A COMPARISON OF STUDENT OUTCOMES AND OVERALL RETENTION BETWEEN A 10-WEEK ACCELERATED AND A 15-WEEK TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM IN A POSTSECONDARY APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This ex post facto comparison study of a postsecondary apprenticeship program at a naval ship construction company examined 8 years of academic performance and program completion data for two curricular formats: a 15-week traditional group (1,259 apprentices) and a 10-week accelerated group (736 apprentices). The two groups were investigated to determine if there were significant differences in retention, course grades, and overall GPA between the two curriculum lengths. A chi-square test for association between groups and retention found a statistically significant relationship between retention and curriculum length, $\chi^2 (1, N = 1,995) = 65.84, p < .001$, with retention greater for the 10-week curriculum. Six of 12 accelerated courses had higher grades (descriptively) than the corresponding traditional 15-week courses, and 4 of 12 accelerated 10-week courses had significantly higher grades (statistically) than the corresponding traditional 15-week courses. The overall GPA for completers was significantly higher for the 10-week curriculum ($n = 474, M = 3.02, SD = .79$) than for the 15-week curriculum ($n = 862, M = 2.83, SD = .81$), $t (994) = -4.16, p < .001, d = -0.26$. This study has added to the limited body of literature on apprenticeship studies and workforce development by exploring how apprenticeship programs can be accelerated to transform inexperienced skilled labor into a high-performance workforce with a general increase in academic performance.