

IACESA NEWS UPDATE

JULY 2013



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COGNITIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

News Update with news of local and international events of interest to our members.

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On becoming resourceful...

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MESSAGE FROM THE IACESA PRESIDENT - ESTELLE BRETTENNY

Dear IACESA Members

The winter holiday period is over and we have to face the challenges of the third term – whether we are ready or not! Having a bit more time to walk and recharge my battery in the sun on the warmer winter days, gave me extra time to reflect... about family issues, my own work and about IACESA activities and projects.

The IACESA Board is in the process of developing resources for the IACESA website. The word ‘resources’ made me think...This very familiar word can mean many things...it can be a noun or a verb...it can be tangible or intangible...there are

many different types of resources....What resources do we want to put on the website? What resources would be most helpful for our members? In doing an internet search about the meaning of the word resource, two important meanings stood out for me. A resource can be something that: *can be used for support or help or used to describe a person that has the ability to deal with a difficult or troublesome situation effectively, i.e. the qualities and skills that someone has and can use for dealing with problems. In other words, a person of resource.*

The IACESA Board endeavours to create and gather:

- **resources that can be used to support and help** our members to infuse the development of thinking and learning skills

(needed to cope in the 21st century) in their daily work; as well as

- **resources that can contribute** to make each one of us a **person of resource** in the 21st century.

Dr. Lidia van Vuuren delivered a very meaningful presentation on Resilience at the Cog Ed Seminar on 29 May 2013. A brief summary is included in this News Update. Dr. van Vuuren emphasized in her closure that most of us are 'caregivers' in more than one way on a daily basis, but that we often stand last in the queue...our own skills to deal with challenges must also be developed. If you can make an original contribution that can be used to support and help our IACESA members or that can contribute to make each one of us a better person of resource, you are invited to send us your contributions. If the IACESA Board

approves the contribution, it will be placed on the website as a resource.

Articles on how to infuse the development of thinking and learning skills into teaching or intervention; practical tips and guidelines for teachers/therapists, parents and learners on how to develop thinking skills; book reviews about relevant topics; etc; can be submitted.

Let us all become more *resourceful* from now on – it is an essential skill for the 21st century. It is not just about *doing more with less* it is *the realization that you can do more with less because you and your colleagues(or learners) are more capable than you first believed.*

Estelle Brettenny

IACESA President 2013-2015

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COG-ED SEMINAR 29 MAY 2013

RESILIENCE: DR LIDIA VAN VUUREN

Our greatest Glory is not in never failing, but in rising every time we fall Confucius

On a typical stormy Cape Town winter's evening on 29 May about 50 loyal IACESA members and guests gathered to listen to Dr van Vuuren inspiring us with the results of her Doctoral research on RESILIENCE.

Learning about the theoretical definition that - RESILIENCE is a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimise or overcome the damaging effects of adversity – confirmed yet again that we all need resilience skills. We were reminded that possessing reliable resilience skills is no guarantee against adversity. However, those possessing sound resilience skills are at an advantage since these skills support the integration of an adverse experience into one's

identity. This makes it possible for individuals eventually to return to a level of functioning at or above pre-crisis level.

An instinctive ensuing question is: What are these characteristics of individuals / families that function well despite adversity? Research confirms that insight, independence, healthy relationships, creativity, humour, morality, autonomy, internal locus of control as well as the ability to master skills are what distinguish these resilient individuals from other individuals who struggle to cope during adverse life conditions.

Studies on RESILIENCE identified several additional family characteristics associated with

individual resilience. These comprise maintenance of rituals in the family, minimal conflict during infancy, positive relationships with a primary caregiver and stable family environments. It was stressed that the development of these protective factors is crucial to family adjustment when faced with specific risks. Recovery skills are critically needed when families must adapt in the face of specific family disasters. Major protective and recovery factors are:

- The major “umbrella” factor of resilience is HOPE.
- The emotional wellbeing of a family is vital in dealing with adverse consequences during family crisis. Emotional wellbeing concerns dealing with intense emotions of anger, disappointment, abandonment and helplessness. When these factors are not dealt with effectively and efficiently – mastery of a disastrous event may be blocked.
- Precise and clear communication with family members, empathy for each other’s positions and tolerance for the conflict may increase the resilience of the family.
- Families’ appraisal of their crisis relates to how they view their stresses and challenges. A positive appraisal may promote family coherence, stability and health.
- Social support from family members, friends as well as from the community provide a sense of security and solidarity for the family.
- A crisis always involves money, thus; sufficient economic resources may

ensure healthy family adaptation and functioning.

- Family routines and rituals provide a sense of stability and support in a family to manage the transitional upheaval, it affords continuity and closeness by linking the past, present and future through shared traditions and expectations.
- Hardiness refers to the sense of commitment within a family to overcome the crisis. It has to be remembered though, that family members need to counterbalance unity, mutual support and collaboration with a sense of separateness and autonomy of individual family members.
- Each member in the family must feel equally important. Each member’s opinion, feelings, verbal expression as well as life experiences are equally important and should be valued as such.

Dr van Vuuren concluded by emphasizing that one can cope with one’s life experiences by making meaning of them, by linking it to one’s social, cultural and religious beliefs, to one’s multi-generational past as well as to one’s hopes and dreams for the future. THAT IS HOW WE ARE ABLE TO COPE WITH OUR LIFE CRISES AND HOW WE CAN GROW EVEN UNDER STRESSFUL CIRCUMSTANCES

**Summarized by Elsefie Wranz
Immediate Past President**

Book review: Daniel, H. Pink. 2006. *A Whole New Mind. Why right-brainers will rule the future.* New York: Riverhead Books.

Daniel Pink offers a mind-altering perspective to the teaching and learning of 21st century learners, and argues that right-brainers will rule the future. Pink's argument for a whole new mind is rooted in the progression that has taken place in the world that we live in over the last 150 years, as shown in the figure below. According to Pink, the progression depicts an evolution in a way that might speak more to the right side of the brain. The evolution can be depicted in the following way:

- 18th century: Agricultural Age (Farmers)
- 19th century: Industrial Age (Factory workers)
- 20th century: Information Age (Knowledge workers)
- 21st century: Conceptual Age (Creators and empathizers) (Pink, 2006:49)

We need to prepare our learners for the Conceptual Age. According to Pink (2006:61) this preparation centres on six pillars, which he calls "high-concept" and "high-touch aptitudes" that are essential for the 21st century, and will guide our lives and shape our world. He calls these aptitudes "the six senses", which are fundamental human attributes that have to be worked back into shape.

Learners will have to complement their left-brain reasoning by mastering six essential right-brain directed aptitudes. The six senses involve the following:

- Not just function but also **DESIGN**: Apart from creating functional products or services, it will be important for learners to create something aesthetic by being emotionally engaged and sensitive during the process in order to make our planet a safer and better place for all.

- Not just argument but also **STORY**: It is not enough for learners to argue and reason effectively about information. They also need to be able to persuade somebody of their own self-understanding and experience, which will require narration through clear and precise communication.
- Not just focus but also **SYMPHONY**: Being able to synthesize will be of more importance than the ability to analyse. This implies seeing the bigger picture and combining disparate parts into a new fascinating whole, and selecting meaningful trends from a superabundance of information and strategically thinking about the application of the information in future.
- Not just logic but also **EMPATHY**: Logic alone will not be sufficient to understand what drives people, to foster relationships and to care for other people. Pink (2006:174) argues for the ability to establish a balance between being sometimes detached and sometimes attuned to events or people.
- Not just seriousness but also **PLAY**: Laughter and humour hold numerous personal, health and professional benefits. Pink (2006:187) argues for a balance between work and play.
- Not just accumulation but also **MEANING**: Although we live in a world characterized by material wealth, it has not brought fulfilment. The desire to find purpose in life, transcendence and spiritual fulfilment need to be pursued.

The book offers a variety of tools, exercises and ideas to develop a whole new mind. In essence, Pink argues that shaping the fundamental human attributes of Design, Story, Symphony, Empathy, Play and Meaning can support personal growth and fulfilment, career success and a caring and humane approach to all human beings and society.

Professor Mary Grosser, President Elect

THE POWER OF ONE PIECE OF PAPER TO ENHANCE THINKING & LEARNING

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One piece of paper... it sounds simple, but it is extremely powerful.

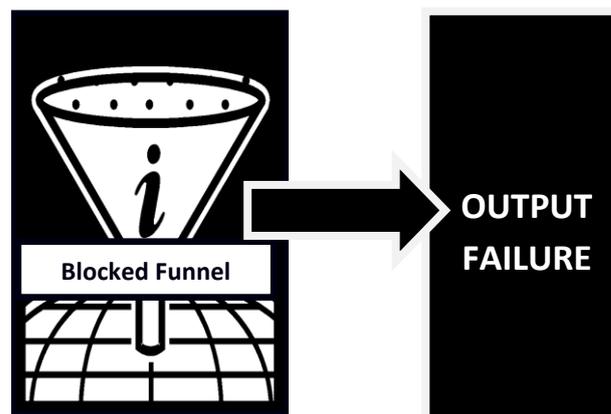
If more *leaders* - curriculum developers, educators, authors, publishers, psychologists, therapists – understood the thinking skills and sub-skills required to put something on one piece of paper, and possessed the skills to capture the essence (main ideas) of what learners need to know on one piece of paper, they would be able to publish/teach/intervene in ways that improve and develop thinking and learning in learners of all ages.

In classes in schools all over the world there are learners with ADD/ADHD, learners with learning differences, learners who underperform academically, learners who “do not know what they do not know” (unconscious incompetence) and learners who do not know how to think and learn effectively. Academic tasks that involve written output, summarizing, taking notes or reading complex text for meaning can be very challenging for many learners, especially learners who experience barriers to learning. Meltzer (2007) states that these learners often show symptoms that can be described as a “blocked funnel.” Levine (2003) uses the term “output failure” to describe the symptoms of these learners. Although this term might sound slightly negative it is very descriptive of learners who are unable to meet intensified production demands, often evidenced by their written output, or lack of written output, for example,

- Homework (not done or of poor quality);

- Projects/tasks (not done, late, or of poor quality);
- Test and exam results (underachieving, poor results or failing).

Behavioural, motivational and emotional problems are often associated with the aforementioned problems.



The reason why one piece of paper is so powerful is that it is sometimes the only thing that can go through a “funnel”.

If the “funnel” is completely blocked even one piece of paper can hardly go through! When learners are, for example, bombarded with masses of loose papers, disorganized notes, busy textbooks, notes without clear structure or patterns, lots of work to study, limited time, overloaded working memories, or rising anxiety and stress levels, they are often totally unproductive. They cannot make sense of or remember what they are reading or learning, do not get the big picture or make connections between different main ideas.

Furthermore, the average parent has limited time, insufficient knowledge and skills about the curriculum, and/or about how to develop the thinking and learning skills that are pre-requisite skills for academic success.

One piece of paper is a very powerful means of giving the big picture and main ideas, helping to create connections, as well as helping to promote understanding and memory. If it just helps a learner to be able to say “I know what I don’t know” (conscious incompetence) this is a big step forward.

The barriers in learners that lead to output failure can be aggravated by ineffective written output by curriculum developers, educators and authors in the form of poorly structured learning material/notes or text books and unclear project instructions. Ineffective teaching methods can also aggravate existing barriers to learning. As a result, some learners fall through the cracks in the system, and some motivated learners have to work harder and harder to try and keep up with academic demands. Many develop secondary emotional problems along the way.

To reduce output failure and to promote and develop thinking and learning, there are many strategies that can play a role. One of the key strategies is to mediate/teach the “power of one piece of paper” to learners and to prominent leaders, such as educators and therapists. In my two decades of experience of intervention with older primary school learners, high school learners and students certain key activities have been part of my meta-cognitive intervention process on a daily basis. It has been crucial to help learners to put the essence of what they need to know, understand and apply to pass a subject (test or exam), on single pieces of paper. The thinking skills and subskills necessary to do this are infused as they are helped to create their single ‘pieces of paper’. In this way they learn to cope with the type, amount and rate of learning tasks and to obtain a pass mark or better marks.

Various visual tools can be used, e.g. Mind Maps (Buzan) or Thinking Maps (Hyerle). The idea of “The Power of One Piece of Paper” is not unique and a vast amount of literature is available in books, in articles and on the Internet; but in

order to enable the average learner to use these tools effectively, the underlying thinking sub-skills must be explicitly mediated/taught step-by-step by a more knowledgeable person.

Unfortunately this does not always happen and therefore learners often struggle to create Mind Maps or Thinking Maps and eventually respond with an ‘*it does not work for me attitude*’. In order to mediate/teach learners how to use Mind Mapping or Thinking Maps (or other visual tools) successfully it is vital that the mediator/teacher understands what thinking sub-skills are required. This helps to identify why a specific learner struggles to think and learn. The mediator can then structure learning material in such a way that it enables learners to think and learn and to create their own Mind Maps or Thinking Maps more easily and independently.

There are many **advantages** of “a single piece of paper”:

- It can help learners to make sense (get the big picture or main ideas) of a section of work/topic, e.g. Exponent Rules, Parts of Speech, Phases of the Holocaust; etc.
- It leads to increased motivation to get going, to study/understand a section of work/topic and to set achievement goals.
- It helps a learner to keep things together in his/her working memory and to use memory processes more effectively.
- It improves attention and concentration.
- It stimulates whole-brain functioning (left and right brain).
- It focuses on priorities and leads to increased understanding and long-term memory.
- It can help with internal perception and regulation of time.
- It requires the use of various thinking sub-skills that are needed for higher order thinking.
- It promotes metacognition, self-regulation and self-monitoring.

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- It can be used to mediate key strategies needed for academic success.
- It leads to improved academic confidence, conscious competence (I know what I know) and academic success.
- It is “addictive” – learners experience the advantages of one piece of paper and become motivated to develop their skills to put a section of work/topic on one piece of paper.

Examples of “the Power of One Piece of Paper” and tips on how to mediate the underlying thinking sub-skills for making Mind Maps or Thinking Maps will be available on the IACESA website soon under **Resources**.

References:

Levine, M. (2003). *A Mind at a Time*. Great Britain: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd.

Meltzer, L. (2007). *Executive Functions in Education*. New York: Guilford Press.

UPCOMING LEARNING OPPORTUNITES

DATE	EVENT
21 September 2013	How to grow a Thinking School, TSSA Conference at St Andrew's in Grahamstown. For more information visit: http://www.thinkingschoolssa.co.za
30 August to 2 September 2013	ICPIC International Conference, Philosophy for Children See flyer
September 2013	IACESA Cog Ed Seminar: Prof Daniel Louw (Department of Practical Theology, University of Stellenbosch) will talk about <i>Professional Burnout</i> Information regarding the date, venue and registration details will be emailed to members shortly

ICPIC CONFERENCE FLYER

International Conference at UCT

For:

Principals
Educators (all phases
and subjects)
Psychologists
Sociologists/social
workers
Lawyers
Policymakers
Politicians
Authors children's
(text)books
Philosophers

Website,
enquiries &
registration

<http://icpic.cmc-uct.co.za>



*International Council of Philosophical
Inquiry with Children*

16th Conference

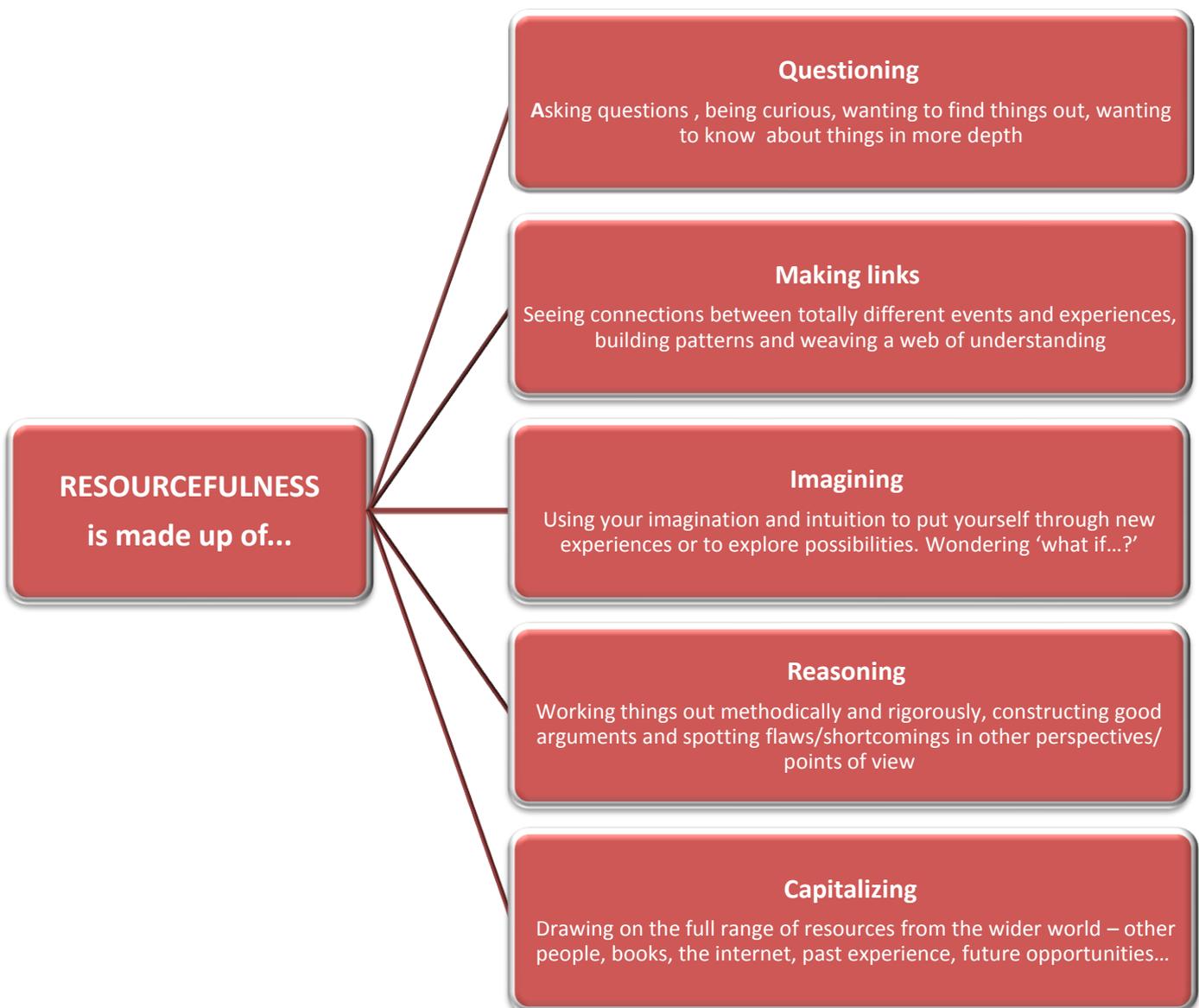
**Philosophy with Children
Critical Thinking
&
Enquiry-based Learning**

**30 Aug - 2 Sept
2013**

A LITTLE INSPIRATION...

*Do what you can, where you are,
with what you have.*

Teddy Roosevelt



Information obtained from the following website: <http://lp.taw.org.uk>

NEW CONTACT DETAILS FOR IACESA

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**IACESA MEMBERSHIP
ONCE-OFF REDUCED FEES
JUNE TO DECEMBER 2013**

IACESA is in the process of developing a revised membership renewal system that will be functional from January 2014. From 2014 renewal of membership will be during January and February of each year. If you renew your membership or join as a new member after these months you will have to pay the full membership fee but it will only be valid till the end of December of that year.

Membership for the rest of 2013 (till the end of December) will be at reduced fees:

- R700 for groups (of 5 members)
- R140 for individual members

This will be once off reduction in fees –

Make use of this opportunity to renew your membership or to become a member!

Benefits of belonging to IACESA include:

- Local, national and international conferences.
- Networking with experts in the field of cognitive education.
- Cognitive education interest groups focused on the latest research and applications in the field.
- Opportunities to explore ways of infusing cognitive education into the curriculum at all levels.
- Professional training programmes.
- Regular News Updates about cognitive education and the activities of members across South Africa and overseas.
- Practical cognitive education resources will be available on the IACESA website soon.