is in the best interest of the university. That way, they will be sure that the university has a real engagement in their students’ lives after graduation. This could bring a lot of value to the university.”

Concept 2: How Coaching Really Shows Up in the Workplace

The subjects invited into this research study are experienced business professionals. Many have personally experienced working with an executive coach and understand what a coaching culture looks and feels like. Their insights reflect generosity for those who will read this study; there is a sense that everything is not always neat and tidy within organizations. The three (3) themes, emerging from twenty-three (23) datum points, provide an insider’s view of how coaching *really* shows up in the workplace. It was recommended that business faculty prepare students with advice that relates directly to coaching skills and knowledge and navigating the business world. Helping students understand that on *one* hand, being coached is a positive and aspirational workplace experience; on the *other* hand, not every workplace has, understands, or wants, a coaching culture.

Theme 1 – Business Faculty Must Prepare Students for the Workplace with Advice that Directly Relates to Coaching Skills and Knowledge. The more that business faculty educate themselves on the world of executive coaching, the more sage-like they can be for their students. Coaching in today’s business environment is a coveted developmental tool; but *not* every organization may use it the same way (or at all). Some may substitute mentoring, others use internal coaches, other may hire external coaches, and some organizations may *not* embrace coaching. Soon to be graduates should be aware that workplace coaching is far from “remediation”; rather it supports individual and organizational performance. Students need to be prepared that some organizations value a coaching-culture, while others may not. One subject shared his experience with a coach stating that, “*the coach makes you come out of your comfort zone to set goals and they hold you accountable.*” Our graduates will also be expected to use coaching skills as they develop their employees. They must learn how to “*be able to read people*” so coaching can be effective. One subject stated that it really helped him elevate his employees to “*reach their potential.*” He also made clear that, “*I was never exposed to this in my MBA program.*” A primary lesson is that our students need to enter the business world open to being coached. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“Students need to be prepared that they're going to be coached; they need to be coachable.”

“Be coachable because the work is evolving and changing in the industry. Things don't stay the same. Even if you are a senior manager, you need to be coachable.”

“A student needs to be able to read people to be a better coach to others. This applies to your staff as well. Some people have to be coached in a certain way. If you just treat everyone the exact same way, you're not going to be as effective because everyone is different. So that's been something that I've learned after the MBA program, which I felt would be helpful within the curriculum.”

“It's been a really good experience and I think it's really helped me, even with the staff that works for me. I can better develop them and really making them reach their potential. I was never exposed to this in my MBA program.”

“What makes coaching effective is that you have to have credibility and respect. If you don't, you're dismissed.”

Theme 2 – Being Assigned a Coach at Work, or being Coached, is Positive and Valued. An insight that emerged from Part II of this series of papers is that senior leaders assign executive coaches to employees who are showing potential. Past negative perceptions of a coach being assigned to help a leader crawl back from the ledge, is no longer the norm. Rather, the insights drawn from the post-MBA subjects clearly establish coaching as a positive and valued development tool. One subject stated that *“I was initially uncomfortable because I had no exposure to coaching in my MBA program”* but now he is so thankful for his executive coach and retains an ongoing relationship with the coach. Another subject stated, *“...coaching is what is expected in the real world; it is an imperative part of a successful leader's role.”* Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“I thought our previous CEO received coaching because he was not respected, and ineffective. I believed that coaching was the board's attempt at fixing him. I was wrong; coaching is a benefit. I never learned about coaching in school, but I should have!”

“When I started getting coached, I was uncomfortable. But now I'm so thankful for it and to this day I still have a lot of coaches where I maintain my relationship and bounce thoughts off of them. And if I'm in a situation, I'll have them coach me again; how should I do this, what's the best way to approach it; understand what makes me uncomfortable. If you're not held accountable, you're not going to take that step, but you need that person there to kind of get you going and making sure that you're held to a standard. I was initially uncomfortable because I had no exposure to coaching in my MBA program.”

“...coaching is what is expected in the real world; it is an imperative part of a successful leader's role.”

“What every candidate that receives coaching shares is fear, fear of failure. I'm afraid of failure. I don't want to fail. Nobody's going to progress or perform in a state of fear. The coach moves you forward, away from the fear.”

“When you get promoted to a new level, you don't know what's going on; you've never been at that level before. Having coaching taught in a way where it's not perceived in a negative light is important.”

Theme 3 – Coaching is Desired in the Workplace, But at Times it is Not Present, or it is Mis-understood. Though the coaching profession seeks to establish clarity as to what is coaching, as compared to mentoring, consulting, or therapy, there are no guarantees. Some organizations may use mentors and call them coaches. Others may believe they are coaching, but they are simply directing performance. A theme that emerged from these subjects is that a coaching culture is desired, it may not always be understood, or valued, by the organizational leaders. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“There can be overlap between coaching and mentoring. When you are coaching, you're basically teaching someone how to do something, which is mentoring. You're teaching them how to do something, but you're also guiding them by being there if they have any questions; you create a connection.”

“I've had supervisors who say they are coaching; however, it is not. They just ask, how are you doing?”

“Industry has done a poor job at coaching, even mid-level people. Leaders as coaches should be asking, what is your next step? How can we help you build a better unit? Rather, it is just a fight for resources, rather than having legitimate conversations about what are the true needs.”

“Leaders, as coaches, should be asking, Can I serve my employees better? Can we try this? Send me a coach that will give a person a chance to try something that might be unconventional!”

Concept 3: The Influence of the MBA Program on the Professional Journey of Post-Grads

Gaining a glimpse of how post-MBA graduates perceive the larger value of their education and its influence on their professional journey, provides a rare and meaningful gift to business educators. Business faculty need to take the *good* news with the *bad* as our post-MBA graduates share details *now*, fully informed by these individuals' professional lives. Faculty may require a thick skin as they hear what these stakeholders share as they reflect back on the value of the MBA journey. Four (4) themes emerged from 45 datum points that provide a multi-faceted view of the MBA journey. For some, obtaining the degree was all that mattered;

going “*through the motions*” was a necessary evil to receiving the credential. For others, the MBA “*definitely prepared*” them as leaders and managers. Necessary for all students is that “*faculty need to prepare students that they have so much to learn throughout their career.*” And finally, the subjects were generous in providing advice on how the MBA can be improved.

Theme 1 – Earning the Degree was About the Piece of Paper. How students perceive the value of the degree can categorize business education as *either* imparting true value *or* serving as an entrance ticket to the first job. Business educators should take this red flag very seriously, because the workplace can easily shift away from requiring a degree. A new entrance ticket, defined by a series of professional certifications, can make the college degree less valuable or even obsolete. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“The problem with business education is that students just sit there for the lectures.”

“I feel like I went through the motions when I did the classes. I got the piece of paper in my hands, and I was like, Okay, now I have a degree and I can start applying for more senior roles.”

“I feel like the entire time I did not see the value. Class was something we had to do to get a diploma and not something that was worth our time and experience.”

“When people are in the coursework, they want to just get the coursework done, they want to take the exams, pass the test, go home and graduate.”

“I became very disillusioned with the process. MBAs are huge investment they need to pay off. And for me, it didn’t.”

Theme 2 –The MBA program Content did Provide Sufficient Career Preparation. Most Valued are Team Projects, Presentation Skills, and Significant Capstone Experiences. Understanding which facets and features of the MBA journey offered the most meaningful and lasting value, allows business faculty to build on what works and to minimize what does not. Recognizing that these subjects are already well embedded in their professional careers, provides a form of longitudinal insight, which gives strength to, and confidence in, the results. Hands-on application of knowledge gained, was consistently reported as valuable for the student’s development. Along with execution skills, the subjects shared that a repetitive focus on formal presentation skills, active team skills, and a culminating capstone experience, were collectively the most powerful in launching and maintaining these subjects career progression. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“What struck me in my MBA program was the number of group presentations we had to do. It was something I was not used to coming from engineering undergraduate program, but now I understand!”

“I learned to be concise, use proper business jargon, never read notes during a presentation, and avoid writing long sentences.”

“The largest really overarching things that I’ve noticed now, and my bosses have called out, is my preparation for presentations. It is not only building a presentation, but a meaningful one that really tells the full story and really captures what you’re trying to get across and doing it in a confident way.”

“I feel so comfortable going into presentations with our executive leadership teams because I got such a strong foundation from my MBA program.”

“Hands-on education. Get your hands dirty. Work in teams.”

Theme 3 – Help Students to Prepare for the Reality of the Workplace. The subjects for this research study are embedded in their professional lives. As they provide us insight into the value of the MBA journey, they are advising the business faculty that we must do a better job in preparing students for the reality of the workplace. As students transition to becoming full-time business professionals, they must be advised “*to have an open mind*” and that “*every day is going to be a learning experience.*” Faculty must prepare students that “*a different challenge arises every day.*” Students need to develop “*coping tools*” to face the challenges that will be presented and the critical feedback that must be heard and accepted. Faculty need to help students control their egos as they can be battered within the early years of navigating the workplace. There will be ups and downs. A commitment to continuous learning is needed. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“The faculty and program need to get students to understand that they need to have an open mind; don’t dismiss everything so quickly.”

“Graduate faculty should emphasize to the students that you want a career, not just a job; then every day is going to be a learning experience. A different challenge arises every day. Faculty need to prepare students that they have so much to learn throughout their career.”

“Teach students coping tools. I honestly feel you want to prepare people to enter the workforce with a critical coping mechanism. That needs to be taught.”

“People work hard to get accepted into top MBA programs throughout the world. It is a very expensive investment. We need to work through our ego where we think that we are the absolute best. So, when we finally get there, we are still in that high. Once we step into the market and start working, we fall, and it's a really hard fall, because we were not prepared to hear that we were not ready or that we don't know something. So, the faculty and the program should be cautious and aware of this ego in the student; they need to bring people down to earth a bit more.”

“I'm not always sure that leaders want what they say they want. Sometimes when people come into an organization, the leaders say that they want a culture where people are independent thinkers. They want them to brainstorm; they want them to be more consensus oriented. Yet, many of those leaders are very black and white oriented. And they already have the answer that they want the people to come up with. Students need to be prepared for this.”

Theme 4 – Recommendations to Improve MBA Programs. The subjects were generous in providing this researcher with recommendations that business faculty can use to improve the MBA journey. This theme reflects an overlap in the prior theme where subjects shared what was most valued in their MBA experience. The subjects advise business faculty that *“coursework needs to focus on the day-to-day business,”* such as interacting with both people and projects. More focus on navigating interpersonal situations is needed. Students need to learn how to handle different and difficult personalities. Self-awareness and managing self, would be valued as a facet of advanced business education. Addition add-ons included project management and root-cause analysis. There was a request to shift away from theory and move more forcefully toward application, integrating more real-world examples and experiences in the MBA journey. Select direct quotes relevant to this theme include:

“I would value working on more interpersonal situations. In my professional career things popped up with certain teams, trying to figure out the best ways to work through different situations is needed.”

“Why do we do care only about leaders, and we don't care about followers? I still try to raise that question of what makes a good follower. I'm struck with the overemphasis on leadership; but we don't question what it means to be a good follower. I would argue most leaders, even if they're a CEO, or a president of a nonprofit, or a university, they still answer to other leaders. So that they still have a bit of following to learn and do. Students need to learn about followership.”

“There should be an emphasis on root cause analysis. Very often people place a Band-Aid on whatever the current problem is, and they implement a short-term strategy solution. There's no understanding of the root cause. Students need to learn this in college, before entering the real-world of business.”

“Need a course on project management techniques to bring a project or problem from the beginning to end.”

“A course on conflict resolution. Must learn how to handle conflict in your team. Learn how you resolve problems as a group?”

5 DISCUSSION OF PART IV RESULTS

Higher education often seeks the opinions of its exiting graduating students as to their experience in the academic program. These exit interviews are gathered quickly, for fear of losing touch with the newly minted alumni. Often these results are gathered too soon, without the gift of time and reflection. The twelve MBA graduates that participated in this study are fully embedded in their professional lives. These subjects are five to fifteen years *post* MBA graduation. This set of stakeholders has the least to gain from participating in the study, when compared to the other two sets of stakeholders. The senior leaders will benefit as their future employees become better prepared for the workplace and the faculty benefit as they improve their own profession; but the MBA graduates' generosity is unconditional. They can provide insight as to how their business education prepared, supported, and sustained their professional journey and their transition from student to mature business professional.

The three major themes that emerged from this research make clear that graduate business education *must* integrate coaching knowledge and skills into the curriculum. The MBA graduates, more than any other stakeholder, described how the developing students need the foundational and theoretical knowledge as well as the hands-on practicum to fully integrate the knowledge of coaching. Our future graduates must have the knowledge, skills, and disposition to enter the workplace ready to *be* coached and to coach *others*. These recommendations are not aspirational, but necessary for the delivered business education to be relevant to the needs of industry.

This group of subjects also shared how business faculty need to broaden their roles and interactions with developing students. Developing graduates need advice and insight that will allow them to navigate the complexity of the workplace. Education is not solely about knowledge, but also about accelerating experience. The newly graduated MBA alumnus should enter into the workplace with insight and confidence on how to step carefully as he or she transitions from outsider to insider. The integration of professional coaching as a *service* and *support system* for the students, was unexpected and highly valued advice. The long-range professional success of the graduate is the work of the university. The graduate is our responsibility beyond his or her years while paying tuition. If the university is to remain part of the fabric of our society, it must stop acting like a trade-school where a student comes, learns, and leaves. The vision of the university relationship to the student, should last a lifetime. Establishing a sustainable coaching experience and service for our students, is a meaningful step forward.

In addition to embedding coaching knowledge and into the curriculum, the subjects also shared that the most valuable skills are those that are *heavily* practiced, not just taught. They are advanced presentation skills and team skills, which should collectively define the final capstone experience. Finally, these students allowed their generosity to tip over the top of the cup as they shared how to more broadly improve the MBA journey with courses that directly prepare the student for the challenges he or she will surely face. How do we know this? Because these subjects, more than the other major stakeholders of business education, are looking in the rear-view mirror of their own professional lives and are willing to report what they see, so that business educators can improve the process for future generations of business students.

6 CONCLUSION and NEXT STEPS

The research design invites the three major stakeholders of business education, to shine a light on the topic of interest: “*should the coaching body of knowledge, skills, and theories, be integrated into management and business education?*” Though there is no bias-free research, triangulation allows for bias to be reduced as multiple viewpoints see different sides of the same question or problem. This multi-phase research design provides business educators with more than what was promised and expected.

The collective research results provide evidence that business educators must *actively* integrate the foundational knowledge, skills, and disposition, into the curriculum of business education. It is recommended that heavy integration take place at the graduate level, with an introductory level at the undergraduate level. Leaders, faculty, and post-MBA graduates offered clear recommendations as to how the knowledge and skills should be integrated. This researcher is proposing the following framework that will create a 12-credit stand-alone *Advanced Certificate* and/or serve as the heart of a dedicated MBA track in “Leadership and Executive Coaching.”

Course 1	3 graduate credits	Organizational Philosophy, and the Foundations of Organizational Coaching	Students will learn the history of coaching in alignment with the major theories presented in the field of Organizational Behavior and the coaching profession.
Course 2	3 graduate credits	Foundational Coaching Model, Positive Intelligence and Mental Fitness	Students will participate in the immersion boot camp to learn the foundational knowledge of Shirzad Chamine’s work on Positive Intelligence
Course 3	3 graduate credits	Coaching Practicum, Part I	ICF code of ethics (assessment includes 3 CEU ICF ethics exam), Participation in group coaching to learn the Positive Intelligence coaching model (assessment: submission of recorded coaching session)
Course 4	3 graduate credits	Coaching Practicum, Part II	Students will learn the ICF competencies. Students will participate in a coaching practicum in a round-robin style completing 3 sessions as a coach and 3 sessions as a coachee. (assessment: submission of recorded coaching session)

The target audience for these research results are the business, management, and leadership scholars and academics who influence textbooks and curriculum within business schools. Business education must remain cutting edge or the threat of external organizations assuming our role as the go-to sources for business education, may become a reality. As business faculty collectively raise-up business education, we will better serve the world of business, both employers and future leaders.

The last planned paper (Part V) in this five paper series will be an environmental scan of how the skills and knowledge of the executive coaching profession is currently showing up within business education. The goal of this exploration is to not only answer the question, *Does Management Education need a facelift?* but to leave a roadmap supported by evidence that will serve both our students and stakeholders.

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