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From Conceptual Mastery to Managerial Action: An Integrated Executive Communication Framework for Management Education

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Abstract

Management education develops students' analytical knowledge, yet graduates are often expected to create value in settings where knowledge must be translated into concise, audience-centered recommendations. This article introduces the Integrated Executive Communication Framework (IECF), a theoretically grounded model that conceptualizes managerial communication as a developmental process connecting conceptual understanding with organizational action. The framework integrates four stages: Conceptual Mastery, Cognitive Translation, Executive Communication, and Managerial Action. Drawing on research in conceptual learning, cognitive load, bounded rationality, experiential learning, and managerial communication, the article develops four propositions explaining why each stage is necessary and why weakness in an earlier stage may constrain later performance. An exploratory classroom implementation involving 146 undergraduate business students across four upper-level business courses is presented as feasibility evidence rather than causal validation. The same students completed one pre-implementation and one post-implementation presentation, both scored with the same four-dimension, five-point anchored rubric. Following concise guidance emphasizing clear understanding, simplicity, brevity, and actionable ideas, pooled descriptive scores increased across all four indicators, with the largest changes in simplicity and brevity. Because the implementation used one instructor, no comparison group, and an instructional rubric without independent psychometric validation, the findings are interpreted cautiously. The article's principal contribution is theoretical and pedagogical: it offers management educators a decision-centered model for moving students from knowing, to translating, to prioritizing, to recommending.

Keywords

Management Education, Executive Communication, Cognitive Load, Managerial Decision Making, Experiential Learning, Business Communication

1. Introduction

Management education has long treated analytical competence as a central marker of student development. Across accounting, economics, finance, marketing, entrepreneurship, organizational behavior, and strategy, students are taught to interpret evidence, apply disciplinary frameworks, evaluate alternatives, and defend conclusions. These capabilities are indispensable. Yet managerial work does not end when an analysis is correct. Organizational value is created when analysis can be understood by others, prioritized under conditions of limited attention, and translated into a decision or course of action.

This distinction exposes a persistent pedagogical gap. Academic assignments often reward conceptual correctness, completeness, documentation, and methodological rigor. Managerial environments frequently reward a different but complementary capability: the ability to preserve analytical integrity while communicating only what a decision maker needs to understand, judge, and act. A student may accurately analyze an industry using Porter's Five Forces or evaluate a strategic alternative using financial evidence and still struggle to explain the implications to an executive audience. Conversely, polished delivery can create the appearance of competence even when the underlying reasoning is weak. Management education therefore requires a model that treats conceptual understanding and executive communication as interdependent rather than separate competencies.

Several established literatures illuminate portions of this problem. Educational psychology explains how learners organize and demonstrate understanding (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Ambrose et al., 2010). Cognitive Load Theory explains why unnecessary complexity impairs comprehension (Sweller, 1988; Sweller et al., 2011). Research on active and generative learning emphasizes that knowledge becomes more durable when learners explain, apply, and refine it (Chi & Wylie, 2014; Fiorella & Mayer, 2015; Kolb, 1984). Management theory emphasizes bounded rationality, limited attention, and the need to make decisions under constraints (Simon, 1947, 1955). Executive communication frameworks emphasize concise, logically organized, audience-centered messages (Minto, 2021). Each tradition is valuable, but management educators still lack a simple developmental model that connects these insights from disciplinary understanding to managerial action.

This article introduces the Integrated Executive Communication Framework (IECF) to address that gap. The IECF proposes four interdependent stages: Con-

ceptual Mastery, Cognitive Translation, Executive Communication, and Managerial Action. The model begins with the premise that a learner must understand before simplifying, must simplify without distorting before prioritizing, and must prioritize before offering a decision-useful recommendation. Communication is therefore not treated as a cosmetic final step added to analytical work. It is the process through which disciplinary knowledge becomes usable in managerial contexts.

The article makes three contributions to management education. First, it integrates theories of learning, cognition, communication, and managerial decision making into a single decision-centered pedagogical model. Second, it advances four theoretical propositions that make the framework more precise and empirically testable. Third, it translates the model into an instructional protocol that can be embedded across management courses rather than confined to a standalone communication class. An exploratory classroom implementation is included to demonstrate feasibility and to motivate future research, but it is not presented as causal validation of the framework.

2. From Knowing to Doing: Theoretical Foundations of the IECF

2.1. Conceptual Mastery: Understanding before Communication

The first stage of the IECF is Conceptual Mastery: the development of accurate, integrated understanding of the relevant business concept, problem, or analytical method. This stage draws on a broad educational literature distinguishing meaningful understanding from memorization. The revised taxonomy of Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), for example, emphasizes cognitive processes that move from remembering toward understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. In management education, this distinction matters because managerial problems rarely arrive in the structured form found in textbooks. Students must recognize relevant concepts, interpret ambiguous evidence, and connect ideas across functional boundaries.

Research on generative learning and active engagement reinforces this view. Learners develop stronger mental models when they organize information, generate explanations, compare alternatives, and connect new material with prior knowledge (Chi & Wylie, 2014; Fiorella & Mayer, 2015). Experiential learning similarly emphasizes cycles of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application (Kolb, 1984). These traditions suggest that a learner who can reproduce a definition may possess factual knowledge without possessing the conceptual structure needed to adapt that knowledge to a novel managerial problem.

For the IECF, conceptual mastery is not synonymous with exhaustive detail. It is the ability to identify the essential relationships, assumptions, and implications that make a concept useful. This distinction becomes important later in the framework because effective simplification and prioritization depend on knowing what can be omitted without distorting meaning. Learners who lack an integrated un-

derstanding often compensate by repeating terminology, presenting every available detail, or relying on a template without recognizing which elements matter most in the current context.

2.2. Cognitive Translation: Reducing Complexity without Reducing Rigor

Conceptual knowledge remains privately held until it can be made accessible to an audience. The second stage, Cognitive Translation, concerns the ability to express complex ideas in a form that reduces unnecessary cognitive burden while preserving conceptual integrity. Cognitive Load Theory provides the primary foundation for this stage. Working memory is limited, and learning or decision making deteriorates when irrelevant complexity consumes cognitive capacity that could otherwise be devoted to essential relationships (Sweller, 1988; Clark et al., 2006; Sweller et al., 2011).

The pedagogical implication is not that complex business ideas should be made simplistic. Rather, complexity should be organized. Cognitive translation may involve replacing unnecessary jargon with familiar language, sequencing ideas from foundational to advanced, using examples or analogies, displaying relationships visually, or separating a core conclusion from supporting detail. In each case, the communicator reduces extraneous complexity without changing the underlying claim.

This distinction is especially important in management education, where technical vocabulary can be mistaken for sophistication. A student may be able to describe competitive advantage using specialized terminology while still failing to explain why customers choose one firm over another. Translation requires the learner to recognize the conceptual core and adapt the explanation to the audience's existing knowledge. That act can itself be evidence of deeper understanding because it requires the learner to distinguish essential from nonessential information.

2.3. Executive Communication: Prioritizing for Limited Managerial Attention

Cognitive accessibility is necessary but not sufficient for managerial communication. The third stage, Executive Communication, addresses the conditions under which organizational decisions are actually made. Simon's theory of bounded rationality argues that decision makers operate with incomplete information, finite time, and limited computational capacity (Simon, 1947, 1955). Attention is therefore scarce. A technically accurate and understandable analysis can still fail if the central issue, recommendation, or evidence is buried beneath material that is not necessary for the decision.

Executive communication responds to this constraint through disciplined prioritization. The communicator asks not, "What do I know?" but, "What does this audience need in order to make a sound judgment?" This shift changes the organ-

ization of a presentation or report. Conclusions and recommendations move earlier. Evidence is selected according to decision relevance. Risks, alternatives, assumptions, and implementation implications are made visible. Supporting detail remains available, but it no longer controls the structure of the message.

Minto's (2021) Pyramid Principle illustrates this logic by organizing communication around a governing conclusion supported by logically grouped evidence. Its practical influence is substantial, particularly in consulting and corporate settings. Yet such frameworks usually begin after the analytical work has already been completed. They offer guidance on how to structure a message but less guidance on how educators can develop the underlying progression from disciplinary understanding to audience-centered prioritization. The IECF extends that logic backward into the learning process by treating executive communication as dependent on prior conceptual mastery and cognitive translation.

2.4. Managerial Action: Communication as Decision Utility

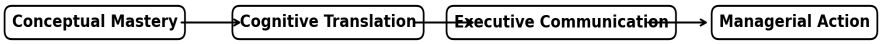
The fourth stage, Managerial Action, distinguishes the IECF from models that end once a message is clear or persuasive. Management education ultimately prepares students to influence decisions, allocate resources, solve problems, and improve organizational outcomes. Drucker's work consistently emphasized effectiveness and results rather than knowledge accumulation as ends in themselves (Drucker, 1954, 1967). In that spirit, the IECF treats decision utility as the culminating objective of communication.

Managerial Action does not require students to pretend that ambiguous problems have certain answers. A sound recommendation may be conditional, may identify tradeoffs, or may propose additional information before commitment. What matters is that the communicator makes the implications of the analysis explicit. Students should be able to answer a deceptively simple question: Based on this analysis, what should a manager decide, do, investigate, stop, fund, change, or monitor?

This final stage also changes assessment. A presentation can be accurate, understandable, and concise while still leaving the audience unsure what follows. By requiring an explicit connection between analysis and action, the IECF encourages students to treat communication as decision support rather than academic reporting.

3. The Integrated Executive Communication Framework

The four stages form a developmental sequence rather than four independent presentation criteria. Conceptual Mastery supplies the intellectual substance of the message. Cognitive Translation makes that substance accessible. Executive Communication prioritizes translated knowledge around the informational needs of decision makers. Managerial Action connects the prioritized message to a decision or organizational response. **Figure 1** summarizes the framework.



Note. The arrows represent proposed developmental dependencies rather than a claim that all managerial communication unfolds in a strictly linear temporal sequence.

Figure 1. The integrated executive communication framework.

The sequence is hierarchical in a limited but important sense. The IECF does not claim that managerial communication always unfolds in a perfectly linear order. Managers often revisit assumptions, refine an analysis after receiving questions, or change a recommendation when new information appears. The framework instead proposes logical dependency: later stages are more likely to be effective when earlier stages are sufficiently developed. A communicator cannot reliably simplify a concept that is misunderstood, cannot prioritize information for an executive audience if the conceptual relationships are unclear, and cannot make a defensible recommendation if relevant evidence has been distorted or omitted.

This dependency is what differentiates the IECF from a simple communication rubric. Accuracy, simplicity, brevity, and actionability are observable performance indicators, but the underlying theoretical constructs are broader. Accuracy is evidence of conceptual mastery; simplicity is one observable manifestation of cognitive translation; brevity is one manifestation of disciplined prioritization for limited attention; and actionability is one manifestation of decision utility. The constructs should therefore not be reduced to the four rubric labels used in the exploratory classroom implementation.

Theoretical Propositions

Proposition 1. Higher levels of conceptual mastery will increase a learner's capacity to translate complex disciplinary knowledge into simpler explanations without sacrificing accuracy.

This proposition follows from the premise that simplification requires discrimination. Learners must know which distinctions are essential, which details are supportive, and which terminology can be replaced without changing meaning. Weak conceptual structures make such discrimination difficult and encourage either excessive detail or oversimplification.

Proposition 2. Cognitive translation will mediate the relationship between conceptual mastery and executive communication effectiveness.

Conceptual mastery alone does not guarantee audience understanding. Translation converts internally organized knowledge into a form that another person can process. The IECF therefore predicts that strong conceptual understanding will contribute more fully to executive communication when learners can adapt language, sequencing, examples, and level of detail to the audience.

Proposition 3. Executive communication effectiveness will increase the decision utility of disciplinary knowledge by directing managerial attention toward the information most relevant to judgment.

Even understandable information can overwhelm a decision maker when it is

poorly prioritized. By organizing communication around the problem, recommendation, evidence, alternatives, risks, and implementation implications, executive communication increases the probability that analysis will influence managerial judgment rather than merely transfer information.

Proposition 4. Deficiencies in earlier IECF stages will constrain performance in later stages, such that weaknesses in conceptual mastery or cognitive translation will reduce the quality of subsequent executive communication and managerial recommendations.

The fourth proposition captures the framework's developmental logic. The proposed sequence is therefore empirically testable. Future studies can examine whether earlier-stage scores predict later-stage outcomes, whether translation mediates the mastery-communication relationship, and whether decision utility improves when communication is explicitly organized for managerial attention (Table 1).

Table 1. IECF stages, observable indicators, and theoretical propositions.

IECF Stage	Core Question	Illustrative Observable Indicator	Theoretical Role
Conceptual Mastery	Do I understand the issue accurately?	Accuracy	Provides the substantive foundation for all later stages.
Cognitive Translation	Can I make the idea accessible without distortion?	Simplicity	Translates internal understanding into audience-processable form.
Executive Communication	What does this decision maker need first?	Brevity/prioritization	Directs scarce managerial attention toward decision-relevant information.
Managerial Action	What should happen because of this analysis?	Actionability	Connects communication to decision utility and organizational response.

4. Teaching the IECF in Management Courses

The practical value of the IECF depends on whether faculty can integrate it into ordinary disciplinary instruction without replacing essential content. The framework is designed as an overlay rather than a separate course. A marketing instructor can use it when students present a segmentation recommendation; a human resource management instructor can use it when students propose a retention strategy; an entrepreneurship instructor can use it for an investor or lender briefing; and a strategy instructor can use it for a board-level recommendation. The disciplinary content changes, but the developmental sequence remains stable.

Implementation begins by changing the question students believe an assignment is asking. Traditional prompts can implicitly encourage reporting: explain the concept, summarize the case, present the analysis, or describe the findings. IECF-oriented prompts add a decision audience and a required action. Students may still conduct the same analytical work, but they must organize the output

around what a manager needs to decide.

A practical classroom protocol can be organized around four recurring questions. First, "What do you know, and why is it correct?" requires students to establish Conceptual Mastery with appropriate evidence. Second, "How would you explain this to an intelligent non-specialist?" requires Cognitive Translation. Third, "What does the decision maker need first, and what can move to supporting detail?" requires Executive Communication. Fourth, "What should happen as a result of this analysis?" requires Managerial Action. Repeating the same questions across assignments creates a common language for feedback and helps students see communication as part of managerial reasoning rather than as a separate presentation skill.

Feedback should mirror the framework. Instead of commenting primarily on eye contact, slide design, or delivery mechanics, instructors can identify where the decision pathway breaks down. A technically incorrect claim is a mastery problem. Excessive jargon or unnecessary complexity is a translation problem. A recommendation hidden at the end of a presentation is an executive communication problem. A strong analysis without a clear implication is a managerial action problem. This diagnostic use of the framework may be more educationally useful than a single holistic communication score.

The framework also supports deliberate practice. Early assignments can isolate one stage—for example, asking students to explain a difficult concept in 150 words without losing accuracy. Later assignments can require the full progression through all four stages. Repeated cycles of performance, feedback, revision, and re-performance are consistent with deliberate practice and experiential learning approaches that emphasize active refinement rather than one-time exposure (Ericsson et al., 1993; Kolb, 1984).

An Illustrative IECF Assignment Structure

Consider a strategic management case in which students recommend whether a firm should enter a new market. A conventional presentation might begin with company history, environmental analysis, industry structure, financial projections, alternatives, and finally a recommendation. An IECF-oriented version begins with the decision: "Enter the market through a limited regional launch rather than a national rollout." Students then identify the two or three pieces of evidence that most directly support that recommendation, explain technical analyses in accessible terms, identify the principal risks and assumptions, and conclude with implementation priorities and a trigger for reevaluation.

Nothing in this structure eliminates analytical rigor. The full analysis can remain in an appendix or supporting document. What changes is the student's responsibility to decide which evidence belongs in the primary communication and why. This forces learners to move from demonstrating that they completed an analysis toward demonstrating that they understand its managerial significance (**Table 2**).

Table 2. A Practical IECF teaching protocol.

Stage	Student Prompt	Instructor Feedback Focus	Example Output
Conceptual Mastery	What do you know, and why is it correct?	Accuracy, assumptions, evidence, conceptual relationships	Analysis or diagnostic statement
Cognitive Translation	How would you explain this to an intelligent non-specialist?	Jargon, sequencing, examples, unnecessary complexity	Plain-language explanation or visual
Executive Communication	What does the decision maker need first?	Prioritization, recommendation-first structure, relevant evidence	Executive summary or briefing
Managerial Action	What should happen next?	Decision, implementation, risks, contingencies, measures	Recommendation and next-step plan

5. Exploratory Classroom Implementation

The theoretical framework was accompanied by an exploratory classroom implementation to examine whether the communication principles underlying the IECF could be incorporated into authentic undergraduate business courses and whether student performance changed descriptively following focused instructional guidance. The implementation was not designed as an experiment and should not be interpreted as causal validation of the framework. The analysis used a within-student paired pre/post structure: the same 146 students contributed one pre-implementation presentation and one post-implementation presentation.

5.1. Educational Context and Participants

The implementation occurred during one academic term at a private university in the southeastern United States. Participants were 146 undergraduate business students enrolled in four upper-level business courses taught by the same instructor. Each student completed one presentation before the instructional intervention and one presentation after it, yielding 146 matched pre/post pairs and 292 presentations in total. All 146 students were represented in both the pre- and post-implementation descriptive averages. Pre- and post-implementation presentations were evaluated using the same four-dimension instrument—Accuracy, Simplicity, Brevity, and Actionability—on the same five-point scale. The pre-implementation scores therefore were not reconstructed from conventional course grades or converted retrospectively to a different measurement framework; the same four outcome dimensions were recorded before and after the instructional guidance.

5.2. Instructional Intervention

Following the pre-implementation presentation, students received concise instructional guidance emphasizing the communication principles underlying the IECF. Students were told to demonstrate that they understood what they were presenting by expressing their ideas clearly. Particular emphasis was placed on simplicity and brevity: students were encouraged to reduce unnecessary complexity, eliminate information that did not materially advance the central message, and communicate essential ideas efficiently. Students were also instructed to make

their ideas actionable by moving beyond description toward communication that could inform a managerial decision or course of action. The intervention was not a separate multi-session training program and did not involve a formal sequence of repeated feedback cycles. Rather, these expectations were incorporated into the instructor's guidance for the post-implementation presentation.

5.3. Exploratory Assessment Indicators

Student presentations were evaluated using a four-dimension analytic rubric measuring Accuracy, Simplicity, Brevity, and Actionability. Each dimension was independently assessed on a five-point scale: 1 (Beginning), 2 (Developing), 3 (Competent), 4 (Proficient), and 5 (Exemplary). The instrument contained written performance descriptors for each of the five scoring levels within each dimension. These descriptors provided a common assessment structure while allowing instructors to exercise professional judgment in determining the score most representative of student performance. The same rubric, scoring scale, and performance descriptors were applied to the pre- and post-implementation presentations. Each of the 146 students contributed one presentation at each assessment point, resulting in 292 presentations and 1168 individual dimension ratings. The complete five-point assessment rubric is reproduced in **Appendix**. The rubric served as an instructional assessment instrument and has not been established as a psychometrically validated measure.

5.4. Descriptive Results

Descriptive averages were calculated from the 146 matched student pairs. Across the pooled four-course sample, Accuracy increased from 2.8 to 3.4, Simplicity from 2.8 to 3.9, Brevity from 2.3 to 3.9, and Actionability from 3.2 to 3.4. The largest descriptive changes occurred in Brevity and Simplicity, two dimensions explicitly emphasized in the instructional guidance. Actionability was also explicitly emphasized but showed a smaller descriptive change. Table 3 presents the pooled results. Because the current summary data aggregate students across the four courses, the manuscript does not claim that the magnitude of change was uniform across disciplinary contexts. Course-specific sample sizes and pre/post means should be reported if the underlying course-level records are available; without those data, it cannot be determined from the pooled averages whether the observed pattern was consistent across all four courses or concentrated in particular courses.

Table 3. Exploratory paired student performance before and after IECF-oriented instruction (N = 146).

Indicator	Pre-Implementation Mean (1 - 5)	Post-Implementation Mean (1 - 5)	Absolute Change	Percentage Change
Accuracy	2.8	3.4	+0.6	21.4%
Simplicity	2.8	3.9	+1.1	39.3%

Continued

Brevity	2.3	3.9	+1.6	69.6%
Actionability	3.2	3.4	+0.2	6.3%

Note. Scores are on a five-point scale (1 - 5). N = 146 students. Pre- and post-implementation observations were paired within the same students, with each student contributing one pre-implementation and one post-implementation presentation (146 pre presentations; 146 post presentations; 292 presentations total). Each presentation was rated on Accuracy, Simplicity, Brevity, and Actionability using the same anchored analytic rubric, producing 584 dimension ratings at each time point and 1168 dimension ratings overall. Written performance anchors guided scoring, with the instructor exercising professional judgment within those criteria. Results are pooled across four courses. No comparison group, independent raters, or inferential statistical tests were used.

These changes should be interpreted narrowly. The paired descriptive structure establishes that the pre- and post-implementation averages came from the same students and were measured with the same four-dimension, five-point instrument; it does not establish that the instructional guidance caused the observed improvements. Students continued to receive normal course instruction over the same period, no comparison group was used, and the instructor both delivered the guidance and scored the presentations. The instrument also has not undergone independent psychometric validation. Accordingly, the implementation is best understood as exploratory within-student feasibility evidence that motivates formal testing of the IECF rather than as validation of the model.

The descriptive pattern is nevertheless useful for generating hypotheses. The largest changes occurred in Brevity and Simplicity, dimensions that were directly emphasized when students were asked to communicate essential ideas clearly, simply, and concisely. Actionability was also explicitly emphasized, yet its descriptive increase was comparatively modest. One theoretical possibility is that producing defensible managerial recommendations requires greater domain knowledge and judgment than simplifying or condensing an explanation; however, the present design cannot determine why the dimensions changed by different amounts. The data also do not establish a sequential developmental process, mediation, or differential rates of stage development. Course-level analyses, independent raters, validated measures, and stronger comparison designs are needed to test those possibilities.

6. Discussion

The IECF responds to a practical and theoretical problem in management education: disciplinary knowledge and communication are often taught as if they were separate outcomes even though managerial work requires them to operate together. The framework reframes communication as the mechanism through which analytical knowledge becomes decision-useful. Its central claim is not that brevity is inherently superior, that all managerial communication should be simplified, or that academic forms of communication are inappropriate. Rather, different communicative purposes require different forms of cognitive organization. Scholarly communication often values completeness and methodological trans-

parency. Executive communication values disciplined prioritization while preserving enough evidence for sound judgment. Management students need to learn both.

The framework also clarifies why communication instruction cannot be reduced to delivery technique. Eye contact, slide design, vocal presence, and professionalism may affect message reception, but they do not ensure that the communicator understands the analysis, has translated it faithfully, has selected the information most relevant to the decision, or can specify a defensible course of action. The IECF therefore shifts the instructional center of gravity from performance mechanics toward the cognitive organization of knowledge.

This framing provides a clear point of differentiation from existing executive communication tools. The Pyramid Principle and related practitioner models offer powerful guidance once a communicator knows what the central recommendation is and which evidence matters. The IECF addresses the educational process that precedes that moment. It asks how learners develop the capacity to identify what is essential, translate it for a particular audience, and connect it to action. In that respect, the framework is not a substitute for established communication models; it provides a developmental foundation on which they can operate.

The exploratory implementation also suggests why an integrated framework may be useful to instructors. A common vocabulary makes feedback portable across assignments and courses. Students who encounter the same progression in marketing, human resource management, entrepreneurship, and strategy may begin to recognize that executive communication is not discipline-specific. The transferable capability is the ability to transform specialized knowledge into decision support.

For management educators, the most important implication is curricular. Communication should not be delegated exclusively to a business communication course and then assumed to transfer automatically. Every management course presents opportunities to practice the translation from disciplinary mastery to managerial action. Embedding repeated decision-centered communication tasks across the curriculum may better approximate the environments graduates will encounter in organizations, where analysis and communication occur together.

Boundary Conditions and What the IECF Does Not Claim

Several boundaries are important. First, the IECF is a pedagogical model, not a universal theory of organizational communication. Organizational politics, power, culture, emotion, credibility, interpersonal relationships, and communication channels all shape whether a message influences action. The framework isolates a narrower question: how management educators can help learners transform disciplinary understanding into cognitively accessible, decision-centered communication.

Second, the sequence is logically developmental but not necessarily temporally linear. Experienced managers may move iteratively among analysis, translation,

stakeholder questions, and recommendations. The IECF predicts dependencies among capabilities, not a rigid four-step script for every managerial conversation.

Third, the framework does not equate brevity with quality. A message can be brief and dangerously incomplete. Brevity is useful only when it reflects disciplined selection rather than omission of material facts. Similarly, simplicity is valuable only when it preserves conceptual accuracy. These qualifications are essential because the framework's purpose is to integrate rigor with accessibility, not to privilege style over substance.

7. Limitations and Research Agenda

The exploratory implementation has substantial limitations. It involved one institution, one instructor, one academic term, no comparison group, and an instructor-developed assessment rubric. The same instructor who taught the framework evaluated student performance, creating potential expectancy and measurement effects. The available descriptive averages do not provide variance estimates, inferential tests, or effect sizes. No evidence of inter-rater reliability, internal consistency, construct validity, criterion validity, or long-term transfer is yet available. The results therefore cannot establish causality or validate the developmental sequence.

These limitations point directly to the next research phase. A multi-section quasi-experimental study could compare IECF instruction with conventional presentation instruction while using common assignments and independent, blinded raters. Pre-registered hypotheses could test changes in the four performance indicators, report effect sizes and confidence intervals, and evaluate whether gains persist on a later transfer task. Rubric development should proceed separately from intervention testing, with multiple raters and evidence of reliability and construct validity.

The propositions also support more sophisticated tests of the model. Longitudinal data could examine whether Conceptual Mastery predicts subsequent Cognitive Translation and whether translation mediates the relationship between mastery and executive communication. Structural equation modeling or multilevel approaches may eventually be appropriate once reliable measures and sufficiently large samples are available. Experimental manipulations could test whether reorganizing the same analysis for executive attention improves decision quality among audience members, thereby moving beyond student communication scores toward the framework's ultimate outcome: decision utility.

Future work should also examine boundary conditions. The importance of each stage may vary by expertise, discipline, culture, task complexity, and communication medium. Graduate students and practicing managers may begin with stronger contextual judgment than undergraduates. Quantitative disciplines may present different translation challenges than behavioral disciplines. Cross-cultural differences in hierarchy and directness may alter what counts as effective executive communication. Digital and AI-assisted communication may change how stu-

dents generate and refine messages while making conceptual verification even more important.

These studies would transform the IECF from a theoretically grounded pedagogical framework into a cumulative research program. The present article provides the conceptual architecture and an initial demonstration of classroom feasibility; stronger causal and measurement claims should await stronger designs.

8. Conclusion

Management education succeeds only partially when students can analyze a problem but cannot translate the analysis into a form that supports organizational judgment. The Integrated Executive Communication Framework offers a developmental way to conceptualize that transition. Conceptual Mastery establishes accurate understanding. Cognitive Translation makes that understanding accessible without sacrificing rigor. Executive Communication prioritizes information for decision makers operating under constraints. Managerial Action connects the message to organizational implications and choices.

The framework's contribution is therefore broader than a presentation rubric. It proposes that communication is one of the mechanisms through which management learning becomes organizational capability. For educators, that proposition creates a practical challenge: assignments should not end with "Show me what you know." They should increasingly require students to answer, "What does a decision maker need to understand, and what should happen next?"

The exploratory classroom results show that this approach can be implemented across multiple business courses and provide a common language for instruction and feedback. They do not prove that the IECF causes better communication or better decisions. That work remains for future research. The immediate contribution is a theoretically grounded and testable model that connects learning, communication, and action—and a pedagogical structure management educators can begin to examine, refine, and challenge.

Author Contributions

The author was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, writing—original draft preparation, and writing—review and editing of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Appendix. Integrated Executive Communication Framework (IECF) Assessment Rubric

Performance levels: 5 = Exemplary; 4 = Proficient; 3 = Competent; 2 = Developing; 1 = Beginning

Dimension	Score	Original performance anchor
Accuracy	5	Demonstrates sophisticated analysis using appropriate concepts and recommendations are fully supported by evidence.
	4	Correctly applies concepts with strong supporting analysis.
	3	Demonstrates concepts with minor errors or limited depth.
	2	Limited or incorrect conceptual knowledge; important issues overlooked.
	1	Little or no meaningful conceptual knowledge evident.
Simplicity	5	Demonstrates proficient use of being able to explain complex concepts to a wide audience and is easily understood.
	4	Effectively demonstrates the ability to explain complex concepts to a wide audience and is understood.
	3	Demonstrates adequate ability to communicate complex concepts to a wide audience.
	2	Limited ability to communicated complex concepts to a wide audience.
	1	Fails to communicate concepts clearly and effectively.
Brevity	5	Demonstrates proficient use of presenting information concisely and emphasizing key points.
	4	Demonstrates effective use of presenting information concisely and emphasizing some essential points.
	3	Demonstrates satisfactory use of presenting information concisely but does not emphasis key points.
	2	Demonstrates limited or inconsistent use of presenting information concisely.
	1	Does not demonstrate use of presenting information concisely.
Actionability	5	Develops highly effective strategy and provides clear recommendations.
	4	Provides well-developed strategies that can be acted upon by executives.
	3	Strategies are generally appropriate but may not be executable.
	2	Strategies are weak or incomplete and make not be executable.
	1	Strategies or recommendations are absent or inappropriate.