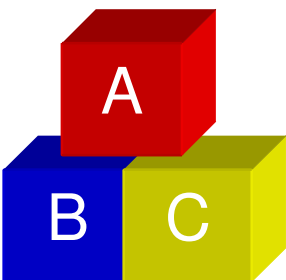


# **THE BASIC CONCEPTS PROGRAMME**



A Metacognitive Programme  
To Promote The Development  
Of Higher Order Cognitive  
Functioning In Foundation  
Phase Learners

## **INFORMATION PACKAGE**



Louis Benjamin, Ph.D.

# THE BASIC CONCEPTS PROGRAMME (BCP)

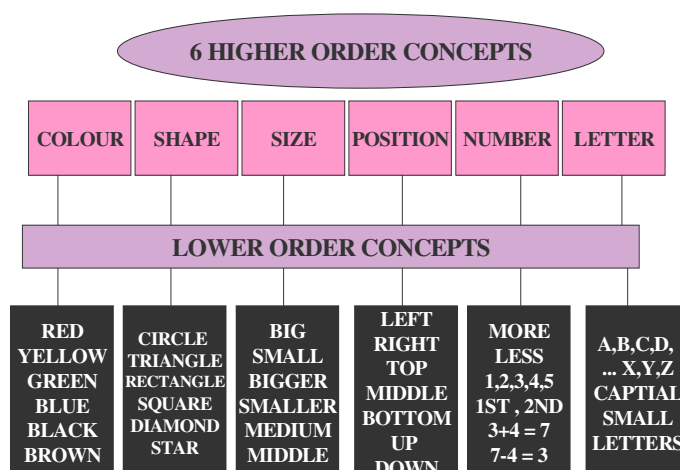
A Metacognitive Programme To Promote The Development  
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## Introduction

The Basic Concepts Programme was developed to enhance the cognitive functioning of young children (Grade R-Grade 3). The programme aims to develop and promote independent, logical and flexible thinking in learners. In this way it attempts to promote thinking patterns considered important for success in all school learning areas, viz. reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. The content of BCP is found to be consonant with the main Learning Areas (Mathematics and Language) and Critical Outcomes of the RNCS. Higher order, abstract thinking abilities are promoted through a focus on key cognitive processes: accurate perception, matching, comparison, classification and categorization, seriation and conservation.

The Basic Concepts Programme (BCP) is a hierarchically constructed programme consisting of 48 well-detailed sessions. The programme is implemented by trained Basic Concepts mediators (teachers, remedial teachers, and therapists). This programme is run 2-3 times per week during the school year with small groups of learners (5-8 learners) in mainstream classrooms or in pullout formats. In the Grade R classroom the BCP is extended into a full curriculum and run daily with small groups of learners.

## CONTENT OF THE BASIC CONCEPTS PROGRAMME



The content of the programme consists of well-known *superordinate* (COLOUR, SHAPE, SIZE, POSTION, NUMBER AND LETTER) and associated *subordinate* concepts (COLOUR: GREEN, RED, BROWN) used to mediate the thinking skills of the programme. The content of the programme is particularly important to learners who have not had adequate early childhood educational experiences or for learners who still need to develop logical and systematic modes of thinking. These concepts are regarded as crucial for creating a basis for future learning.

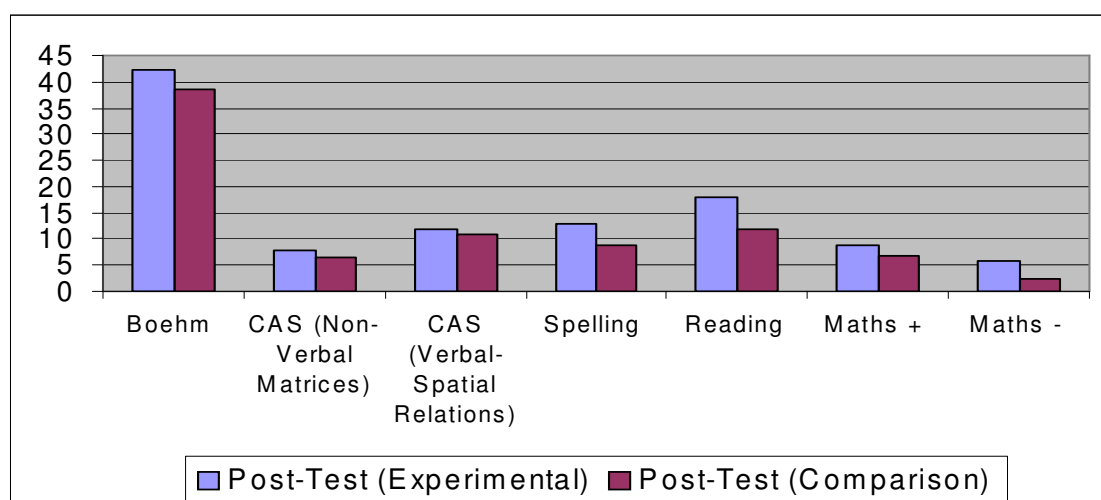
The strength of such a programme lies not only in its well-defined conceptual content, but in how educators implement it. Educators are trained to become mediators of learning experiences. A social-constructivist approach to teaching learning underpins the programme. Teacher-mediators are co-participants in the building of new knowledge structures (schemas) with their learners during the programme.

### Can The BCP Promote Cognitive And Scholastic Functioning?

A thorough empirical investigation of the efficacy of the BCP has been undertaken. This research study included some 175 learners who experience learning problems from approximately 35 schools mainly located on the 'Cape Flats', a disadvantaged area in Cape Town, South Africa.

### Research Evidence Of The Benefits Of The BCP

*Independent Samples Test: Significant differences in Post-Intervention means between learners in the Experimental and Comparison Groups (N=109).*



The above findings (after pre-intervention independent sample analyses were conducted between learners in the Experimental and Comparison groups) found that learners in the Experimental group gained significantly when compared with their peers in the Comparison group. (Comparison group learners received a comparable, traditional remedial intervention programme.) Learners who participated in the BCP therefore benefited more with respect to their knowledge of basic concepts, and cognitive and scholastic functioning than their peers in the Comparison group.

All learners (Experimental and Comparison) made significant gains from the pre- to post-intervention phase of the study. The Comparison group, however, failed to make progress in a key cognitive processing sub-test (non-verbal matrices) and one scholastic subtest (mathematics subtraction).

**The BCP has been found to be: -**

- An effective short-term and small group intervention programme for learners who experience barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase, even if their home language is not English.
- An effective and efficient approach to prevent future educational failure and potential withdrawal from school learning at a critical and foundational phase of the learner's cognitive and scholastic development.
- An appropriate and manageable programme for teachers to implement in the South African context.

**Facts and Figures**

- The BCP has to date been implemented in three provinces in South Africa by over 1500 trained mediators in approximately 600 schools.
- The project sites include rural, urban, and peri-urban settings mostly located within low socio-economic environments.
- The programme has been introduced in a number of countries around the world: Zimbabwe, India, Australia, Brazil, and the Netherlands.
- Over 13 research presentations are available on the Basic Concepts website.
- The educational professionals who have been trained to run the programme include: class teachers, remedial teachers/learning support teachers, Occupational and Speech Therapists, Psychologists, Social Workers, Education Managers, and Teacher Trainers.

A teacher who implemented the BCP said that:

***‘The programme was very interesting and it allowed the children to reason, think and work independently. The children were also exposed to many practical activities ... (in different settings, like the) home and classroom. It also made them explore many dimensions and (they) never took things for granted. They loved the concrete activities and never felt the boredom of writing and not understanding... They could explain all their answers and solve their own problems.’***

Comments of international experts in the field of cognitive education about the research into the Basic Concepts Programme:

***‘The work ... is certainly original, and in some important aspects constitutes a contribution to the fund of knowledge about cognitive development and early education.’***

Professor Carl Haywood, USA

***‘The work itself is both original and highly pertinent to the needs of the SA education system. The author is clearly deeply involved in and knowledgeable about his topic and ... (he) provides a distinct contribution to knowledge in the area of cognitive education.’***

Professor Bob Burden, UK

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