

Cognitive Education Research Group in Association with IACESA

The Research Group comprises a number of dedicated academics from the School of Education Sciences at North-West University, Vaal Triangle campus, and board members of the International Association of Cognitive Education in South Africa who are committed to advance cognitive education (the teaching of thinking) in South Africa at all levels of education across the curriculum. The aim of the Research Group is to advance rigorous and focused research in the field of cognitive education that will make an influential contribution to the development and support of a diverse Southern African community to become smarter at thinking and learning.

Background

Thinking is a key component of most learning and teaching. Since 1997, a strong cognitive focus has been evident in the teaching and learning in South African classrooms. The new National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Grades R-12 continues to support the development of cognitive and meta-cognitive processes, skills, strategies as well as dispositions. Learners should be able to:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- Use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

Bearing the aforementioned in mind, teachers should be equipped with knowledge and skills to implement and advance a cognitive approach to teaching and learning across the curriculum. Learners who are effective thinkers will be able to use the aforementioned thinking processes, skills, strategies and dispositions and will be able to feel good about their thinking and learning. There are however many learners that have not developed these thinking processes, skills, strategies and dispositions effectively yet or they can only use these effectively in some situations. This often causes learners to become passive and/or dependent in learning and working situation. Moreover, the Department of Education does not provide explicit guidance to teachers as to how they could advance the thinking processes, skills, strategies and dispositions of learners. In a changing education system and world learners, educators, professionals, employers and employees all need to understand how to think and learn and how to feel good and motivated about their thinking and learning.

Members of the Research Group

Prof. Mary Grosser

Dr. Magda Kloppers

Dr. Stef Esterhuizen

Ms. Viné Petzer (PhD.-student)

Mr. Francois Minnie (M.Ed.-student)

Mr. Byron Bunt (PhD.-student)

IACESA board members (see IACESA website: <http://www.icesa.co.za>)

Vision

The vision of the Cognitive Education Research Group is to support the International Association for Cognitive Education in South Africa (IACESA) to make an influential contribution to the development and support of a diverse Southern African community of successful and responsible 'conceptual age' thinkers. Successful and responsible thinkers learn independently, have the 'kinds of minds' and abilities to design their own future, flourish in ever-changing circumstances and make creative contributions to the quality and democratic functioning of their contexts.

Mission

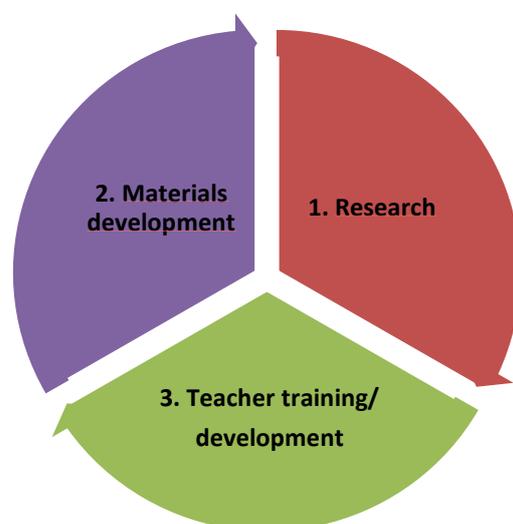
In order to achieve its mission, the Cognitive Education Research Group in collaboration with IACESA aims to:

- create a stronger awareness of the importance of cognitive education among schools, in-service teachers, parents and student teachers;

- disseminate reliable and theoretically sound information to schools, teachers, other professionals, parents and the general public about international and local initiatives already in existence that are known to improve the quality of thinking and learning;
- encourage and support the creation, implementation and systematic research of new, uniquely South African and contextually relevant approaches (and processes) for the enhancement of thinking and learning;
- promote research that investigates the effectiveness of both international and local initiatives to improve the quality of thinking and learning and to disseminate the research findings;
- provide consultation required by schools, teachers, other professionals and the general public to advance cognitive education;
- equip teachers with skills to effectively and purposefully mediate effective thinking skills and dispositions to all learners across the curriculum to enable learners to develop the propensity to skillfully and mindfully apply their own cognitive tools/resources when confronted with problems and challenges in and out of school; and
- support the continuing professional development of teachers and other professionals in the field of cognitive education.

Focus Areas of the Research Group: research, development, training, innovation, support

The three focus areas will function in synergy with one another.



Research activities

- Promoting research in schools and with pre-service teachers to advance the importance of the idea that schools need to strive to become thinking communities.
- Adapting, developing and assessing the impact of material and processes to enhance cognitive education to meet the different needs of South African schools.
- Liaising with local and international researchers and professionals/professional practitioners to share and learn from one another's research experiences.
- Communicating research findings to the Department of Education to create a stronger awareness of the importance that schools become thinking communities.

Materials Development/Innovation activities

- Developing NWU accredited short courses to advance cognitive education.
- Developing workshop material for CPD training that focuses on the theory and practical application of cognitive education.
- Developing classroom materials that align with the specific teaching and learning needs in specific school contexts.

Teacher training and development activities

- Promoting cognitive education during teacher training at NWU.
- Creating awareness at other universities regarding the importance of cognitive education during teacher training.
- Facilitating training at schools on how to become a thinking community.
- Facilitating training of in-service teachers in existing cognitive approaches to teaching and assessment, or newly developed courses.
- Ensuring a sustainable approach to cognitive education at schools by monitoring and supporting the implementation of cognitive approaches/courses at schools.