

THE DYNAMICS OF ACCELERATED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

As accelerated programs are maturing in higher education, and populations of non-traditional learners are soaring nationwide as well as internationally, there is still quite some ambiguity regarding the rigor and validity of these programs. Opposing sounds mainly come from full time faculty, and administrators, due to insufficient familiarity with the different teaching concepts that intensive formats require, and erroneous perceptions about student populations in general. This paper examines the reasons for the continuing growth of accelerated programs in higher education, reviews the main concerns as well as the main advantages of intensive course formats, and presents some important prerequisites and considerations for successful teaching in these courses.

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INTRODUCTION

Accelerated learning can be defined in multiple ways. Imel (2002) defines it as a multidimensional approach to learning with the learner placed at the center of the experience. Boyd (2007) specifies that accelerated learning pertains to a learning format in which students are enabled to take courses and earn credits in a shorter period of time, compared to a traditional semester format. Boyd subsequently clarifies that teaching in accelerated programs requires different approaches as teaching in a traditional semester format.

Accelerated programs have been around for about 40 years now. The trend of including this format in higher education has grown at a stunning pace. Today, adult learners form about 80% of the student population in higher education. Wlodkowski (2003) explains that accelerated programs are among the fastest-growing transformations in higher education. He points out that these programs challenge the status quo, because they redefine the very roots of academic structures, from content and numbers of instruction hours, to the need for faculty tenure. Wlodkowski adds that most accelerated programs are offered by traditional institutions that have decided to serve the ever-growing population of working adults in the college classroom.

Nonetheless, the challenges are far from over for accelerated programs. Educators tenaciously hold on to their perspectives, which are either strongly advocating or strongly disapproving intensive formats. While, on the upside this continuing difference in perspectives stimulates ongoing scrutiny and incessant strengthening of this format, the degree of best practice sharing among those involved in facilitating intensive formats seems to decelerate. In addition, accelerated programs still suffer from substandard treatment in academe. Marques (2005), for instance, reports on a NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) conference where less than 3 percent of the workshops were focused on advising adult learners. This insufficient attention to adult education at the practical level may be a major contributor to the criticism from faculty and institutional administrators, as they lack in-depth awareness of proper approaches toward this massive student community.

Inspired by the ongoing hesitance and sometimes radical aversion of many full time educators in higher education toward intensive formats, the author of this paper, also a college instructor, engaged in

extensive literature review to find answers to a number of recurring questions about accelerated formats, such as their purpose, the trend around them, concerns and advantages, strategies for success, and rigor. The remainder of this paper consists of the literature review addressing these issues, a review of the dynamics of accelerated learning, captured in a figure, and some concluding comments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Accelerated Pace of Work

It is common knowledge today that the pace of corporate change has arrived at a point where business organizations feel pressured to accelerate their activities in numbers as well as in speed, increase performance measures but decrease innovation cycles, and continuously consider management and organizational systemic advancements (Bruch & Menges, 2010). Bruch and Menges explain that being subject to constant change requires employees in contemporary workplaces to look for ways in which they can effectively deal with overloads of activities. Now that acceleration has become the new normal, Bruch and Menges recommend three rigorous steps toward preventing employee burnout and organizational crises: 1) reformulating priorities, so that employees can focus only on the real important issues; 2) reconsidering performance goals, abandoning second-rate actions, and solely focusing on actions and processes that are important to the organization; and 3) Narrowing down the focus to one thing at the time, with short revitalizing pauses in between. Bruch and Menges (2010) assert that a critical screening of activities can lead to eliminating large percentages of unimportant tasks that negatively affect overall performance. These authors have found that corporations, which limited their focus to one activity at the time enabled employees to perform faster at those activities, while slowing down in between. This led to greater output and enhanced senses of accomplishment. The trends and responses that Bruch and Menges describe above are occurring in higher education as well. There is less time to allot to unnecessary details, and the demand for accelerated programs is soaring.

Hoover, Giambatista, Sorenson, and Bommer (2010) agree that corporations increasingly question the effectiveness and relevancy of business education. According to Hoover et. al, the concerns pertain to an excessive focus on theories and a lack of behavioral and experiential practices. These authors point out that business recruiters are particularly focusing on communication and interpersonal skills, team skills, and problem solving skills in applicants. This focus from the corporate world makes intensive learning formats a fertile foundation for workplace performance.

Collins (2005) points out that employers are important stakeholders of universities, who expect that today's college graduates should have obtained more than just content information. Collins (2005) further explains employers' expectations about college education: "It must assist [students] in developing ways to process information, evaluate objectively, control for own bias, create a solution or new knowledge, and analyze the outcome (p. 174). Collins stresses that in today's complex world of work, universities have the responsibility to assist students in developing more complex ways of thinking, so that they will properly meet the demands of contemporary workplaces and society. Intensive programs were developed to be more practical and are in foundation more in tune with the demands of the workplace.

A Growing Population of Adult Learners

Intensive course formats are not only offered for business majors, but surface in all academic disciplines. As an example, Beal (2007) reports that between 1971 and 2007, 197 accelerated baccalaureate degree programs in nursing were launched, with 37 more in planning stage. Aside from the pressures from the ever-accelerating paces in business performance, Scott (1993), Daniel (2000), and Collins (2005) report that the soaring trend of intensive formats should be ascribed to the growing number of non-traditional students in higher education. Scott confirms that between 1970 and 1985, the adult student population

grew with 140%, leading to 42% of non-traditional learners in higher education in 1993. Daniel (2000) presents more recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Department of Agriculture, which reveal that about half of the US college population is 25 years or older, a trend that has increased by 50% percent in the past three decades. In addition, Daniel avers that the number of part-time students has also increased tremendously. Marques and Luna (2005) offer a comprehensive reason for the growth of the part-time student population. Based on their experiences as advisors and faculty, they have noted that not only experienced adults experience the time pressure toward accelerated progress, but students in the so-called traditional formats as well. Marques and Luna present the phenomenon of a “mixed educational society” (par. 7), gravitating to accelerated learning formats. This mixed society consists of experienced working adults, younger working adults, and “traditional” students. Daniel (2000) predicts that, based on this augmenting trend, it can be expected that more and more higher education institutions will offer intensive course formats at non-traditional times, such as evenings, weekends, and summers. She affirms that 217 out of 424 surveyed colleges and universities were including intensive course formats. Daniel’s findings date back to the year 2000, and since then the pace has only increased. To confirm this, Wlodkowski and Kasworm (2003) present the stunning 2002 data from the National Center for Education Statistics: “Seventy-three percent of all college students today are nontraditional learners” (p. 94). Focusing on a particular college that has expanded its accelerated program, Spaid and Duff (2009) report that Mount Olive College in North Carolina has witnessed an average enrollment increase of 12% each year over the last four years in a time where traditional enrollment is decreasing. They specify, “Eighty percent of the students enrolled are working adults pursuing a degree through an accelerated cohort program” (p. 104).

Accelerated learning programs are not limited to the United States. Wlodkowski (2003) mentions Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Ireland, Germany, and Australia, as examples of countries that have also been early contenders in this new trend. Wlodkowski and Kasworm (2003) aver that the majority of non-traditional learners can be found in the areas of business management, teacher education, and computer science. The next sections will provide some general facts, perceived concerns, and advantages of accelerated programs.

Some General Facts about Accelerated Courses

There is a general misnomer that accelerated courses are normal courses, squeezed in a compact format, which basically entails that there is no change in approach, just an increase of speed with the same structure. Authors such as Wlodkowski and Kasworm, 2003; Swenson, 2003; Daniel, 2000; Scott, 1993, and many others, explain that the most essential strategy in these courses is to shift from lecturing to facilitating. In other words, engaging in an accelerated course format requires a paradigm shift for instructors as well as students. The awareness levels toward their mutual responsibilities need to be heightened. In these courses, there should be great interaction, significant self-learning, and increased responsibility. Swenson (2003) explains that learning is, in fact, individual and situational, meaning that each person learns in his or her own way, and in context with his or her environment and experiences. The traditional notion of group learning through extensive in-class seating time is therefore a flawed one. Swenson (2003) warns that teaching formats and structures are not a guarantee for success.

“A learner's preferred learning style, dominant perceptual mode, role, motivation, interest in the subject matter, and other variables combine to make every individual learning transaction a universe of one” (Swenson, 2003, p. 84). What a teacher teaches in class and what a student learns are not necessarily the same thing. Students don’t learn on command. However, there is a better change to motivate them to learn when they are invited to reflect and share their perspectives.

In the course of the 30 years that accelerated programs have been around, some general traits of students in this type of program have been identified. Beal (2007) presents a concise but clear assessment for

accelerated nursing students, which accurately befits the general profile of students in accelerated courses: a) These students are generally older, in steady relationships, and oftentimes also working outside of school; b) They are highly motivated, bring valuable insights and experiences to the classroom, and often challenge traditional ways of thinking, and c) Based on their higher degree of maturity and greater motivation, they generally score higher than traditional students, particularly in areas that require critical thinking.

Collins (2005) explains that the aspect of critical thinking is one of the foundational elements of intensive courses. Because these non-traditional students can be rather challenging in the classroom, which can lead to heated debates, some educators prefer them, while others prefer traditional formats.

Disadvantages of Accelerated Courses

There is an interesting dynamic at play when it comes to intensive course formats: students generally love them, while faculty struggle with mixed feelings, and are often hesitant in acknowledging the validity of these courses. Scott (1993), Daniel (2000), and Wlodkowski (2003) address this concern from multiple angles. Scott (1993) identifies the two most frequently mentioned faculty concerns: 1) lowering academic standards to meet time constraints, and 2) lack of clarity on how to structure intensive courses differently than traditional ones. Scott's first point should also be perceived in light of pressures to lower standards so that a competitive advantage can be established or maintained over similar programs at other institutions. This is further underscored by Wlodkowski (2003), who lists some common, competition geared criticisms from faculty, such as prioritizing convenience over substance, perceived unfeasibility of covering required content in less time, infringement of educational consistency, crammed and poorly developed learning, and the referral of this alleged "inferior" format as "McEducation" and "Drive-Thru U" (p. 7), due to its fast pace.

Daniel (2000) adds an additional common faculty concern that some topics are just not suitable for accelerated formats. Yet, states Daniel, comparisons between test scores in accelerated versus traditional formats have defied this concern, as the students in the non-traditional formats scored similar to those in the traditional ones. Reviewing a number of studies on the topic, Daniel stresses that students in intensive formats seem to retain more or the same amount of information as traditional course students after the courses are over. However, there seems to be ambiguity in perspectives on success rates and achievability of courses that entail quantitative components: while some categorically discard the possibility of offering these courses in intensive formats, there are others who claim that they have had consistent success with the implementation of these topics in accelerated courses. Davies (2006), for instance, feels that any course can be taught in an accelerated format, as long as the curriculum and teaching methods are designed for such a format, and Adams, Gearhart, Miller and Roberts (2009), as well as Carlson and Lipka (2009), support Davis' contention by reporting on noted successes with the new approach of offering basic writing courses in accelerated format: improved student performance, greater motivation and higher retention rates, faster completion, and lower overall costs.

Another concern to be addressed is the narrower margin of error in accelerated courses compared to traditional courses. Due to the condensed format of the program, the quality of course instruction and achievement of learning outcomes needs to be monitored regularly (Wlodkowski & Kasworm, 2003). Students who don't possess a high level of self-regulation skills should not be allowed in this program. In addition, there needs to be well-constructed assessment on retention, level consistency, grading, and content, stress Wlodkowski and Kasworm, as these programs are usually considered cash cows and can therefore easily be abused.

Kasworm (2003) presents a final concern that was mentioned earlier in this paper, but should be readdressed here as an important reason for faculty concern about intensive formats. She clarifies that

accelerated programs, due to their practical nature, have instigated a radical overhaul of conventional education, whereby professionally qualified faculty, mostly adjuncts, turn out to be more suitable for the heavily real-world oriented student population in accelerated courses. There is, hence, a threat factor captured in this argument that tenure and other conventional academic structures may become obsolete if these courses continue to demand a more prominent place in university curricula. Interestingly, Seamon's (2004) article radiates exactly this sentiment, as he attempts to defy the claims that accelerated courses in psychology are considered superior compared to those offered in the traditional format. Seamon's measures over a three-year period found that accelerated courses were considered either better or similar in affinity for learning. Based on his findings, Seamon predicts that the initially perceived superiority of accelerated courses will either fade or remain stationary.

Advantages of Accelerated Courses

The most obvious advantages of accelerated courses were interwoven in the concerns above: shorter course seating time and a faster pace toward degree completion, a more to-the-point approach and greater attunement into real-world preparedness. However, there are some deeper and more specific advantages to intensive formats, such as Wlodkowski's (2003) assertion that multiple comparative studies between the level and depth of learning between students in traditional courses and those in accelerated courses have suggested "that accelerated courses provide levels of learning indistinguishable from or greater than those demonstrated by the younger students in conventional courses" (p. 8).

Lee and Horfsall (2010) posit that there are advantages for multiple stakeholders, and mention the financial windfall for the universities, fulfillment of the call for more flexibility from students, and greater compatibility with overseas university calendars. Their study yielded additional student and faculty identified advantages such as an increased sense of community among students, greater frequency of feedback, and greater opportunity to focus on a single topic.

Several studies (Scott, 1993; Conrad, 1996, Lee & Horfsall, 2010; Kucsera & Zimmaro, 2010) found that, given a specific set of prerequisites, to be presented in more depth in the next section, these courses are regarded rewarding and powerful learning experiences by all constituents. In a comparative study of accelerated and traditional courses across multiple departments, Kucsera and Zimmaro (2010), for instance, found that for both formats instructor ratings were rather consistent, but that course ratings differed markedly, with intensive formats clearly in the lead. Based on their findings, Kucsera and Zimmaro assert, "These findings provide further evidence that negative beliefs concerning intensive courses may be unjustified, and intensive courses may be as or more effective than those presented in traditional formats" (p. 62). They further state, "These findings support prior research that has found equivalent—and at times superior—learning outcomes from intensive courses" (p. 66). Agreeing with Kucsera and Zimmaro's findings is Johnson (2009), who presents the results of a qualitative research in which she interviewed 18 faculty members teaching in accelerated formats. The study focused on the effects of reduced seat time in their courses. A majority of the interviewed faculty members stressed that the reduced seat time was not an impediment to the quality and depth of their courses. These faculty members referred to increased responsibility from course participants, the low tolerance on absences, the high level of out-of-class preparation, and the greater focus from both students and instructors on the course topic. Johnson (2009), who audited some of these courses for a firsthand experience, stressed the high interaction she observed. Students came in highly prepared, with questions, and demonstrated thus that they had allotted significant time to the course material outside of class. As a result of her study, Johnson (2009) affirms, "The findings challenge critics who believe the accelerated delivery format compromises academic quality" (p. 149).

Spaid and Duff (2009) identify two important advantages of students in accelerated courses: 1) individual student development, and 2) group development. Specifically referring to the cohort format, Spaid and

Duff emphasize, “Cohorts must be purposefully formed and structured to evolve into cohesive working groups. Targeted development of a cohort is crucial if the students are going to persevere to graduation” (p. 104).

A PATH FOR THE FUTURE

In order to ensure greater alignment between higher education and the needs of employers in the future, some important issues will have to be addressed in accelerated programs. Daniel (2000) emphasizes that, in order to ensure greater success and increased student satisfaction, faculty should include strategies that may be different from traditional formats. She thereby refers to instructor’s organization and pre-course preparation, including timely syllabus distribution, a creative variety of methods and approaches, and clearly defined course outcomes. Scott (1993) interviewed college instructors and students in English and Marketing, and arrived at the following prerequisites for intensive course formats: a) Attitudes toward the course: instructors as well as students maintained an entirely different attitude toward accelerated courses than they did toward traditional ones, not only regarding the context, but also in their approach to course content. Overall, there was greater creativity in knowledge dissemination, less redundancy, and more interaction; b) Mental investment and commitment: Instructors and students agreed that intensive course formats required more mental investment and commitment, which they felt was lacking in semester long courses, and c) No absences: the fact that there is a zero tolerance for absences in these courses also serves as a major motivator for students to invest more effort in these courses.

Based on the prerequisites above, Scott (1993) presents the following eight results in intensive course formats: 1) More concentrated/focused learning: instructors as well as students felt that accelerated courses engendered a continuous learning experience due to the concentrated format; 2) More in-depth participation: Due to the longer class sessions, instructors and students explained that they could engage in more in-depth discussion and classroom interaction; 3) Improved performance: Instructors and students felt that intensive formats encouraged improved performance, for a number of reasons, such as the greater concentration possibilities and the shorter duration of the course; 4) Less procrastination: Given the nature of these courses, procrastination is not possible, hence, not performed; 5) Greater stress: due to the higher concentration, the stress levels are higher, but not necessarily perceived as a negative aspect; 6) No superfluous material: Due to the short format of these courses, instructors stay the course, and get rid of unnecessary details; 7) Positive effect on future performance: students declared having learned more about themselves in the intensive course formats, having increased their sense of self-esteem, and felt better capable of undertaking future challenges, and 8) Greater student interaction: Students explained that intensive formats encouraged a greater sense of togetherness among them, due to the high pace and the frequency of team performance.

In her conclusion, Scott states, “I came to understand from students, instructors, and my own observations, that intensive courses yield qualitatively different learning experiences than semester-long courses, but the quality of those experiences depends on the presence or absence of certain attributes” (p. 436). As important “attributes” Scott (1993) lists: instructor’s approach, application of diversified teaching methods, the overall in-class environment, and the quality of the learning experience, with a focus from the instructor to create meaningful assignments and not just try to test knowledge.

In an analysis of a 2002 survey among students and faculty in accelerated programs, who had also experienced traditional formats, Poellnitz (2007) interestingly found exactly the opposite of Scott’s findings: faculty members were positive about the accelerated format, and students were positive about faculty, but a majority percentage of students felt that the accelerated format was more demanding thus more stressful, and that the traditional format was more conducive to their learning due to more organized and understandable course material. However, Poellnitz’ conclusions are based on comments from 20% of the surveyed population. Of this 20%, 58% maintained that they preferred the traditional format, which

is an overall of 11.6%. This might be too narrow a basis to generalize the findings, particularly since Poellnitz' findings are so different from all other studies.

Horfsall and Lee (2010), for instance, agree with Scott's assertions. Discussing their findings from interviews with faculty and students in accelerated courses in Australia, Horfsall and Lee assert, "From both faculty and student responses, findings indicated that the benefits of acceleration for learning rested largely on an intensified, active learning cycle of theory, practice, and feedback and a stronger social learning experience derived from peer support, guidance and feedback" (p. 196).

Wlodkowski and Kasworm (2003) concur that the lecture method of teaching does not work too well in intensive formats. Rather, they recommend that, given the general features and structure of these courses, instructors should adhere to an "active learning method of teaching" (p. 94). Collins (2005) maintains that assignments in accelerated courses need to require students to reflect, and that small group assignments should be included to prepare students to the work-based reality of dealing with different opinions and ideas. Wlodkowski and Kasworm (2003) further lay out some critical conditions:

“... trying flexible schedules instead of fifty-minute classes in the daytime; respecting adult experience as a means to inform teaching and research rather than vice versa; using adjunct faculty from the workforce as the main conduit of learning rather than full-time faculty housed at a university; and embracing new technology for teaching rather than shunning it as bothersome and unnecessary” (p. 94).

Accelerated Learning Formats and Andragogy

The findings and statements of researchers such as Swenson, Wlodkowski, Kasworm, Collins, Scott, Horfsall and Lee, Daniel, Johnson, Kucsera and Zimmaro, Beal, Davies and others, are well aligned to the concept of “andragogy,” which entails “the teaching of adults” versus “pedagogy,” which pertains to the teaching of children. Knowles, Holton and Swanson's (1998) stress the importance for educators of younger and older adults to seriously consider and apply the andragogical principles instead of the pedagogical ones. The difference between these two styles is simply facilitating versus lecturing. In case of adult learners, whether young or old, the facilitation technique works much better, as it encourages all participants to reflect, implement, and share their learning. Lecturing, on the other hand, is often compared to bank deposits: lecturers make deposits without expecting any feedback or challenge. Knowles et. al. (1998) explain that andragogy considers six focus points: 1) The need to know, which should be clearly explained to adult learners; 2) The learner's self-concept: this is often shaped by the way he or she is treated; 3) Encouraging students to integrate their work and life experiences in their learning; 4) Readiness to learn. Adult learners have made a conscious choice to be in school: they have a readiness to learn, which should be stimulated through interesting course strategies; 5) Orientation to learning. Most adults learn best when new information is presented in real-life context; and 6) Motivation is greater when students are given responsibility and ownership.

Marques (2006) recommends the andragogical concept in college courses with inclusion of, a) an approach of openness to reduce teacher-student barriers; b) multiple feedback options; c) making it contemporary and reflective; d) encouraging student input in the course structure; and e) Creating submission options for exams and tests.

Intensive learning formats were developed on basis of enabling each individual to engage in increased self-learning while using the reduced in-class sessions to share insights, dialogue about perspectives, thus learning from one another in the presence of a course facilitator (the instructor). Swenson (2003) recommends three checkpoints for educators when engaging in accelerated courses: 1) Create room for

students to actively engage in their own learning; 2) Enable ways for the student to include reflections of life and work in the process, and 3) Ensure sufficient time for reflection.

Kasworm (2003) adds, “Unlike undergraduate higher educator beliefs of a learning model based on young adults' limited maturity and understandings, adult accelerated degree programs represent a new mental model of learning, grounded in adult maturity and responsible engagement in the world beyond the classroom” (p. 27). She stresses that accelerated programs offer an effective combination of program structure and learning design geared toward actions, work identity, and competence of today's adult learners.

An interesting illustration of Kasworm's statements can be found in Armstrong's (2007) and Manjounes' (2010) doctoral dissertation studies. Armstrong's study, which specifically focused on accelerated MBA programs, concluded that students mainly enroll in these accelerated programs for extrinsic reasons, but while these were met, they ultimately felt that they found even more intrinsic gratification by going through the program. Also examining the experiences of the employers of these MBA graduates, Armstrong (2007) found that these were satisfied with the results and felt that their employees had obtained greater knowledge and skills that prepared them for advancement in their workplace. Manjounes' study, which specifically focused on accelerated undergraduate programs, found that these formats positively affected retention rates, especially when some important internal and external factors were addressed. The internal factors involved a good relationship and a high level of mutual trust and respect between instructors and students. The external factors included financial concerns, positively challenging academic requirements, and perceived advantage of their education to their career prospects and self-efficacy. Figure 1 presents the dynamics of accelerated learning, as discussed in this paper.

Explaining the Figure

Section 1 represents the three populations that make up the non-traditional learning community. Section 2 depicts the three drivers for the intensive or accelerated learning format. Section 3 presents the dual interpretation of accelerated learning: a) time based – pertaining to the reduced timeframe, and b) format based, with strategies intended to enhance (accelerate) the learning process. Section 4 captures the two opinion groups toward accelerated learning, mainly consisting of faculty and college administrators. The advocates consider this format an enhancement to learning, based on andragogical principles. The opponents claim a dilution of standards by offering semester based material in shorter timeframes. Section 5 highlights the concerns and advantages of accelerated courses, as extracted from existing literature. Section 6 embodies the most important aspect in making accelerated courses successful: attitude, and subsequently, the approach toward the program. Section 7 portrays the results from a constructive attitudinal shift toward accelerated formats. Section 8 reveals the teaching strategies that have been registered as the success guarantors in accelerated courses.

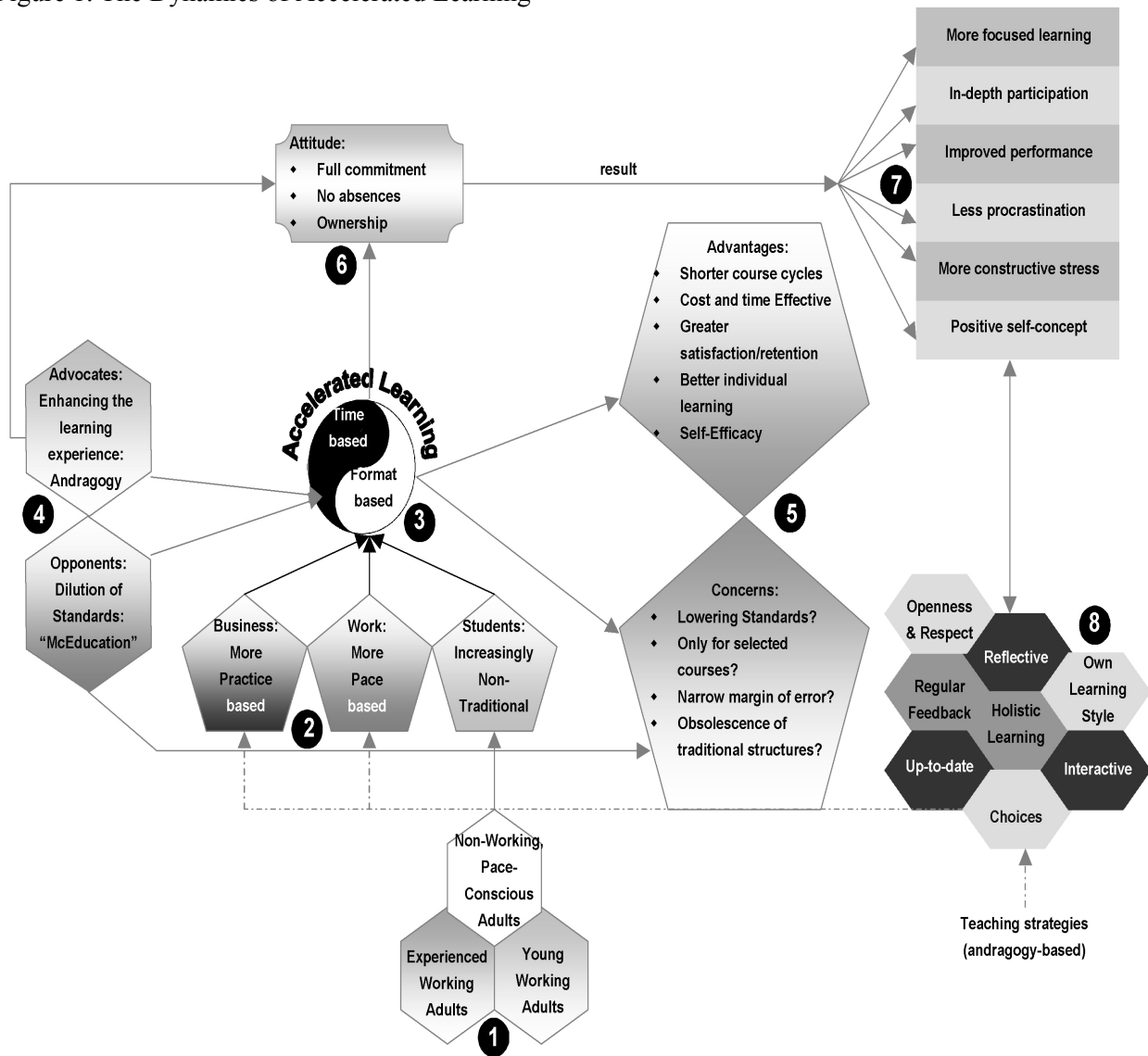
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The purpose of this paper was to address, through extensive literature review, the ongoing hesitance and sometimes radical aversion of many full time educators in higher education toward intensive formats, specifically their purpose, the trend around them, concerns and advantages, strategies for success, and rigor.

This study found that accelerated education is still a growing trend, and that its success rate strongly depends on the approach from instructors. Given the andragogical concept, a facilitative rather than a teaching approach should be utilized. Furthermore, accelerated programs will require regular and close monitoring to prevent dilution. However, when well-managed, these programs lead to greater gratification and a more rewarding learning experience for both students and course facilitators.

While there are still mixed feelings about this format, it has become apparent that accelerated courses in higher education are not likely to disappear. It seems to be quite the contrary: everything points in exactly the opposite direction: a) As business corporations keep complaining about too much theory and too little practice in business education (Hoover, Giambatista, Sorenson, & Bommer, 2010), conscious efforts are implemented to narrow the gap that causes so much dissatisfaction; b) As the pace of work output is accelerating, and creative strategies are called for to reinvent the nature of work, non-traditional learning formats seem to be the most appropriate form of preparing near-future workforce members for success; c) As more and more workforce members return to school and more and more youngsters seek to combine their post-high school jobs with further education, non-traditional formats seem to be their best and most desired option.

Figure 1: The Dynamics of Accelerated Learning



Yet, this article also brought some important concerns to the surface: there is still a significant degree of hesitation or even aversion toward accelerated learning programs, particularly from full time instructors. This attitude can have multiple reasons. One is that accelerated programs, being as practice oriented as

they are, seem to benefit more from adjunct faculty members with full time involvement in the profession about which they teach. Full time faculty could perceive this as a threat. Yet, there is also the issue of unfamiliarity with what it takes to make this format work, and resentment to teach during evenings and weekends. Many educators lack proper preparation in dealing with multiple learning populations, and often lack skills and awareness to apply situational techniques to more mature populations. This lack of insight should be seriously addressed, if intensive format offering higher education institutions, of which Business Schools are a large part, want to deliver satisfied graduates with solid foundations to the future workforce.

Based on an abundance of literature, this article has also established that accelerated programs are definitely not inferior in educational rigor (see section “*Concerns about Accelerated Courses*”). The many studies cited in this paper attest to the fact that extensive research has been done, and that findings point in exactly the opposite direction, namely, that accelerated programs usually deliver better prepared and more aware graduates. To assist in a more proper approach toward this new “normal,” this article has suggested some success strategies from instructors for improving the intensive format experience.

An important limitation to this paper is the fact that the data is based on existing literature, and not on primary data. While this was purposely implemented, to acquire a broad view on the standing of accelerated programs, it still represents a concern, due to the fact that authors from other works may have had different priorities in attaining their data.

Future research could engage in direct data generation from a series of higher educational institutions applying accelerated courses, in order to compare their experiences. Future researches could also consider expanding their focus on strategies that work, as well as ongoing shifts in student populations, from a majority traditional format to a majority non-traditional format.

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