



*HISTORICAL EFFORTS IN
SOUTH AFRICA IN
DEVELOPING A COGNITIVE
ENRICHMENT MODEL -
SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES*

Cognitive Development Summit, June 2009



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**International Association of
Cognitive Education in
Southern Africa (IACESA)**

- ❖ **What is IACESA?**
- ❖ **Benefits of belonging to IACESA.**
- ❖ **How and why did it start?**
- ❖ **Who may belong to IACESA?**
- ❖ **History.**
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What is IACESA?

- ❖ **The first professional organisation in Southern Africa devoted to cognitive education.**
- ❖ **Established at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1994 with 100 foundation members with Professor Mervyn Skuy as its President.**

❖ **Addresses local concerns but also maintains close links with the International Association for Cognitive Education and Psychology (IACEP) based in the USA, Middle East, Europe, South America, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand.**

IACESA NATIONAL BOARD

- ◆ President: Dr Anita Worrall Founder and Director ProEd Centre and ProEd School, Cape Town
- ◆ Immediate Past President: Prof Lena Green, UWC
- ◆ President Elect: Elsafie Wranz, Senior Speech Therapist, Jan Kriel School, Cape Town
- ◆ Hon Secretary: Amanda Kowarski, Learning Support Specialist, Cape Town
- ◆ Hon Treasurer: Dr Louis Benjamin, Independent consultant in cognitive development, Cape Town
- ◆ Estelle Bretteny, Bretcare Metacognition and Learning Health Centre, Cape Town
- ◆ Debbie Evans, independent consultant, Kwazulu Natal
- ◆ Dr Marie Grosser, University of the North West
- ◆ Lilian Lomofsky, independent consultant, Cape Town
- ◆ Sharon Moonsamy, Wits University
- ◆ Dr Thabo Pudi, Tshwane University of Technology

Benefits of belonging to IACESA

- ❖ **Members are automatically members of the IACEP and have preferential access to journals and international conferences.**
- ❖ **Members have access to: local, national and international conferences;**

- ❖ **Networking with experts in the field of cognitive education;**
- ❖ **Cognitive education interest groups focused on the latest research and applications in the field;**
- ❖ **Opportunities to explore ways of making cognitive education accessible to the OBE curriculum at all levels;**

❖ Professional training programmes by expert members;

❖ Regular News Updates about cognitive education and the activities of members across South Africa.

How and why did IACESA start?

- ❖ **In efforts to modernise education in South Africa different cognitive methodologies were imported from the late 1970's by individuals, NGO's, universities, technikons, businesses and commerce.**
- ❖ **A need arose to unpack the underlying educational theories and belief systems of different and often complementary cognitive education methodologies.**

❖ We needed to compare and assess different approaches and to adopt (or adapt) the most effective ones for use with different target groups within Southern Africa. At the same time it was important to make information about developments in cognitive education available to a growing number of users and potential users.

❖ It was also necessary to acquire a collective voice to influence educational reform in the democratic transformation taking place in South Africa.

Who may belong to IACESA?

- ❖ Those interested in the promotion and development of cognitive education in Southern Africa.
- ❖ Educators and parents working with learners of all ages in mainstream schools, special needs schools, colleges, universities and workplace training settings.
- ❖ Occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers and remedial therapists.

History

1993

- ❖ **A contingent of 25 South Africans attended the Fourth Conference of the International Association of Cognitive Education (IACE) in Israel. A number of participants presented papers**
- ❖ **There was a groundswell of enthusiasm for the formation of a local chapter of the IACE in South Africa.**

❖ **1994**

The First National Conference was held at WITS.

Theme: “Educational Reform through the Advancement of Thinking Skills”

There were 184 participants from various parts of Southern Africa.

❖ **Professor Carl Haywood, then Dean of the Faculty of Education, Touro College, New York spoke about Cognitive Education and Mediated Learning and how these may be applied to the school curriculum.**

❖ 1994

Professor Mervyn Skuy of the Division of Specialised Education at WITS was elected President. Other members of the board were Dr Jenny Pretorius, Vaal Triangle Technikon, Professor Willie Rautenbach, Stellenbosch University, Vice-Presidents: Mandia Mentis of Wits, Membership Secretary; News Letter Editor, Dr Anita Worrall.

❖ Many proposals were made by specialist groups.

❖ **1995 Professor Mervyn Skuy proposed the following in drawing up a policy document on behalf of IACESA which was to be discussed at various meetings that year:**

❖ *“We are committed to working in a paradigm shift in both teacher education and education generally and to implement approaches to education which increase the individual’s ability to think, function effectively and operate optimally in a multi-cultural society.”*

❖ *We hope to bridge the gap between theory and research on the one hand and practice on the other by introducing methodologies based on sound cognitive theory tested under rigorous research conditions and demonstrated to be applicable to the various spheres of educational types.*

❖ *We are very aware of the critical situation with regard to education in this country and consider the solution based on a sound and coherent philosophy and methodology in teacher and other spheres of education to be essential”.*

❖ **1995 IACESA submitted a document to the Committee for Teacher Education Policy (COTEP), “Norms and Standards for Teacher Education”. The document emphasised the importance of including cognitive education as an integral part of teacher education.**

- ❖ **Contributing to this submission was a group of individuals and organisations working in the area of teacher education representing colleges, NGO's and universities from all over South Africa.**
- ❖ **That same year a number of us flew to New York for the 5th Conference of the IACE and presented ourselves as "the group" from South Africa.**

❖ February 1995

Prior to a National Board Meeting seminar held at UWC Professor Merlyn Mehl, then director of the Independent Development Trust (IDT) spoke on a major education initiative for South Africa in which he advocated the need for making cognitive education explicit within the curriculum at all education institutions.

❖ Prof Mehl maintained that “in the light of the current reconstruction and development programme it would be timeous to influence education in the direction of cognitive education. An effective way to create a paradigm shift, moving away from the tradition of rote learning towards a process oriented approach would be to integrate and infuse thinking skills into the curriculum on all pre-service and in service teacher training”.

❖ **1997 - the 6th Conference of the International Association of Cognitive Education (IACE) was held in South Africa at the University of Stellenbosch. It was organised by IACESA. Theme: "The Challenge to Cognitive Education for Empowerment in the Information Age for Developing Countries"**

- ❖ The then IACE President, Professor Katherine Greenberg, writing in Education, the IACE Newsletter, described the 1997 conference in an article “Reflections over Dinner, Bobotie and Ethos”:
- ❖ *“the 1997 conference had more practitioners in attendance than any other prior IACE conference”.*

Greenberg went on to say:

“There is an ethos amongst us that truly inspires me, the ethos I sense is one of deep commitment to learning and facilitation of learning by all people in the world. Members of the IACE (and IACESA) share a common belief in the importance of cognitive education, a need to explore its many aspects and the desire to help others to understand the importance of cognitive education.....”

- ❖ **1999 Western Cape Education Department Project on Cognition in Education. IACESA was central in organising the project.**
- ❖ **Five different approaches to cognitive education were trialed in about 30 schools. Cognitive Education was seen to be the practical way to realise the critical outcomes and thinking skills embedded in the curriculum.**
- ❖ **A publication “Better Thinking Better Learning” for educators was one result of the project.**

More conference themes and sub-themes:

- ❖ **2000 – “Cognitive Development for Educational Renaissance - Creating Value-add for OBE and unlocking Industrial and Business Training Opportunities”**, University of Stellenbosch (Dr Jenny Pretorius, President).
- ❖ **2004 – “Better Thinking for Better Learning, Teaching, Working and Living”**, Jan Kriel School, Cape Town (Lilian Lomofsky, President)

- ❖ 2006 – **“Critical and Creative Thinking for the New Era Educator”**, North West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, Vanderbijlpark. (Dr Anita Worrall, President) Professor Louis Falik, Keynote Speaker sent by ICELP).
- ❖ 2009 – **“The Art of Thinking – the Importance of the three critical R’s, Reasoning, Reflecting and Relating”**, Cape Town. (Professor Lena Green, President).

Our vision:

The following elements must all be in place if we are to make substantial and necessary changes in education.

1. A clear body of philosophy of education;

2. Educational goals that follow logically from that philosophy;

3. Educational methods that are consistent with the goals and the philosophy;

4. A total approach that encompasses the whole educational enterprise from pre-school to university and in all workplace settings.

This means we have to shift our way of thinking:

- ❖ from information giving to enhancing educability;**
- ❖ from stretching knowledge alone to stretching minds;**
- ❖ from present concepts of educators' roles as givers of information to mediators of experience, and guiders of students' quests for cognitive growth and change;**

- ❖ from emphasis on achievement/knowledge criteria to emphasis on educability and lifetime enthusiasm for learning;
- ❖ from the assumption that motivation is up to the students and their parents to recognition of teachers' role in motivating cognitive growth.

- ❖ **The entire conceptual approach to the role of educators and learners needs to be revised.**
- ❖ **Dissemination of new methods should begin in teachers' colleges and university faculties of education.**
- ❖ **A total approach is required simply because partial solutions are not effective.**

As implied by Professor Bob Burden of Exeter University in his presentation at our recent conference:

Where the various programmes have succeeded most clearly is in situations in which they were adopted at the philosophical level by administrators, implemented by well trained teachers, implemented in large numbers of classes in a school system rather than in isolation, implemented as part of a system with commitment to cognitive approaches at all levels.

International Association for Cognitive Education in Southern Africa (IACESA)

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- ❖ (currently under reconstruction)

With grateful thanks to members
of the IACESA National Board

Thank you!