



Short Learning Programme (SLP) in Cognitive Education

1. Background

As part of the mission of the Cognitive Education Research Group, in collaboration with IACESA, one of the aims is to encourage and support the development, implementation and systematic research of new, uniquely South African and contextually relevant approaches and processes for the enhancement of thinking and learning through teaching and assessment.

The Cognitive Education Research Group (CERG) recently secured accreditation from the North-West University for a Short Learning Programme in Cognitive Education (NQF Level 6) that will be provided as from 2015. The Research Group is in the process of preparing the programme for CPD approval from the South African Council for Educators (SACE). The aim is to present the SLP as a one-year course for 30 CPD points on two Saturdays per month for 10 months between 8:30 – 12:30 (80 notional hours), after which participants will receive a Certificate in Cognitive Education endorsed by the NWU. Teachers, therapists and psychologists in possession of an approved teaching qualification may enroll for the SLP, or need to provide proof of possessing a basic knowledge of:

- Learning theories that underpin teaching and learning
- Basic teaching strategies
- Approaches to assessment

2. Aim of the SLP in Cognitive Education

The aim of the SLP in Cognitive Education is to equip in-service teachers with practical tools and approaches/strategies suitable for the South African teaching and learning context in order to transform classroom practices and intentionally unlock learners' cognitive potential. This means teachers should actively and explicitly mediate the thinking skills and dispositions that are required for achieving the objectives of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The systematic and carefully planned mediation of thinking can promote effective learning at all levels across the curriculum. The purpose of the course can be operationalized as follows:

To assist in-service teachers in:

- Understanding the importance of cognitive education as a means to achieve the objectives of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement of South Africa (CAPS) – a means by which learners can be enabled to 'become smarter' and cope better with academic and real life challenges;
- Planning developmentally appropriate teaching, learning and assessment activities to advance cognitive development among learners across the curriculum.
- Understanding, applying and infusing a range of teaching, learning and assessment strategies to facilitate cognitive development among all learners across the curriculum;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of teaching strategies to facilitate learners' cognitive development during teaching, learning and assessment.
- Identifying and eliminating factors that can hamper the successful implementation of a cognitive approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

3. The unique features of the SLP

The SLP aims to promote a unique South African branded approach to equipping teachers with skills to advance cognitive education across the curriculum in ongoing teaching, learning and assessment activities.

The focus and purpose of the SLP is not to promote an exclusive focus on a certain strategy/strategies or approach/approaches across a school curriculum.

The SLP **primarily** aims to promote the achievement of the cognitive objectives as set out by the CAPS curriculum by assisting schools/teachers to provide ongoing teaching, learning and assessment activities that will ensure that the cognitive objectives of the CAPS are met. **Secondly**, the SLP aims to equip teachers with skills to apply approaches/strategies that will personalize and contextualize cognitive education (taking into account the school's context and the characteristics of the learner, teacher and parent profiles).

4. Study units and outcomes of the SLP

Study unit 1: Conceptualizing cognitive education/the explicit teaching of thinking

Outcomes: (i) Define and explain what is meant by cognitive education/the explicit teaching of thinking by clarifying the differences between teaching for, of and about thinking.

Study unit 2: The importance of cognitive education

Outcomes: (i) Outline and provide examples showing the importance of explicit and intentional cognitive education for academic learning and for preparing learners to cope with life after school and with the challenges of the new millennium. (ii) Investigate and justify the importance of cognitive education as a means of implementing the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

Study unit 3: Cognitive development processes

Outcomes: (i) Identify and classify the processes and characteristics of cognitive development: from toddlers to adolescents to adults. (ii) Recognize how the characteristics of cognitive development influence instructional design in the classroom.

Study unit 4: A Mediated Learning Approach to advancing cognitive education

Outcomes: (i) Understand and apply the theoretical principles of mediated learning during teaching in order to advance cognitive development. (ii) Compare the application of a mediated learning approach with traditional transmission and reception teaching.

Study unit 5: The Thinking School and the Thinking Classroom

Outcomes: (i) Determine ways to create a "Thinking School" and distinguish factors that can hamper the journey towards becoming a "Thinking School". (ii) Manage the implementation of a

thinking approach across classrooms in schools and colleges. (iii) Clarify the role of the teacher in establishing a “Thinking Classroom” (iv) Identify and minimize factors that can hamper effective thinking and learning in the classroom and at home.

Study unit 6: Approaches/Strategies/activities to teach thinking

Outcomes: (i) Understand, apply and infuse a variety of teaching approaches/strategies into ongoing teaching and learning activities to enable learners to acquire learning content at the different cognitive levels of Bloom’s taxonomy, as envisaged in the objectives of the CAPS curriculum.

(Examples of strategies/activities: De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats, Hyerle’s Thinking Maps, Costa’s Habits of Mind, Cooperative learning and Enquiry Based teaching)

(ii) Evaluate the effectiveness of a specific teaching strategy/activity as a means of developing the dispositions, cognitive skills and metacognitive strategies that promote effective thinking as described in the objectives of the CAPS.

Study unit 7: Cognitive principles and assessment

Outcomes: (i) Understand the principles of Bloom’s taxonomy for designing learner assessment tasks (ii) Design an assessment task that allows learners the opportunity to become cognitively engaged in the execution of the task.

5. Assessment of Performance

A variety of assessment tasks will be provided, namely formal individual assessment tasks, and informal assessment tasks that require working in pairs and in groups, for each of the study units. Participants must complete all the assignments (7 in total) that form part of the course, and obtain a minimum of 50% to pass an assignment. An overall average of 50% must be obtained for all the assignments to qualify for a certificate in cognitive education.

For more details about the SLP in Cognitive Education, contact Prof. Mary Grosser: mary.grosser@nwu.ac.za