

**THE ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT
OF LEARNERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT
IN TWO SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL CONTEXTS:
SPECIAL AND FULL-SERVICE INCLUSION SCHOOLS**

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SPECIAL AND FULL-SERVICE INCLUSION SCHOOLS

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Regrettably, the author/artist/creative mind behind this picture could not be traced, and could, therefore, not be cited.

***“... wat is die mens dan dat U aan hom dink,
die mensekind dat U na hom omsien?
U het hom net ‘n bietjie minder as ‘n hemelse wese gemaak
en hom met aansien en eer gekroon ...”
(Psalm 8:5,6)***

***“A person who doubts himself
is like a man who would enlist in the ranks of his enemies
and bear arms against himself.
He makes his failure certain
by himself being the first person to be convinced of it.”
(Dumas, in Ferreira, 1992:77)***

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SUMMARY

The Education White Paper 6 has set South Africa on the course for implementing a policy of inclusive education and participation in its schools. It is argued that an essential criterion to establish the congruency between the inclusive education and participation policy and its implementation is the academic self-concept (ASC) of learners. The ASC is influenced by context, thereby including all the systems which contribute to context, such as the education, school, class and social systems. As the product of different factors in various systems, the ASC may have significant diagnostic value in a school and class system. For this study, the ASC of learners with hearing impairment (HI), as an example of an impairment to be included in schools, was explored, involving two public school contexts: special and full-service inclusion schools.

The research design incorporated a multi- and mixed method design, as quantitative data, to measure, describe and analyse the nature of the ASC of learners with HI, was augmented with qualitative data, to further explore the nature of the relation between the ASC and HI, especially in respect of the dynamics of the ASC. The investigation entailed developing and administering ASC questionnaires to Grade Seven learners with and without HI in special and full-service inclusion schools, observing classroom interactions, conducting interviews with the principals, educators and learners with HI, and collecting background information on the learners with HI.

In answer to the main research question, *What is the ASC of Grade Seven learners with HI in the contexts of special and full-service inclusion schools?*, the data suggested that school context (full-service inclusion or special schools) did not play a primary role in influencing the ASC of learners with HI. The *first sub-question* related to the role HI plays in the ASC of Grade Seven learners in the two school contexts. The results suggested that HI greatly influenced the first language ASC (LASC) of the learners with HI in the special school and one of the full-service schools. HI did not seem to play a strong role in the mathematics ASC (MASC) of learners with HI, provided that there was adequate and effective support for the learners with HI. The *second sub-question* addressed the outcome(s) related to the ASC of Grade Seven learners with HI, which could be regarded as indicative of the successful conversion of primary schools to full-service inclusion schools. The results suggested that a general ASC (GASC) and LASC which are moderately lower than the GASC and LASC of the learners with no HI, and a MASC that is similar to the MASC of the learners with no HI, is acceptable. The *third sub-question* addressed guidelines to improve the conversion of primary schools to full-service inclusion schools. From the data, early identification of HI,

appropriate technical and early specialised learning support, and the accessibility and knowledge of educators appeared to contribute the most to the ASC of learners with HI. Understanding some of the functional and accidental limitations of the research places the findings and conclusions in perspective.

KEY WORDS

Academic self-concept (ASC)

Inclusive education and participation

Barriers to learning and participation (BLP)

Hearing impairment (HI)

Effective learning environments

Special schools

Full-service inclusion schools

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	augmentative and alternative communication
ASC	academic self-concept
ASCs	academic self-concepts
ASCQ	academic self-concept questionnaire
BFLPE	Big-fish-little-pond Effect
BLP	barriers to learning and participation
DEAFSA	Deaf Federation of South Africa
EASC	English academic self-concept
EASCs	English academic self-concepts
ENT	Ear, Nose and Throat
EWP 6	Education White Paper 6
FET	Further Education and Training
GASC	general academic self-concept
GASCs	general academic self-concepts
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
HI	hearing impairment
I/E	internal / external
L1	first language
LASC	first language academic self-concept (either Afrikaans or Sepedi)
LASCs	first language academic self-concepts (either Afrikaans or Sepedi)
MAM	mean of achievement marks across all learning areas
MASC	mathematics academic self-concept
MASCs	mathematics academic self-concepts
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
NCESS	National Committee for Education Support Services
OBE	outcomes-based education
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SHQ	Song and Hattie Questionnaire
SAT	Stanford Achievement Test
SASA	South African Schools Act
SDI	Self-Description Inventory
SBST	school-based support team
SGB	school governing body
SSPS	Self-concept Scale for Primary School Pupils
TASC	Total Scale