21 Stories to Celebrate

21 Years of IACESA
International Association for Cognitive Education in Southern Africa
The International Association for Cognitive Education in Southern Africa (IACESA) is the first and leading professional organisation in Southern Africa devoted to the development and support of a diverse Southern African community of successful and responsible thinkers and as a Non Profit Company (NPC) attempts to address concerns regarding cognitive education. IACESA’s mission is to influence education, thinking and learning of individuals at all levels, ages and stages of development.

_21 Stories to Celebrate 21 Years of IACESA (in 2015)_ is a special publication with contributions from 21 cognitive education practitioners and academics, many also founder members of IACESA. The views expressed in the stories are personal views and do not necessarily express those of IACESA but the stories reveal many similarities that emphasise the critical role of cognitive education in educational reform.

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Preface &
Acknowledgements

Looking at this booklet’s title, you might be wondering about various things. Who or what is IACESA? What exactly is cognitive education? What is so special about IACESA that 21 stories were collected to celebrate 21 years of IACESA? If you endeavour to read the stories in this booklet, you will discover the incredible power of reflection and stories and find some answers to these questions.

IACESA was founded in 1993 but the inauguration IACESA Conference took place in 1994. As IACESA holds bi-annual conferences, the 2015 IACESA Conference (with the powerful theme: Personalising Thinking and Learning in the Conceptual Age) was a suitable occasion to celebrate this milestone in the history of IACESA. As President of IACESA (2013 – 2015) I suggested the Story Project. The intent of this project was to draw together 21 stories from 21 people that were IACESA founding members, people that have been actively involved with cognitive education in South Africa throughout the past 21 years, or individuals that have been directly connected to IACESA, to contribute towards this project and to share their stories about the unfolding and establishment of cognitive education in South Africa and in their own lives/work.

Prof. Willie Rautenbach, who has played a pioneering role regarding the development of cognitive education in South Africa, often used the following expression, “When your past is bigger than your future…” and the IACESA Board would like to add “…then it becomes important to think about the legacy you are leaving behind”. With this booklet the IACESA board aims to capture historical events and cognitive education milestones as well as the experiences, thoughts, knowledge, values, insights and emotions of the participants about the past, but also about
the present and the future of cognitive education in their lives and in South Africa in the form a story/narrative.

Cognitive scientist Mark Turner (in Pink, 2006) states that “narrative imagining – story – is the fundamental instrument of thought”. Stories are our chief means of looking into the future, of predicting, of planning and of explaining … most of our experiences, our knowledge and our thinking are organised as stories (Pink, 2006).

Although stories are integral to the human experience and although they have been important throughout humanity, they have been neglected during the Information Age. Facts have become so easily available and instantly accessible and through this, stories have become less valuable. According to Pink (2006) what begins to matter more and more is the ability to place facts in context and to deliver them with emotional impact … context enriched by emotion. Stories can be viewed as important cognitive events. They can be encapsulated into one compact package that comprises information, knowledge, context and emotion that is driven by reflection on practice and reflection in practice (Schön, 1983, 1987).

Pink (2006) believes that the ability to encapsulate, contextualise and emotionalise has become vastly more important in the Conceptual Age. We are living in a time of abundance and people are looking for meaning. Stories can be a vehicle to create meaning. We can compress years of experience, thought and emotion into a few compact narratives that may be conveyed to others and ourselves. We are our stories and we must listen to each other’s stories.

On the behalf of the IACESA Board, I sincerely thank Oxford University Press Southern Africa for sponsoring the publication of this booklet and I would like to thank all the Story Project participants for their willingness, time and effort to share their stories. May our 21 stories advocate for our ideas and move people to greater action.

*Stories are how we think. They are how we make meaning of life. Call them schemas, scripts, cognitive maps, mental models, metaphors, or narratives. Stories are how we explain how things work, how we make decisions, how we justify our decisions, how we persuade others, how we understand our place in the world, create our identities, and define and teach social values.*

– Dr. Pamela Rutledge, Director, Media Psychology Research Center
Over the years I have become convinced that we learn best – and change – from hearing stories that strike a chord within us ... Those in leadership positions who fail to grasp or use the power of stories risk failure for their companies and for themselves.
– John Kotter, Harvard Business School Professor, and author Leading Change

Estelle Brettenny
IACESA President (2013–2015)

References:
Introduction

IACESA comes of age
Twenty one stories that trace its history

The birth of IACESA coincided with the birth of the new democratic South Africa. It was founded by a small group of people with tremendous enthusiasm and high hopes of transforming education across Southern Africa, beginning with education in South Africa. Their insights and research were not, however, sufficiently well established to reach and influence the mainstream of educational reform in the 1990s. Although education policy makers researched widely, cognitive education did not feature in their deliberations, despite the fact that it was implied by the goals set for education in the new South Africa. Now, in a climate of disappointment with the results of education reform, a space has opened up for IACESA to make an important, and in fact crucial, contribution to the way in which our children learn and our teachers teach.

The stories in this collection illustrate the powerful and life changing effects of an introduction to the principles of cognitive education and reveal the rich resources that exist within IACESA. The ideas of Reuven Feuerstein permeate the pages that follow, although, as he would have wished, they are taken up in different ways by different individuals. The time has come to ensure that all teachers and learners share this liberating experience.

Prof Lena Green
Extraordinary Professor, Faculty of Education,
University of the Western Cape
Educational Psychologist, Oakdale Practice
Oxford University Press Southern Africa: celebrating 100 years of excellence

Oxford University Press Southern Africa (OUPSA) is a leading publisher of educational materials for South African schools and higher education institutions. As a branch of Oxford University Press in the United Kingdom – a division of the University of Oxford – our mission is aligned to that of the University: to bring excellence in education, scholarship and research to people around the world. We live this mission through the educational products we produce for the people of South Africa.

Since our establishment in South Africa in 1915, we have become deeply rooted in education on the African continent. 2015 marks an important milestone in our history as we celebrate our 100th year of making a difference to education in our beautiful country.

At OUPSA, we are passionate about education. We believe that a good education is the key to the social transformation that we need in South Africa. We know that education will unlock opportunities to allow our youth – our future – to make real successes of their lives. We are immensely proud to be able to contribute to education through the provision of our diverse range of learning and teaching materials, which are made for South Africans by South Africans.

The *Every child deserves a dictionary* campaign will be our flagship celebration during our centenary year. We aim to donate 20,000 copies of the *Oxford South African School Dictionary 3rd edition* to deserving learners across the country. The focus will be on schools that do not have the funds available to buy these valuable resources. We would like to involve members of the public who treasure the value of education to participate in this campaign. OUPSA will donate the first 10,000 dictionaries...
at the start of the year. Thereafter, the public will have the opportunity to support the campaign by visiting our website and “pledging” a dictionary. For each pledge received, OUPSA will donate another dictionary up to our target of 20,000 dictionaries. You can follow the campaign on our website at www.oxford.co.za, by liking us on Facebook at OxfordSASchools or following us on Twitter @OxfordSASchools.

During our year of centenary celebrations, we will also support other organisations that are involved in improving education. We are the named sponsor of the joint 9th Pan-African Literacy for All Conference and the 10th Reading Association of South Africa (RASA) National Literacy Conference. The theme is Imagination and Literacy: Theory and Practice and the conference will take place 2–5 September 2015 at the Baxter Theatre Complex in Cape Town. For more information, visit www.rasa2015.co.za.

It is in this spirit that we are supporting the International Association for Cognitive Education in Southern Africa (IACESA) during their 21st anniversary year by sponsoring this special publication: 21 Stories to Celebrate 21 Years of IACESA. We hope that this collection of contributions from 21 cognitive education practitioners and academics will mark the start of many more years of development and growth in this field of research and education.

Dr Rudi MR Venter

Rudi Venter

Schools: National Marketing Manager
Oxford University Press Southern Africa
Willie Rautenbach is a retired professor in nuclear and applied physics of the University of Stellenbosch and foundation and honorary member of IACESA. He became involved in cognitive education in 1979 when he imported the need for it from Israel. He was trained in Instrumental Enrichment by Feuerstein and in Cognet by Greenberg and was involved in the training of about 500 South Africans in these fields. Established with Mr. Basil Wunsh the Career Education Foundation in 1979, which subsequently established the Vaal Career College in 1989 where Cognitive Education was from the beginning a corner stone of pre-apprenticeship training. His career as a nuclear physicist covered first the rehabilitation of the 16 MeV CSIR cyclotron, which he used as the foundation for a feasibility study for the establishment of the multidisciplinary 200 MeV cyclotron as a national research facility at Faure in the Western Cape.
THE STORY OF A NUCLEAR PHYSICIST’S FASCINATION WITH THE POTENTIAL OF COGNITIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA
Let me introduce myself: Basically I am a nuclear physicist, who started a professional career on the design, building, commissioning, and using of nuclear accelerators for basic research and applications in medicine and industry in SA.

These activities required close cooperation with expert technicians and scientific instrument makers at the CSIR, many of whom were immigrants from Europe. The relative neglect of training such people in South Africa appeared to me to be the consequence of a colonial value system that values academic education at Universities above the other technical and vocational education that is essential for the development of a modern industrial economy. By accident I became more directly involved in educational reform in 1979 when Prof. Marinus Wiechers of UNISA told me that the newly “independent” homeland of Bophuthatswana had decided to establish its own University. My spontaneous, and politically highly incorrect reaction was: “Don't they have enough white-collared revolutionaries already?” When asked what I would recommend my remark was that they should establish a type of decentralised University/college system to educate the teachers, civil servants, agriculturalists, industrial workers, technicians, medical support staff etc. needed to optimise human and economic development in a geographically fragmented country adjacent to the Witwatersrand which was the mining and industrial powerhouse of Southern Africa, always in need of more skilled workers. He then asked me to put these ideas in writing to President Mangope. This led to my being appointed to the first council of the University of Bophuthatswana, where I found myself the lone member “representing the physical sciences and engineering”. My preliminary study of the senior secondary education (grades 10 to 12) in Bophuthatswana revealed that only about 1% of their pupils received any technical/vocational education, versus 15% in education for whites in South Africa. At that stage I became aware that the corresponding percentage was about 50% in Israel, mainly due to the pioneering efforts of ORT, a non-government organisation (NGO). It was therefore not difficult to persuade my fellow counsellors to send me to Israel during the University vacation in 1979 to study technical and vocational education and ORT.

During this visit I came across an ORT Technical College at the campus of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem that was training hardware-and software specialists in IT between grades 10 to 14 (two years beyond matric in SA). What really surprised me was that about 30% of the college intake was from immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. Despite their considerable educational backlogs compared with regular Israeli students when starting at grade 10, Dr Dan Sharon, the college principal, assured me that all students achieved similar outcomes after five years, provided the teaching staff explicitly developed thinking skills and used them while teaching all subjects (cognitive education). Teachers had also to be capable of neutralising the negative feelings such students often had of being discriminated against by the modern sector of the Israeli society. He also mentioned that they were using Prof. Carl Frankenstein's method of cognitive education, and undertook to send me a copy of his recently published book. Frankenstein attributed the widespread educational problems encountered by children from such groups in Israel to the effects of rapid change from pre-industrial cultures to the modern industrial Israeli culture. Parents realised that their previous worldview and technologies no
longer applied to strange new living conditions and were therefore often reluctant to pass their previous culture on to their children. In the meanwhile they did not understand the new culture and its values. Such children therefore grew up in a type of “cultural vacuum”. Under such conditions logical thinking does not develop naturally, feelings tend to intrude into thinking, and rote learning often supplants understanding of the material learned. Suddenly it dawned on me that this could be the central problem in South Africa, where vast numbers of peoples from all racial groups were rapidly moving from tribal/rural cultures into the industrial environments of the cities and mines. The advantage to me of this idea was that it made a break both with racially based theories of educability of different population groups on the one hand, and with the naïve idea that the demise of apartheid would solve all human development problems in SA, on the other hand.

After returning to South Africa the multi-racial De Lange Investigation into education in SA offered an unique opportunity to me to bring to the fore the need for expansion of vocational education and training. To study and advocate this, the Urban Foundation bought 50% of my time out from the University of Stellenbosch for 1980 and 1981. Eventually I was instrumental in shifting one of the focal points of the investigation into quality technical and vocational education, which I labelled “career education” (1). While promoting career education amongst educationalists and industrialists I told everyone willing to listen about cognitive education, which should be an integral part of training. The problem, however, was how to implement it in our education and training systems. Although Frankenstein's diagnosis of our educational problems was spot-on, his solution to it required teachers well trained in teaching, educational psychology, as well as in the subjects they had to teach. The ORT College using this method also had the advantage of having Prof. Frankenstein available on campus, as a mentor to the lecturers. I could not envisage establishing such conditions in South Africa on a large scale with our myriads of inadequately prepared teachers of our children. When discussing these problems someone mentioned Prof Feuerstein's work on cognitive education in Israel, and that he had just published two books (2) on his methods. I promptly bought those books and studied them. Although Feuerstein identified the same underlying problems in educating immigrant children as Frankenstein, the Feuerstein method addressed cultural diversity but was considerably more user friendly and could be adapted for use with physically and psychologically disadvantaged pupils as well. It was also very useful as a means of improving the
cognition of teachers in training and in adult education. In 1983 I became aware that Feuerstein planned to run a training workshop in Israel in English for teachers. I applied to the organisers to attend, only to be promptly turned down. This I could not accept, and turned to Basil Wunsh, the chairman of ORT-South Africa for assistance). Within one week I had a personal invitation from Prof. Feuerstein to attend.

The workshop I attended covered the use of the underlying theory and instruments that constitute IE1 and IE2) for us in schools. I found Feuerstein's concepts of Mediated Learning, Deficient Cognitive Functions and the Cognitive Map most useful. The only South Africans attending the workshop were myself and Ian Shochet from the University of the Witwatersrand, who was on sabbatical leave overseas. Feuerstein called the two of us to discuss with him possible involvement in South Africa. Although both of us thought that his methods were sorely needed, Ian thought that Feuerstein should wait for the demise of apartheid before becoming involved. I, however, was of the opinion that something as important as cognitive development should not be left to the whims of politicians and that ample opportunity already existed for constructive projects using IE in South Africa. Happily Feuerstein agreed with me. Back in SA I was in a better position to promote cognitive education in the private and public sector and I informed Reuven that it would be possible to get up to 50 educationalists and industrial trainers to attend a local IE workshop, run by him and his staff. This would be the most economical and fastest way to disseminate his methodology in SA. Since he still seemed a little hesitant, I suggested that he should undertake a fact-finding visit himself, to which he agreed. He was willing to pay his own travelling costs between Israel and SA provided CEFSA (see reference 6) paid for his board and lodging, and for local travel. He requested that I arrange the programme for the visit in consultation with him. This visit took place between 20 and 31 October 1984. I accompanied him on his lectures, presented in Johannesburg and Cape Town, together with interviews with various persons and organisations, with the exception of members of “struggle” organisations, to enable such people to speak more freely to him. It was a demanding programme. I remember that I took a lot of trouble to arrange visits to a number of educational institutions and persons in Soweto. On that morning Feuerstein became indisposed and I had to cancel these meetings at the last moment. Happily he felt much better during the afternoon and could proceed with his programme in Johannesburg. On that Friday afternoon I took the special precaution of leaving enough time after the last interview to reach his kosher hotel before the Sabbath started at 18h00. Five minutes to six Reuven was still deeply engrossed in a discussion while we were still five kilometers away from his hotel. I only managed to pull him away one minute before six o'clock and delivered him a few minutes late at his hotel. Prof. Mervyn Skuy, of the University of the Witwatersrand, privately arranged a meeting that evening with Reuven at his hotel. Afterwards Mervyn told me that when he arrived at the hotel at eight o'clock all the lifts were automatically stopping at every floor, thereby obviating any work by passengers in pressing knobs. Arriving at Reuven's room, he found him sitting in the dark since switching on a light during the Sabbath was prohibited work for the pious. The two of them therefore had an interesting discussion in the dark!

As far as I could gather our people made such a favourable impression on Feuerstein that he started planning the implementation of my proposed training workshop early in 1985 in South
Africa. When this did not materialise, Feuerstein announced workshops inter alia to train trainers of teachers of IE, during 11-21 July 1985 in Jerusalem. Mervyn Skuy and I made it widely known in South Africa, resulting in more than twenty South Africans attending the various workshops. At that stage CEFSA accepted cognitive education as a corner stone of career education. To encourage the wider dissemination of IE, CEFSA gave loans to a few people to assist them to attend the workshop to train the trainers of teachers, with the understanding that they would work off these loans by participating in workshops in SA on their return. The following South Africans completed this workshop: Prof. Mervyn Skuy from Wits University; myself from CEFSA and the University of Stellenbosch; Irma Roth from UCT, and Ben Viljoen from Pretoria Portland Cement. After completing our training the four of us were accredited to import the copyrighted IE material from Feuerstein’s publisher in the USA. We could also order it for use by teachers/instructors trained by us.

The next step to advance cognitive education in South Africa was to start training teachers in SA. The first training started when I organised, under the auspices of CEFSA, an exploratory IE1 workshop in the Western Cape, starting in April 1986 with training once a week from 18h00 to 22h00 at the Department of Physics of the University of Stellenbosch. The workshop presenters were Irma Roth from UWC, Maureen Archer from UCT and myself. With no course fees, about 60 people originally joined the course, but 21 completed the full course and qualified to use IE1. It served to expose a number of people prominent in education in the Western Cape to Feuerstein’s approach. The next workshop was from 7 to 17 July 1986, at Mervyn Skuy’s Department of Specialised Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, being a joint effort by his department and CEFSA, with Mervyn and myself as presenters of the workshop. The fee was R300 per person; with 35 people from various parts of the country attending. This was followed by the first workshop on IE2 at the same venue with the same presenters from 6–13 December 1991.

The De Lange Investigation recommended the establishment of one national department of education for all population groups as well as the rapid development and expansion of career education. The government’s reaction was to turn the first recommendation down, thereby discrediting the positive recommendations stemming from it in the eyes of the majority of South Africans. When CEFSA considered the future of career education it was obvious that considerable support existed for it in industry and at grass roots level in many communities, provided it could be differentiated from apartheid education. At that time the colour bar on industrial apprenticeships was coming down due to a shortage of skilled workers. The obvious solution was to establish a private career college for pre-apprenticeship training to develop and test our ideas of career education before industry and government implemented it on a much larger scale. Although open to students from all races, it was decided to concentrate mainly on black students in order to assist them to compete with all races for the limited number of apprenticeships available. Although CEFSA proposed the establishment of this college in 1983, and obtained a promise from Cape Gate of R1 million towards capital cost, and one third of the running costs, it took a paper battle until 1989 before we could obtain government approval to establish the Vaal Career College. In this process I interviewed most of the ministers of the
Departments of National Education and of Education and Training between 1982 and 1989 and sat on innumerable committees. Senior departmental staff were generally supportive of career education, but this was often not the case for staff at lower levels. In 1989, when minister Dawie de Villiers had a short stint at being the minister of Education and Training, CEFSAn finally obtained permission to establish the Vaal Career College (VCC) as a private college, funded by industry. At about the same time ESKOM offered the prefabricated buildings of their single quarters at the Vaal Power Station, just South of the Vaal River, and near Vereeniging and Sasolburg to be converted into classrooms and workshops.

At that time my own career took an important turn. CEFSAn obtained sufficient support from the private sector to pay my full salary and related expenses at the University of Stellenbosch for five years. The University then created a Programme for Career Education in the Faculty of Education, with the support of CEFSAn, for me. I became director of this programme, with a part-time secretary. It enabled me to vacate my position in nuclear and applied physics, which would enable the Department of Physics to fill my post with the appointment of a fulltime professor. I also had to vacate the position as chairman of the CEFSAn board, since I technically now became one of its “employees”. Dr Robin Lee, who was previously from the Urban Foundation, replaced me as chairman of the CEFSAn board.

The original plan I presented to CEFSAn made provision for a preparatory year before starting classes at the VCC to prepare the curriculum, appoint teachers, to prepare the venue and to select students. In practice it turned out that I first had to complete my teaching commitment for a full year at the Department of Physics during the first half of 1989, before taking up my new appointment, advertising for staff for the VCC, preparing and equipping the premises, and recruiting students to start classes at the beginning of 1990. During the intervening years I studied the training of artisans in SA, was appointed as a member of the first National Training Board in SA, and decided the VCC should start by supply pre-apprenticeship training to mainly black students from grade 10 to 12 to assist them to compete strongly with all comers for the limited number of new apprenticeships becoming available each year. This required teaching: Communication in English (the parents decided that English should be the language of instruction at the college); Cognitive Education (based on Feuerstein’s methodology) with mediated learning permeating all the courses; Understanding the Industrial System (comparing the commonalities and differences with prior tribal systems); Appropriate Science and Mathematics for technical careers in Electricity and Mechanics; Trade theory integrated with practical laboratory and workshop work. Instruction took place from 8h00 to 17h00 with an afternoon break for a hot lunch supplied by the college. Students were to come by taxi (paid by the college) mainly from Sebokeng, Sharpeville and Zamdela near Sasolburg and should have completed grade 9 at school. Working conditions for teachers were based on a fixed number of days of vacation per year, and not on student vacations. Salaries were slightly higher than in the run-of-the-mill schools.

The positions for teachers and trainers were widely advertised. We were exceptionally fortunate in attracting an outstanding number of applicants for all the vacancies. They were short listed, tested by the HSRC, and appointed after exhaustive interviews.

Since the majority of teachers were only appointed at the end of 1989, I ran an IE1 course for
the whole staff, including the principal. Mediated teaching in all subjects was accentuated, and it was expected of all staff members to actively collaborate with the IE teachers and the one who taught communication in English. Since we had had little time to design the curriculum we had to do so while teaching. It was decided, therefore, to take in only two classes of 30 students each, instead of the planned 4 classes. For the first year it was arranged to buy out some leave-time from teachers and instructors to cope with the curriculating and equipping of the college.

In July my wife and I travelled up North, taking CEFSA's Olivetti PC with us to the home of my parents-in-law in Pretoria, which we used as a temporary workstation. The two of us also drew plans of the buildings of the single quarters to enable Eskom contractors to convert residential buildings into classrooms and workshops, etc. One residential unit was held back to function as a flat and workspace for us, which we started using at the beginning of 1990 after it was equipped with the necessary furniture.

We equipped the classrooms with state of the art padded chairs and benches despite warnings from our industrial friends that such equipment would be rapidly vandalised by the students. This never happened. Students took to our curriculum like fish to water. After three months some of our grade 10s claimed that they were the only real students in the Vaal area. When asked them why they said that, the answer was that they were the only students that really understood what they were learning and why they were learning! The VCC soon became nationally and internationally known and we had a constant stream of visitors. The college, however, continued to struggle financially. The ideal was that student fees should contribute about 50% to the running cost. Many parents were, however, too poor to contribute and we had to establish bursary schemes for such students. It helped when CEFSA appointed an experienced professional fundraiser, absolving me from this onerous task, which I did not like.

Parents were actively involved in matters relating to the college. A Saturday afternoon was set apart each quarter for Parent-Teacher meetings. I often had to fly up from Cape Town for such meetings and soon found out that it was advisable to stay overnight in the flat on the campus since such meetings could easily last from 14h00 to 18h00 – and were generally well attended by parents. One of the issues often brought up by parents was the use of corporal punishment. We explained that it did not fit in with our philosophy – we clearly spelled out to the students what the rules were and indicated that gross violations would lead to expulsion from the college. During the first year we only had to expel one student due to theft. Parents mentioned that they observed some changes in the behaviour of their children since joining the College. They were still naughty, but were much better at arguing why they did some things and not others!

Investigation of the outcomes of the three year training at the VCC revealed that 60 to 80% of the students managed to obtain apprenticeships or jobs at industry after three years of training, while a small percentage continued their study at the local technikon, completing technical engineering diplomas and degrees. One even managed to obtain an MBA. However, it was problematic that some were promoted too rapidly in the new SA so that they did not achieve adequate mastery at the successive levels at which they were employed.

Now back to cognitive development in general: during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s a number of IE workshops training teachers and instructors, mainly organised by me or by Prof.
Skuy’s group, produced a growing demand for IE-material. A major problem limiting the use of IE was its high cost, which was based on first world prices. This made it too expensive for large-scale use especially by pupils from black communities. We had a slight hiccup when Feuerstein’s American publisher decided to oppose apartheid by joining an US commercial boycott of South Africa. Fortunately Feuerstein arranged for us to buy the material directly from him. At that stage I also obtained quotes for printing the material in South Africa, which would have reduced the cost by a factor between two and three. However, for the rights to print the material in SA, Feuerstein wanted an upfront payment of US $100 000 plus a commission on the material sold. South African business people, who were willing to support cognitive education, advised CEFSA that a proven demand for IE-material should first be established, supported by a viable business plan, before undertaking fundraising to meet Feuerstein’s demands.

Apart from training in IE my personal contribution to promoting the widespread use of IE was to distribute material imported by CEFSA, free of charge. Feuerstein also helped by sending a crate of older IE-material that I stored at my home and which my wife and I sorted for distribution, paying him only after material had been sold.

Although the application of IE had expanded rapidly in SA since 1986, Mervyn Skuy and I were aware of several other projects in SA that could broadly be labelled as “cognitive education”. Some of them appeared to be based on sound educational principles, whilst others, like De Bono’s was at that time, based more on niche markets like the adult business community. Others appeared to have more questionable foundations, i.e. in following some guru, or educational fad. The two of us felt that cognitive education was of such fundamental importance to South Africa that different approaches should be discussed openly and compared to ascertain what works best, under what conditions, and why it works, etc. For this we needed a learned organisation in SA devoted to cognitive education, and not mainly to conventional remedial education like SAALED\(^\text{10}\)). When we started sounding colleagues out about the establishment of such an organisation we were confronted with a Babel of voices and opinions and deep mistrust of the motives of some people and groups active in this field. Creating a new, coherent, and useful organisation under such conditions was akin to the task of herding a number of cats! Then Mervyn had a brilliant idea: Why not establish a local branch of the International Association for Cognitive Education (IACE) in SA? Many of the leading lights in IACE also had an understanding of Feuerstein’s approach to cognitive development, although Feuerstein himself was not a member. IACE already had a constitution and structure of governance, and since 1988, had presented biannual international conferences. The main advantage of taking this route was to minimise potential conflict about cognitive education in SA. Membership would be open to all people involved in CE and every body that subscribed to its ideals would be free to join. Calling the new organisation the International Association for Cognitive Education Southern Africa Branch (shortened to IACESA) was also an obvious choice to start the ball rolling. That there also was a strong ground swell for the establishment of IACESA was attested by the fact that 65 prospective foundation members attended the inaugural meeting on 2 October 1993 at the University of the Witwatersrand. The outcome of this meeting was the election of a steering committee\(^\text{11}\)) under the chairmanship of Dr Jenny Pretorius of the Vaal Triangle Technikon to formalise the formation of IACESA with
the structure of IACE as template, but with adaptations to our situation as needed. The most important difference between the two organisations was that IACE’s membership fees of US $70 (R240)/year were too high for the majority of prospective members from IACESA, especially when taking into account the IACESA membership fee of R100 per year needed to cover our running expenses. It was therefore imperative to negotiate financial matters and benefits of branch membership of IACE. The steering committee was also mandated to organise the first Regional Conference of IACESA, to register IACESA members and to have an AGM where a board could be elected. Then the meeting was closed with the presentation of 13 short papers on cognitive education.

The inauguration IACESA Conference took place between 12 and 14 September 1994 at the Division of Specialised Education of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). The conference theme was: “Educational reform through the advancement of thinking skills”. It reflected the high expectations that we had of educational reform in the “new democratic” South Africa that came about in 1994. Prof. Carl Haywood from the USA, a founding member of IACE, was the keynote speaker on “Special Properties and Applications of Cognitive Education/Mediated Learning Curricula”. A widely representative board of 28 members was elected and co-opted for two years under the presidency of Prof. Mervyn Skuy). At that stage we had 110 paid-up members, again reflecting the countrywide enthusiasm for cognitive education. When Kate Dear informed the Board that she was no longer available to do the secretarial work, I undertook to do the work of the Honorary Secretary, provided IACESA provided funding for secretarial help for a total of 10 hours/week, spread over two mornings. I made office space free of charge available at my home for the assistant, including the use of my computers, fax and copying facilities, and telephone. IACESA paid running expenses only. Subsequently Daleen Kleyn, and after her, Janine van Niekerk, were appointed in temporary capacity while I functioned as Honorary Secretary from 1994 to 1998. Both these ladies had their own PCs at home which helped to even out high workloads from time to time. Both gave sterling service to IACESA and contributed to our success.

At the IACE Conference at Nof Ginossar in Israel during July 1993, Mervyn Skuy and I proposed at their AGM that they have their 1997 biannual international conference in South Africa. This was accepted in principle, provided South Africa turned out stable enough after the transition to a government of national unity after the democratic election of 1994. This invitation was finalised after the next IACE Conference at Monticelo in New York during July 1995. That conference, together with conference associated workshops, was attended by about 27 members from IACESA, including Mervyn and myself.

The next major activity for IACESA was the organisation of its 1996 conference, which was to take place in Cape Town. Since 1996 was the centenary year commemorating the births of both Jean Piaget of Switzerland and Lev Vygotsky of Russia, it was decided to have the work of those two pioneers in cognitive education as conference theme. Since the cognitive educationalists in the South were too busy to undertake the role of organising this conference at UCT, I undertook to do it with UCT as venue.

Around that time Dr Adrian Ashman, the president of IACE asked Mervyn to be the conference chair for IACE-1997 in South Africa, and nominated Drs Naglieri and Carlson, and
the conference chair to constitute the programme committee, despite the fact that IACESA had requested two representatives on it. It was also agreed that IACE would supply the seed money needed to organise this conference, and thereafter be entitled to a 90% share in the conference profits. In the meanwhile IACESA asked our members to propose possible venues for IACE-1997. I personally nominated the University of the Witwatersrand as the most appropriate venue. Proposals for some exotic venues like Pilanesberg, the Drakensberg, and scenic places in Mpumalanga turned up, probably proposed by some people who had their provincial eyes on income from an influx of well heeled academic tourists! Following an objective weighing approach, the IACESA venue committee found Wits to be a clear winner with the University of Stellenbosch an acceptable runner-up. IACE was accordingly informed. Mervyn Skuy was hesitant to become heavily involved in organising the conference at Wits. The IACESA-Board, and myself as honorary secretary, however, assured him of our active support, and suggested that Dr Jenny Pretorius of the Vaal Triangle Technikon be asked to function as co-chair. As honorary secretary of IACESA I also prepared budgets for IACESA-1996 and IACE-1997 in South Africa.

I inadvertently became involved in a “drama” in the management of IACESA when Mervyn Skuy phoned me out of the blue to inform me that he had decided as President, that the time was not yet ripe to have the IACE-1997 conference in South Africa, and that it should be postponed for two years, and that he intended to inform IACE after talking to me. I told him that this should be a decision of at least the IACESA Executive Committee, taken after he had adequately motivated his proposal, and proposed organising an urgent meeting of Exco. My objections were not only about not following the appropriate procedures, but also that we would be leaving IACE in a very difficult position to find a new venue at short notice for IACE-1997. To my mind this would definitely bias them against having future conferences in SA. I also expressed the view that having IACE-1997 in SA would not only be invaluable in promoting cognitive education and IACESA locally, but would also put the “new SA” on the international cognitive educational map. Mervyn’s reaction over the phone was prompt – he withdrew himself from formal participation in the conference, and suggested that I should proceed to organise the conference in Stellenbosch. Later on he resigned as IACESA president for the period 1996–1998 and was replaced by Jenny Pretorius. I informed the members of the IACESA board of this turn of events. They supported shifting the venue from the University of the Witwatersrand to Stellenbosch University. Subsequently the president of IACE appointed me as conference chair (a fancy name for the organiser of the conference), and Jenny Pretorius became the IACESA member of the conference programming committee. Mervyn, however, presented two papers at IACE-1997, which was appreciated.

I was saved from the impasse of having to organise IACESA-1996 and IACE-1997 in the Western Cape when Mervyn Skuy offered the use of his division as conference venue at Wits, providing IACESA could provide outside organisers. This we managed to do when Mr André Grobler of the Vaal Career College near Vereeniging volunteered to act as organiser, assisted by Susan Mackie as conference secretary.

The IACE-1997 conference theme concerned the role of cognitive education in the information age, especially in developing countries which could progress much more rapidly by copying with understanding developments elsewhere. The rapid development of computerised information
systems like the Internet promised an avalanche of both useful and trivial information, requiring well-developed cognition to see the difference. It will be a bad day for IACESA should we forget this! It is one of the most important stepping stones for humanity, like the preceding agricultural and industrial revolutions.

My task of organising IACE-1997 was made much easier by the help of Mr Neels Britz and his staff from the Bureau for University and Further Education who assisted in organising conferences hosted by the University of Stellenbosch. I chaired the conference committee, which was an extension of the IACESA-96 committee. Prof. Petra Engelbrecht headed the host committee, which was responsible for making the delegates feel welcome in Stellenbosch. Prof. Cilliers helped in organising and running the day-to-day programme of the conference. What I remember best was organising a total of 16 pre- and post-conference workshops, most with overseas presenters. To make it worthwhile for presenters to run workshops, a minimum attendance was required for each. Cancelled workshops led to people applying at the last minute to attend other workshops, leading to a flurry of e-mails and telephone calls. Eventually 111 people attended workshops. Very useful was the COGNET-workshop for consultants, which was the first workshop in South Africa to train people who could train others to use COGNET.

Our first choice for a person to open the conference was naturally our charismatic president, Nelson Mandela. When he could not come I approached the minister of National Education, who also declined. Eventually we settled on Mr. Brian Figaji, Rector of the Peninsula Technikon, who was knowledgeable in the field of cognitive education. We had an eminent and very capable guest speaker in Prof. Bob Steinberg from the USA who is an expert on intelligence. IACE undertook to pay for his travel and accommodation at the conference. At the last minute he inquired why we are not paying for his wife’s accommodation too. I had to scrounge around to find the required money in a tight budget and also enlisted Prof. Jerry Carlson from IACE to smooth his ruffled feathers in the USA.

The conference attendance was as follows: 157 from SA; 21 from North America; 17 from Europe; 4 from Namibia; 3 from Latin America; and 2 from Australia. It was considered a success with attendance in excess of any prior IACE conference. It also yielded a record profit of about R61 000 to IACE. I saw red later on when I heard that IACE used this financial bonanza to reduce their membership fee over the next year! I am sure IACESA could have used it much more effectively to promote cognitive education!

To my mind an unmitigated disaster struck education in South Africa when the government announced its new idea of comprehensive educational reform as Curriculum 2005, founded on Outcomes Based Education (OBE)\(^\dagger\), to start at grade 1 in 1998. To my mind this was a superficial attempt to rectify all the historical inequities and cultural transitional problems besetting education in SA with one swoop by renaming it. It was akin to apply the thinking that underlies the well known “cargo cults”\(^\ast\)}, to education. I wrote a long memorandum to the then Minister of National Education, professor Kader Asmal, pointing out that achieving desired outcomes in a given situation requires a thorough understanding, and then applying suitable inputs. An essential input in our situation was cognitive education, which if systematically applied over many years would eventually yield most of the desired outcomes of OBE. I got a friendly answer
to my letter from the minister, promising that his Director General would study it. Needless to note, I am still waiting for any indication that memo was read or understood!

Our version of OBE was especially deleterious to the many poorly trained and under qualified educators in schools that still mainly served the black population. Only very well qualified and experienced teachers could develop their own curricula and work without textbooks. This partially happened in some of the ex-model C schools which still catered mainly for whites. These teachers had sufficient training to know what education is really about, and many were clever enough to give token support to the new political fad, while continuing to deliver a reasonable quality of academic education. In schools for blacks where discipline was purposely broken down during the “Struggle” with mottos like “liberation before education”, populated by under trained teachers, this was not the case. The unintended outcome of this whole reform was to further exclude the majority of South African children from quality education, training and employment up to this day. This despite the positive reforms after 1994 by the new government, of having one educational system for all, with salaries for teachers depending only on qualifications and experience and not on race, and the same base of funding for all schools.

True to one of my mottos “as long as there is a sign of life, resuscitation is called for”, which required that I personally supported the IACESA-1998 conference in Kimberley with the theme “Teaching Thinking – the Essential Prerequisite for Success with Curriculum 2005 and Life Long Learning”. Mr. Johan Cronje of the Sol Plaatje Educational Trust was the conference organiser and the IACESA secretariat was involved in assisting the organiser and his committee.

In 1989 I stood down as chairman of the CEFSA board for Dr Robin Lee, previously from the Urban Foundation, since funding for the PCE was indirectly channelled through CEFSA to the university. I remained one of the board members of CEFSA. At that stage we had several entities in the CEFSA stable: The Board itself; the Vaal Career College (with its own charter and board of control consisting of parents, representatives of local industries and CEFSA, and college management); the PCE with me as director and a controlling committee with representatives from the university and CEFSA on it. To this must be added the professional fundraiser. From the start of the VCC I was practically continuously working in a crisis management mode with uncertain funding, involved in all the above entities, including fundraising. Good results were coming in from the VCC, and everybody assumed that a loose organisational structure would be sustainable without taking time to think the whole organisational structure through thoroughly. The weakness of this approach came to the fore when unexpected problems arose. During the first year it was decided that the students, should also write, apart from their internal examinations, also the N1 national external examinations in which they did unexpectedly badly. This caused quite a flurry amongst the staff some of whom were used to using these examinations as norms in previous jobs. This problem merited close examination, which should have included evaluating the philosophy behind the N-examinations and their structure. The next problem was a more serious internal one. The principal of the VCC was a live wire, who took to the challenges of getting the VCC going like a duck to the water, and was generally liked and respected by the staff and students. I later found out that his personal finances were not very sound. At the end of
In 1990 I received an anonymous telex accusing the principal of misallocating funds for the special development projects that were provided for in the first year. I turned it over to the CEFSA Board, which in turn asked the VCC Board to investigate. The upshot was that the principal resigned. In the meanwhile industrialists and parents on the East Rand proposed opening a career college similar to the VCC in Tembisa. They just had sufficient funds and a venue in the centre of Tembisa to start, but not for sustainable operation. I opposed this premature expansion in the view of the still unresolved problems at the VCC, and my experience in getting an under funded VCC off the ground, but was overruled in public by the chairman of the CEFSA Board. As part of this expansion CEFSA appointed two new senior staff members to cope with the increasing – but still largely undefined workload. These expansions drastically increased CEFSA’s funding needs resulting in the chairman of the Board opening a CEFSA office for himself and the fundraiser in Johannesburg, adding a further financial drain. As a sop I was made CEO of CEFSA, with no responsibility for the financial management of the conglomerate, which remained firmly in the hands of the Chairman, while the management of the Vaal Career College and the new East Rand Career College remained in the hands of their respective Boards of Control. My role turned out to be training staff members of the two colleges in cognitive education, arranging for staff experienced in CE at the VCC to be trained as trainers of teachers of IE by Feuerstein in Israel. This was important in view of enabling VCC staff to train new staff as the VCC expanded into an intake of 4 classes per year and into grade 11 and 12 training. I also had to put in considerable effort into trying to keep a tottering ERCC going. In its second year the ERCC ran out of funds and had to be closed down. CEFSA also had to be closed in 1994 in order to save the VCC. Funding of my program at the PCE also collapsed with that of CEFSA a few years before my natural retirement age of 65. Eventually the VCC was closed down at the end of 1999 because they could not pay their staff.

When the PCE started I reached agreement with the University that in such an eventually, I would take early retirement, which I did. My pension was not adequate to cover the incremental cost of my involvement in cognitive education and I started the Centre for Cognitive and Career Education (CCCE) in 1995 to generate income from contract work in this field.

While working at the PCE I ran numerous workshops in IE, for instance for both industrial and educational institutions which yielded an income for the PCE. Fortunately I had an agreement with the University and CEFSA that incomes from such activities would be paid into a special account at the University, which could be used by me for overseas training in cognitive education and attending conferences. I used this money to be trained in Professor Matthew Lipman’s Philosophy for children in 1993 in the USA, to attend IACE-1995 in New York, and after the conference to be trained as a COGNET trainer of teachers by Prof. Kathy Greenberg at the University of Tennessee. While being employed by the University my philosophy has always been to make information I obtained in physics and on cognitive education freely available to fellow South Africans. I had already done that for IE and therefore presented a four-day workshop on Philosophy for Children (P4C) in Stellenbosch during 1994, which effectively launched it in South Africa. I also started running COGNET workshops to introduce it into education and training in SA.
Personally I like P4C. To my mind it is very suitable to be used with well-mediated children from homes in the higher socio-economic levels of society, but it is not as suitable as either IE or COGNET for children caught up in a rapid cultural transition. The latter methodologies strongly depend on mediation and are thus eminently suitable for use with the majority of children in SA.

COGNET also has the advantage of helping the teacher to actually integrate the teaching of cognition through “mini-lesson plans” whilst teaching any subject. I, therefore, put considerable effort into the local dissemination of COGNET, including translating its terminology into Afrikaans, especially for the teachers of the San children at Schmidtsdrift in the Northern Cape. I also started giving one day “exposure workshops” in both IE and COGNET to expose people interested in these methodologies, to enable them to decide for themselves if they wanted further training. The success we had at whole-school-training in IE at the VCC also led to my propagating such courses and, if possible, following up on such training. Whole-school-training in COGNET also took place for teachers at the San School at Schmidtsdrift, in the Northern Cape (2 workshops to cover the whole school) (1997); Cross Roads School, Johannesburg (1999); Anita Worrall’s Pro-Ed School in Cape Town (2000 and 2001); Bellavista School, Johannesburg (2000); Jan Kriel School at Kuils River (2001) (2 workshops to cover the whole school), where I met Elsefie Wranz; and the De La Bat School for the Deaf at Worcester (2001) (2 workshops to cover the whole school).

Two workshops, which were of special interest to me, were IE1 (1996) and COGNET (1997) for occupational therapists in the Western Cape. The driving forces behind both workshops were Cornelia Prins and Estelle Bretteny. What impressed me most was their para-medical training. When confronted with an educational, training, or behavioural problem, they tended to postulate a possible solution, apply it, if it works, OK, if not, try another hypothesis, etc. This is ideal for remedial education for all types of students, from the highly performing to those hampered by rapid cultural change. I wish that the training of teachers and instructors would incorporate similar approaches.

During 1998 I became involved in an investigation by Eskom into the training of nuclear reactor operators by being appointed on a committee consisting of international experts. My own involvement was that of a consultant in cognitive development and as a nuclear physicist. Eskom had recently installed an expensive computer that could simulate the working of the Koeberg nuclear reactors. When this computer became available it was mainly used in re-evaluating operators during their periodic re-evaluation to keep them “sharp”. Failures led to periods of retraining and reduction of salaries. This resulted in some reactor operators having nervous breakdowns. Eskom’s diagnosis of the problem was that those who failed lacked higher order thinking skills – this being the reason for my appointment on the investigating committee. I decided to put this hypothesis to the test by subjecting some of the operators, over the whole range from the most senior to junior, to my version of Feuerstein tests for learning potential (LPAD). To every body’s surprise the vast majority performed very well. Then I investigated the in-house training of the reactor operators. Eskom carefully selected a small number of good matriculants with the aptitude to become effective reactor operators. My test showed that this selection process was very successful on the intellectual level and their performance on the job
showed that good team workers were selected. The real problem came to the fore when I dug deeper into the actual training given by Eskom. The trainees received no further training beyond matric in science or mathematics. They were, however, exposed to imported textbooks on reactor operations written for students who had prior tertiary training in science and mathematics. Such students could relate reactor operation to the basic underlying sciences, and build a solid science-based understanding about it in their minds, on which diagnostics could be based when things went wrong. This the Eskom trainees could not do. Science based formulae were just recipes to them! They had to memories myriads of possible malfunctions and the tabulated actions to rectify them! Some of my overseas colleagues commented that the Eskom reactor operators had extra-ordinary memories! The problem was that the type of competency learning used by Eskom for their reactor operators was shot through with rote learning!

At that time (1999) Eskom was coming under increased pressure to take in “affirmative action” learner reactor operators with matric. They also found it difficult to find enough candidates from this group that met their selection criteria. I therefore proposed that they interpose a cadet year of training between matric and the start of operator training. This year should be used for advanced training in physics (including reactor physics), chemistry and mathematics, cognitive education, communication in English, and Developing an Understanding of the Modern Industrial System. When the cadet scheme started Eskom at first appointed, on contract, two competent lecturers, but only for the sciences and mathematics part of the training. The new students, however, soon objected. Then I was called in again and I managed to recruit Sandra Young, an excellent teacher of communication and cognitive education from the original staff of the VCC, to teach missing parts of the curriculum. I also gave some training to the staff in COGNET and Industrial Orientation. A few weeks after the new regime started, students reported to Sandra that they previously intuitively knew that something was wrong in the way they were taught, but that they only now realised what was missing. Afterwards some of the most experienced trainers of reactor operators at Koeberg told me that the 1999 batch of affirmative action trainees were amongst the best they have ever had! Typical of Eskom the 1999 Cadet Scheme was managed by an administrative clerk from Koeberg head office, who told me his main objective for the scheme was to ensure that the trainees remain respectful of authority! Recently one of the original instructors asked me for a personal recommendation and told me that Eskom discontinued the cadet scheme after a few years when they had a sufficient number of competent reactor operators. This proves that industry in general is not a good trustee for new ideas in education and training, and that NGO’s like ORT are probably essential for this purpose in developing countries’). 

One of the largest projects on cognitive education I became involved in was when the then faculty of education of the University of the North, under pressure from above, decided, around 2003, that their whole staff of about 80 needed training in cognitive education, and I was asked to do the training. This was quite a challenge, and to me an opportunity for cognitive education to become a part of mainstream training in education. After giving it considerable thought I decided to develop a workshop based on an advanced version of COGNET for youth and young adults, which could be used to improve the thinking of both staff and students. This took about four months of my time, in which a number of suitable instruments were also developed. It was
arranged that the University would pay for my airfare and lodging for two workshops with about 40 people attending each, paying the rest of my fees after completion of each workshop. When I inquired about three weeks before the first workshop should start about air reservations for me, I was informed that new management in their faculty had just asked their staff who wanted to volunteer to attend the workshops in the scheduled time during their July university vacation. Only a handful indicated their willingness to attend. I promptly cancelled the workshops and realised that the tendency of some South African educationalists to shy away from work is even rife at tertiary level in some institutions, despite equal pay! If you mix it with incompetent management and inappropriate democracy, things get even worse.

Finally I want to express my thanks to the many people I have worked with in promoting cognitive education in South Africa. They ranged from some who fully understood the importance of it for our country, whom I would liken to “missionaries” in this field to others who had a much more “mercenary” approach, who participated mainly for what was in it for themselves, but who, with a few glaring exceptions, also made some useful contributions.

To my mind cognitive (and career education, including CE) have yet to realise the potential I saw for them in 1979, because, to do so CE has to permeate most education and training, especially that of the vast number of pupils who are still badly culturally disadvantaged. Their growing numbers feed the number of jobless people and threaten the future of our democratic civilisation. A useful starting point would be to introduce CE into all training of teachers and instructors. IACESA therefore has its challenges cut out for it for the next twenty-one-years, if not for the next century. ☹

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Foundation and Honorary Member of IACESA

Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.

2. ORT, the acronym standing for the “Organisation for Rehabilitation through Training”, formed by Jews in Russia in the 1880’s to rehabilitate their people uprooted by the pogroms.


6. Basil previously helped me to arrange visits to ORT-institutions in Israel in 1979, and the two of us had already established, “The Technical and Vocational Education Foundation of SA” in 1979, later renamed as the “Career Education Foundation of SA (CEFSA)” an NGO that could focus the interest and the resources of the private sector in SA on career education, that incorporated cognitive education. CEFSA organised the first (and only) multiracial “Southern African Conference on Technical and Vocational Education” in February 1980 in Johannesburg. I was elected chairman of CEFSA, Prof. Bozoli (previous rector of Wits) as vice-chairman, and Basil Wunsh (later the first SA attorney to become a judge) acted as secretary of CEFSA’s board, which had the following prominent South Africans as members over the years: Advocate Anton Mostert SC; Mr David Susman, CEO of Woolworths; Mr Z M Yacoob; Mr Franklyn Sonn; Mr R T Hofmeyer; Mr Fanyana Mazibuko; Mr M H Mabogoane; and Dr Robin Lee.

7. IE1 and IE2 respectively denoted sets of Feuerstein’s exercises to develop thinking at introductory and advanced levels for children from junior to senior secondary schools, respectively called Instrumental Enrichment 1 (with 7 sets of instruments/thinking exercises) and 2 (with 7 sets).

8. Around that time the Department of Education and Training started propagating their own very ambitious project for career education for black pupils. It started with elective vocational subjects in the primary school, to be followed by the establishment of more than 40 senior secondary career schools to meet industry’s need for artisans in different fields. They did, however, not realise the crucial need for cognitive education, and that educational reform could only work in SA if it encompassed all races. In 1989 politics were just against good things coming from DET who could only try to reform education for blacks!

9. When visiting industrial training institutions, including the large Eskom power stations in the then Eastern Transvaal, I found that the training of artisans was in a transition stage from the old five year apprenticeship where artisan status was conferred by lapse of time. Although apprentices were required to attend theoretical classes in trade theory, mathematics and science, they were
not required to pass them. This was fondly called training by “sitting at Nelly” carrying their master’s artisans tools, making his coffee, assisting him in his work, boarding in his home and often marrying one of his daughters! Many of the experienced artisans that I met, were products of this system, more or less of my age — children of the world-wide economic depression of the 1930’s and from poor families who could not afford education beyond the school leaving age of 16 years. Many of those apprentices, however, fully availed them of their training opportunities, both practical and theoretical and became the high quality artisans that built the giant power stations like Matla from the ground, and maintained them effectively. In the eye of industry this type of training was too long and expensive, and when competency based education and training (CBE&T), based on the behaviouristic psychology, propagated by John B Watson and B F Skinner in the USA, started in the USA, we were soon to follow. One enthusiastic trainer explained it to me: “I train the apprentice what to do in practice, when to do it, and how long it should take. It is, however, taboo to ask him if he understands the reason behind anything”. This flies in the face of cognitive education, where the meaning of knowledge and action comes to the front. When asking the experienced artisans about the performance of the artisans trained in the new system, the answer was that they can follow orders but are at sea when required to diagnose problems in complex systems, which the artisans of the previous generation, can. Another problem of the SA version of CBE&T was that practical training in workshops was separate from theoretical training at technical colleges. This type of training is especially pernicious for learners coming from transitional cultures where children do not come in contact with modern equipment/tools at home or school.

10 South African Association for Learning and Educational Difficulties, an organisation devoted to traditional remedial education.

11 Members of the steering committee: Dr Jenny Pretorius, (Vanderbijlpark), Chair; Anita Craig (Durban) Co-coordinator – information; Prof. Mervyn Skuy (Johannesburg) — international liaison; Prof. Willie Rautenbach (Stellenbosch) — constitutional matters; Mandia Mentis (Johannesburg) — treasurer and membership matters; Dr Anita Worrall (Cape Town) — information matters; Marcel Kanyago (Pietersburg); Mandla Mbuli (Johannesburg); Edna Freinkel (Johannesburg); Dr Johan van Wyk (Orange Freestate); Represenatives of the Transkei, Gazankulu and Venda were also nominated.

12 IACESA’s first Board: President: Prof. Mervyn Skuy; Vice Presidents: Dr Jenny Pretorius and Prof. Willie Rautenbach; Secretary: Kate Dear (in temporary capacity); Hon. Treasurer: Ms Mandia Mentis; Editor of the Newsletter: Dr Anita Worrall; and after co-opting a number of members: Ms Pamela Behr; Ms Jill Bradbury; Mr Nico Claasen; Mr Thys Cronje; Prof. Petra Engelbrecht; Mr Averal Fortuin; Ms Edna Freinkel; Ms Lena Green; Ms Anna-Marie Gwilt; Mrs L S Hanyane; Elaine Harcombe; Mr Phineas Kutumela; Ms Irene Lategan; Ms Lilian Lomofsky; Mr Sipho Mathebula; Mr Mandla Mbuli; Asnath Mojapelo; Ms Mimie Mtiya; Dr Reynold Sonn; Ms Poppy Thabethe; Mrs Hetta van Niekerk; Dr Stefina Verhoef; Dr Art Wouters.

13 To my understanding OBE posed a number of very desirable outcomes to education like producing citizens that can think logically and critically, who understand the new constitution of SA, understand the world they live in and themselves, and can compete in all spheres internationally.
The rub comes in achieving these outcomes with the limited resources, pupils, parents, children and school administrations available. This becomes nearly impossible if it is to be achieved in a very diverse educational system like the one in South Africa at the year 1994. This can not be done in one fell swoop like envisioned by the introduction of OBE. It is much better to use a stepwise process, building on proven strengths and better understanding of the fundamentals of rapid cultural change with small innovations like the VCC being evaluated before replication.

For me the following is a good description of a “cargo cult” by Richard Feynman, a nobelauriate in physics (taken from Wikipedia under cargo cults): “In the South Seas there is a cargo cult of people. During the war they saw airplanes land with lots of good materials, and they wanted the same thing to happen now. So they arranged to imitate things like runways, to put fires along the sides of the runways, to make a wooden hut for a man to sit in, with two wooden pieces on his head like headphones and bars of bamboo sticking out like antennas — he’s the controller — and they waited for the airplanes to land. They’re doing everything right. The form is perfect. It looks exactly the way it looked before. But it doesn’t work. No airplanes land. So I call these things cargo cult science, because they follow all the apparent precepts and forms of scientific investigation, but they’re missing something essential, because the planes don’t land”.

The N1, N2 and N3 denote national technical examinations for different levels in mathematics, science and trade theories that apprentices need to pass, together with a trade test, to become artisans.

It was reported to me that the VCC received its first subsidy from government in 1998 for modular courses in welding etc., run for their students. This was to be an ongoing subsidy, which encouraged them to expand their intake for the next year from 120 to 180 (grade 10 students). In the mean while the department involved decentralised its activities to the provincial administrations. When the VCC requested their agreed-on subsidy in 1999 from the provincial administration of the Free State nobody knew anything about is. This money just vanished into thin air, and nothing could be done about it despite appeals to the Minister of National Education and the other minister involved!

The San community consisted of two small tribes, the !Xu and Khwe, originally from Namibia and Angola. They came to South Africa just before Namibia became independent. There was little mutual understanding in their own languages and they could only converse in Afrikaans which was the lingua franca in their SADF camp in Namibia, and naturally the language of instruction in their school in Namibia and at Schmidtsdrift in the Northern Cape, to which they were relocated.

An experienced senior professor in education and training from Taiwan told me during the 1980 Conference on Technical and Vocational Education in Johannesburg, that people planning and managing education and training need: “the drive of the business man, linked to the soul of an educator”. This probably applied to the senior staff in ORT.

Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Maureen Archer is happily retired from the School of Education at the University of Cape Town. There she headed a diploma programme of Specialised Education for trained, experienced teachers and offered lectures in other programmes in the Faculty about learners with special educational needs. She has had a long and varied teaching career working at all levels from pre-school to primary and high schools before entering teacher training. Her publications included papers and chapters in books on the related topics of SEN and remedial teaching. She is currently one of the brigade of retired teachers who volunteer their services to schools and/or to some of the excellent NGO-run learning projects which augment education in our country.
A NEW CHALLENGE FOR IACESA?
Language has always fascinated me. Words and word play were a source of delight from early stories and then my own reading of Alice’s nonsensical creatures, William and his Gang’s repartee, Archie and Mehitabel and the wonderfully evocative words and phrases of Afrikaans. Perhaps they all encouraged my primitive forays into word meanings as I considered how it could be possible for other peoples’ descriptions to build pictures in my own mind.

I trained as a primary school teacher and, though I hugely enjoyed inter-acting with the children, I do not think I was a particularly thoughtful or thought-provoking teacher. However, I do now remember with some satisfaction my strivings to encourage wide reading and good writing skills. Planning and preparation were conscientiously done but by and large I probably flew by the seat of my pants like too many teachers.

The above notwithstanding, I have clear memories of the children who demonstrated real thinking: the insect enthusiast; the boy who depicted (in an untidy scribble) the make-up of the atom bomb and accurately described its destructive power; the eleven year old girl who grappled with the realisation of her impending death from leukaemia. These and other children made me conscious of my shallow approach to life but it took Jimmie James to force me into doing the Remedial Programme at the University of Cape Town. Jimmie was a little boy from a remote rural area, nine years old with severe health problems which kept him from attending school. I was a hospital teacher at the time and spent about an hour a day in his ward, he learning English far faster than I could learn Xhosa. He was bright and alert and absorbed learning like a sponge so that within a few months he was coping with Grade 3 work. Then the essential but lengthy surgery resulted in brain damage. Jimmie lost his learning and I started mine.

Studying any and all forms of specialised education opens up a wealth of information. I became engrossed in the psychology of learning and the impediments to learning and was convinced that a person’s IQ dictated scholastic and academic achievement. All tests and testing procedures I regarded as sacrosanct and I practise their administration with diligence. Many of the children I tested were from cultures other than that of the test designers and their poor results gave me pause. Later, during the Masters programme of strictly supervised training in administering IQ and complementary tests, I finally recognised that I would never be a psychologist as I always thought like a teacher.

The remedial course set me off on a long and thoughtful journey of discovery: first of all about children’s cognitive and emotional development and always about language and how that affected learning and living. I had experienced so many “other language” children in the hospital who were unable to communicate with anyone and I began to understand the major part played by emotion and self concept in successful learning and achieving. I tried to emulate the Master Teachers I read about, encouraging children by a focus on their success and helping them devise coping strategies against bullying and teasing. I had never heard of “mediation” but was very open to it when I discovered it and was helped by Feuerstein’s carefully structured usage of clues and cues.

A Rotary scholarship enabled me to do a Masters Degree at Northwestern University under Doris Johnson: a deeply theoretical programme underpinning a practical approach to teaching those with special educational needs. Again, I opted for many language courses and my exposure
to Lev Vygotsky continues to colour much of my thinking about cognitive education. I had to grapple with his critiques and research at a level which I had never before attempted but I found the relationship between words and “inner language” very helpful in trying to conceptualise links between developing thought and language. The findings appealed to me as a teacher in that one could devise a methodology to lead a child verbally upwards from plane to plane towards a clearer understanding of the whole problem and, perhaps, its solution. That simplistic interpretation ignored Vygotsky’s research on the development of scientific thought in children and the issue of instruction – something I had to rethink when I encountered Feuerstein’s approach.

In the 1980’s I moved into teacher education at the University of Cape Town, working with qualified, experienced teachers intent on a diploma in specialised education. I hope that I impressed them with the need to become, and spread, a strongly cognitive form of education which emphasised meaning and thinking as the goal of all the tools and skills we trained. South African education then, as now, required wise and thoughtful teachers who adapted their teaching to the needs of a very divergent school population. I worked closely with colleagues at the other two universities in the Western Cape and we all sought answers to the increasing numbers of pupils with special educational needs.

Professor Rautenbach of Stellenbosch University introduced us to the work of Reuven Feuerstein, whose programmes seemed to meet our needs. Mrs Irma Roth of the University of the Western Cape persuaded me to join her in Jerusalem for our sabbaticals and we spent six months absorbing his cognitive approach. It was a very rewarding time. My greatest surprise was meeting children who were living proof of Feuerstein’s claim that IQ was not static but could be modified. His principles of dynamic assessment and mediated learning deserve to be entrenched in every sphere of education.

Advancing age now redirects my thinking away from child development and towards ageist decline, not of thinking but of language. Like others of my generation, I am experiencing word finding difficulties/Nominal Aphasia. Call it what you will, it is a frustration of language which leaves me at odds with the Vygotskian theory of thought born of words. I can still think, often deeply but my “social speech” flounders and I struggle to express my thoughts. So, while I heartily congratulate IACESA on 21 years of service to cognitive education I boldly suggest that the next 21 years be directed towards the cognitive and linguistic maintenance of the elderly. After all, the “population bulge” is now old!

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A glimpse into Bellavista’s journey in embracing Dr Greenberg’s Cognitive Enrichment Advantage (CEA), just one of the programmes employed at the school to develop meta-cognition and drive self change
“How is it that our children cope?
From where do they acquire hope?”
An inner voice, over time, says, “I am okay. I can learn to learn.”
And so our story unfolds…

There was once a darling called Cea. She had beautiful brown eyes and tight curly hair. Every day she would go to school, learn her alphabet and play with her friends. To all around, she seemed strong and secure. Her outgoing, bubbly personality made everyone believe that she was able, yet in truth she felt sad and inadequate. In her mind, all her friends were quick thinkers, asked many questions and read with ease. She alone noticed that her stardust chart was short of coveted gold stars. Cea felt more and more bewildered and overwhelmed.

One day, whilst sitting all alone, silver tears fell from her eyes. Full of concern, her mother approached her. She lifted Cea up in her strong arms. Looking into her daughter’s eyes, her mother whispered tenderly, “I love you, Cea.” Gently, in what seemed like a cloud of spiral updrafts, Cea was placed at the foot of an enormous tree, in a faraway land called Birdhaven. She heard her mother singing softly in the background and she felt an air of calm surround her gradually.

All at once, Cea was surrounded by many others, smiling down at her with huge sparkling eyes from the top of the tree. Quietly, they all pointed to a beautiful queen. Her dress formed the roots of the tree, and her arms were reaching out to Cea. In her hands, she held a heart-shaped locket. “In this locket,” she whispered, “you will find the language of the tree. To reach it, you will have to climb slowly and steadily, one branch at a time. Be careful, you are weak and tired. You have an inner strength. Harness it, Cea, believe in yourself and lay hold on hope,” she whispered.

Cea desired that beautiful locket. She experienced a moment of self-realisation and began to climb.

As she stepped up, an inhabitant of the tree, called Miss Mediate, chirped at her, “Stop, think and then decide which route will be best.” Cea was annoyed that Miss Mediate hadn’t simply advised the best route, but it dawned on her that this was what she herself had to explore. She climbed slowly further. Another reached out his hand. “You will experience a feeling of challenge as you set off. Keep going and you will achieve your purpose. Make specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed goals. Stay goal directed.”

Cea began to think about her approach to task. If she went too fast, she would lose her footing; if she went too slowly, she might be distracted and lose her sense of direction. She summoned up her self-regulation.
As she looked at the thorny branches and sticky spider webs blocking her way, she heard whispers and rustling from others in the tree, using a new language to guide her, “Use planning and precision and accuracy to negotiate the branches.” Warmly, they linked arms and reached out to help. She moved on. At times, she explored the route on her own, using her working memory to forge ahead and reach higher branches independently.

The sky darkened and a strong wind came up. The branches shook. Cea compared herself to others flying around so effortlessly. She felt discouraged and doubted that she would ever reach the top. She thought of her parents and felt a new resolve and determination. She was reminded of the values that had been mediated by her family, to be resilient and rely on her inner strength.

Cea accepted the feeling of challenge and struggled on. With a renewed sense of purpose, she started to climb again, refocused and mindful of her goal. Shaking, her arms full of scratches and bruises, she reached out to take hold of the last branch. The queen extended her hand and hoisted her to the top of the tree. Elevated, Cea felt the warm glow of the sun and gazed in awe at the bright view around her.

Gently, the queen smiled and gave Cea the dazzling heart shaped locket. Cea could feel a magical current course through her veins, charged with courage and hope. With a giant leap of faith, Cea’s heart soared. Never before had she felt such a desire to be the best she could be nor had she experienced such a feeling of competence. She knew that she was capable of doing things far beyond her reach previously. Cea reflected on her own self change. Cea heard her parents saying, “Well done child. We watched you grow; we are proud.”

The words of Benjamin Franklin, “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I will learn”, echo what Bellavista School strives to achieve: involvement – in learning, in self development, in self actualisation – even at a tender age. Intentionality, a fundamental belief in the plasticity of the brain and a belief in the innate potential in every child, underpins all that we do: in our morning line-up, we tell guiding stories; our teaching incorporates the language of cognition; everything on which we base our learning, especially the stories and life experiences shared, makes learning more meaningful and leads the children on a journey of self-discovery and self acceptance. The children learn to think and do, not only for themselves but for others. From this point, tolerance flows and hope is born. The children and staff leave Bellavista with more than an enduring feeling of competence in their
own ability to overcome obstacles and challenges. Within each there is a cultivated and valued inner drive towards each individual’s strengths.

Written collaboratively by Bellavista staff: Debbie Behrens (Art Teacher), Fleur Durbach (Remedial Therapist), Katrinka Frankish (Grade 6 Teacher), Geraldine Cruikshank (Grade 3 Teacher), Jenny Hallendorf (Grade 2 Teacher), Bev Nowikow (Grade 4 Teacher), Lena Pillay (Grade 7 Teacher), Penny Sinclair (IT Specialist). Edited by Alison Scott (Principal).

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Illustration below by Lauren Mills (Grade 6).
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What works, how, for whom and in what contexts?
This story was a personal and professional journey for me – and helped me to gain perspective.

When I was dropped off by my dad at Nerina Hostel at the University of Stellenbosch in 1975 to achieve my goal of obtaining an occupational therapy (OT) degree I had to become an independent young lady overnight. I knew my parents had financial constraints but they encouraged their children to get an education. Fortunately I received a bursary from my 2nd year; I experienced a feeling of challenge about my university career and told myself that “I must make it work”. I accepted that it was my responsibility to pass my degree. I was confident that I would cope with the demands and my upbringing equipped me with some essential skills. Although I lost my biological mother at a very young age my father remarried a wonderful lady who became my mother; I was raised in a stable Christian home with my other siblings; healthy meals and good nutrition were a norm in our house; I was exposed to “good” values from an early age; I was privileged to attend an excellent high school in George and to share my high school years with other teenagers with high-quality values. I did not really have money to go out during my university years. I therefore focused on my studies and worked hard – very hard and persisted for hours without end. I realised that university studies were more demanding than school and that my core university strategy of more hours was not sufficient. I motivated myself, created some simple methods to help me with my studies and was successful in obtaining my degree in 1978.

Reflection: I was not consciously aware of it but I had some good disposition (Habits of Mind) and Affective/Motivational Tools of Learning as a student that helped me to cope with my studies, although I lacked various other skills. My upbringing and home situation played a positive role too.

I was only 22 years old in 1979 when I started my first job as a slightly insecure OT in Neuro Clinic C, a short term psychiatric unit at Stikland Hospital in Bellville. I had to provide dynamic individual and group treatment for high level short term patients (mostly older than myself); I had to report back to a team of experienced psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and nursing staff in ward round discussions; and meet the additional administrative and organisational requirements of my job. My basic training as an OT helped me to a certain point but in order to cope with the demands of my unique role in the clinic I had to engage in intensive reading, self study and research (without any technology!). I had to create and provide treatment plans for the patients during the acute phase of their illness, but more importantly, I had to assist the patients to develop knowledge and skills to cope with stress and problems in their lives, to fulfil their daily life roles and activities in the most optimal way and to prevent future problems. The tedious 20 to 30 page treatment plans that I conscientiously wrote (according to the OT treatment process) during my student years provided me with a systematic way of thinking but did not equip me with a repertoire of strategies to help the patients with problems that I had never experienced in my own life. I embarked on a serious learning curve and in the process I developed tremendously.

Reflection: I became a Life-Long-Learner but at that stage of my life I did not even know this word existed. I developed a desire for knowing more and thinking about my personal and professional
life and how I could improve it. I had no intellectual term for what I did – I just did it.

Between 1981 and 1990 I married; moved to Bloemfontein; filled a senior OT post (acting as head OT) at Oranje Hospital; worked as a part time lecturer at the University of the Orange Free State; became one of the first OT's to enroll for a Master’s degree at the OT Department at the University of the Orange Free State (one of the first universities to offer a Master’s course for OT’s); successfully completed the first part of this degree in 1984; gave birth to our daughter; relocated to Cape Town; started working with young children in a private practice for a few hours a week; was blessed with twin boys; changed the topic of my M degree thesis a few times and finally became fascinated with health promotion and prevention (very new concepts in the 1980’s); learned about being a wife/mother and raising three children; worked as a part time lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch; developed an intervention programme (with a colleague) for older primary school learners and their parents; worked on my thesis after the children's bed time in the evenings and finally obtained my Master’s degree (Cum Laude) in 1990.

Reflection: My very busy life in this time period was partly my choice but I did not expect to have three children when I enrolled for my M degree. I however persisted and with God’s help and owing to the coping and problem solving skills that I had developed in the process of equipping myself for the demands of my work roles, I was empowered and succeeded. It was during this time that I developed a passion for assisting underachieving older learners and higher education students.

In 1993 (after a few years of working with older learners) I heard about a workshop aimed at “therapy for the older child” that was organised by The Institute for Occupational Therapists in Private Practice. I could not afford to attend this event in Pretoria and decided to arrange a similar workshop, called “Meerbrein/Metaleer” in Durbanville. I managed to get a small group of interested people together and we covered the costs to have Miré Taljaard (a dynamic young psychologist who was busy with her PhD) present the training for us. This workshop sparked my journey within cognitive education. I remember how stimulated and excited I felt and I could not wait to implement my new knowledge and skills to assist the older learners I was working with. I realised that the development of cognitive skills, meta-cognition and learning skills would be part of my personal and professional life for as long as I lived. These skills, the missing links in the interventions they had already
received and needed for transfer to take place from their therapy to real academic situations, were essential but often underdeveloped in most learners who were referred. Little did I know that during the same time period a group of professional people, interested in (and passionate about) cognitive education, had founded IACESA and was planning the inaugural IACESA Conference which took place from 12 to 14 September 1994 at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Reflection: In the process of researching the facts for my story I made this exciting discovery – my journey of explicit cognitive education started separately, but more or less at the same time as when IACESA was founded, more than two decades ago.

After the “Meerbrein/Metaleer” workshop I became a professional “course go-er” for many years. I had an urge to learn more about thinking and learning and how to assist older learners and students with academic and learning difficulties (as most OT’s in private practice focused on therapy for younger children). I could use some of my knowledge and skills gained at university but it was not sufficient to provide realistic intervention for the problems that the older learners and students experienced. I attended numerous courses and workshops about creativity, study methods and approaches to develop thinking skills. I kept on searching for something more… Two workshops that changed my thinking totally were the 4-day Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment workshop (1996) and the 4-day COGNET (now CEA – Cognitive Enrichment Advantage) workshop (Feb/March 1997) – both presented by Prof. Willie Rautenbach (who was a wonderful role model with incredible wisdom, critical thinking skills and world knowledge). Later in 1997 the IACE (now IACEP) conference took place in Stellenbosch. I was fortunate to be trained as a COGNET (CEA) Consultant by Kathy Greenberg during a pre-conference workshop – this workshop was the first workshop in South Africa to train people who could train others to use COGNET (CEA). After this conference I became an IACESA member, and a few years later, part of the IACESA Board. At the end of 1997 I managed to convince an English medium mainstream high school in Durbanville to allow me to establish an OT practice at the school and in 1998 I officially started. This was a very unusual service as hardly any OT’s functioned in mainstream high schools. OT’s treated teenagers, when admitted for psychiatric problems or when they did not cope with academic demands, but working with mainstream high school learners in a school system was not generally viewed as part of the OT’s role. From 1998 I regularly presented COGNET/CEA training for therapists and teachers (initially with Cornelia Prins) and endeavored to influence as many people as possible to infuse the mediation of cognition and meta-cognition into their daily personal and professional lives. In 1999 I was also a private service provider (with Cornelia Prins) for The Cognition in Curriculum 2005 Project of the WCED, training a group of 14 primary school teachers, over a period of 6 months (for more than 100 hours), in Cognitive Education, using the COGNET/CEA Approach. This action research project took place during the early phases of the implementation of Curriculum 2005 when thousands of teachers became disillusioned with teaching and struggled to cope with the demands of this curriculum. One teacher wrote the following very memorable reflection at the end of the training: “COGNET (CEA) is like the flesh on the skeleton of OBE”.
Reflection: I chose a clinical career path after my Master’s degree but in the process I became knowledgeable and skilled in the process of cognitive education. I became a member of IACESA only three years after the organisation was founded and started a very meaningful journey of explicitly promoting cognitive education since 1997. I regret that the WCED did not follow through on the recommendations made in 2000 after the Cognition in Curriculum 2005 project, in which a number of IACESA Board members were active service providers (report available on IACESA website).

The demand for intervention for older learners grew rapidly over the years so I also started an afternoon practice to cope with referrals from other schools. I developed a meta-cognitive therapeutic intervention process that is realistic and hands-on, based on the real academic problems/“hidden needs” that learners experience with their school work and learning. I focus on the development of executive function skills (goal setting, planning, organising, prioritising, time management, self-regulation, meta-cognition, etc), the development of thinking and learning skills. I infuse various cognitive approaches and strategies implicitly and explicitly in my intervention process to bridge the gap between weak executive function skills and academic demands. Over the past 20 years I have gained knowledge about school subjects from primary school level to Grade 12; I work/read/think/learn actively (up to 8 hours per day) with my referrals and experience the problems they have or are confronted with; I regularly include parents in my sessions and hear their complaints or needs; I constantly reflect about how to adapt and enhance my services based on the feedback of the learners, parents and teachers and the changes in the curriculum; I share my experiences with colleagues (for example with Elsefie Wranz while driving to IACESA board meetings and events) and we discuss the problems in the education system in SA, the problems of the learners and possible solutions.

Reflection: The reflection of the teacher (mentioned earlier) can be generalised to have everlasting value: “The process of cognitive education is like the flesh on the skeleton of any curriculum/intervention/work situation”. Therapists (with a cognitive education background) who work with older children in a school system (or privately) often do in therapy what teachers should be doing in their classes – why?

In 2008 I completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation (PDME – Cum Laude) at the University of Stellenbosch as I wanted to be able to understand more about the process of objectively evaluating social intervention programmes (or just my own intervention processes). During the course I learned about various evaluation approaches and the work of social scientists and evaluators. The so called “black box” problem, to find out what exactly happens in the space between input and output (the black box), has been the concern of programme evaluators for decades and fascinated me. I discovered that “black box programmes are such that they have no theory, goals are unclear and measures are fake”. Theory-driven programmes on the other hand, provide evaluators with good social science theory and steps to follow in an evaluation. Many theory-orientated evaluation approaches have been developed from the 1980’s
but the one that appealed to me the most was the Realist Approach (Pawson and Tilley, 2000) as well as the following question that captures the gold standard for evaluation by a realist evaluator:

“WHAT WORKS, (HOW), FOR WHOM AND IN WHAT CONTEXTS?”

Reflection: After completion of the PDME course, I became a more deliberate critical thinker without realising it. I recognised that over the years the IACESA board has done tremendous work regarding the promotion of cognitive education and the dissemination of information but IACESA was not growing fast enough and making the needed impact in the education system. It seemed that cognitive education experts and researchers had not identified and communicated all possible underlying mechanisms that could make a cognitive education programme/approach work (and be sustainable) and had not analysed all outcomes of a programme in order to assist in the process of making better programmes and policy decisions. For a variety of reasons there has been insufficient research into these issues.

In 2010 the IACESA Board became interested in The Thinking Schools movement and after the 2011 conference (with the theme: Thinking Schools – The Journey) and hours and hours of meetings, Thinking Schools South Africa (TSSA) was founded. I am a founder member of TSSA and was part of the TSSA Board and a TSSA trainer for a period of time but eventually, for various reasons, chose to remain only on the IACESA Board. I was trained as a Thinking Maps Trainer by David Hyerle prior to the 2011 conference and incorporated this approach into my therapy. Although I am very passionate about Thinking Maps, as every bubble, every branch, every block is a cognitive decision (Hyerle, 2011), and I can apply and mediate the use of Thinking Maps with all grades in all subjects on all age levels, it was the use of Thinking Maps that shook me back to my cognitive education roots and motivated me to understand more about how to be a better critical thinker. Many of my referrals battled with Thinking Maps; they struggled to identify the underlying thinking processes and to select the correct thinking map as the structure and clarity of their notes and text books hampered the process and they lacked underlying thinking skills (e.g. CEA Building Blocks of Thinking and Affective/Motivational Tools of Learning); they gave up without deliberate mediational support and said “Thinking Maps do not work for me” or required more mediation of the underlying thinking skills in order to self-mediate (that is time consuming and there are always time constraints). Many learners reverted to previous (rote) methods of learning. I even lost referrals as some learners and parents preferred to work with tutors that could “spoon feed” them “for cheaper fees”. I also became slightly disillusioned with the notion of cognitive education – as so many knowledgeable people around me were not consistently using higher level thinking and demonstrated poor thinking habits. Even in my own family I experienced problems as it is always easier to see mistakes in other’s thinking without being fair. In 2013 I obtained a wonderful book written by Richard Paul and Linda Elder called, Critical Thinking – Tools for Taking Charge of Your Personal and Professional Life (one of the best books I have read in my life). I read that critical thinking can serve two incompatible ends: self-centredness and fair-mindedness. I learned that strong-sense critical thinkers strive to be
fair-minded but that weak-sense (sophistic) critical thinkers use their skills to serve their own interests; they are often unfair and even unethical. In order to be a strong-sense critical thinker we need to develop essential traits like intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual empathy, intellectual integrity, intellectual perseverance, intellectual confidence and intellectual autonomy. It takes many years to develop as a fair-minded thinker and there are stages from being an unreflective thinker to being an accomplished thinker. We need to learn to assess our own thinking and reasoning according to essential intellectual standards, like clarity, relevance, depth, breadth, etc. I discovered more about strategic thinking and that egocentrism is the most significant barrier to the development of critical thinking and strategic thinking.

Reflection: Whenever I feel a bit despondent in my professional life I remember a certain saying of Prof. Willie Rautenbach: “Cognitive Education is not for the faint hearted”, and then I reflect, adapt and persevere. I have gained tremendous insights and strength from the book about Critical Thinking and made a commitment to myself to become a more conscious fair-minded critical thinker (also as all the traits, standards and elements of fair-minded critical thinking are in line with my Christian values).

As President Elect, I worked very closely with Elsefie Wranz during her term as IACESA President between 2011 and 2013. We worked hard to maintain the professional prominence of IACESA (founded two decades ago) as the birth of TSSA in 2011 affected IACESA in various ways. Many people confused IACESA and TSSA; IACESA lost some support; many schools and teachers gravitated towards TSSA as the 2011 IACESA conference sparked a great interest in the notion of Thinking Schools. TSSA was founded to offer a “whole school approach/training to develop thinking skills” and some schools wanted to become accredited as Thinking Schools. I took over as IACESA President in 2013 after a successful IACESA conference (with the theme: Essentials for Learning and Life – Language, Thinking and Diversity). I was very reluctant initially to fill this position but then decided to use my critical thinking skills, to build IACESA and to maintain the professional image of IACESA with the support of the Board members. I am proud to say that over the past two years we have developed a new and more modern website; the News Updates have become more professional and substantial; we have successfully conducted numerous Cog Ed seminars; we have supported Prof. Mary Grosser and her team at North West University (NWU) in establishing a Cognitive Education Research Group (CERG) in association with IACESA; some Board members have contributed to the writing of materials for the first Short Learning Programme in Cognitive Education (NQF Level 6) that will be presented by the Research Group Team at NWU from 2015; we have planned the 2015 conference (with the powerful theme: Personalising Thinking and Learning in the Conceptual Age for which the first call for abstracts created an overwhelming response) and we have initiated the IACESA Story Project as part of the 21st birthday celebration of IACESA. My term as president will end after the 2015 conference and Prof. Mary Grosser will take over. As President Elect she has supported me 100% during the past two years; I have experienced her intellectual traits of integrity, perseverance, autonomy, etc; I know that she is an accomplished thinker with high
standards. I have asked her to make a presentation about critical thinking at the 2015 conference and I am confident that she (with the support of the IACESA Board) will lead IACESA to greater heights in the next two years.

Final Reflections:
1. IACESA still is, and must remain, the leading professional organisation that promotes cognitive education in Southern Africa.
2. We need strong-sense fair-minded critical thinkers on the IACESA board.
3. We need to stand up against egocentric sophisticated thinking and intellectual self-centredness.
4. We need to listen to the real needs, experiences and insights of teachers and other professionals, parents and learners.
5. We need to make a deliberate effort to focus on objectives and activities that can make a real difference in the education system and the process of cognitive education (e.g. class notes and textbooks that will enhance thinking and learning).
6. We must contribute towards research projects to determine “what works, how, for whom and in what contexts?”

Fair-minded critical thinkers, even about cognitive education, are needed to develop fair-minded critical thinkers for the future. 😊

Estelle Brettenny
Occupational Therapist
IACESA President 2013–2015

Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
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Charl Cilliers is a Professor in Educational Psychology (with a research focus on juvenile delinquency, cognitive development and wellness) and retired at the end of 2014 as Director of the Centre for Student Counselling and Development at Stellenbosch University. Up to date, he has published 26 articles in peer-reviewed journals, co-authored 10 subject related books and published 16 other subject related articles and 15 research reports. He is the recipient of 17 awards and scholarships and the supervisor of 22 masters' and co-supervisor of 2 doctoral degrees. Apart from his formal university qualifications, he is officially trained in 8 other acknowledged specialised areas. He presented 35 papers at national conferences, 19 at international conferences and completed 123 research projects.
IACESA: personal reflections on the past and perspectives on the future
In 1993 I attended the 4th International Association for Cognitive Education (IACE) Conference at Nof Ginnosar in Israel, and in 1995 I became more actively involved with IACESA (International Association for Cognitive Education in Southern Africa), and also attended the 5th IACE Conference at Monticello in New York. At about this time I spent a three-month sabbatical at Harvard, and used the opportunity personally to invite international leaders in the field of cognitive education and psychology to attend the 6th IACE Conference, then planned for 1997 at Stellenbosch University.

We realised that many people were then still very sceptical about, and even afraid of, the new democratic Republic of South Africa, and it was quite a challenge to convince them to the contrary and to induce them to attend! I was, for instance, very fortunate – after a lengthy discussion in his office – to persuade Prof Robert Sternberg, who was then at Yale, to be our keynote speaker.

The 1997 IACE Conference went exceptionally well, thanks to the collaborative support of Professor Willie Rautenbach, and many of the then internationally acknowledged experts attended, among whom were Jerry Carlson, Martin Miller, Kathy Greenberg, Joe Elliot, Carl Haywood, David Tzuriel, Shlomo Kaniel and Robert Sternberg.

I served on the board of IACESA from 1998 to 2005, and in 1998 the 3rd IACESA Conference was organised in Kimberley. The 4th was in Stellenbosch in 2000, and, during my office as president from 2001 to 2002, the 5th was held in Oudtshoorn.

Since 1993 I have had the privilege of attending nine IACE and six IACESA conferences and can testify to the wonderful impact these events had on my personal and professional life.

The challenges IACESA as an association faces in the present conceptual era should continually be proactively identified, and creatively and practically addressed. We should, especially in our country, do much more to involve and equip school teachers, so as to contribute towards the optimisation of the cognitive potential of all our learners.

**Professor Charl Cilliers**
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*Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.*
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Janet Condy is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education, Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), South Africa. After completing 19 years as a class teacher both in mainstream and special schools, she has more recently been training teachers in the field of literacy, professional development and inclusive education for undergraduate and post graduate students at CPUT. She has been working with training teachers for the past 14 years. She obtained her PhD at the University of Cape Town in 2006 and is currently involved in many research projects including literacy, inclusive education, philosophy for children and digital storytelling. She has supervised 7 Masters and 3 Doctoral students. In 2014 she edited a book on digital storytelling. Janet is the founding member of RASA and has been on the IACESA board since 2013. She volunteers for the International Reading Association and has completed literacy projects in Mauritius, Zambia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
THE FLUFFY PROJECT:
from the emotional to the cognitive dimension
At the beginning of 2007, thirty-nine IsiXhosa and Afrikaans speaking pre-service teachers in my second language English didactic class began their teacher education. The training was predominantly through reading children’s stories, yet none of them was in the habit of reading. I was faced with the challenge of providing literacy appreciation and thinking experiences to pre-service teachers from culturally diverse backgrounds. I aimed to enable them to engage critically in literacy activities that would eventually expand their understanding of being citizens in a democratic world. Hopefully they would, in turn, mentor this knowledge to their family members and to learners in their classes. In other words they would use children’s novels to become “thinking teachers”.

I modelled the process of reading to a child, after which we brainstormed the skills I had used to engage them in the story. I encouraged them to discuss what they liked and did not like about the book and to express their opinions about the text. The pre-service teachers then selected their own English language children’s book and practiced reading it at night with their family members until they were confident enough to read the story aloud to their fellow pre-service teachers. After three weeks all pre-service teachers had read at least two children’s storybooks and had begun to feel more confident about reading and sharing their appreciation of what they had read.

It was at that point that I read “Gator’s adventures: A lesson in literacy and community” in the *Reading Teacher Journal*. I bought a reasonably large teddy bear, three disposable cameras, and a journal. The pre-service teachers unanimously voted for “Fluffy” as a name for the teddy bear. We discussed the rules for taking Fluffy home, for example, do not take him clubbing nor spray him with deodorants or perfume and don’t use him as a punching bag! It was OK, however, to talk to him, stroke him and love him. The prospective teachers took turns taking Fluffy home, where they read to their younger siblings and friends while holding him. The students encouraged thinking by asking their children to talk about the story, saying what they liked about it and why.

The pre-service teachers took pictures of themselves reading with Fluffy (see left) and were asked to
reflect on their experiences in a journal. When analysing the journal entries some of the themes that were regularly referred to were: they were pleased to have something fun to do at home, Fluffy was good company for those who lived on their own, reading made them feel calm, many pre-service teachers enjoyed reading a story for the first time to their family members, and finally Fluffy was used to discipline children.

Two particularly noteworthy comments made in the journal by male class members aged 33 and 30 years respectively were: “I told the children that they must remember the calmness and softness of Fluffy, and identify reading with it” and “I thought reading to Fluffy was a spiritual experience. I think that Fluffy has absorbed the warmth and love from all the people he has been with and has started to radiate it on his own.”

This experience highlighted for me the importance of the emotional climate in which thinking and learning take place. My next step was to look more closely at exactly how thinking happened during this Fluffy project and how it could be further encouraged. Reading about Feuerstein’s work on cognitive modifiability, attending Lillian Lomofsky’s Mediated Learning Experience workshop and attending my first IACESA conference in 2007, all changed the way I conceptualised the training of pre-service teachers. I developed a strong belief that these older pre-service teachers had the potential to be better teachers if they appreciated the value of reading and discussing children’s novels. Linking the reading to a home experience and taking photographs of each other and sharing them stimulated them to engage with this cognitive and emotional experience, eventually promoting intrinsic motivation. During this process they had developed strategies and skills to connect their learners to the books they were reading and as a result of this they were becoming reflective, insightful teachers who were generators of new knowledge.

Since attending my first IACESA conference, learning more about MLE, subsequently working with Professor Lena Green on Philosophy for Children, and recently becoming a board member of IACESA, I can definitely say that juxtaposing Feuerstein’s theory and learning about teaching and learning in the conceptual age have taken my own engagement with pre-service teachers to enormous heights! What a privilege this journey has been!

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**Associate Professor Janet Condy**
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Fleur Durbach is deputy principal and remedial therapist at Bellavista School in Johannesburg. She has more than thirty years experience in primary education. Fleur is passionate about assisting learners with special needs and has spent years exploring a variety of different approaches to reading. She has completed her Master's degree in education. Her research evaluates the level of mediation required by teachers to promote effective reading and thinking. Fleur worked part time in the cognitive research unit at Witwatersrand University developing materials to enhance cognitive education.
MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES TEACHING COGNITIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA
Feuerstein’s legacy must live on. I first came across this inspirational psychologist in 1986 whilst teaching at Crossroads Remedial School. The concept of Mediation made complete sense to me as I reflected on gaps in my own learning, and I realised that this was the best way to teach. Initially I implemented Instrumental Enrichment in my Grade 4 class at Crossroads and simultaneously taught children in the Gifted Child Programme in Alexandra Township. This Research Project led to further involvement at the Cognitive Research Unit, at the Division of Specialised Education. Being part of the research team led by Professor Mervyn Skuy and Mandia Mentis was the catalyst which motivated me to travel to Israel to gain first hand knowledge from the master himself.

The training equipped me to facilitate Cognitive Education in many diverse settings throughout South Africa. At this time, we also developed materials to make “Structural Cognitive Modifiability and Instrumental Enrichment” relevant within the South African context. Some of these materials were published by Skylight Publishers in the USA. In addition we gave workshops and developed workbooks to make Cognitive Skills accessible to the broader, multi-cultural South African community.

My interest in this field inspired me to engage in personal research around Parental Involvement in the Reception class at Blairgowrie Primary School, teaching parents to mediate Cognitive Strategies to their young children. This proved to be rewarding on two different levels. As a mother of two young children I was able to share this gift with the parents of the children in my class.

I enrolled for a degree in Remedial Education at the University of the Witwatersrand as part of which I developed a Cognitive Curriculum for special education teachers. This gave me a sense of “Inner Meaning” as I was able to transcend the theoretical framework to my personal teaching experience.

During the early 1990s a colleague and I developed and trained District Supervisors and high school Life Orientation teachers in a Cognitive Skills approach to HIV/AIDS awareness which was and remains critical. Some years later, Prof Skuy invited me to join him in training District Supervisors in KwaZulu-Natal in Instrumental Enrichment for the Triple I Academy. This also included training personnel at a Recruitment Agency in Sandton.

I am currently Deputy Principal at Bellavista School, where the “Cognitive Enrichment Advantage Programme” developed by Kathy Greenberg has been incorporated for a number of years. As a remedial teacher I discovered a cognitive approach to reading, which in my
opinion aligned closely with Feuerstein’s philosophy. It was fortuitous that Maryanne Wolf, the designer of RAVE-O, was guest speaker at the International Cognitive Conference in Boston in 2010. I was determined to go to this Conference as I knew it would re-kindle my passion.

More recently, a colleague and I embarked on a new research study implementing the Instrumental Enrichment and RAVE-O Programmes simultaneously to make the connections for learners explicit. This has proved to be positive and it is my on-going vision to entrench Cognitive Skills in Bellavista School’s Curriculum.

Feuerstein motivated me to be a life-long learner. I have integrated the knowledge and strategies of the Instrumental Enrichment Programme throughout my teaching career in many different situations. I would like to pay tribute to his legacy by enriching other people’s lives the way he enriched my life.

Ms Fleur Durbach
Deputy Principal and Remedial Therapist, Bellavista School

Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Rabia Edries is a Foundation Phase and Learning Support teacher who is currently teaching in Abu Dhabi in the UAE. She has been involved in education for the past 10 years. She taught in the Foundation Phase at Kirstenhof Primary School. She then provided learning support at St George’s Grammar School and Forres Preparatory School using a cognitive approach to supporting teachers and learners. She trained teachers at the WCED with Louis Benjamin in the Basic Concepts Programme. She obtained a Masters Degree in Education from the University of the Western Cape in the field of Cognitive Education in 2013. She was an IACESA board member from 2010–2013.
SUCH AN IMPACT ON MY LIFE!
Cognitive Education has made such an impact on my life, that it is amazing to think that I have only been formally involved in this field since 2010. This will be a personal reflection of my journey to date.

I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. As a child I knew that teaching and educating was my calling. Looking around and observing things around me during my primary and high school years, I somehow felt that I had it within me to make a difference. As I struggled through my understanding of mathematical concepts during my school years, always wondering why I didn’t understand these concepts as quickly as my classmates, my confidence in my future profession wavered. As I reflect on this, I realise that it was actually the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in Grade 10 that helped me get back on track. Suddenly, teachers were using different strategies to explain concepts, students were more actively involved in the learning process and I started feeling the joy of learning return within my environment. The process, the planning, the investigating, the wondering, the careful consideration became as important as the final product. Ever since this turning point during my school years I have been inspired to educate, to help others using different strategies and to support them in their learning journey.

Only when I started my M.Ed studies in the field of Cognitive Education, did I realise that I have been on the cognitive pathway for years without even realising it. I always felt the need to help and support my own students to be able to develop more than just academically. During my Master’s research, it was incredible to read and reflect upon the work of authors such as Vygotsky, Feuerstein, Lipman and Costa and realise that I have been using a meditational approach in my classroom. I was guiding, encouraging, supporting, promoting inquiry, questioning, developing individuals and highlighting the value of collaboration. As a teacher, there are things that you may do naturally without realising the powerful impact you are having on the learning process. It was the process of completing my Master’s research that helped me become self-aware and more reflective about my strategies to support learning. Meta-cognition, thinking about my own thinking, became an important part of my teaching and learning process and it helped me to develop ways in which I could support others more effectively.

Using a cognitive approach to teaching and supporting learners has felt so natural to me. It was an honour to serve on the Board of IACESA from 2010–2013. I was involved with the website, newsletter and in my final year I served as the Treasurer. Meeting, networking and working with members of IACESA has been invaluable to my own
cognitive journey as well as in my approach to teaching. The amount of
knowledge and expertise within the IACESA membership is astounding
but incredibly inspiring to me. Being part of the IACESA family has
expanded the way that I think about my own thinking, but also made me
aware of the possibility of contributing to the development of thinking
in a wider spectrum than my own classroom.

Through my Master’s research and my involvement with IACESA,
I have become more aware of cognitive education programmes,
initiatives and training opportunities. Assisting with the organisation
of the IACESA Cog Ed seminars and the IACESA Conferences has
opened my eyes to what can be achieved with a cognitive approach
and it has enlightened and informed my own way of thinking. There is
such potential for growth in this field. I have experienced the work of
Lena Green with Stories for Thinking and the Community of Inquiry.
I have had training in and worked with cognitive approaches and
strategies including Habits of Mind, Thinking Maps, CEA, Instrumental
Enrichment and TASC. I worked with Louis Benjamin as a consultant
with his Basic Concepts Programme and trained teachers at the WCED.

I now realise that my problems with learning during my school years
could have been helped and supported more effectively if a cognitive
approach had been used. For me, the importance of teaching thinking
and supporting learning with a cognitive approach is essential. Being
meta-cognitively aware will help learners to be more effective global
citizens able to navigate through the pressures and demands of multiple
layers of information coming their way.

I have learned so much about change and managing changes over the
last year, after moving to Abu Dhabi in the UAE to teach English, Maths
and Science in English to children who speak Arabic as their first language.
A different country, different classroom environment and many different
experiences have provided me the opportunity to develop a resilience
and strength within myself and in my abilities. Teaching children who
speak very little English has made it essential for me to develop further
strategies to help them understand concepts and be able to communicate
in English. I hope to be able to make a positive contribution to education
in Abu Dhabi and to further develop as a teacher.

I am in the beginning stages of my contribution to the field of
cognitive education and I am inspired to continue to support learning
and teaching using a cognitive approach.

Rabia Edries
Foundation Phase and Learning Support Teacher

Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and
do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Stef Esterhuizen is a senior lecturer at the School of Educational Sciences at the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Faculty), Vanderbijlpark, South Africa. Stef lectures undergraduate students (for the past 10 years) and has participated in several national and international conferences. She believes that all children can achieve their maximum potential through apposite instruction that enhances cognitive and critical thinking skills. Her research interests are the improvement of teaching and learning practices to promote cognitive development among Foundation Phase learners and prospective teachers. She is a board member of the International Association of Cognitive Education in Southern Africa (IACESA) and involved in a Thinking Schools Project under the leadership of Prof. Mary Grosser.
FROM THINKING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE DINNER TABLE TO MEDIATED LEARNING:
My journey with cognitive development
I grew up as the youngest of four children in a home where “education” formed the core of all activities. My father was a principal and all my siblings became teachers, including me. I remember listening with interest to my family’s conversations over dinner. Since I was the youngest, my opinion was seldom asked but I always listened with awe to their reasoning and arguments. Only now I realise that dinner-time in my childhood home was the unintentional opportunity my parents gave us to develop our cognitive and critical thinking abilities by questioning and reasoning in a safe environment.

As a learner and student many years ago, I focused on remembering all the facts I received in class. I started my teaching career at a pre-primary school and quickly learned that I should follow precisely the preparation my principal gave me without contravention of the rules. When I continued my teaching career at a primary school, I once again experienced the fact that there was no room for using my own creativity. I had to abide by the rules, especially in the presentation of lessons in my Grade 1-classroom.

My views on teaching and learning have grown immensely since I first entered the field of teaching nearly 30 years ago as a Foundation Phase teacher in 1985. I am passionate about laying fundamental foundations, growing and making dynamic adaptations where needed. I therefore decided to enrol for B.Ed. Honours in 2003 in Educational Psychology, then my M.Ed. in 2005 in Educational Psychology and my Ph.D in 2009 (conferred 2012) in Teaching and Learning. The shift from Educational Psychology to Teaching and Learning was caused by my growing interest in cognitive psychology, owing to being taught by a cognitive education specialist, Professor Mary Grosser. She not only became my study leader, but also my mentor. I became increasingly interested in how to teach young learners to become self-reflective, critical thinkers, problem solvers, and autonomous, self-directed, independent, meta-cognitive individuals. Through research and extensive reading, I realised that the teacher in the Foundation Phase can, through innovative teaching strategies, instil the above-mentioned skills in the young learner. In particular, the Mediated Learning approach of Reuven Feuerstein, for which I received training in 2007, inspired me to pursue my Ph.D in this field with a study entitled: “An intervention programme to optimise the cognitive development of Grade R-learners: A bounded pilot study”.

The Mediated Learning approach has proved to be beneficial to pre-school learners for replacing their impulsive, emotional reactions with logical, objective and more controlled responses. Spontaneous
correction of errors and reading of instructions, and a decrease in trial and error responses, dependency, impulsivity, physical aggression and absenteeism are also evident. Learners demonstrate a need for precision, spontaneous use of vocabulary, willingness to assist others and to accept help, curiosity, self-monitoring, reflection, active participation and tolerance. Their attention span, self-image and quality of communication improve. They engage with higher order problems, and demonstrate control, social sensitivity, self-pride, enthusiasm and competence. They show less fear of failure and are able to develop strategies, search for alternative answers and work in a more systematic and planned manner. MLE teaches learners to think and work systematically and objectively, which is likely to lead to a change in thinking habits.

After attending a seminar on “Innovative Teaching Strategies in Higher Education” I now adapt and intentionally implement innovative teaching strategies in my own teaching, because I believe that, if student teachers are taught how to become self-reflective and self-regulative critical thinkers, their young learners will become self-reflective and self-regulative critical thinkers. I therefore grew from being a provider of information to a mediator and facilitator of learning, values and skills.

Currently I am involved in a research project, Schools as Thinking Communities, under the leadership of Professor Mary Grosser, and act as project leader at a preschool. I am also involved in the design and presentation of part of a Short Learning Programme in Cognitive Education that will be presented from 2015. I have been a member of the IACESA Board since 2012.

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Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Debby Evans serves on the board and management committee of the Midlands Community College, an NGO that provides educational support for communities and under-resourced schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Initiatives include Early Childhood Development projects and the support of Maths, Science and Technology at primary, secondary and post-school levels. She worked at St Peter’s Preparatory School, Rivonia from 1981–1991 in the area of specialised education (LSEN) and in setting up their Enrichment/Thinking Skills curriculum. She has served on the Board of IACESA, and has been actively engaged in cognitive education initiatives for over 30 years. She holds a M.Ed. degree in Curriculum Development from the University of Natal (1995) and has used the TASC – Thinking Actively in a Social Context – model as a framework for teaching, training and writing thinking skills materials in ABET, ECD and corporate settings.
The Week That Sparked an Abiding Passion
Introduction
It all began in 1989. I was part of a multi-disciplinary team of specialists in LSEN, working in the Learning Centre at St Peter’s Preparatory School, Rivonia. As members of SAALED (South African Association of Learning and Education Difficulties) for many years, we regularly attended lectures and courses in our own disciplines. Tricia O’Brien and I signed up for a course offered by the Division of Specialised Education at Wits University – “An introduction to Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment Programme.” It was presented by Prof Mervyn Skuy and Mandia Mentis. The week was intense, stimulating and informative. It sparked a passion for cognitive education that still drives all that I do. A few critical aspects for me were, firstly, that intelligence was dynamic (not a number on a scale that would define one’s capabilities for life!), but something that was “modifiable”. Secondly, the actual processes of “what goes on inside one’s head when one thinks,” were named. For example, every time one makes a decision or chooses one thing over another, the cognitive process (or “thinking skill”) necessary, is “comparison”. Thirdly, the deconstructing of the elements of each skill (e.g. “analysis”) through the paper and pencil exercises of the IE programme was the first time I had ever really “thought about my own thinking”. “Meta-cognition” became part of the vocabulary of teaching and learning at St Peter’s.

It all seems so obvious now – 25 years later – but at the time we recognised something quite new and revolutionary was being demonstrated. “Mediated learning” (or MLE) was a new concept, and we recognised that Feuerstein’s ten criteria for MLE were critical for teachers to know about, in order to improve their classroom practice. We (Tricia and I – and many of the staff!) were trained in the early 1970’s, after all! Old educational theories were being superseded by the exciting discoveries in psychology, brain research and the new philosophies and theories of the cognitive education paradigm. This was the week that changed the way I thought and operated in my own life, and that set the direction for all that I was to do, educationally, from then on.

Putting theory into practice
As always, when one learns something new, the difficulty lies in being able to translate the concepts, or theory, into practice. At about the same time as we did the Feuerstein training, Mr Anthony Parnell, the Headmaster of St Peter’s, was introduced to Edward de Bono’s CoRT Thinking Skills Programme at the Independent Schools’ Headmasters’
annual conference. The timing was critical. In order for us to be able to take what had been learned and implement the explicit “teaching of thinking” as an integral part of the curriculum, we needed to have the principal’s permission and support. As it happened, we were allocated the two half-hour periods per week, per grade that we requested, and were given the autonomy to “do what we liked”! Next, having the time-slots, meant having to have the content to fill them! A thinking skills curriculum had to be devised.

The challenge, therefore, after our Feuerstein training week, was to plan and strategize how we would take what we had learnt and “customise” the theory for each age/grade level and integrate the thinking skills with curriculum content. How this was done is well documented in an article written for the 1989 edition of the “Crossed Keys” – the annual St Peter’s school magazine, the title of which was “Enrichment – a new subject in the curriculum.”

Initially Feuerstein’s content-free IE paper-and-pencil exercises were mediated with the boys at all grade levels. The introduction of Edward de Bono’s first 10 CoRT Thinking tools and “Six Thinking Hats” soon followed. Creativity specialist, Mrs Eva Biebuyck, introduced staff to “Creative Problem-solving” and to the works of Paul Torrance and Joseph Renzulli – whose school-wide “TRIAD” model was adopted as the framework for all enrichment and thinking skills initiatives. Ideas for extending the very able and talented, were based on the work of Belle Wallace. This gave St Peter’s a good counter-balance to the strong provision of therapies offered in the Learning Centre. Edward de Bono became a “friend” to the school and visited on a number of occasions. The Upttrail Trust, an NGO that collaborated with international experts associated with Harvard’s Project Zero initiative, published a cognitive curriculum for use in South African schools which we used with the boys. Beatriz Capdevielle from Venezuela, a co-author, introduced us to the “Keys to Thinking” curriculum, the main architect of which was David Perkins. Beatriz also trained our staff in “Powerful Questions” and became a good friend. Many of the principal and co-authors of these materials, including outstanding South African academics, were, and still are, global leaders in the cognitive education arena, many of whose work I had studied. I had the privilege of meeting a number of them personally, at the “8th International Conference on Thinking” in Edmonton in 1999.

Suffice it to say that St. Peter’s staff continued over the years, to learn, to be trained in new cognitive models, to invite experts in to address them, and to have a dedicated core of teachers responsible for continuous
curriculum integrity and innovation. Amazing things were introduced and done at the school over the next 25 years – long after I had left and re-located to KwaZulu-Natal. Deservedly, St Peter’s has recently been accredited through Thinking Schools South Africa (TSSA) as one of the first two recognised “Thinking Schools” in the country. I am so proud of the staff and school – the alma mater of my three (now “30-something”!) sons, and the place of ten happy years of teaching.

Membership of IACESA and what this has meant to me
As I write this, I have in front of me nearly every (yellow-paged!) issue of “Cognitive Education in Southern Africa” that was published – starting with Volume 1, Number 1, November 1994, “the first of many regular newsletters to members of our newly founded International Association of Cognitive Education in Southern Africa.” (words from the Editor’s Desk). I am proud to have been at the founding! Through this membership I was made aware of all cognitive education seminars, workshops and conferences being held both nationally and internationally. I was encouraged to participate, and contributed at many of these over a 20 years period – from Kimberly to Calgary – and more!

From practice to theory and back again
After leaving Johannesburg, with my St Peter’s experiences behind me, I was free to indulge in further studies. I enrolled for a Master’s degree in cognitive education/curriculum development. This I did in 1993. My research was based on workshops training teachers in the TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) framework that Belle Wallace and Harvey Adams were developing in the Curriculum Development Unit at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Their passion, encouragement and guidance led to a number of published research articles and books on thinking skills for the classroom, and to my use of TASC to underpin much of my subsequent work in the NGO sector – notably a 5-year Adult Literacy project in Cramond, KZN and the training of Early Childhood Development practitioners. This training became part of a research project during which a TASC module on creative and critical thinking and problem-solving was translated into isiZulu and taught in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
Conclusion

I salute and thank all those who have led this remarkable organisation over the years – many of whom will be co-contributors to this celebratory project. The IACESA conferences have always attracted a wide and diverse range of South African and international experts, who have contributed enormously to the cognitive education discourse in particular, and to pertinent issues in general education in our country. For the future, I foresee IACESA and TSSA making a much-needed impact in training and assisting teachers to implement and integrate the teaching of thinking skills in schools so that educators and learners alike may become more effective thinkers in their homes, their schools and in life. I thank and congratulate Lena Green (Editor) for her sterling effort in co-ordinating so many experts in cognitive education to share their knowledge and to articulate what IACESA has been advocating for so long. These efforts resulted in the recently published book, “Schools as Thinking Communities” – a timeous and wonderful resource for us all.

Debby Evans
Business Relations Manager, Midlands Community College

Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Lena Green, Ph.D. is an Educational Psychologist currently Extraordinary Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, where she has taught since 2000. Her long term research interest is in cognitive development and in ways of empowering students and teachers to think, learn and teach more effectively. She is trained and experienced in the use of several approaches to the mediation of thinking, but is particularly interested in Philosophy for Children. She is a founding member of both IACESA and Thinking Schools South Africa.
A NEVER ENDING QUEST
I now know that children are naturally thoughtful. I cannot recall, however, that I was a particularly thoughtful child. I played many imaginative games and my father modelled for me a playful, creative approach to language and thinking that I value to this day. I may have wondered privately but I do not think I can claim to have been an emerging critical thinker. That came later, mediated by the teachers and authors who inhabited the culture within which I was educated.

When I was in high school I was fortunate enough to be taught occasionally by Miss D. V. Thompson, the founder and first principal of Kingsmead College in Johannesburg. She had retired some time previously but indulged her passion for teaching and thinking from time to time. In retrospect she did three things to encourage thinking. She talked to us once a week about current affairs, and would have engaged with us if any girl had dared to ask a question. She occasionally gave us a lesson in Logic, in which we might have to define an object, or describe a process. Thirdly, she showed us how to structure our thoughts when we planned History essays. We learned from her because she modelled for us, again and again, how to do this, and gave us feedback about our own efforts. One could say she instilled in us certain “habits of mind” but I do not think she could be said to have had a “mediational teaching style” as we were all terrified of her. It is only when I look back that I realise how much I learned and how much more I could have learned from her.

I started my university studies with a B.A. majoring in English and French. The one career I did not want to consider was teaching. It was only when my own children were growing up that I became fascinated by what children thought - how their minds worked and how they learned. Teaching suddenly seemed a much more interesting occupation. My introduction to education was coaching English – working mainly with high school learners in their matriculation year. I was shocked at how little the students I tried to help seemed to think. Since it was my brief and time was short, I concentrated on equipping them with every trick I could think of to help them pass their English examinations and most of the time I was successful. I was well aware, however, that I was not influencing their thinking habits beyond a particular examination.

Some years later I qualified as a high school teacher of English and French but I still needed to know more about how difficulties developed and how to avoid or alleviate them. I enrolled for a Special Education diploma. I learned a great deal about the basics of teaching, mostly from my fellow students, who were all primary teachers. My next experience
was as teacher of the English speaking Foundation Phase class in a multi-grade school – my main qualification being that I really was English speaking in an area and a school where Afrikaans was the norm. As I struggled to master the syllabus for each grade and manage my class and observed what went on in the rest of the school I could not help thinking that there must be better ways to educate children. So I returned to university to study psychology and eventually became an academic and an educational psychologist.

The first time I came across cognitive education was in the late 1980s when I was introduced to the work of Reuven Feuerstein by Carol Newman. The idea that we could identify different thinking processes and actively work on improving them – in ourselves and in others – was new to me but it began to answer some of my questions.

I trained as practitioner in Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment (IE) programme with Willie Rautenbach, Maureen Archer and the late Irma Roth while I was an intern educational psychologist working in Student Counselling at UWC. I read more widely about teaching thinking and about critical thinking in general. Matthew Lipman’s Philosophy for Children (P4C) appealed to me immediately. It is particularly easy to align with language and literature teaching because examining and refining concepts is one of its aims. At the same time, as with Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment, there is emphasis on the processes of thinking, on meta-cognitive awareness and on the quality of the teaching/learning relationship. For a number of years now I have been involved in training pre- and in-service teachers in Lipman’s approach, and in researching its effectiveness.

I began contemplating a Ph.D in the early 1990s when working as an academic at UCT. By then I knew I wanted to research the cognitive developmental histories of my own students. When I met the late Professor Bob Burden at a conference we discovered many interests in common and he encouraged me to study at Exeter University in the UK. I was looking for a supervisor who was interested in narrative research, which was not yet as popular as it is now, and he recommended a colleague. The colleague and I did not prove a good match and I ended by being supervised by Bob himself. He did not know a great deal about narrative research, but was always open to new ideas, mediational in his supervisory approach and as fascinated as I am by human thinking processes. My Ph.D. thesis, entitled “Narratives of cognitive development” was completed in 1997.

In 2000 I moved from UCT to UWC as Associate Professor of Educational Psychology and subsequently was appointed Professor.
I taught prospective educational psychologists and teachers and practising teachers at various levels over the years in the areas of cognitive development and enhancement and became more focused in my writing and research. If it was true, as Feuerstein claimed, that we could influence how well children thought, I wanted to find out what kind of intervention would be most likely to succeed in our local schools and what kind of teacher preparation would be most effective. I investigated a number of different approaches to the active “teaching of thinking”. I became a Thinking Maps practitioner and trainer and acquired some basic skills in the use of Habits of Mind and in the practical application of De Bono’s work. My main focus, however, has remained Philosophy for Children. Over the years I have presented my research at IACESA and other conferences, and attended Philosophy for Children residential workshops in the US on three different occasions, each time learning something new.

Bob Burden was one of the first to recognise, however, that simply motivating and equipping teachers to “teach thinking” was not enough. The literature on school development made it clear that real change requires whole school commitment. He established a most successful “Thinking Schools” movement in the UK, based at Exeter University. At my request, he introduced the notion of a “Thinking School” to a South African audience at the 2009 IACESA Conference, at which time I was President of the Association. From then onwards the Thinking Schools movement has grown in this country and I currently represent Exeter University when local schools seek accreditation as Thinking Schools. My most recent initiative was the publication in 2014 of “Schools as Thinking Communities”, to which I invited a number of colleagues in the field of cognitive education to contribute, in order to make information about various forms of cognitive education easily accessible to local schools and teachers.

The more I read, reflect and write about thinking and learning the more I realise how little I know. If there is a message in my story, however, it is that there can be few activities more interesting and rewarding than trying to understand and influence the mysterious process that we call “thinking”. I was a founder member of Thinking Schools South Africa, have been a member of IACESA since its inception in 1993 and
a member of its Board for many years (and president from November 2006–February 2009). The opportunities the Association has created to share and extend our understandings of cognitive education have been, and continue to be, invaluable.

Lena Green
Extraordinary Professor, Faculty of Education,
University of the Western Cape
Educational Psychologist, Oakdale Practice

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Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Mary Grosser is an Associate Professor at the School of Education Sciences, North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, South Africa. Mary has worked in the field of Cognitive Education and Teacher Education for the past 18 years. She lectures at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and acts as study leader for Masters and PhD-students. She leads the Thinking Schools Project and her university and the Schools as Thinking Communities Project in the D7 and D8 Districts of the Gauteng Department of Basic Education. She has presented papers related to her field of interest at many national and international conferences, and has published articles and chapters in books on topics related to cognitive development and the teaching of thinking.
FROM RESISTANCE AND DOUBT TO SELF-REALISATION:

My journey with cognitive education
My involvement with cognitive education will span 17 years in 2015, and I like to describe this involvement as a journey without a definite destination. So far, this has been a journey that has been characterised by a duality: amazing, enjoyable and fulfilling but sometimes frustrating and tiring too. I like to describe my personal growth journey with cognitive education in terms of the stages of personal growth as depicted in the diagram below.

Source: http://www.thereachapproach.co.uk/Approach/

My own school career and university education were dominated by passive traditional teaching, which at that point in time seemed to be the acceptable and only way to teach. Although it sometimes bothered me that we as students seldom questioned the subject content offered to us during lectures, it also provided me with some comfort that I only had to study and memorise what the lecturer gave, and was not faced with challenging issues outside the safe borders of the textbook or lecture notes. It goes without say that my own teaching practice reflected the very same tenets for a number of years.

After 10 years of teaching German at High School level to Grade 8–12 students, I felt frustrated with the passiveness, uncritical acceptance of what I taught and lack of motivation to pursue the acquisition of knowledge outside the textbook among the majority of students whom I taught. Teaching deprived me of the passion that motivated me initially to become a teacher, as well as the joy of being a teacher who wants to make a difference in the lives of students.
Slowly but surely resistance to my own way of teaching, and doubt as to whether I was actually a good teacher started to gnaw on my conscience. I felt as if I fooled and failed so many students for so long, and deprived them of the right to receive good quality teaching that would nurture their thinking capacity.

With a lot of unresolved conflict and duality within me as to whether I should change my teaching practice and if so, how I should do so I left the teaching profession and took up a position as lecturer in Education Studies at the former Sebokeng College of Education. The ten years I spent lecturing at the college, became the turning point in my teaching career. Isabel Van der Walt, a dear colleague and friend, introduced me to the theory of Mediated Learning, Cognitive Modifiability and the Instrumental Enrichment (IE) Programme of Reuven Feuerstein. Isabel coordinated the training of selected staff members who would be responsible for IE implementation with the entire cohort of students. The College set out to implement IE with the students in an attempt to nurture and develop their learning and thinking skills to enhance academic performance. I was privileged to receive Level 1 training in 1995 by the pioneer of Cognitive Education in South Africa, Prof. Willie Rautenbach, who was an excellent role model for Mediated Learning. I immediately embraced the theory of Mediated learning and Cognitive Modifiability and translated the theory of Mediated Learning into my daily classroom practices. During this time, I also became a member of IACESA and started to promote cognitive education actively. Realising the importance of cognitive education for success in school and life in general, I wanted to pursue the merits of cognitive education in more depth. I completed M.Ed. and Ph.D. studies whilst at the college, both of which focused on enhancing the cognitive potential of my own students with the IE programme together with various teaching strategies. The positive outcomes of both studies convinced me that poor academic
performance could be attributed to deficient or fragile thinking skills, which can be reversed through Mediated Learning.

Initially, because the college students were not used to teaching practices that involved them directly in constructing knowledge and meaning making, it took a while for the ice to melt - for them to accept a classroom climate where they could voice their opinions. Slowly, the resistance with which I left teaching at High School level diminished, and the joy of teaching returned. For the first time I experienced teaching as a collaborative and transactional agreement between the students and me, and the students and each other. I was amazed at the power of learning together. The gratitude of students, who for the first time in my class felt that they were “regarded as important role players” in the classroom, as “people who are able to contribute to their own learning”, was expressed in terms of education being “enlightening” and “liberating”. According to the students, lectures in my class were no longer “irritating” and “crippling”, but a “powerful force” that “integrated learning with self-growth”, and produced “positive outcomes”.

Our ideals for cognitive education at the college were, however, short-lived and came to an abrupt halt when one staff member, due to a lack of information about Mediated Learning and IE, spread the news among students that the IE programme was meant for people with mental retardation. In addition, the restructuring of the Higher Education landscape in South Africa brought another challenge to Colleges of Education. Colleges were closed or incorporated into universities. The Sebokeng College of Education closed at the end of 2002, and a new career started for me when I took up a lecturing position at North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus during 2003. Full of enthusiasm to make a difference to the nature of the teacher-training curriculum, which until recently lacked focus on the implementation of cognitive education, I embarked on this new phase in my career.

Little did I know that the frustrating part of my journey with cognitive education was about to start. Convincing curriculum developers at the University and the Department of Education of the importance of cognitive education for pre-service and in-service teacher training respectively, has been and remains a daunting task. I am convinced that good ideas are resisted and seem to be regarded as obstacles, mainly because they might tip the power balance in authoritarian relationships. Nevertheless, I persuaded the Teaching Practice Department at the School of Education Sciences, North-West University (NWU), Vaal Triangle Campus, of the importance of cognitive education, and have been able to expose many of the staff members involved in teacher training to workshops that address approaches to classroom teaching that can enhance thinking, for example Mediated Learning and Instrumental Enrichment (2007) (Lilian Lomofsky), Habits of Mind (2011) (James Anderson) and Thinking Maps (2012) (Dr David Hyerle and Dr Sharon Moonsamy). Many lecturers apply these strategies on a daily basis. I also started the Thinking Schools Project during 2011 with the aim of exposing the 2012 cohort of pre-service teachers across their four years of training to the purposeful teaching of thinking. We are currently observing their teaching practice to establish how well the strategies that they were taught translate into their own teaching practice. In addition, two of my colleagues, Magda Kloppers and Stef Esterhuizen work with me on the Schools as Thinking Communities Project, where we train and support in-service teachers in the D7 and D8 Districts of the Department of Basic Education to enhance
the cognitive potential of their students. The most important milestones for me so far have been the fact that I formally established a Cognitive Education Research Group in Association with IACESA at the NWU, Vaal Triangle Campus during 2014. Collaboratively, we have developed a Short Learning Programme in Cognitive Education (NQF Level 6) that will be offered as from 2015, and enable participants to receive a certificate in Cognitive Education endorsed by the NWU. In addition, cognitive education will become an integral part of the Professional Studies/Teaching Practice modules of all NWU BEd undergraduate students as from 2015.

I am not looking for a particular destination to my journey with cognitive education. I do not want to deny myself the pleasure of being able to stretch my own mind further to seek ways for promoting cognitive education, and of seeing the fulfilment that teachers experience when they realise the power that their classroom practices hold for nurturing cognitive potential among students. Although I know many people still doubt the value of cognitive education, this inspires me to pursue the ideals of cognitive education with renewed energy. Irrespective of obstacles, I need to be persistent and consistent in pursuing the ideals of cognitive education, so that it keeps on gathering momentum. The momentum keeps the wheels of cognitive education turning which produces the power for further development and growth. As members of IACESA, we need to continue to promote the ideals of cognitive education, and realise that:

People may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do.

Through cognitive education, I have found purpose and direction in my career and personal life. This enables me to touch positively the lives of students and teachers whom I meet. I continue to grow, expand and discover the subtle nuances of cognitive education and am amazed at the self-empowering value it has. I have been infusing cognitive education into the way I teach my students since 1993. However, I am sad that I deprived many students of developing essential skills and dispositions to thrive and flourish, when I started my teaching career. Cognitive education is not an ideal, but the moral right of each student. As the future President of IACESA (2015–2017), I wish to realise the following two-fold dream: cognitive education should stand central to teacher training, and the Department of Basic Education should realise, that constant curriculum change is not the answer to reversing the poor performance of South African students. What we need are effective teachers who can model and mediate good thinking skills and dispositions to students, in order to prepare students for life after school and to deal with the challenges of the conceptual age. There is no computer in the world that can teach this to students.

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Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Ute Hendrich was a senior counsellor at Student Counselling & Support Services of the Vaal University of Technology. Her main responsibility was co-ordinating the psychometric testing of the first-year students, report writing and research activities in this regard. Prior to these activities, she co-ordinated the functions of the Centre for Learning Skills. She holds academic as well as professional qualifications in Psychology and Education. She has presented papers internationally as well as locally. She has had articles published both internationally and locally.
FROM READING LABORATORY TO CENTRE FOR LEARNING SKILLS
In 1993 Dr Jenny Pretorius and I attended the inaugural meeting of IACESA at the University of the Witwatersrand. Here we were introduced to the concepts of cognitive psychology and their implications for education.

At the time, I was employed at the Reading Laboratory, which was located within the Bureau of Student Counselling and Support at the Vaal Triangle Technikon (now called the Vaal University of Technology [VUT]). While working with the students, it became progressively clear that the students’ learning and study skills were largely lacking. Thus, I gradually transformed the Reading Laboratory into a Centre for Learning Skills. I retained the reading improvement exercises as another skill along with the other interventions which the students could receive at the centre.

The staff at the Centre for Learning Skills aimed to broaden the students’ learning repertoire and to instil in them an awareness of the control that they could exercise over their studies. To facilitate the achievement of this aim, C.E. Weinstein’s Learning and Study Strategies Inventory [henceforth abbreviated as LASSI] was used. The theoretical foundation of the LASSI lies within the domain of cognitive psychology. The LASSI is an assessment tool designed to measure students’ use of learning and study strategies and methods. The focus is on both covert and overt thoughts and behaviours that relate to successful learning, which can be altered through intervention (LASSI User’s Manual, 1987).

During their first appointment, students who reported at the Centre for Learning Skills were required to complete the LASSI and later the electronic LASSI version (E-LASSI) was used as a point of departure. The LASSI assesses both the thought processes and behaviours of students across the following ten scales:

- **Attitude (ATT)** – focuses on items relating to attitude and interest in tertiary study.
- **Motivation (MOT)** – examines a student’s self-discipline and willingness to work hard.
- **Time Management (TMT)** – items relate to how well organised, systematic and productive a student is regarding study time.
- **Anxiety (ANX)** – focuses on identifying to what extent the student worries about his/her tertiary education and performance.
- **Concentration (CON)** – contains items to establish the student’s ability to pay close attention, to listen carefully and not to be distracted easily.
- **Information Processing (INP)** – addresses comprehension monitoring, translating information into one’s own words and reasoning.
- **Selecting Main Ideas (SMI)** – items concentrate on establishing how well the student can identify critical points or key ideas.
- **Study Aids (STA)** – examines to what extent the student supplements learning with useful techniques and materials to facilitate the learning and remembering of new information.
- **Self Testing (SFT)** – focuses on preparing and reviewing for classes and exams. Comprehension monitoring plays an important part in most of the items.
- **Test Strategies (TST)** – focuses on approaches to test preparation and test taking.
Pintrich and Johnson (1990) divided these ten scales into five scales dealing with motivation and self-management and five dealing with cognitive skills. This division of the scales was applied at the Centre for Learning Skills.

The results of the LASSI pre-test were printed and discussed with each individual student. Emphasis was placed on the strengths and weaknesses the student exhibited as far as his/her learning and studying strategies were concerned (please see the LASSI test results below).

### DETERMINATION OF INTERVENTION ACCORDING TO PERCENTILE RANKS

Name of student:
Student No.:
Vaal Triangle Technikon

The electronic Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (E-LASSI) The description of each of the ten categories of learning and study strategies follows. Each of the three-letter codes indicates a category of learning and study strategies or methods. The meanings of the codes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>attitude and interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOT</td>
<td>motivation, diligence, self-discipline and willingness to work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMT</td>
<td>use of time management principles for academic tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANX</td>
<td>anxiety and worry about school performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CON</td>
<td>concentration and attention to academic tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INP</td>
<td>information processing, acquiring knowledge and reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMI</td>
<td>selecting main ideas and recognising important information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STA</td>
<td>use of support techniques and materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFT</td>
<td>self-testing, reviewing and preparing for classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TST</td>
<td>test strategies and preparing for tests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following graph interprets the responses you made to E-LASSI. The columns on the far left and far right of the chart, show percentile ranks. You can use these percentile ranks to compare your scores to other college students’ scores. For example, if you scored on the 80th percentile in Attitude and Interest (ATT), you scored higher than 80 percent of other students answering the same questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength (no intervention required)</th>
<th>99</th>
<th>95</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>85</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>99</th>
<th>95</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>85</th>
<th>80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Intervention</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly advised Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequently, an intervention program was compiled for the student according to the weaknesses identified (see the summary of interventions offered on the next page).
# LEARNING CENTRE: INTERVENTION PROGRAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LASSI INTERVENTION (new)</th>
<th>EXISTING PROGRAMS</th>
<th>SESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude &amp; Interest</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time management scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>+✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>+✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>+ Study Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting Main Ideas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Memory Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Retrieval Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Guidelines: Underling &amp; Summarising</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Memory Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Note Taking optional]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Aids</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>+ Guidelines: Underling &amp; Summarising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Memory Strategies (especially classification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Testing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>+ Study Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Retrieval Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Strategies</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>+ Exam Techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Retrieval Strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**First session (Needs Analysis)**
Completion of E-LASSI and discussion of strengths and weaknesses with counsellor.

**Follow-up sessions (according to weaknesses)**
- Percentile ranks below 50th percentile: reflect weaknesses, where intervention is **strongly advised**.
- Percentile ranks between 50th and 75th percentile: in need of attention & intervention is **recommended**.
Once all the identified weaknesses were addressed, the student completed a post-test LASSI to establish the improvement. These results were then shown and discussed with the student in the final interview. Gone were the days of “students who believe that it is (only) the responsibility of lecturers to teach and not students to learn” (Dison, Quinn, Nelson and Collett, 1996, p. 27) – at least this applied to the students who reported at the Centre for Learning Skills. I, and my colleagues, had become much more aware of the importance of mediating to students how to understand and manage their own thinking and learning.

Dr Ute Hendricks
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Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Ute Hendrich

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FROM BRAINTEASERS AT THE DINNER TABLE TO MEDIATED LEARNING:
my journey with cognitive education
At the dinner table, my father used to challenge us children with brainteasers like, “An old toaster, that can take two slices of bread, can toast one side only, and takes one minute. How long will it take to have three slices of bread toasted on both sides?” At the time, my father was unintentionally providing an opportunity for us to practice the skills of problem solving, reasoning and creative thinking. These are valuable “tools”, but at the time had no name in an educational context. Although I experienced thinking stimulation at home, the learners whom I taught had little exposure to the same skills. In school this was mostly as a result of an over loaded curriculum, big classes and the fact that a traditional teacher-centred approach to teaching and learning was considered the most desirable way to teach.

After university, when I started teaching Mathematics and Information Technology, all lessons, exercises and homework activities were carefully planned before presenting them to learners. At first, I followed the same traditional way of teaching as I had experienced, and learners were rarely exposed to new ways of thinking in order to understand difficult concepts. It was only years later, as an Honours student at North West University, while sitting in a lecture room with fellow students and a dedicated lecturer, that I was exposed to a new way of thinking and problem solving. My father’s “tools” were then given a name: “Cognitive education”.

During my Honours degree, and continuing to the completion of my Ph.D, I was blessed to have one of the best study leaders in the field of cognitive development on our campus. I was taught strategies and skills to develop learners’ cognitive potential in order for them to integrate and make sense of new information. While being taught, I received training in Reuven Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment programme to facilitate thinking and learning and to improve my students’ development as independent, confident problem solvers and thinkers. This training was foundational to the completion of my Masters degree entitled: The impact of Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment programme on the development and/or improvement of the cognitive skills of student teachers. Moreover, my passion for cognitive education inspired me to complete a Ph.D. with the title: A curriculum based mediational approach for the encouragement of critical thinking dispositions with second year Mathematics students. I now use the mediational approach combined with the development of critical thinking dispositions in all my classes and I am inspired daily by students’ ways of thinking and understanding. Learners’ answers to
problems, including the problem referred to at the beginning of this story that “Three slices of bread will take 3 minutes to toast on both sides”, provide ample opportunity to discuss cognitive processes in the Mathematics classroom. I am currently also involved in the “Schools as Thinking Communities” project and will be part of a team presenting a Short Learning Program in Cognitive Education. I have been a member of the Board of IACESA since 2013.

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Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Lilian Lomofsky is an Educational Psychologist at Oakdale Practice in Newlands. Her former position was as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Psychology, University of the Western Cape. Her field of interest is in Inclusive Education, learners with special needs, cognitive and metacognitive approaches to education and assessment, including dynamic assessment. Lilian is an experienced trainer in Feuerstein’s Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) and Instrumental Enrichment (IE) cognitive programme and has conducted many FIE Courses and projects for schools, colleges and universities as well as for therapists, counsellors and parents. She has published research articles in academic journals and chapters in books – the most recent is “Instrumental Enrichment” in Lena Green (Ed) Schools as Thinking Communities. She is an IACESA Board Member, a past President of IACESA, a past Vice-President for Africa (IACEP) and a founder member of TSSA.
COGNITIVE EDUCATION 
AND LEARNING FOR LIFE
I am pleased to have this opportunity to write my story as a contribution towards this milestone year of IACESA’s 21st anniversary. It has caused me to reflect back on the past 27 years of my involvement with Cognitive Education and 21 years with IACESA. I came to be interested in Cognitive Education on hearing about the ground breaking and pioneering work of Reuven Feuerstein, while I was working as a remedial teacher at Herzlia Primary School and as a part-time lecturer at UCT in Education and Special Needs. I heard about it from several colleagues amongst whom were Prof. Willie Rautenbach (US), Maureen Archer (UCT) and the late Irma Roth (UWC), who had studied Feuerstein’s philosophy, theoretical and practical application in Jerusalem. In 1987 I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend Feuerstein’s International Workshop held at Shoresh close to Jerusalem. In 1991 I returned to another International workshop to become an accredited Trainer in Instrumental Enrichment (IE). More recently in 2006, at a Feuerstein Institute’s International Workshop in Paris I underwent the Part A training in the (LPAD) Learning Propensity Assessment Device, dynamic assessment that is used to identify a person’s capacity to become a more effective learner.

To reflect back on my involvement, I recall that in 1993 the IACE (IACEP) International Association of Cognitive Education and Psychology held its Third International Conference, at Tiberius in Israel. I was one of a large delegation of about 20 other educators from South Africa and became a member of the IACEP. I served as the Vice-President for Africa on the executive committee of the IACEP in 2001–2002 and again in 2011–2013.

In 1993, Mervyn Skuy of WITS University founded IACESA (International Association for Cognitive Education in Southern Africa) and was elected as the first President. It was a professional organisation and although autonomous would have links with the International Association. I was a founder member on the IACESA Board and have been an active member ever since. At the time we also started Cognitive Interest Groups in different regions of South Africa and I was responsible for organising these in the Western Cape on various topics. I was elected the President of IACESA 2002–2004. Both these organisations held biennial conferences in alternate years. The IACEP Conference was held in different countries including one in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The IACESA Conferences were held in centres in South Africa. Many interesting invited international and local speakers and presentations were arranged and these have been very enriching and stimulating.

In retrospect, having been introduced to Reuven Feuerstein and his team and learning about his theory and its applied systems appealed to me for various reasons. Firstly, there is a strong theoretical base that has been well researched in different contexts. Secondly, it is based on the positive belief system that intelligence is not fixed and can be changed through mediated learning by another more knowledgeable person. Thirdly, I realised the value of the tools, the use of which requires Mediated Learning Experience, namely, The Learning Propensity Assessment Device (LPAD) a dynamic assessment procedure and the Instrumental Enrichment programme (IE), which is a systematically structured programme for developing cognitive structures and higher order thinking skills. This approach has enabled many learners, including those with special needs, to be integrated and lead meaningful lives as a part of their society.

This view changed my whole perspective and my approach to teaching and learning in my work
as a remedial teacher and subsequently as an educational psychologist. All the incongruities about which I felt uneasy when working with children and their families were explained. Here was a philosophy, a theory and unique tools that were relevant to learners of all ages and abilities from birth to adulthood irrespective of ethnicity or creed. It could be applied by educators, therapists, caregivers and parents and, being systemic, enveloped the total environment of the child both at school and at home.

In 1992 I decided to embark on research for my Master’s Degree as part of a project initiated by Wits University’s Cognitive Research Unit to introduce Instrumental Enrichment into Teacher Training Colleges. I approached the Hewat Training College in Cape Town and the Rector, Mr Ed Pratt was interested and supportive. Mervyn Skuy, Mandia Mentis and I trained 16 lecturers and the IE project ran successfully for 2 years until the College was closed in 1994 due to its amalgamation with the Mowbray College of Education now CPUT Faculty of Education. Lena Green was the supervisor of my thesis and patiently guided me through out.

As a Senior Lecturer at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), from 1994 to 2006, I introduced MLE into the curriculum and training for the fourth year post graduate student teachers and also at B.Ed (Hons) and M.Ed levels. I conducted many IE workshops for students and other professionals and have trained university and college lecturers and teachers in schools, many of whom started IE projects under my supervision.

MLE and IE programmes have been implemented in many projects with groups of regular and special needs learners. The settings were varied and included classes in mainstream schools that practice inclusion, mostly in the foundation and intermediate phases. I even ran a project with MLE and IE for the boys and care workers at a Home for ex-street children. These provided wonderful opportunities for bridging the principles and concepts that are embedded in IE. At one school in Zonnebloem estate the IE Instrument was Comparisons and the children were asked to bring items of customary clothing worn at their traditional festivals. They exchanged their clothing and dressed up demonstrating to each other the correct manner of wearing and adorning the clothes. As well as being a learning experience for the children in sharing information about their customs and cultures, it was most enjoyable for the teachers, learners and project leaders who assisted me, namely Sandra Young and Achmat Ajam. From 1998–1999, Sandra and I were involved in an action research project “Cognition
in Curriculum 2005” with the WCED Curriculum Development and worked with Foundation Phase teachers doing IE in six primary schools that were previously disadvantaged. The educators were encouraged to develop a mediational teaching style and benefits to teachers and children were noted in these programmes at the schools. These projects were subsequently written up as research articles. Additional research in South Africa together with David Martin was reported at the 2013 IACESA Conference, a summary of which can be found on the IACESA website.

Participating in the International Feuerstein workshops and the IACEP and IACESA Conferences gave me an opportunity to network with many professionals in cognitive education worldwide and to establish connections with people in South Africa and other countries including Japan, Korea, India, Singapore, USA, Belgium, Holland, UK, Finland. This exposure enabled me to gain knowledge and insight into many other approaches that were being offered. Several had mediated learning as the core principle, such as CEA (Greenberg) and Bright Start (Haywood) and many other programmes that came from different perspectives. Useful sources of information in this respect are the IACEP Journal and the IACESA News Update.

I have had the privileged of observing Reuven Feuerstein, who was an excellent clinician, while he used the LPAD with children and adolescents. I have also applied the LPAD and IE with individual clients. While assessing a young woman with Down's Syndrome I was amazed at the way she learned and reasoned in a logical way that appeared highly intelligent but defied conventional thinking. I have seen the changes while working with an adolescent girl, who was referred to me three years ago with hardly any spoken language, after being assessed at the Feuerstein Institute. Since working with her on IE and encouraging bridging activities that were mediated in her home and social environment, she is now reading and conversing and asking pertinent questions.

My engagement as an IE trainer and proponent of Feuerstein's work has been a lifelong learning experience and has been inspirational in that this approach can be made relevant to people of diverse backgrounds and cultures, abilities and ages. I have seen changes in people of all ages who have benefited and shown increased motivation in their academic subjects and in the workplace. It many respects it has bridged the divide between cultures and brought people with differences together. While doing an IE workshop for Lecturers at a College in Cape Town, since I am of the Jewish faith, I mentioned that the start of the Jewish New Year would be at the end of that week. This led to a discussion amongst the group about the similarities between the Moslem and Jewish religions as they both originated from the same region and have commonalities in their ancestry, language, values and customs. This to me was a very heart-warming experience in discovering our similarities and not only our differences. Since Comparisons is one of the conceptual thinking operations in the IE programme, I thought that if only more people could use this tool to think and discuss these issues openly there could be more harmony in the world.

Every time I do an IE training workshop I gain new insights from the participants about how to make thinking and feeling more explicit and it becomes a real sharing experience. The creativity that abounds in the bridging exercises by the professionals to academic and social contexts is very exciting. Similarly when I do IE or the LPAD with individuals I always learn something new. This refers to reasoning and critical thinking as well as to emotional aspects such as motivation. Being
an IACESA Board member has given me many opportunities during meetings to discuss and debate a range of controversial issues in a robust manner. Listening to the different perspectives of my colleagues has been a very stimulating and enriching experience.

I am a Founder member of Thinking Schools South Africa (TSSA) and though no whole schools have yet been trained in the IE programme directly, the principles of MLE are central to most programmes that promote Cognitive Education. I have been gratified to see the interest in thinking skills programmes that is demonstrated in schools. Much is owed to IACESA for its activity over the past 21 years and for the dissemination of information country wide. This role is so crucial in promoting the essential thinking skills that will assist people to adapt to rapid social and technological changes in this modern society.

High School students engaged in the process of solving problems and planning their strategies for this task.

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METACOGNITION
– a time for reflection, evaluation and monitoring
My story began in the 1990s, when I was first introduced to mediation by Prof. Mervyn Skuy, who was the Head of the Department of Special Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. As a Speech-Language Therapist/Audiologist, I knew that I required further insight into how children learn so that I would not focus only on the impairment. Hence I enrolled for a B. Ed. degree Ed – focusing on remedial education (now referred to as “learning support”). This education slant added to my profession in language therapy, I believe, enables me to provide a more grounded intervention for the children that I worked with.

Once in the remedial course, I began to appreciate the teaching of Feuerstein and Vygotsky amongst other cognitive psychologists, whose philosophies formed the theoretical framework of my practice. In 2000, I completed the Basic and then the Advanced training in Cognitive Enrichment Advantage (CEA) with Prof Katherine Greenberg from the University of Tennessee. During this period and the period ahead, I was introduced to other programmes – Bright Start, Keys to Thinking, Habits of Mind and Thinking Maps. These programmes consolidated my conceptualisation of Cognitive Education. I became a member of IACESA and have served on its Board for two terms.

With this background, I train teachers and therapists in these cognitive skills. Furthermore, since 2011, I have introduced metacognition to students in the discipline of Speech-language Pathology at the University of the Witwatersrand, as a topic in the module entitled Advanced Child Language. This new initiative combines the understanding of brain neuroplasticity, cognitive processing and intervention strategies for effective thinking and learning for all students.

Publications in the field of cognition have been limited in South Africa but there is growing interest. I am proud to be a chapter author in the book edited by Lena Green: “Schools as Thinking Communities”, as well as author of a chapter entitled: “Metacognition as a tool for strategic thinking teachers” in the SAALED conference proceedings. My areas of research, which build on my Ph.D. on metacognition and reading comprehension, include cognition and language, and specifically how thinking intervention strategies influence learning.

We live in exciting times in education and should test our theories on how to learn effectively, and not only focus on a thinking programme per se. The student will only generalise effective thinking if given the opportunity to exercise metacognitive practices of reflection, evaluation and monitoring. I believe that explicit inclusion of metacognition in teaching and learning is fundamental to making students effective
life-long learners. I am privileged to be among colleagues who enjoy working and expanding knowledge about cognition, enriching my understanding of cognitive practice. 😊

Dr Sharon Moonsamy
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Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
Bio

**Prof Jennifer Dawn Pretorius** (Prof. Jenny) attained DPhil Counselling Psychology in 1976. After five years at Sasolburg High School as Head of Counselling she started the Bureau of Student Counselling at the Vaal Triangle Technikon where she was Director for 13 years.

Prof. Jenny received research awards, presented project results internationally and this led to being requested to start up the Research Directorate at Vaal University of Technology. She received a full Professorship in 2000 and became the first Dean of Research at the VUT. Prof. Jenny is the sole author of 12 Accredited Publications in Academic Journals, joint author for a number of accredited publications, development of 3 Products and artefacts, 17 International presentations and workshops, 14 Awards including 2 Ernest Oppenheimer Awards, Research grants including 3 CSD, NRF and SABC and University grants. Prof. Jenny held 35 different positions of leadership outside the Research Directorate and successfully conducted more than 40 conference presentations.
A REWARDING JOURNEY WITH IACESA
Four children in a space of seven years – what was I thinking, especially as the last born came while executing my doctoral research. The youngest was three when Sasolburg High School approached me to be the Guidance teacher and Counsellor in 1977. During the following five years I was bombarded with questions such as “Please, how do we study Mathematics?” Obviously problem solving was required. The question in my mind was how to convey this simply to the pupils. Adolescent development required Life Skills, Study Skills, Cognitive Education and Career Counselling. All needed to be delivered in a simple and acceptable manner. Thus the quest for understanding cognition and methods of cognitive education began.

Ninety eighty one saw me move to the Vaal Triangle Technikon to start a Counselling Department. It became apparent that students in higher education often lacked skills in reading, comprehension, studying and problem solving. A laboratory was established where individually and in groups these deficiencies were addressed.

At some stage an article on cognitive education was forwarded by the Rector to the Director of Student Counselling (me). I remember pausing before putting this into the “Read later” file thinking that perhaps this must be read now because the Rector may ask me about this.

IACESA was now on the radar screen. I was able to secure funding from the rector to attend a conference. Soon I was involved and over the years met and corresponded with international gurus from Israel, UK, Europe and Scandinavian countries.

On the local scene I met Prof. Willie Rautenbach. He was extremely knowledgeable and always ready to share. One of my most vivid memories is a conference held at Wits University, when Susan Hall, the secretary, and I lugged heavy boxes of folders, pens, documents and catering essentials up flights of stairs. It was at this period I was elected President of IACESA (for two terms: 1996–2000).

The IACESA Board consisted predominately of members living in the Cape and Transvaal (Gauteng). Meetings were held alternately in these provinces. Susan’s father became involved and we had our Board meetings by Teleconferencing. I would have to drive from Vanderbijlpark to a Telkom venue in Pretoria. Modern technology made it possible to see our fellow board members in the Cape. I tore ligaments in my ankle while attending a Creative Thinking Conference in Bloemfontein and remember an official driver of our institution having to drive me to Johannesburg near the airport for a meeting. This led to my hopping into the meeting and being greeted by kind and sympathetic IACESA Board members.
My skills in assisting students and staff were honed by the wonderful people I met. These included de Bono and many others at creative thinking workshops and conferences. I was able to secure funding and with Prof. Rautenbach’s help launched a project with the blessing of the management of the Department of Education which was delighted that we would work, in its words, with the “township schools”. Prof. Rautenbach conducted the workshop during the school holidays. We also arranged for a video of his presentations and distributed copies to other schools.

When I was tasked with setting up the Research Directorate for the whole institution it became difficult to stay an active member of IACESA. However the skills acquired made cognitive thinking an integral part of all my activities, duties and assistance to others. As Dean of Research these skills definitely contributed to my supervisory skills, the examination of postgraduate work, research paper evaluations and editorial skills.

As a Counselling Psychologist I have guided students, couples, groups and individuals in solving their problems using the cognitive skills which have become embedded in me. My journey with IACESA has been rewarding to me and has enabled me to assist others from all walks of life.

**Prof. Jenny Pretorius**

Previously Counselling Psychologist, Director of Bureau of Student Counselling, Vaal Triangle Technikon and Dean of Research at VUT
Georgette Rautenbach is a qualified remedial teacher with over 28 years of teaching experience across the Foundation Phase. For the past 10 years she has been teaching at independent remedial schools in Cape Town. During this time she supported learners with Dyslexia and other learning and behaviour difficulties in the subject areas of Literacy and Mathematics. She is currently head of curriculum development for Kg 2 at an international school in the UAE. Georgette is a passionate teacher who uses an asset-based, multi-sensory approach to all learning areas. Her aim is to make learning fun and meaningful. She believes in the possibilities of every learner and is inspired by supporting her learners to reach their full potential. Georgette’s hobbies include trail running with her huskies, stained glass and currently, exploring the UAE!
MY STORY:
Becoming a Thinking Teacher
Ten years ago I obtained a position as a Grade 2 teacher at a remedial school in Cape Town. It was there that I was introduced to the blocks and tools of COGNET (Cognitive Enrichment Advantage – now called CEA) for the first time. At that stage I did not even know the meaning of meta-cognition and I was as impulsive and disorganised as many of the children in my class! As I read through the manual, I felt completely overwhelmed. Most of the time I felt just like the chubby Grade 2 boy in my class who was staring at the worksheet in front of him. He started giggling anxiously and shouted out: “Teacher, I stop, I look and I think, but I still don’t have a clue!”

Religiously (I mean I had to – it was part of my job description!), I introduced the different blocks and tools, one at a time, once a week. However, that was the only time that my Grade 2’s and I did COGNET. The rest of time, we did not even give COGNET a single thought.

The second year went slightly better. It was then that I discovered that I could make COGNET fun! I love a hands-on approach to teaching and I could use that strength when teaching COGNET. Unfortunately, during that time, COGNET remained only in its exclusive time slot: every Tuesday before break. No bridging happened and the concepts were not generalised. I knew the different blocks and tools, but it was only every now and then that the COGNET vocabulary would slip into the daily teaching of my learners.
After three years, I accepted a new position at Oakley House School and it was only when I had to train colleagues in COGNET myself that the penny finally dropped. (As we say in Afrikaans: “In die land van die blindes, is een-oog koning!”) In preparation for this enormous task, I studied the manual again and in sharing my knowledge and connecting it with my experience with children with learning difficulties, I realised what a powerful tool this is. Together with Bright Start, Cornelia Prins’ “Thinking Tools” and mind maps, everything suddenly made sense. The blocks and tools became part of my teaching vocabulary, a teaching style and a life style.

I still introduce the different thinking tools once a week and one at a time. I think in doing so, the different tools are clearly named and defined which brings some clarity to the various concepts. The difference is that as a class we use all the tools every day and all the time. As a teacher, my focus has shifted from teaching content to teaching process. I think that it empowers my learners when they know that even if they do not know how to do something straight away, they can make a plan and work it out. This is what gives my learners a feeling of competence. I could only smile when one of my Grade 1’s once said, (after I was rattling off a series of instructions during pack up time): “Mrs. Rautenbach, you are not saying all of this systematically, you are not being precise and accurate!”

Today, I know that what Albert Einstein once said is so true: “Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.”

Georgette Rautenbach
Remedial Teacher
Mervyn Skuy PhD (clinical & educational psychologist) was a member of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand for 30 years (1973–2003). In 1989 he was promoted to Ad Hominem Professor of Specialised Education. On retirement, he received the title of Professor Emeritus. At Wits, he founded and headed the Division of Specialised Education, the Education Clinic and the Cognitive Research Programme. He was, on several occasions, President of the SA Association of Learning & Educational Disabilities (SAALED) from which he received the Medal of Honour. In 2009, he was offered the post of Professor of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the Touro College & University System in NY, USA, where he is currently employed. During his career, he has published, lectured and held office internationally. He was a Vice President of the International Association of Cognitive Education, and the founder and first President of IACESA.
BACKGROUND TO THE FORMATION OF IACESA
In July 1993, I organised a contingent of 25 South Africans to attend the Fourth Conference of the International Association of Cognitive Education (IACE) in Israel. This represented an unprecedentedly large attendance at a conference by a group of South Africans. A number of participants presented papers at the conference, and there was a groundswell of enthusiasm for the formation of a local chapter of IACE in South Africa.

With the assistance of certain others, I arranged a public meeting in the Division of Specialised Education at the University of the Witwatersrand in October 1993, at which the inauguration of the South African Branch was heralded. Some 65 prospective members attended and many gave short presentations on their involvement in the area of cognitive education.

At this meeting, participants resolved to apply the original IACE principles within the region of South Africa and to address the educational needs of developing countries and communities.

A Steering Committee under Dr J Pretorius as Chairman, was elected, to work towards the creation of the organisation, and to plan a National IACESA Conference for September 1994 in Johannesburg. The theme of the Conference was “Educational Reform through the Advancement of Thinking Skills”.

A highly successful conference was subsequently held at the University of the Witwatersrand in September 1994. Keynote speaker was visiting Professor to the Division of Specialised Education, Wits, noted cognitive educationalist, psychologist, and Founding President of IACE, Professor Carl Haywood of the United States. In addition, Ms Mojapelo, of the Minister of Education’s office, opened the conference on his behalf.

At the Annual General Meeting of the First national Conference of IACESA, I was elected President, and the first National Board was elected.

At this conference, a number of proposals were put forward by different interest groups that had been constituted for this purpose. Cognitive education was considered to be central to the concerns of learners with special educational needs, as well as to pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education as a whole.

Reproduced, from a report compiled by Prof. Mervyn Skuy, founder and first President of IACESA, by Estelle Brettenny (IACESA President 2013–2015).

Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
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Anita WORRALL

Anita Worrall is Founder and Executive Director of Pro Ed House School (established 1998) a school for bright children who learn differently, as well as Founder and Director of Pro Ed Centre (established 1978), a multidisciplinary centre offering assessment and therapy to children with learning difficulties. She obtained a BA with Honours in Psychology from McGill University in Montreal in Canada, a MA and PhD from Cornell University in the USA, and a Diploma in Specialised Education from Canberra University in Australia. Her PhD dissertation, Bilingualism and Cognitive Development, was the first such research to be published in the Journal of Child Development. Her life-long interests have been in cognition and cognitive development as well as in ways to assist children with Special Educational Needs. She was President of SAALED as well as one of the founding members and later President of IACESA on two separate occasions. In 2011 she co-founded Thinking Schools South Africa, and is its current Chairperson.
FROM COGNITIVE EDUCATION TO THINKING SCHOOLS
How children develop complex thinking and reasoning has been an interest of mine since my student days. It was why in July 1993 I joined a group of South African colleagues at a conference held in Israel and met there an Israeli professor, Reuven Feuerstein, (incidentally, Rumanian-born, like me) who had developed a theory on the modifiability of human intelligence through a systematic process of mediation.

Several of my colleagues had already met Feuerstein and had attended his workshops in Israel. For me, it was a new and moving experience. Imagine a gloriously sunny day in Jerusalem at the opening of the International Institute for the Development of Learning Potential, sitting on the terrace outside the building. I can still see the audience, made up mostly of happy children and their families, eagerly waiting to hear the words of their beloved teacher. The inspiring opening was followed by a conference on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Nof Ginosar.

Feuerstein spoke about his passionate belief in the modifiability of the child’s cognition through the application of systematic principles of adult/child interaction, which he called Mediated Learning Experience. Today, we call this process, neuroplasticity. Feuerstein’s genius was in establishing how to achieve structural modifiability. There were many other educators and psychologists attending the conference, from the USA, France, Canada, Spain, Australia – too many to remember. They all shared our passion for cognitive development and education. I was especially impressed by Professor Carl Haywood, who had taken Feuerstein’s theory of MLE (Mediated Learning Experience) to the USA. A few years prior to this conference, many of those attending it had formed an association called the International Association for Cognitive Education (IACE).

Inspired by the conference and the people we met, the South African group decided to forge links with IACE. These would be formal links but the local association would nonetheless be independent. Accordingly, in 1993 the International Association for Cognitive Education in Southern Africa (IACESA) was born. I recall that I suggested IACESA should be part of SAALED (Southern African Association for Learning and Educational Difficulties) which already had an organisational structure. Professor Rautenbach opposed me saying that cognitive education was for all children, hence, it should be a separate and independent organisation. He was right, of course!

I was elected Newsletter Editor of IACESA and served in that capacity for a number of years. This took me to many national and
international conferences. The IACESA First National Conference was held in September 1994 at Wits University, Entitled “Education Reforms through the Advancement of Thinking Skills”.

Carl Haywood was the guest speaker and spoke about cognitive education and mediated learning and how these can be applied to the curriculum. He also taught a course, “A Cognitive Curriculum for Young Children”, which he and his colleagues had developed. It was based on a mediated learning experience programme, called Bright Start. I attended the course a few years later – travelling to Kortrijk in Belgium to become a Trainer. We still use Bright Start with our Grades 1 and 2 at Pro Ed House School.

Carl had written many journal articles. He was Editor of *The Thinking Teacher* in those days, a very influential journal in the early 1990’s. In his presidential address to the Second International Conference on Cognitive Education held by the IACE in Mons, Belgium in 1990, he deplored the fact that “A very large number of children entered the public school system unprepared to learn effectively. A revolution in thinking about education”, he wrote, “should consider first the goals of education from stretching knowledge to stretching minds, from teacher roles as givers of information to mediators of experience, guider of students’ personal quests for cognitive growth and change.” He went on to propose “a systematic commitment to cognitive education.”

Carl Haywood wrote these words in 1990. They were so apt for South Africa! I recall an IACESA Conference held at Wits University in 1995, when one of the delegates, Poppy Mbethe, reminded us of a university professor who rebuked his students, saying, “Yes, I think you understand, but you have not used the same wording as I used”!

**IACESA’s ups and downs**

I have been linked with IACESA over the years. As I mentioned I have been Newsletter Editor and later served as President for two terms (Sep 2004–Nov 2006, Feb 2009–Feb 2011). During my time, IACESA has had its ups and downs. There were occasions when attendance at our conferences was so low that we contemplated cancelling the conference. We just did not seem to get the message across, despite training of individuals in various cognitive methodologies and introducing such programmes in their classrooms. We realised that these isolated attempts were not working. Teachers needed support from principals and colleagues if they were to introduce new methods of teaching.
The Birth of the Whole School Approach to Education in South Africa

The late Professor Bob Burden of Exeter University in the UK, had told us of the birth of The Thinking Schools movement in New Zealand and the UK at the 2009 IACESA Conference. During my term as President of IACESA the Board decided that the 2011 conference should address the topic “Thinking Schools – The Journey”. Amazingly, the interest sparked was huge. A record number of delegates attended the conference, with national and international speakers addressing that topic.

The delegates requested a follow up and it was decided that IACESA should lead the change in education by actively promoting “Thinking Schools”. A non-profit organisation, Thinking Schools South Africa (TSSA), was established with some of us from IACESA now members of the Board of TSSA. Thinking Schools South Africa (TSSA) is now three years old and Professor Jonathan Jansen, the noted educator from the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, is its patron. It has touched more than 1000 schools. Two Johannesburg schools have recently been evaluated and have been accredited as “Thinking Schools” by the University of Exeter and several more are preparing for accreditation. Our goal is expressed in the following slogan: “200 Thinking Schools, 100 000 Smarter Children”. We believe this is achievable.

Carl Haywood’s system-wide commitment to cognitive approaches in education is becoming a reality in South Africa. This is due primarily to a small band of committed educators and other professionals who, for the past 20 years, have worked steadily to achieve what is no less than a revolution in South African education.

Happy 21st Birthday IACESA! 🎂

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Note: Views expressed in this article are personal views, and do not necessarily express those of IACESA.
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TWENTY ONE E-THINKING STEPS IN THE SPECIAL NEEDS CONTEXT

(E = essential, easy, effective, enabling, everlasting)
In 1999 after working as a speech-language therapist and audiologist in the special needs context for a few years, I realised I needed to change the way I think and teach. The speech and language objectives I set for the learners with specific language learning difficulty were just not adequate to address the backlogs that these learners experienced in their language. I sensed that something was missing in my therapy approach. Learners did not generalise the principles that were taught during speech-language therapy sessions to their schoolwork.

I was invited, with a few of my colleagues, to attend a COGNET course at Pro-Ed School. Professor Willie Rautenbach introduced us to the principles of Instrumental Enrichment of Prof Reuven Feuerstein and also to the COGNET program of Kathy Greenberg. Often one is introduced to a new way of thinking by a person who is passionate about his work – that person was Professor Willie Rautenbach. As I learnt more about the instruments of the Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment program I realised that sometimes the pure principles of thinking may be adapted slightly for the learner experiencing barriers to learning. But when I experienced Kathy Greenberg’s COGNET approach (now Cognitive Enrichment Advantage/CEA) I immediately knew that it was feasible to use the Building Blocks of Thinking and the Tools of Learning as a complete programme immediately without any adaptations for learners who experience complex speech and language difficulties.

Moreover, I realised that by introducing this thinking approach into my therapy I would develop a new way of teaching and administering speech and language therapy. My speech-language therapy sessions now integrate my speech-language therapy goals with the language goals in the curriculum and with thinking goals. It took careful planning to ensure that speech-language therapy sessions included the explicit teaching of cognitive skills, the language goals required by the curriculum together with specific speech-language objectives while addressing the backlogs of a specific learner. Teaching the principles of thinking in CEA explicitly also meant that a whole new vocabulary needed to be introduced, explained and clarified for the learner with specific language disability.

I knew that from then onwards the integration of these three sets of goals implied more than simply teaching these cognitive principles randomly while also keeping the curriculum objectives in mind. It became evident that by integrating the objectives one facilitates the generalisation of thinking skills to all areas of a learner’s life. In addition, a learner becomes aware of the fact that a certain thinking skill, for example, “comparing concepts” is applicable in many contexts. For example, it may be applicable in business studies when one compares different kinds of ownership and also in tourism when one compares different kinds of accommodation. An essential aspect of teaching these principles is that once the thinking principle is identified, named and explained, application of the principle is supported by generalising the principle to several other contexts where applicable. The process of explicit teaching and naming of the cognitive principle in a mediational manner is crucial.

Through the process of learning about the new cognitive approach, preparing the integrated therapy sessions, it remains fundamental that similar thinking colleagues engage in regular discussion with each other. One needs a professional partner to share one’s new passion and vision.
I also realised that I needed to equip myself with as much information as possible about cognitive educational teaching approaches. I did the CEA Basic course and the CEA Consultant course. I still regard myself as being extremely privileged to have been trained in both these by Kathy Greenberg herself in 2000.

The specific choice of a particular cognitive approach or programme is not an uncomplicated one. A thorough knowledge of the teachers’ attitudes and capabilities in the school as well as of the specific learner is required and the needs of both should be carefully considered. Even the best cognitive approach will not succeed if it is perceived not to match the teachers’ requirements or meet the learners’ needs. If a small group of professionals in a school realise that they need to convince a whole staff to implement a complementary additional approach to teaching, it requires meticulous, detailed and in depth motivation. One should be very patient as the process to ensure that all stakeholders are on board may take a long time. It is critical that the school governing body, the school management team and the whole staff agree to implement the process. Once the process is underway, it is advisable to start with a few inspired teachers. A very logical place to initiate or implement a cognitive approach is the foundation phase. Insist and strongly encourage the teachers to be involved in the sessions and to take part. The vocabulary and concepts must become part of everyday teaching and be part of the classroom vocabulary and culture.

If I were asked to give advice about introducing cognitive education I would make the following comments and recommendations. It is essential that one’s knowledge is updated regularly. Review of one’s own practice and beliefs is also vital. One should always stay informed about new approaches, but be open-minded, careful and critical about the applicability and suitability of programmes for a particular context. One should be aware that it is possible to use more than one approach simultaneously, but be realistic and practical if an additional approach is selected. Any approaches adopted should be compatible with each other as well as fulfilling the requirements of teachers and the needs of the learners. Ensure close contact with the colleagues in your academic setting and as far as possible have regular meetings, discussions and brainstorming sessions.

Life-long learning is envisaged as a critical component of the school curriculum and should be the ultimate objective for all learners and teachers; it is possible if an appropriate cognitive programme is integrated into all teaching and learning and becomes part of the ethos in a school.

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21 STORIES TO CELEBRATE 21 YEARS OF IACESA

Stories can be a vehicle to create meaning and meaning making is vital for any learning process. Stories have been neglected during the information age and Pink (2006) argues that we must maintain our left brain (L directed) skills but we must also develop six essential right brain (R directed) skills. Story is one of these skills or “six senses” that will help shape our future in the conceptual age.

Stories can be viewed as important cognitive events. They can be encapsulated into one compact package that comprises information, knowledge, context and emotion that is driven by reflection on practice and reflection in practice (Schön, 1983, 1987). Taking both categories into consideration, this booklet, 21 Stories to Celebrate 21 Years of IACESA, includes stories of 21 people making sense of their experiences with cognitive education, for the purpose of orienting themselves, as committed (or previously committed) cognitive education practitioners or researchers, towards current and/or future actions or thought. The stories also demonstrate careful reflection in practice, namely planning, monitoring and evaluating practice while it was taking place, with the aim to constantly adjust and change.

This precious resource forms part of the 21st celebration of IACESA – 21 years of promoting cognitive education in South Africa.

Teachers, professionals, students or parents who are interested in cognitive education will find this booklet meaningful and might be inspired to become part of the ongoing IACESA journey and quest to influence education in South Africa for the next 21 years.