

**Evaluating the Effectiveness of Harcombe's Cognitive Approach to  
Literacy Instruction in Improving Literacy Learning in a South  
African University Training Setting**

By

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I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been  
submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

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Date

## **ABSTRACT**

Along with various contextual factors, the method of literacy instruction is recognised as one of the main reasons for low levels of literacy learning both locally and internationally. Harcombe's CATLI process is offered as an alternative literacy methodology, firstly since its constructivist, ecosystemic underpinnings endeavour to address as many contextual issues as is possible, and secondly, because the CATLI process attempts to address some of the gaps in other literacy instructional programmes. The current study aimed to evaluate the CATLI process as a viable alternative to traditional methods of literacy instruction. In addition, the study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of using the constructivist approach to train university students in the CATLI process. The sample comprised trainee learning support specialists and one parent per learner receiving the CATLI intervention at the community centre at a Johannesburg university in 2007. Quantitative and qualitative data obtained by means of questionnaires and extant records provided evidence that all learners showed improvement in literacy skills as well as general development, ascribing the effectiveness of the process to being underpinned soundly by social constructivism and associated theories. For the same reason, trainees considered their training sufficient.

## **KEYWORDS**

Cognitive; Collaboration; Constructivism; Ecosystemic; Learning Support; Literacy Learning; Methods of Literacy Instruction; Motivation; South African Context.

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