In adult education, the term accelerated learning is usually associated with programs designed to meet the needs of adult learners. Because of family, work, and other commitments, many adults cannot participate in traditional programs, so institutions and organizations have developed programs that are accelerated or intensive in format (e.g., Donaldson 2001; Lynott 1998; Mealan and Lawrence 2000; Wlodkowski and Westover 1999). Within the field of training and development, however, the term accelerated learning is used to identify an approach to learning that is multidimensional in nature and that places the learner at the center of the experience (e.g., Greenbaum 1999; McKeon 1995; Meier 2000). This Alert examines some of the trends and issues associated with accelerated learning, including the different ways the term is defined.

The different uses and definitions of accelerated learning are an issue. Accelerated learning (AL) grew out of the work of Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian research psychiatrist, who developed the theory of “suggestopedics,” upon which the suggestopedia method of teaching is based (Bonanno 2000; Brändle and Niedermüller 1994; McKeon 1995). Sometimes called superlearning, accelerated learning, or SALT (suggestive-accelerative learning and teaching) (Brändle and Niedermüller 1994), this method has at its center, “a philosophy of learning and of life that seeks to demechanize and rehumanize the learning process and make it a whole-body, whole-mind, whole-person experience” (Meier 2000, p. xxiii). A number of modern movements have influenced AL, including natural learning, the theory of multiple intelligences, learning style research, collaborative learning, and the decline in behaviorism as the dominant educational philosophy (ibid.).

Many parallels exist between the techniques or strategies used in AL and those that are recommended for adult learning: nonthreatening teaching-learning environments, teachers and learners as equals in collaborative environments, the use of small groups, and the importance of learners’ experience as a resource. AL also stresses the use of multisensory learning environments that tap into multiple intelligences and make use of both the right and left brain (Gill and Meier 1989; Greenbaum 1999; McKeon 1995). However, these practices are not widespread in adult education, although they are advocated by those in the field of training and development who are proponents of AL.

When the adult education literature speaks of accelerated programs or learning, accelerated generally refers to time and intensity, not to methodology (e.g., Donaldson 2001; Lynott 1998; Mealan and Lawrence 2000; Wlodkowski and Westover 1999). Because of the similarities between AL and adult learning, accelerated programs for adults may contain features advocated by AL. For example, Mealan and Lawrence (2000) write about cohort groups in accelerated learning programs.

Adaptation of the original theory is one of the trends related to AL. As noted earlier, the theory has been influenced by changes in education but it has also been adapted by individuals such as Dave Meier (Gill and Meier 1989; McKeon 1995; Meier 2000) for use in training and development. For example, Lozanov’s original theory called for Baroque music to be played as students entered the classroom but when music is mentioned in the training and development literature (e.g., Meier 2000), Baroque music is not required and music is viewed as only one strategy for creating an inviting learning environment.

Accelerated learning is an example of a term that has many meanings. How the term is being used can be determined from the source.

The following resources provide additional information on accelerated learning in its many identities.

**Resources**


Describes how the teaching method of accelerated learning that draws on the work of Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian research psychologist, and Howard Gardner, a Harvard educator, makes sense in a digital environment. An explanation of accelerated learning is included.


The suggestopedia method of teaching is explained in detail. Removal of the impediments to the learning process of the students is seen as a key feature. The article explains how the method is used in the teaching of modern languages in a summer intensive program for adults.


Research on adult learning and adult college experiences and outcomes that can inform the planning, development, and evaluation of accelerated degree programs is reviewed. Many of the issues related to the design of accelerated programs are addressed using a model of college outcomes developed to explain adult learners’ experiences in college.


Accelerated learning in employee orientation was tested with new employees of a retail automotive parts store. Results were mixed but did seem to indicate that using all the components of AL—presentation style, breathing technique, music, relaxation, and imagery—did in fact facilitate learning.


An exploratory study examined the effectiveness of a public relations management course offered over a 6-month period in a 3-weekend accelerated curriculum format. Students rated its effectiveness in relation to the assumptions of the theory andragogy developed by Malcolm Knowles.


Trainers at Bell Atlantic used accelerated learning techniques to increase employee productivity in half the time of traditional train-
ing methods. In addition, the learning atmosphere was fun, efficient, and beneficial to all involved.


Accelerated learning is described as a way of envisioning and assessing the training process and the interlocking roles of designers/developers, trainers, and learners.


The experiences of adult learners in an undergraduate accelerated degree program were explored. Four themes emerged: the adult degree program as a supportive world, fellow students as family, the dedication of successful adult students, and the paradoxical involvement in learning in an accelerated program.


Group developmental patterns and levels of group productivity in an adult student cohort group model of accelerated education were investigated. Results suggested that a statistically significant relationship exists between group effectiveness and grade point averages.


In the communication module of a human services administration program, an accelerated, interdisciplinary program for adult students, teachers serve as guides or coaches to lead students through active and cooperative learning exercises.


Accelerated learning based on Lozanov’s theory of suggestology was used by David Meier when he founded the Center for Accelerated Learning. The process of AL is explained, including the major premise that it must be collaborative.


The authors reflect on their individual and collaborative experiences with accelerated, cohort-based learning in adult higher education. A conceptual framework based on adult, experiential, and collaborative learning is presented.


The book’s subtitle, A Creative Guide to Designing and Delivering Faster, More Effective Training Programs, describes its purpose: to help readers apply accelerated learning principles and methods to specific learning programs as quickly as possible. It contains AL principles and philosophies and implementation ideas.


Provides guidelines for comprehensive outcomes assessment of accelerated degree and nontraditional adult programs. Illustrates common assessment practices used to document program efficacy, develop formative evaluations, and provide information for accreditation.


Accelerated learning techniques for training incorporated into staff meetings were designed to address different learning styles and modalities. The model made training engaging and it appealed to learners’ preferred styles of reception, organization, and expression.


Outlines the process of accelerated learning in six steps: relaxing mind, acquiring facts, searching out meaning, triggering memory, exhibiting what is known, and reflecting on the process.


Provides an extensive overview of accelerated learning and describes how it can be implemented in business. Includes extensive suggestions for implementing AL.


Investigated the possibility of conducting adult education courses based on accelerated learning methodology and comparing it to traditional methods. It was not clear that AL produced better results, so further study is needed to evaluate its effectiveness.


A 2-year collaborative study identified factors that influence adult learners’ continuing involvement in course work or graduation. Women in accelerated formats were more successful, compared to men in the same format and to women in the traditional format.


This study investigated adult students’ learning and attitudes in six accelerated courses at three private colleges. Results suggested that accelerated courses satisfy adult students’ needs and provide levels of learning indistinguishable from those demonstrated by the younger students in traditional courses.

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