

**BOOK REVIEW**

Saltiel, I., & Russo, C. (2001). *Cohort programming and learning: Improving educational experiences for adult learners*. Malabar, FL: Krieger. (121 pages.)

**Reviewer: Denise Gordon**

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Cohort-based programs are an effective programming strategy that is rooted in a collaborative model of learning and professional development, so say the authors, Saltiel and Russo. We know from research that adults learn best when they participate in the learning process. The authors contend that cohort-based programming is more suitable to the educational experiences of adult learners since cohort learning provides for active, cooperative, and collaborative learning strategies. The success of this book is the particular attention the authors give to the internal mechanisms of cohort-based programs and to the understanding of the adult learner. Each chapter delves into a specific area of cohort-based programs and to some degree builds upon the previous chapter.

Chapter 1 defines cohort-based programming and its connection to the learning processes. The authors point to the need to truly understand cohort-based programs' various elements before the institution, faculty, and staff design such a program. The chapter gives a detailed description and background of cohort-based programs and distinguishes cohort-based programs from more traditional programs, schedules, and faculty. There is much discussion on the benefits of cohort-based programs for adult learners.

Chapter 2 may be an unnecessary chapter, but briefly discusses the four distinct components associated with cohort-based programs: design and development, curriculum development, teaching-learning strategies used in such programs, and the type of learners who will participate in the program.

Chapter 3, titled "Design and Development," focuses on setting up a cohort-based program, which includes determining a mission statement that is the guiding focus of the cohort-based program, designing the program and courses that are sequential in nature, securing faculty involvement from the outset (getting buy-in), using faculty as mentors, planning outside social cohort activities with faculty, and preparing for continuous evaluation of the program so the ultimate goal of the program is met and the cohort is satisfied. These are considered the essential elements that structure designing and developing cohort programs for adult learners.

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"Curriculum and Development," chapter 4, discusses the relationship of course content to the cohort. Discussion centers on modifying the curriculum when necessary to accommodate the cohort, but maintaining the mission of the program. This chapter, as with the previous chapter, points out the importance for ongoing evaluation of the program.

The description of the cohort-based program learner was the critical chapter of the text. As I read chapter 6, I was reminded of a review of the literature about adult learners. Once I completed this overview of the classics, I was able to focus on how the understanding of the adult learner is paramount to guaranteeing that necessary supportive tools be part of a cohort-based program structure that facilitates adult learners' successful completion. Supportive areas such as the administrative component, recruitment and marketing possibilities, one-stop orientation, financial aid information, and registration were discussed.

The final two chapters, 7 and 8, discuss implications and the future of cohort-based programs for the workplace and adult educational systems. Cohort-based programs with respect to distance learning, the use of the Internet, networking, and partnerships with corporations—all possibilities are also discussed. These two chapters offer examples and beneficial information on cohort-based programs' invaluable use in areas such as the health care industry and the business industry. The connection to a global society and collaborative, team-building partnerships that derive from cohort-based programs is firmly demonstrated throughout these chapters.

"Teaching and Learning Strategies," chapter 5, offered some teaching strategies such as team building, group work, partnerships, group development, and learning contracts; however, the chapter could be strengthened with more concrete examples of teaching methodologies specifically designed for cohort-based programs. In addition, no new teaching-learning strategies are given for cohort-based programs. I was searching for new and innovative methods for cohort-based programs. However, the section on how to build a network and create a culture of support and collaboration was quite informative and did add depth to the chapter.

Further, while there is some discussion of cohort-based program's use with the youth population (16- to 19-year-olds) — an increasing population in many adult education settings — more is needed here. Finally, discussion of cohort-based programs' use in vocational education training and GED programs, both growing programs in adult learning departments and organizations, could also be added.

As I read the text, I continuously had pangs of "I've read this before." The book reviews the characteristics of the adult learner sev-

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eral times as each chapter reiterates them. However, since the understanding of the adult learner is so vital to the success of a cohort-based program, I may be too stringent in my judgment.

As a teaching practitioner and a curriculum and instruction administrator, I am always searching for new methods of teaching and designing programs that will spark creativity in my faculty and captivate the adult population we serve. This book enables the reader to obtain a well-rounded perspective on cohort-based programs and their use in adult learning situations. This book goes on my shelf as a "refer to" text.

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