

THE EFFECT OF A COACHING COURSE ON A PARTICIPANT'S SELF-
PERCEPTIONS AS A COACH: A PRELIMINARY REPORT FROM A SURVEY OF
GRADUATE BUSINESS STUDENTS

Peter E Thorsett, MBA
Doctoral Candidate
and
Deborah S. Butler, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Management

Web & Instructional Technology
College of Law
Georgia State University
140 Decatur Street, SE
Atlanta, GA 30302-4037
404 651 4424 (office)
pthorsett@gsu.edu
dbutler@gsu.edu

THE EFFECT OF A COACHING COURSE ON A PARTICIPANT'S SELF- PERCEPTIONS AS A COACH: A PRELIMINARY REPORT FROM A SURVEY OF GRADUATE BUSINESS STUDENTS

Peter E Thorsett, MBA
Deborah S. Butler, Ph.D.
Georgia State University

Understanding the relationship between the completion of a course and a student's self-perception of his or her own skill set (and how it has changed) is of paramount importance in evaluating the efficacy, and determining the appropriate delivery length, of skills-based courses.

This is a preliminary report from a study that is currently under way in the business school of a major southeastern university. The first component of this study is evaluating how an individual's self-perception of his or her own coaching ability changes as a result of participating in a skills-based course on coaching. In undertaking this component, graduate business school students who are participating in the course are being surveyed using the Coaching Skills Inventory, which was developed by Dennis C. Kinlaw (1).

The second component of this study is focused on evaluating the magnitude to which student self-perceptions of coaching ability change when they experience the course in varying delivery times. Part of this research effort was completed during a "mini-mester" term at the university this past summer while the second half of this component is currently under way (Fall 2002).

METHODS

Participants. Two sessions of the university's Coaching for Leadership course were selected to participate in the study. The sessions were taught consecutively, the first ("Section A") being offered during a compressed summer semester (three weeks, meeting daily, Monday through Friday) and the second ("Section B") being offered during a traditional fall semester (fifteen weeks, meeting weekly, every Monday).

Section A consisted of 30 students, 25 of whom successfully completed both the pre- and post-test administrations of the Coaching Skills Inventory (CSI). Section B consisted of 26 students, all of whom have successfully completed the pre-test administration of the CSI. All of the students participating in both sections are graduate level (both master's and doctoral) and are enrolled in a business or business-related major.

The CSI was completed during class time that was allocated for this purpose. The pre-test was given on the first day of the course and the post-test was administered on the last teaching day of the course. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. For the purpose of matching pre-test and post-test results among participants, the last six digits of each participant's student ID was captured on the cover page of the survey. ID numbers were discarded from the analysis after the matching was completed. Participants also provided their Graduate Management Aptitude Test (GMAT) scores and allowed, via their consent form, access to their final course grade.

Dependent variable. The dependent variable was the level of awareness of each student's own coaching skill as measured by the CSI. The instrument is divided into five components: Contact and Core Skills, Counseling, Mentoring, Tutoring, and Confronting and Challenging skills. Each of the components contains ten statements and a Lichert-scale for indicating a skill level (where "5" corresponds to "Very Characteristic" of the participant and "1" corresponds to "Very Uncharacteristic" of the participant). Participants complete the survey by circling a corresponding skill level for each of the 50 statements.

Independent variable. For the purposes of this study, our independent variable is the management course being offered in two different time periods. The first session (completed) was offered for three weeks, meeting daily, Monday through Friday and the second session (currently in progress) is being offered during fifteen weeks, meeting weekly, every Monday.

RESULTS

The CSI was developed by Dennis C. Kinlaw and was tested against “superior” coaches. The average overall rating 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 have been interpreted incorrectly by participants or participant’s self-perceptions of ability may be out of alignment. Both sections pre-test average aggregate means were within this range (PreTest_A Mean = 3.72, difference = 0.2852; PreTest_B Mean = 3.68, difference = 0.3292). This result indicates that the instrument and the corresponding scores collected from the students are in synch with the instrument developer’s expectations.

Three separate tests have been completed with the data. The first is a surrogate validity test to determine if the two classes were similar or different in their pre-test administration scores. A Student’s *t*-Test was performed comparing the results of the pre-test for both groups. In this case, $p=0.676$ ($p<0.05$) indicating that there is no significant difference between the two groups. This is important as it indicates that both groups entered the course with similar self-perceptions.

The second test evaluated the difference between the pre-test and post-test aggregate scores for Section A. In this case, $p=0.066$ ($p<0.05$), indicating that student’s who completed the compressed course had no significant change in their self-perception of their own coaching abilities as measured by the CSI.

The final test performed, compared the difference between the pre-test and the post-test aggregate means for Section A against their final course grade to determine if there was any correlation between course performance and self-awareness of coaching ability. None was found.

DISCUSSION

In reviewing our first research goal, to determine if participant self-perception's of one's own coaching skills changed, we found that many of the students’ mean aggregate scores increased between the pre-test and the post-test. This is an interesting finding, as an initial review of the post-test self-scores indicated that many of the students felt their

existing coaching skill set was approaching that of the expert coaches on which the CSI is referenced (CSI Expert Mean = 4.01; PreTest_A Mean = 3.72; PostTest_A Mean = 3.90). This shift (difference = 0.17) in self-perception indicates one of three possible issues.

First, the students, having been taught in such a highly compressed manner (much like a foreign language immersion program), were able to progress rapidly in their core skill development and self-perceptions as measured by the CSI indicated this. Second, many students may be inflating their assessment of their own abilities in spite of being trained on coaching techniques. In particular, this inflation may have been exacerbated by the fact that the course was taught in such a compressed time frame. Students, not having enough time to fully synthesize neither the material nor having fully grasped the intricacies and nuances of what superior coaches do, simply felt that their abilities improved as a result of completing the course. Or, third, the instrument is not a valid assessment tool.

REFERENCES

- (1) Kinlaw, Dennis C. "Coaching for Commitment: Coaching Skills Inventory – Self" 2nd Edition, 1999, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.