

**An action research study on the effects of
cooperative paired reading on learners
with special educational needs (LSEN)**

by

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TO HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE, GLORY AND HONOUR

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SUMMARY

Worldwide society at large has a long history of discriminating against the disabled. They were in many cases segregated because they were considered not to be able to cope in society. According to the medical model of disability disabled persons had to be segregated and treated in order to become as “normal” as possible. The segregation of the disabled was also practised in education. In South Africa many learners who were unable to cope with English as the medium were either placed in special education or dropped out of school. The problematic nature of segregation has led to the realisation of the need for a new paradigm to cater for these learners. The perception that learners who do not cope in the mainstream of education need to be excluded, has made way for a more humane perception of non-segregation and inclusion, where diversity is celebrated and where education is adapted to suit the needs of each individual. This view is in line with recent legislation in South Africa and many overseas countries which aims at protecting the rights of individuals and to fight discrimination. (The fact that certain learners such as the blind, deaf and ‘severely mentally retarded’ cannot at the moment be accommodated in the mainstream in a South African context is however recognised. Certain adaptations will first have to be made).

The challenge of implementing these principles in practice was met by introducing a cooperative paired reading programme for learners with special educational needs in inclusive education settings with the aim of assisting them in their understanding of English as the medium of instruction and therefore also to achieve growth in the realisation of their human potential. The role of metalearning and cooperative learning, where meaning is reconstructed through reading and is first shared with the self and then with others, has been found to be crucial in the process of achieving growth in the realisation of human potential. Through action research, including qualitative and quantitative research, it was found that cooperative paired reading can lead to growth in the realisation of the human potential of learners with special

educational needs in inclusive education settings, as measured in terms of cooperative and mega life skills, as well as reading.

KEY WORDS

- Inclusive education
- Achieving growth in the realisation of human potential
- Cooperative paired reading
- Metalearning
- Mega life skills
- Cooperative learning
- Learners with special educational needs
- Action research
- Special education
- Disabilities