

PARENTS' CONSTRUCTIONS
OF THE ROLE OF THE HELPING PROFESSIONAL
IN LEARNING SUPPORT

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2006

**PARENTS' CONSTRUCTIONS
OF THE ROLE OF THE HELPING PROFESSIONAL
IN LEARNING SUPPORT**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS
(EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)

in the

**Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria**

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JULY 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks and appreciation is extended to the following people:

- ❖ Dr Salomé Human-Vogel for informatively encouraging and supporting my understanding in completing this study.
- ❖ Dr Carien Lubbe for her enthusiastic assistance and insights and with this mini-dissertation.
- ❖ My parents, Rachel and Walter. Their love and constant support of all that I have chosen to do in my life is deeply cherished.
- ❖ My brother, Carl, for giving the kind of love and support during my studies that only a brother can provide.
- ❖ My friends, for all their care, understanding and love whilst I completed this degree.
- ❖ The parents who assisted in my understanding of their thoughts, feelings and experiences of helping professionals and who so kindly participated in this research and contributed to its outcome.
- ❖ The staff members at the LSEN school that assisted with access to the parents involved in the study.
- ❖ Francis Cairney, an endless source of guiding inspiration.

DECLARATION

I, Lisa Zimmerman (9812347), hereby declare that all the resources that were consulted are acknowledged in the reference list and that this study, entitled “Parents’ constructions of the role of the helping professional in learning support”, is my original work.

L. Zimmerman

July 2006

SUMMARY

**PARENTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE
ROLE OF THE
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IN LEARNING SUPPORT**

By

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KEYWORDS

- Social constructionism
- Social representations
- Parents
- Helping professionals
- Parent-professional interaction
- Role expectations
- Modern, needs-based approaches
- Postmodern, strengths-based approaches
- Learning support
- Interactive Qualitative Analysis

Within the helping professions there are contrasting epistemological views regarding the role of the helping professional, which have direct influences on learning support practices. Despite these views, it remains unclear what parents expect when seeking learning support for their children. This qualitative study explored parents' constructions of the role of the helping professional in learning support. It specifically addressed parents' expectations of the helping professional, what they value in their interactions with helping professionals as well as their understandings of their own roles in consultation and intervention for learning support.

A case study approach was employed to gain access to participants. Specifically, three parents of children attending a school for Learners with Special Educational Needs [LSEN] were included as participants. These parents had had experiences with various helping professionals, both at the school and in private practice settings, in the course of seeking assistance for their children. It was thus thought that they would be able to provide in-depth perspectives as to their ideas of the role of helping professionals who assist children experiencing difficulties due to their exposure and experiences with helping professionals. Initial data collection was undertaken via semi-structured interviews with the participants. A content analysis of the interviews was subsequently employed to elicit affinities for use during a further modified form of Interactive Qualitative Analysis [IQA] with the contributors to the study. In total, fourteen affinities were generated and included *Parental expectations, Professional characteristics, The helping process, Parents' role, Status of the helping professional, Professional approach, Parents' personal experiences, Parents' emotions, Assessment, Recommendations, Stigma, a Team approach, parent-professional Interaction* and *Values*.

These affinity descriptions were corroborated and expanded on with the participants and the relationships amongst the affinities were then hypothesised by the participants themselves. A central outcome of the study was the research participants' social representations of helping professionals. These representations comprise the thematic elements representing the participants' discourse about the role of helping professionals in learning support and provide the participants' in-depth ideas of the relationships amongst these elements.

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