



NPO REGISTRATION NUMBER: 159-025 | PBO NUMBER: 930 051 526

THE BASIC CONCEPTS PROGRAMME:

A brief prepared for a rural situated NPO in the Eastern Cape (2025)

1. Introduction: The Early Learning Crisis

Research shows that too many South African children arrive in Grade 1 without the foundational knowledge, language, and dispositions for learning. Without intervention, these gaps compound, leaving children struggling with literacy, numeracy, and self-confidence. Teachers often fall back on rote methods, which fail to develop higher-order thinking. The Eastern Cape faces these challenges acutely, making early intervention both urgent and necessary.

2. The Basic Concepts Programme (BCP)

The BCP is a cognitive and metacognitive intervention for young learners. It provides both content (conceptual domains essential for early learning) and a pedagogical model (the Concept Teaching Model) that equips teachers to systematically scaffold children's learning.

Key Aims

- Develop children's thinking, language, and learning abilities.
- Provide teachers with a structured, evidence-based pedagogy.
- Strengthen school readiness and build long-term capacity in the education system.

3. The Concept Teaching Model (CTM)

At the heart of BCP lies the Concept Teaching Model (CTM), a structured pedagogy that transforms how teachers mediate learning.

Core Components:

1. **Scaffolded Instruction** – moving from concrete → semi-concrete → abstract understanding.
2. **Metacognitive Mediation** – prompting children to reflect on *how* they learn, not just *what* they learn.

3. **Interactive Encounters** – language-rich, dialogical sessions that prioritise reasoning and participation.
4. **Small-Group Focus** – 6–8 learners at a time, allowing differentiation and close observation.
5. **Embedded Cognitive Tools** – integrating seven core processes: perception, matching, comparing, classifying, seriation, perspective-taking, and conservation.

The CTM ensures that teachers are not simply delivering content but mediating deep, transferable learning processes.

4. Core Features of the Programme

- **Conceptual Domains:** Colour, shape, size, position, number, and letter.
- **Teacher Training:** 18–36 hours of face-to-face experiential training, accredited to NVQ6 level.
- **Practical Component:** Classroom-based mentoring and coaching to embed CTM in real settings.
- **Materials:** Teachers receive a training file, manual, small group activity posters and a Cognitive Toolkit with picture sets for effective mediation.
- **Alignment:** Directly linked to CAPS and national literacy/numeracy curriculum priorities.
- **Inclusive Approach:** Particularly beneficial for learners with poor vocabulary, receptive/expressive language difficulties, attention challenges, and low self-confidence.

5. Evidence of Impact

Over the past 20 years, the Basic Concepts Programme (BCP) has been implemented and evaluated across diverse contexts in South Africa, from urban metros to remote rural schools. First validated in doctoral research and confirmed by international experts, the programme has consistently demonstrated significant improvements in learners' cognitive, conceptual, and scholastic development.

Independent evaluations and peer-reviewed studies have reinforced these findings, showing large gains in school readiness, conceptual knowledge, language development, and early literacy and numeracy. Teachers repeatedly report that the BCP equips them with practical tools to reach learners who struggle most, while learners demonstrate sustained progress when the programme is applied consistently.

With adoption by provincial education departments and endorsement through external research, the BCP stands as a proven, adaptable intervention that strengthens the foundations of learning and helps close the gap for children facing barriers to education.

6. Why select the BCP for the 118 ECD Centres?

- **Addresses Early Gaps:** Directly tackles the lack of vocabulary, concepts, and thinking skills in disadvantaged learners.
- **Scalable Model:** Training 50 teachers per cohort, easily adaptable to large networks of ECD centres.
- **Sustainable Outcomes:** Teachers retain mediation skills, benefiting future cohorts long after training ends.
- **Alignment with National Priorities:** Strengthens literacy, numeracy, and ECD goals of the DBE.

7. Implementation Approach

The Basic Concepts Programme is not a once-off training, but a structured two-year professional development process that equips educators to internalize and sustain the approach in their classrooms. The process is scaffolded through four interlinked phases:

- **Phase 1: Training** – 18–36 hours of experiential face-to-face training.
- **Phase 2: Classroom Practice** – teachers implement with small groups, supported by manuals and other materials as detailed above.
- **Phase 3: Mentoring & Coaching** – ongoing support inside classrooms, ensuring fidelity and adaptation to local contexts.
- **Phase 4: Monitoring & Evaluation** – tracking learner progress in school readiness and teacher application of the BCP model.

8. Conclusion

The Basic Concepts Programme is not just an intervention; it is a systematic, evidence-based model of cognitive development in the early years. For xxx's 118 ECD centres, BCP offers a proven way to:

- Close early learning gaps,
- Equip teachers with sustainable skills, and
- Prepare children to thrive in school and beyond.

Scaling BCP in the Eastern Cape would represent a bold, research-backed step towards changing the trajectory of children's educational futures.

For more information contact:

Dr Louis Benjamin

Cell: 084 857 8763

Email: louisben@iafrica.com

Website: www.basicconcepts.co.za