

**DEVELOPING INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL SCHOOL
READINESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN AND POSSIBLE
THERAPEUTIC USE THEREOF**

by

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Submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**MAGISTER ARTIUM
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY**

In the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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SEPTEMBER 2004

DECLARATION

I declare that this work: Developing indicators of emotional school readiness of South African children and possible therapeutic use thereof is my own work and that this work has not been submitted to any other University for any degree

Signature

Miss J Fauconnier

Date

DEVELOPING INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL SCHOOL
READINESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN AND POSSIBLE
THERAPEUTIC USE THEREOF

A thesis presented to the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria

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SUMMARY

The year 2002 saw the amendment of section 5(4) of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996. The amended Act now allows children of five years or younger to enter school. The entry of five year olds and younger into the school system left the researcher with the question: when is a child emotionally ready for school? The test and mediums currently used to determine school readiness do not place emphasis on the emotional aspects, although this plays an integral part in the child's scholastic success.

This scientific investigation was to determine the emotional development of children between the ages of four and seven years. The aim of this study was to determine which emotional aspects a child should have to be emotionally ready for school. These findings were discussed and information gathered through semi-structured interviews with grade 1 teachers. The teachers were a good source of practical and personal experience and observations on children who enter school. The information gathered from the literature study and interviews formed the basis for developing an emotional school readiness checklist and related programme that can be used to determine the emotional school readiness of a child entering grade 1.

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme that was designed was not in question, rather the aspects deemed necessary for a child to be emotionally ready for school and how therapy could be developed based on these aspects. Thus the inventory was not tested on a child, but was implemented in a case study to illustrate a therapeutic plan that could be designed based on the emotional school readiness checklist.

KEY TERMS

Grade 1 children

Developmental ages

Social and emotional development

Academic success

School readiness

School readiness tests

Emotional school readiness

Emotional intelligence

First grade teachers

Emotional school readiness checklist

Emotional school readiness programme

ONTWIKKELING VAN AANWYSERS VAN EMOSIONELE SKOOLGEREEDHEID
VIR SUID AFRIKAANSE KINDERS EN DIE MOONTLIKE TERAPEUTIESE
GEBRUIK DAARVAN

'n Verhandeling voorgelê aan die Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe aan die Universiteit
van Pretoria

deur

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GRAAD: Meesters in Sielkunde met spesialisering in Voorligting

DEPARTEMENT: Sielkunde

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OPSOMMING

Afdeling 5(4) van die Skolewet no 84 van 1996 is in 2002 gewysig. Die gewysigde wet dui tans aan dat kinders van vyf jaar oud tot graad 1 toegelaat mag word, maar dit laat die vraag of die kinders emosioneel gereed is vir skool. Die media en toets wat tans gebruik word om skoolgereedheid te bepaal plaas nie baie klem op die emosionele aspekte van skoolgereedheid nie alhoewel die emosionele aspekte 'n integrale deel van 'n kind se skolastiese sukses is.

Die studie fokus op die emosionele ontwikkeling van kinders tussen die ouderdomme van vier en sewe jaar. Die doelwit van die studie was om die aspekte te identifiseer wat bepaal of 'n kind emotioneel gereed is vir skool. Die inligting verkry uit die literatuurstudie en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met graad 1 onderwysers, sowel as die bevindinge in hierdie verband, word bespreek. Die inligting het die basis gevorm vir die ontwikkeling van 'n emosionele skoolgereedheid oorsiglys en verwante program wat aangewend kan word om die emosionele skoolgereedheid van kinders wat tot graad 1 toetree te bepaal. Die emosionele skoolgereedheid aanwysers vereis nog ondersoek en navorsing voordat dit geïmplementeer kan word.

Die fokus van die emosionele skoolgereedheid oorsiglys en verwante program val dus op die emosionele aspekte wat belangrik is in kinders wanneer hulle tot graad 1 toetree, sowel as die ontwikkeling van terapeutiese intervensie op grond van die emosionele skoolgereedheid aanwysers eerder as die oorsiglys en program as sodanig. Dus was die emosionele skoolgereedheid oorsiglys geïmplimenteer as 'n gevallestudie om die ontwikkeling van 'n terapeuties plan te illustreer.

Die fokus van die studie was dus op terapeutiese hulp wat 'n kind aangebied kan word wanneer sodanige kind nie emosioneel gereed is vir skool nie, gebaseer op die resultate van die emosionele skoolgereedheid oorsiglys.

SLEUTELTERME

Graad 1 kinders

Ontwikkelingsouderdomme

Emosionele- en sosiale ontwikkeling

Akademiese sukses

Skoolgereedheid

Skoolgereedheidstoetse

Emosionele skoolgereedheid

Emosionele intelligensie

Graad 1 onderwysers

Emosionele skoolgereedheid oorsiglys

Emosionele skoolgereedheid program

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to the following people for their contributions and support during this research:

- ? My parents, Con and Bev, who supported, encouraged and helped in every way a parent knows how. Thank you for laying a strong foundation for me to build on and reach this goal in my life.
- ? To Thinus, my husband-to-be, thank you for supporting me and being there throughout this experience.
- ? To my sisters, Anna-May, for reading my research and all the advice, and Celeste who supported me all the way from Stellenbosch.
- ? My supervisor, Mrs N Machete, for taking me under your wing when I was in need. Thank you for your knowledge, proficiency and guidance.
- ? To Prof LJ Jacobs, Queenie van Standen and the Centre for Child and Adult Guidance for allowing me to do practicals and my internship at the facility where this research idea started as well as your help and support.
- ? To all the teachers who participated in the research. Thank you for your participation, honesty and openness, especially Annette Benson.
- ? To Mrs Deirdré du Toit for her professional editing.
- ? To the University of Pretoria, especially the Psychology Department, for your part in my formation as a student and future psychologist.
- ? Most of all, thank you to my Heavenly Father without whom all of this will not be possible.

PRETORIA, September, 2004

The author

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1. CHAPTER ONE: EXPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH

“Cleverness is not the only test of whether a child is ready to start school – it is just as important that they are able to interact and fit in with other children.”

Jacobson, 2002.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of emotional school readiness of children entering grade 1. In modern life, it has become necessary to pay attention to the stimulation and development of the pre- and primary school child because increasing demands are made on the child in a formal school setting with regards to his/her holistic development and learning (De Witt, Rossouw, Le Roux, 1994). Pieterse (2001) believes that most attention is directed at the development of physical and intellectual skills, but it is important to emphasise that school readiness is not purely academic (Jacobson, 2002). Pieterse (2001) views social and emotional skills as very important and she further states that when children enter school, they should have healthy socialising and emotional skills. Social and emotional development can be regarded as the foundation of other kinds of development and hence are not just important, but necessary for school beginners, and these aspects do not just happen on its own and should never be left to chance (Kapp, 2001, p 189).

In 1999, the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 stated that a child would be able to enter school when the child was seven years old or turned seven in the year of admission. However, by the end of 2001 several parents took legal action against the education department to allow their children school entry before the age of seven (Cornelissen, 2002; Jacobson, 2002). Some of the reasons why parents wanted to have the age policy of seven years relaxed or overturned were documented by a variety of newspaper articles. A Cape Town father felt his daughter was too advanced for pre-school and was already bored. He asked: “Is she expected to continue bumbling along at pre-school?” (Lund, 1999). Another parent echoed these sentiments, saying that keeping her child back would “be a waste for her in mental

terms, and for me in financial terms” (Lund, 1999). Many pre-schools cost more than primary school, and some parents stated that their children were “bored” and needed stimulation. A mother, who wanted to register her five-year-old daughter in grade 1, was quoted by the *Cape Times* as saying her daughter was very mature, and if she was not admitted to grade 1, it would set her daughter back a year (Peer, 2002).

In 1999, the admission age for a child to grade 1 was seven years or the year in which the child turned seven. In 1999, former minister of education Kader Asmal was quoted as saying that “people are clutching at straws if they think they can enrol five-year-olds for grade 1” (Lund, 1999). Asmal said that in the interest of national good, the age policy was not negotiable or flexible. Although the government seemed unrelenting in its intention to enforce the age policy of seven years (Bayoli, 2001), two years later, at the end of 2001, it was reported that Asmal and the council of education ministers had agreed to temporarily amend the age policy while it was being reviewed (Makhanya, 2001). The South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 was subsequently revised and amended and the new regulations implemented in 2002. The new age requirement for entering grade 1 is defined as follows: “the admission age of a learner to a public school to grade 1 is age five turning six by 30 June in the year of admission” (section 5(4) of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996).

1.2 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

With the amendment of the Schools Act, children from age five and younger will be admitted to grade 1. The South African Constitution (section 29(1)) further protects all children’s right to schooling and thus a child cannot be withheld from entering school. The amendment of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 indicates that a child should effectively be entered into school when s/he is five years old turning six before 30 June of that year. The act has guidelines for entering a child younger than five into school. According to the Schools Act, “subject to the availability of suitable school places and other educational resources, the head of department may admit a learner who:

- (i) is under the age if good cause is shown
- (ii) complies with the criteria contemplated.” (Section 5(4) of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996).

The implication of the amended act is that a child can be sent to school at five years old or a younger age, but there are no criteria to keep a child out of school when the child is of school-going age. It could be concluded that if a child is of school-going age, s/he has to enter school whether the child is school ready or not. The Schools Act also states that “the physical, psychological and mental development of the child are taken into account” when determining if an underage child should attend school, but the emotional aspect, although part of the psychological aspects, is not highlighted as an aspect in its own right.

Before the amendment of the South African Schools Act, the age of seven years has served as the major criterion for school entry in South Africa. The advantage of the age cut-off of seven years was that younger children who might not have been ready for school did not find themselves in a formal school setting. Some five-year-olds might be intellectually ready for school, but it does not follow that they are emotionally ready; some children can perform academically, but if they are not emotionally ready, they have problems keeping up with their classmates (Cornelissen, 2002). The disadvantage of the age restriction of seven years was that some children who are school ready and able to cope in a formal school setting were not allowed to enter school before the age of seven.

Very (1979) believes that a child’s level of development determines school readiness, and not so much a child’s chronological age (as cited in Kapp, 2001). However, children younger than seven years might not be able to fulfil rigorous school requirements as well as their older counterparts, as the grade 1 school curriculum currently does not cater for children of different ages (Lewit & Schuurmann, 1995).

The current curriculum expects all children in a given grade to be at the same developmental level. Children however develop at different rates. Equally, because different schools have different requirements and curriculums, children who may be considered ready for some schools might be judged not ready for others (Lewit & Schuurmann, 1995).

There are currently no comprehensive tests in place to measure the emotional school readiness of South African children. One of the reasons for this is the lack of

consensus on what constitutes emotional school readiness and how to measure it (Lewit & Schuurmann, 1995). Most standardised tests used to assess school readiness lack a comprehensive emotional assessment of the child's school readiness and emotional intelligence. Emphasis is placed on the physical, perceptual, cognitive and language abilities of a child when administering a school readiness test, but the aspects of normative, social and emotional development do not enjoy as much attention (Lewit & Schuurmann, 1995). The University of Pretoria's Group Test for School Readiness developed by Le Roux in 1980, based on the Aptitude Test for School Readiness (ASB), is one such an example of a school readiness test. This test covers important aspects such as visual and auditory perceptions, spatial orientation, language and experience, fine and gross motor abilities, dominance and number concepts (Le Roux, 1980), but does not emphasise the emotional aspects of a child's development.

Two other examples of standardised tests widely used in South Africa to assess school readiness are the Aptitude Test for School Readiness (ASB) (Human Sciences Research Council, 1994) and the Junior South African Individual Scale (JSAIS) (Madge, 1984). The aim of the ASB is to obtain a differentiated image of certain of the aptitudes of the school beginner. The ASB can also be administered to children who are about to start school to assess the cognitive aspects of school readiness. The JSAIS (revised in 1994) was constructed to provide a profile of younger children's cognitive abilities and to provide a reasonable coverage of the intellectual skills essential for progress in the first year of primary school. Both tests consist of subtests assessing perception, numerical abilities, memory, co-ordination and vocabulary, among others (Human Sciences Research Council, 1994; Madge, 1984). Both tests thoroughly assess a child's cognitive and intellectual ability, but neither have emotional aspects as part of or as an individual subtest.

Academic school readiness can be determined by a number of school readiness tests available, but the main shortfall of these tests is that emotional aspects do not enjoy much attention if any at all. The researcher believes it important to develop emotional school readiness indicators that can be used to determine whether a child is emotionally ready for school. The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme that will be developed will be used to determine possible

emotional difficulties experienced by the child and can then be used as a possible indicator and starting point for therapeutic intervention.

1.3 EXPLORATION OF THE PROBLEM

It is important to be able to assess a child's emotional readiness, for emotional immaturity could interfere with the child's ability to function effectively. Increasing demands are made on the child in formal schooling, and it is only through experience that the child is able to maintain the pace (Zill, Collins, West & Hausken, 1995). These demands include a child's cognitive and intellectual ability and the child's ability to develop and use his/her intellectual talent, but demands are also placed on a child to develop moral, social and emotional appropriate behaviour and the child's perception of his/her social world (Wood, 1981).

Competency is defined by the Collins Concise Dictionary as "being able or capable" It is also defined as "suitable" and "sufficient" (Sinclair, 2001, p 302). Skills refer to "practiced ability" or "readiness" as well as "practical knowledge in combination with ability" (Sinclair, 2001, p 1409; Flower & Flower, 1979, p 776). In other words, emotional competency or skill refers to the child's abstract ability in social relationships or in handling social situations adequately, whether or not the child actually uses these abilities. Schneider (1993) proposes to define emotional competency or skill as "... the ability to implement developmentally-appropriate behaviour that enhances one's interpersonal relationship without causing harm ..." (p 18).

According to Schneider (1993), a child must be competent in many ways to function effectively. The concept of school readiness is based on the notion of competency and readiness for learning to a standard of physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development that enables children to fulfil school requirements and to assimilate a school's curriculum (Gale Research, 1998). However, as mentioned, there are tests available to determine a child's physical and intellectual school readiness, but there is a lack of tools for measuring the emotional school readiness of children, and the meaning of the available, but varying, data is often debated.

Van Niekerk (1986) believes that school readiness is concerned with the child's views and attitude to the demands of formal learning and is thus the result of education (as cited in Kapp, 2001). But the question is: what about the informal learning and socialising that a child is exposed to in class and on the playgrounds, when is a child ready for those kinds of interactions and when does a child have the skill or competency to participate optimally in these interactions? In South Africa, children from the age of five to seven years old will be together in a class setting (the result of changes to the act between 1999 and 2002 on the age of enrolment); it is therefore imperative to assess the maturity of a child's emotional functioning.

Most parents are unwilling to accept that their children are not ready for school or for other areas of life, but this is not the main issue. What should be kept in mind is the emotional gap between children of different ages all put together in the first class of school. Emotionally, a child of five years differs from a seven-year-old, and this could affect not only the younger child, but the class environment as well. For instance, a five-year-old child is still very dependent on family security, and fear of the unexpected or unfamiliar is prominent; the child could get anxious when left alone or separated from parents (Kapp, 2001). According to Schneider (1993), a child who experiences anxiety could be unable to translate knowledge of forming social bonds into practice. Furthermore, Cohen and Rudolph (1977, as cited in Kapp, 2001) state that the five-year-old child shows little tact or diplomacy in his/her associations with others, while a seven-year-old child begins to move away from the security of the family and acts more independently.

These differences in emotional and social aspects of children might influence a class where a five-year-old demands more attention from a teacher and takes up the time of the teacher and the class (Kapp, 2001).

The *Cape Argus* (Lund, 1999) quoted Silus Nawa, as saying:

Research had proved most children were school ready the year they turn seven. Our system has been carrying vast numbers of under-aged pupils who are not school ready and

end up repeating grade 1. This is a waste of manpower and resources.

Another article from the *Cape Argus* stated that, in South Africa, 70% of five-year-olds failed their first year (Lund, 1999). According to Garbers (1966) and Joubert (1984), “many children (20% to 30%) who enter school are not ready for school” (as cited in Van Eeden, Robinson & Posthumus, 1994, p 50). The deputy director-general in the National Department of Education believes that “parents are not doing their children a favour by putting them in school if they can’t cope with the emotional and social demands” (Jacobson, 2002).

Johnson and Mykleburst (1967, as cited in Kapp, 2001, p 186) believe it is necessary “to adopt a diversified concept of readiness, not only readiness for school subjects, but for a level of self-control and responsibility ... readiness is a concept to be viewed from many standpoints”.

1.4 FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Social and emotional school readiness is essential for young children’s early school success (Lang, Jackim & McGregor, 2000). A child’s emotional school readiness must be determined because it could affect the child’s academic performance and self-esteem. Much emphasis is placed on scholastic performance – a child who is not emotionally ready to cope with the demands of school could be negatively affected (De Witt, Rossouw & le Roux, 1994). By developing and implementing a list of criteria for emotional school readiness, the child’s emotional readiness for school could be determined with greater certainty. The current South African Schools Act states that a child should enter school at the age of five, but at that age the child might not be emotionally ready for school. The law provides regulations that can be followed if a child of a younger age is to enter school, but no provision exists for delaying school attendance. This means that a child has to attend school regardless of any emotional difficulties. The emotional school readiness indicators that will be designed will help identify the emotional areas with which a child might have difficulty, and can be used as a starting point for therapeutic intervention to help the child develop optimally.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.5.1 General statement of the problem

The amended South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 allows children to enter school from the age of five. The researcher became aware of a need to assess the emotional school readiness of children to be able to set up a therapeutic intervention if the child is not emotionally ready to enter grade 1 but is in a formal school setting.

1.5.2 Specific statement of the problem

A reflection on the researcher's awareness brought about specific questions:

- ? What is emotional school readiness?
- ? How do children between the ages of four and seven differ emotionally?
- ? Which aspects of emotional development are important when entering school?
- ? How do teachers define and understand emotional school readiness?
- ? Why is it important for a child to be emotionally ready for school?
- ? What are the effects of emotional school readiness in the school environment?
- ? How can the emotional school readiness of a child be assessed?
- ? How can the assessment of a child's emotional school readiness be used to help a child with possible emotional problems?
- ? How will a therapeutic plan be set up?

1.6 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

1.6.1 General aims

The general aim of this research is to study the emotional school readiness of South African children. The focus will be on:

- ? The differences in emotional development of children between the ages of four and seven years.
- ? Existing literature on school readiness, focusing on emotional school readiness.

1.6.2 Specific aims

The purpose of this study is threefold:

- ? To identify specific emotional factors that will be important for a child to have developed when entering school.
- ? To design an emotional school readiness checklist and related programme to assess the child's emotional school readiness.
- ? To use the emotional school readiness checklist as indicator and to identify a starting point for therapeutic intervention.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will be conducted as follows:

1.7.1 Literature study

A literature study will be conducted to:

- ? Investigate the phenomenon of school readiness in general as well as emotional school readiness.
- ? Explore the different emotional stages of children between the ages of four and seven years.
- ? Explore various theories of emotional school readiness.
- ? Explore the effects of emotional school readiness in the pre- and primary school child.
- ? Explore the effects of lack of emotional school readiness in the class situation.
- ? Compile a list of emotional school readiness factors.
- ? Create an emotional school readiness checklist.
- ? Rework the data of the literature study, interviews and checklist into an emotional school readiness programme to determine emotional school readiness.
- ? Use the emotional school readiness checklist to implement a plan for therapeutic intervention.

1.7.2 Data collection

1.7.2.1 Selection of survey population

The survey population will consist of randomly-chosen grade 1 teachers who are currently employed full time at a school and have more than two years of teaching experience – professional people who work with children daily and specialise in grade 1 children. This random population will be able to draw on practical experience and offer insight into factors they regard as relevant to emotional school readiness.

1.7.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews will elicit information from grade 1 teachers. A basic schedule (Merriam, 1998) consisting of questions will be prepared to ensure relevant topics are covered. The main thrust of the interviews is to gain understanding of the teachers' experiences and of the meaning they give to the phenomenon of emotional school readiness (Berg, 2001).

1.7.2.3 Schedule questions

The aim of semi-structured interviews is to keep focus on the research problem, maintain momentum and get closure on questions (Groups Plus, 2002). The questions will address the relevant research topic. (McNamara, 1999).

1.7.3 Data analysis

Data analysis will be made up of three basic sub-processes:

- Data reduction including organisation and perusal
- Data display and classification
- Conclusion drawing, verification and synthesis

(Berg, 2001; Humberman & Miles as cited in De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurink, 1998; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

1.7.3.1 Data reduction

According to Berg (2001), data reduction transforms the raw data to make it more readily accessible and understandable and to draw out various themes and patterns. The reduction of data will be based on the transcripts of the recorded interviews. The focus of the reduction will be on identifying themes (Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Schaw, 1998).

1.7.3.2 Data display

The reduction of data allows for the display of “organised, concise assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing...” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurink, 1998, p 340).

1.7.3.3 Conclusion drawing and verification

“Conclusion drawing involves making interpretations and drawing meaning from the displayed data” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurink, 1998, p 340). From the transcripts, a master list of themes will be produced that should be ordered and coherent (Smith, Harré & Langenhoven, 1995).

1.7.4 Implementation of the research findings

The themes and conclusions drawn from the interviews will be combined with the findings of the literature study. These findings will be compiled into an emotional school readiness checklist and related programme to determine emotional school readiness. The emotional school readiness checklist will be implemented on a case study, after which it will be used to develop therapeutic intervention.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.8.1 The child

In the study, 'the child' will refer to children, both male and female, between the ages of four and seven years.

1.8.2 School readiness

The level of development at which a child is ready to undertake the learning of specific materials (Kapp, 2001).

1.8.3 Emotional school readiness

Emotional school readiness refers to the child's ability to cope emotionally with the formal, normative, academic and social demands placed on a child in a school setting (Wentzel, 1996). The definition of emotional school readiness differs in its naming, but correlates in its understanding and concepts. Emotional school readiness can also be referred to as emotional intelligence, emotional maturity, social competency, as well as emotional stability. For the purpose of this study, the term emotional school readiness will be used, and the term will include all the definitions mentioned.

1.8.3.1 Emotional intelligence

The ability of a child to understand, interpret and verbalise his/her own and other's emotions. It is the emotional skills to help cope with environmental demands (Goleman, 1996).

1.8.3.2 Emotional maturity

Refers to emotional reactivity considered appropriate and normal. It also refers to self-control and ability to repress extreme emotional reactions (Reber & Reber, 2001).

1.8.3.3 Social competency

The ability to understand the social message sent by others (Schneider, 1993).

1.8.3.4 Emotional stability

A person whose emotional reactions are appropriate for the situation and consistent from one set of circumstances to the next (Reber & Reber, 2001).

1.8.4 South African Schools Act

Refers to the law stating the age admission for a learner to enter grade 1. The current amended law (section 5(4) no 84 of 1996) states that a child is able to enter school at the age of five, turning six by 30 June in the year of admission.

1.8.5 Emotional school readiness checklist

The emotional school readiness checklist that will be developed is to determine a child's emotional school readiness. The questions will be based on the findings from the literature study and themes identified from the interviews. This checklist should be completed by a teacher and parent or caregiver of a child. Collaboration between the teacher and parents are important and is recommended when assessing a child's emotional school readiness.

1.8.6 Emotional school readiness programme

The emotional school readiness programme will be based on the same themes identified in the emotional school readiness checklist. The emotional school readiness programme is thus an extension of the emotional school readiness checklist and therefore the emotional school readiness programme will also be referred to as the *related* programme when necessary. The emotional school readiness programme can be used by a professional person to identify possible emotional difficulties a child might have in conjunction with the emotional school readiness checklist.

1.8.7. Status of emotional school readiness checklist and related programme

Throughout the study it is important to keep in mind that both the emotional school readiness checklist and programme should be viewed as being in its developmental phase and that the reliability and validity of the checklist and related programme will not be tested and thus cannot yet be guaranteed.

1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The research is set out as follows:

Chapter one gives an exposition of the problem. It states how the researcher became aware of, explored and formulated the problem and outlines the aims of the research.

Chapter two consists of a study of the literature to investigate the emotional development of children of different ages as well as theories pertaining to emotional readiness. The chapter will also include data on what emotional aspects a child should possess before entering grade 1.

Chapter three consists of qualitative research of the phenomenon of emotional school readiness by means of interviews. The data analysis and findings will be discussed. Themes will be identified and developed.

Chapter four develops an emotional school readiness checklist and related programme based on the literature study and interviews that could be used in the development of therapeutic intervention.

Chapter five illustrates the function of the emotional school readiness checklist by means of a case study. The checklist will also be used to plan therapeutic intervention.

Chapter six offers the conclusions, recommendations and inferences that can be drawn from the findings of this investigation.

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE STUDY

“... children should be left to ripen as a piece of fruit on a tree so the natural and lovely character within the child would flower ...”

Rossouw, 1762

(Seefeldt and Barbour, 1986)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The question that needs to be answered is: when is a child, regardless of age, emotionally ready for school? South African law currently states that a child is allowed to be admitted to grade 1 if that child is five, turning six before 30 June in the year of admission (section 5(4) of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996).

Kruger (2002) states that school attendance is considered compulsory, but this does not guarantee scholastic success. With compulsory education in South Africa, an increase in the number of school beginners can be expected, together with the probability of large gaps in their readiness for school (Heckroodt, 1994). Pre-grade teachers, states that if a child has to go to school according to the age policy, it is important to determine if a child shows emotional “unreadiness” and that pre-school teachers are not allowed to keep a child back for a year in grade 0 once that child is old enough for school (Collective Media, 2001). This presents a problem to the child who is not emotionally ready for school but finds him/herself in a school setting. It is therefore important to identify the emotional problems a grade 1 child might have.

Hanekom and Robinson (1991) highlight that it is the right of every child to have educational opportunities that will be as favourable as possible for the child's positive development. If a child enters the formal school setting without being emotionally school ready, there may be negative implications for the child's adjustment to school and the child's self-concept. Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg (1977) agree that if a child is not emotionally ready for school it could affect other aspects of the child's functioning. Spitzberg and Cupach (1989) describe a child who is not emotionally

ready for school as “trying to climb a greased pole” (as cited in Schneider, 1993, p 18). Pretorius (1993) states that total school readiness, including emotional readiness is an important prerequisite for success in school.

2.1.1 School readiness

Wentzel (1996) states that there are as many opinions about school readiness as there are people. It was found that the information, although correlating in some areas, does differ in opinions on when a child is ready for school. Kagan (as cited in Crnic & Lamberty, 1992) notes that readiness has been poorly defined and is subject to various interpretations, creating conflict and confusion. The latter writer further suggests that school readiness, as currently understood, is limited with questionable value. Lewit and Schuurmann (1995) believe the concept of ‘readiness’ is poorly defined and is interpreted differently in different contexts.

According to Joubert (1984) and Ramphal (1972), school readiness can be described as:

... the degree of development the child has achieved, partly as a result of the normal developmental process and partly as a result of the learning process ... it is the stage of general development when the child is able to comply with the demands of the school situation without difficulty. (as cited in van Eeden, Robinson & Posthumus, 1994, p 49).

The writers also emphasise the importance of the child’s caregivers and parents in the process of development (van Eeden, Robinson & Posthumus, 1994).

Pieterse (2001) states that school readiness implies that a child is ready to tackle a school career with a reasonable measure of success. To van Niekerk (as cited in Kapp, 2001, p 186), school readiness is “concerned with the child’s views and attitude to the formal learning demands”.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS

There are many opinions about emotional school readiness as well as its naming. Writers like Reber and Reber (2001) refer to emotional stability or maturity that indicates appropriate emotional behaviour in given situations. Schneider (1993) refers to social competency, indicating understanding of emotions and Pieterse (2001) refers to emotional intelligence. These aspects of emotional readiness focus mainly on the child's emotional ability and interpretations whereas emotional school readiness refers to more than just emotions; it includes independence, confidence, self-esteem, responsibility and social skills (Benson, 2002).

Marilyn Petersen emphasises that scholastic readiness does not equate to school readiness and that a school readiness test confirms that a child is able to cope with structure and formal education (Monday Paper, 2001). She states that school readiness includes all spheres of the child's development: intellectual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual (Monday Paper, 2001). Petersen defines emotional development as the ability of a child to handle emotions, which arise in different situations, as well as the child's ability to cope with his/her environment. Petersen also states that some of the areas of development a child needs to master if the child is to be seen as school ready include motor, perceptual, intellectual, language, artistic, social, spiritual and emotional development (Monday Paper, 2001).

The Children's Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network (FAN), based in the United States is an international group of public and private agencies and foundations interested in issues of child development and public policy, indicates that social and emotional school readiness is essential for young children's early school success. FAN states that:

... social and emotional school readiness is demonstrated by confidence, friendliness, good peer relationships, and the ability to tackle and persist at challenging tasks, good language development and other factors. Children who enter school without these characteristics are less likely to

be successful during the early years of school, which may create social and academic problems later in life (Lang, Jackim & McGregor, 2000, p 4).

Hofmeyer (1989) defines a child who is emotionally ready for school as an individual who can leave his/her mother and familiar surroundings to explore the unknown. This child will feel safe in the new school environment and will show self-confidence and a willingness to participate in new activities. Nel (1994) describes this phenomenon of emotional school readiness as a child experiencing a feeling of belonging, safety, trust, love and acceptance. The writer further postulates that these feelings of safety, encouraged by parents and teachers, will establish confidence and a willingness to explore in the child, as well as emotional stability.

Cronjé (as cited in Pretorius 1993, p 78) states that:

... emotional maturity is dependent upon how a child feels about himself. A youngster who cannot be away from home for short periods will have much more difficulty developing adequate readiness skills. The child should show a willingness to learn and excel.

Schneider's (1993) repetition of this phenomenon refers to emotional competence. He defines this term as "the ability to implement developmentally-appropriate behaviour that enhances interpersonal relationships without causing harm" (p 19).

Martie Pieterse's book was written for parents and teachers as a practical guide to help the teacher and parents assist the child in his development. Pieterse (2001) states that there are many unique demands made on a child who starts school and she lists a few examples of what will be expected of a child ready for school.

The child will have to:

- ? Get use to being separated form parents and home.
- ? Be able to relate and communicate with peers and strangers and be able to express his/her needs and feelings in words.

- ? Have reasonably well developed self-confidence so that the child will be able to assert him/herself and be able to hold his own in a group as well as handle criticism and conflict from individuals and a group.
- ? Be able to work quietly and calmly without constantly needing praise and be able to work on his/her own. The child should also be able to concentrate and complete tasks (Pieterse, 2001, p 129).

Professor Mervyn Skuy commented to the *Star* newspaper that a child is not school ready if the child is not ready for organised group activities, if the child does not interact with others and if the child is not task-orientated and cannot concentrate on the task at hand. Professor Skuy also stated that the sign of emotional school readiness is when “a child shows receptivity to learn and has the ability to handle tasks without the child’s mind wandering” (Kalideen, 2002).

Wentzel (1996) describes school readiness as a process and not an event. She believes a normal and healthy development will enable a child to be ready for school at the appropriate age. To Wentzel, normal, healthy development includes all aspects of development, namely social-emotional, biological, perceptual and intellectual development. Du Toit (1996) echoes these aspects but includes mental age, moral development and religion as respective aspects of emotional school readiness.

Swart (as cited in van Eeden, Robinson & Posthumus, 1994) believes as soon as a child is ready for school, s/he exhibits a positive orientation towards school. This means that “the child can easily, effectively and without emotional upheaval benefit from formal education” (p 49).

2.3 INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The phenomenon of emotional school readiness is not only being debated in South Africa, but worldwide. One of the studies was conducted by Zero to Three: National centre for infants, toddlers and families situated in Washington DC (USA). The study *Heart Start Report: the emotional foundations of school readiness* was published in 1992 (Zero to Three, 2002). According to the Zero to Three centre, it was one of the first documents to look at the characteristics that children develop which enable them

to be prepared for school and be driven to learn and work well with others. The study emphasises that to succeed in school, children require a specific set of social and emotional characteristics (Zero to Three, 2002). The characteristics described by the Heart *Start* study are:

Confidence – A sense of control and mastery of one's body, behaviour and world.

Curiosity – The sense that finding out about things is positive and leads to pleasure.

Intentionality – The wish and capacity to have an impact, and to act upon that with persistence. This is clearly related to a sense of competence, of being effective.

Self-control – The ability to modulate and control one's own actions in age-appropriate ways.

Relatedness – The ability to engage with others based on the sense of being understood by and understanding others.

Capacity to communicate – The wish and ability to verbally exchange ideas, feelings and concepts with others.

Cooperativeness – The ability to balance one's own needs with those of others in a group activity (Zero to Three, 2002).

According to the Zero to Three centre, these social and emotional characteristics equip children with a "school literacy" more basic than knowledge of numbers and letters. It is these characteristics that are most closely associated with school success and they indicate that there is much more to school readiness than a child's IQ. The *Heart Start* report was honoured by the United Nations in 1994 for contributing "to the protection of the world's greatest resource – our children" (Zero to Three, 2002, p 1).

Another well-researched and referenced study conducted by Early Childhood Research and Practice (ECRP) in the autumn of 2000 focused on *Readiness for school: a survey of state policies and definitions* (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000). The study was supported by the US office of educational research and improvement as well as the US department of education. The study was conducted on a nationwide scale in the United States of America and included all 50 states.

The researchers of the study state that understanding the condition of children as they enter school can help parents and teachers understand children's performance in their school career. The information will be essential for individualising the curriculum to help children learn more effectively. The study found that when children are five-years-old, they vary greatly in their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. According to the writers, the national Goals Panel established five dimensions that contribute to children's success in school (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000). These dimensions are:

- ? Health and physical development
- ? Emotional well-being and social competence
- ? Approaches to learning
- ? Communicative skills
- ? Cognition and general knowledge (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000).

The writers found that although US researchers, educators and policy makers agree that these dimensions are essential elements of school readiness, the question of how to measure these domains remains unanswered. They found that assessing pre-school children is challenging, for their development is rapid and uneven. The demands for standard methods to document children's school readiness have become increasingly stronger, despite the difficulties in assessing young children. States have been left to develop their own frameworks, with guidelines provided by the National Education Goals panel (NAEYC) and other national efforts. The study found that most states had made efforts to move away from formal readiness testing (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000).

The study concludes that school readiness continues to be a "hot topic" among early educators and policy makers across the United States (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000). It seems there has been a reluctance to define school readiness and pursue assessment of young children on a broad basis. The reason for this is that assessing young children is theoretically, psychometrically, and logistically difficult (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000).

Saluja, Scott-Little and Clifford (2000) find it hard to believe that we cannot indicate in some way how well prepared children are as they come to school.

Data on the condition of children as they arrive at school are important in interpreting later accountability measures. Such data are also helpful in understanding how well early childhood services perform in raising the developmental level of young children prior to entry into school. Finally, it seems logical that schools should be able to use data on the condition of children entering school to help design and implement educational programmes for these children (Saluja, Scott-Little & Clifford, 2000).

2.4 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

2.4.1 Definitions of emotional intelligence

The question that might arise is why is emotional intelligence important? According to Segal (1997), Stein and Book (2001), for a person to take advantage of and shape cognitive intelligence to the maximum, emotional intelligence is necessary. For regardless how intelligent a person may be, if a person cannot function in a social setting and if the person is abrasive and caves under minimal stress, others will not want to be around to notice the person's high IQ (Stein & Book, 2001).

According to Bar-On (1997, as cited in Sternberg, 2000, p 402), intelligence describes the aggregate of “abilities, competencies and skills that represents a collection of knowledge” used to cope with life effectively. The adjective emotional is employed to “emphasise that this is a specific type of intelligence...”.

Emotional intelligence is based on interaction with people in the child's life such as parents, family and teachers (Clarke-Stewart & Friedman, 1987).

In early writings by Gardner (1983 as cited in Schutte & Malouff 1999), Gardner did not use the term emotional intelligence but rather referred to intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. He refers to intrapersonal intelligence as the ability to know one's own emotions where as interpersonal intelligence refers to understanding other's motivations, emotions and intentions. Azerrad (1997) believes that recognising emotions in others enables the person to interact productively with others. According to Parks (1994 as cited in Schutte & Malouff 1999), productive interaction includes maintaining conversation, reaching solutions that are mutually

satisfying and enabling others to feel good about themselves. Reaching mutual solutions is also included.

Other writers refer to emotional intelligence as the ability to interpret your own and other's feelings correctly and act in an appropriate way to enable a person to communicate and have relationships on an emotional level (De Klerk & Le Roux, 2003; Goleman, 1996). Stein and Book (2001) refer to emotional intelligence as a set of skills that enables a person to make his/her way in a complex world. The writers simplify it by referring to being a person whom others want to be around. Emotional intelligence can be seen as a lifeline. It connects a person to self-preservation and self-awareness and these connect a person to oneself and others. The basis of emotional intelligence is to build loving and lasting relationships with others (Segal, 1997). Goleman (1995) believes the basic lesson for a child in emotional intelligence should be to be able to distinguish feelings.

2.4.2 Most prominent theorists

The most prominent theorists of emotional intelligence include John Mayer, Peter Salovey, Daniel Goleman and Reuven Bar-On (Schutte & Malouff, 1999; Stein & Book, 2001; Sternberg, 2000).

Mayer and Salovey (1990) first used the term emotional intelligence and they postulated that emotional intelligence consists of appraisal and expression of emotion as well as regulation and utilisation of emotions in solving problems and decision making (Schutte & Malouff, 1999). Mayer and Salovey (1997 as cited in Sternberg, 2000) refer to emotional intelligence as the set of abilities that accounts for how people's emotional perception and understanding vary in their accuracy. More formally, emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to perceive and express emotion as well as understand and reason with emotion. Regulation of emotions is also important (Sternberg, 2000).

Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (1995) generated a flood of interest in the role that emotional intelligence plays in people's lives (as cited in Sternberg, 2000). Goleman (1995) refers to emotional

intelligence as abilities or skills such as self-control, zeal, persistence and the ability to motivate oneself that influence a child's ability to succeed.

Reuven Bar-On (1944) defines emotional intelligence as an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influences a child's ability to cope with demands and pressures of the environment. Bar-On developed an instrument to determine a person's emotional intelligence. The test is referred to as the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) (Stein & Book, 2001). Bar-On's theory of emotional intelligence consists of five areas or realms and 15 sub-sections.

2.4.3 Major areas of skill and specific examples of emotional intelligence

As mentioned, Bar-On's theory consists of five areas:

The intrapersonal realm of emotional intelligence determines how in touch a person is with his/her feelings and how the person feels about him/herself. Success in this area is the ability to express emotions, live and work independently and have confidence in expressing ideas and beliefs. The intrapersonal realm embraces the following:

Assertiveness – the ability to stand your ground, defend a position and clearly express thoughts and feelings.

Emotional self-awareness – the ability to recognise and understand your feelings to be able to know why and what you are feeling.

Independence – the ability to be self-directed and self-controlled in your thinking and actions.

Self-regard – the ability to appreciate your perceived positive aspects and possibilities as well as to accept negative aspects and limitations and still feel good about yourself.

Self-actualisation – the ability to realise your potential capacities.

(Stein & Book, 2001; Sternberg, 2000).

The interpersonal realm of emotional intelligence is concerned with 'people skills' (Stein & Book, 2001). It is the ability to understand, interact with and relate well with others in a variety of situations. The interpersonal realm consists of:

Empathy – the ability to be aware of, to understand and to appreciate the feelings and thoughts of others.

Social responsibility – means to demonstrate that the person is a cooperative, contributing and constructive member of a social group.

(Schutte & Malouff, 1999; Stein & Book, 2001).

The adaptability realm or scale of emotional intelligence defined by Bar-On refers to the child's ability to respond to a range of situations by achieving success in:

Problem solving – is multiphasic in nature and could briefly be discussed as stating or identifying the problem, generating and evaluating alternatives, choosing the best option or alternative and implementing the solution.

Reality testing – is the ability to assess the correspondence between what is experienced and what objectively exists.

Flexibility – is the ability to adjust emotions, thoughts and behaviour to changing situations and conditions.

(Schutte & Malouff, 1999; Stein & Book, 2001; Sternberg, 2000).

The realm of stress management in emotional intelligence is concerned with the ability to withstand stress without falling apart, losing control or going under. To achieve success, a person needs to show:

Stress tolerance – includes suitable responses to stressful situations by having the capacity to be relaxed, calm and composed when faced with difficulties and not reacting with strong emotions.

Impulse control – is the ability to control and delay an impulse, drive, desire or temptation.

(Schutte & Malouff, 1999; Stein & Book, 2001; Sternberg, 2000).

The general mood realm of emotional intelligence defined by Bar-On is concerned with the outlook on life and the person's overall feelings of contentment or dissatisfaction. The feeling of contentment can be achieved by:

Happiness – the ability to feel satisfied with life, to enjoy yourself and others and have fun.

Optimism – is the ability to look at the brighter side of life and maintain a positive attitude even in the face of adversity

(Schutte & Malouff, 1999; Stein & Book, 2001; Sternberg, 2000).

Mayer and Salovey's (1997 as cited in Sternberg, 2000) view on emotional intelligence and the skills required to be emotionally intelligent include:

Expression of emotion - that refers to identifying and expressing emotions.

Assimilating emotion - in thought, specifically emotions generated as aids to judgement and memory as well as understanding and analysing emotion.

Ability to label emotions - includes the ability to understand relationships associated with shifts of emotion and reflective regulation of emotion.

Ability to stay open to feelings - includes the ability to monitor and regulate emotions reflectively to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Sternberg, 2000).

Goleman (1995) refers to five major areas of skills needed for emotional intelligence. These are:

Knowing one's emotions – referring to recognising a feeling as it happens, monitoring feelings from moment to moment.

Management of emotions – refers to handling feelings so they are appropriate. The ability to soothe oneself and to shake off rampant anxiety, gloom or irritability.

Motivating oneself – includes marshalling emotions in the service of a goal and delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness.

Recognising emotions – in others refers to empathic awareness and being attuned to what others need or want.

Handling relationships – includes skills in managing emotions in others and interacting smoothly with others (Goleman, 1995 & Sternberg, 2000).

2.4.4 Other perspectives of emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence includes problem solving, where the child has the ability to solve his/her own problems, and being able to make his/her own decisions (Schneider, 1993). The child should be able to recognise and acknowledge different emotions and act accordingly (Pieterse, 2001), and children should be able to talk about their emotions (De Witt & Booysen, 1994). Respect is a part of emotional intelligence where the child should be able to think not only of him/herself, but of others as well (Baron & Byrne, 1997). The child should be able to show respect and consideration towards others, as well as empathy (Schneider, 1993). Emotional intelligence also includes the ability of a child to hold his/her own in a group of children of the same age (Thompson & Rudolph, 2000). Emotional intelligence is the ability of a child to read other people's emotions and be in touch with his/her own emotions. The child must be able to adjust his/her behaviour and attitudes to different circumstances, and self-confidence also comes into play (Kapp, 2001).

With school readiness, intellectual ability (IQ) is not just based on academic performance but also on the child's emotional ability. Some writers such as Pieterse believe that emotional intelligence is the "most important requirement for success" (Pieterse, 2001, p 104).

2.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical approach that will be discussed is the social developmental theory of Erik Homburger Erikson (1902-1994). Erikson believes that a healthy personality "actively masters" the environment, shows a certain "unity of personality" and is able to perceive the world and self "correctly" (Erikson, 1968, as cited in Thomas, 2000, p 145). In Erikson's system, ego identity has two aspects. The first or inner-focused aspect is the person's recognition and acceptance of oneself. The second or outer-focused aspect is the individual's recognition of "some kind of essential character

with others” (Erikson, 1959, as cited in Thomas, 2000, p 145). A person who has attained ego identity has a clear picture and acceptance of both inner essence and the group culture in which the person lives.

The term epigenetic principle (Plug, Meyer, Louw & Gouws, 1993) refers to the belief that growth is governed by a pre-set constructed plan. Erikson extended the principle to social and psychological growth as well, proposing that personality develops according to steps “pre-determined in the human organism’s readiness to be driven towards, to be aware of, and to interact with a widening radius of significant individuals and institutions” (Erikson, 1968, as cited in Thomas, 2000, p 146). The sequence Erikson refers to allows the child to interact with people and institutions the child comes across in a particular culture.

Erikson believes the interaction of the individual with the social environment produces a series of eight major psychological crises or stages the individual must work through to achieve psychological health (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998). Each stage is phrased as a struggle between two opposite conflicting personality characteristics. The particular stage or crisis the child faces at a give time is worked out through interaction with people or the social setting. It is important for a child to work through every stage effectively to be able to develop ego identity (Kritt, 1992) and psychological health. For a child to develop in a normal pattern of behaviour, the positive attribute of the stage needs to be satisfied at the critical period before the next stage is developed (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986).

The successful completion of each stage or crisis as outlined by Erikson is determined by the child and his/her interactions with others and Erikson stresses that if a stage is not successfully completed, the child may develop later or consequently never (Thomson, 2000). Seefeldt and Barbour (1986, p 34) also believe that hastening the process of development would be undesirable and detrimental to the child, and that children’s outward behaviour indicates readiness. It is thus important for parents and teacher to successfully help a child through these stages of life.

The different stages or crises defined by Erikson are divided into different age groups. For the purpose of this study, only two stages will be discussed as they pertain to the age group focused on in this study.

2.5.1 Initiative versus guilt

This stage, which lasts from approximately three to six years, is where the child's imagination expands to encompass so many things that the child cannot avoid being frightened about what was thought or dreamt up. Nevertheless, the child must emerge with a sense of "unbroken initiative" as a basis for a high and yet realistic sense of ambition and independence (Erikson, 1959, as cited in Thomas, 2000, p 150). At this stage, the child is able to undertake and plan activities and do them in cooperation with other children (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986).

To navigate through this period successfully, the child needs "the guidance of parents and teachers" (Thomas, 2000, p 150). If the adults in the child's life do not offer proper regulations, the child may undertake more than what s/he can achieve at this stage, and this could develop into a sense of guilt or failure (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986). Thus, the proper guidance the child receives from parents, teacher and society allows for a balanced development that leads to integration or to "purpose" (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998, p 53). This is characterised by the child's ability to strive for goals purposefully and confidently, and pursue life in a self-confident way without guilt affecting the child's development (Ault, 1980).

2.5.2 Industry versus inferiority

From the age of approximately six to seven years, children want to get busy with activities worth their attention and to pursue these activities with peers. At this stage, children become producers of things and users of "tools", not least being reading, writing and mathematics (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986). In Erikson's opinion, children during the elementary school years want to do something worthwhile (Thomas, 2000). Children become socially skilled as they work beside and with other children (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986). The child aims at mastering certain skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics, required for adult life and society helps the child by

providing schooling. However, if the child has not solved conflict in the previous stage or if family life has not prepared the child well for school life, a sense of inadequacy and inferiority can develop (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998). Feelings of inferiority may also occur if what the child has done or learned to do well are not considered as significant by the teacher and peers (Clarke-Stewart & Friedman, 1987).

As noted, a child does not develop in a void and the child's development is influenced by parents, caregivers and teachers as well as family and society (Saarin & Harris, 1991) and is echoed by Erikson. Clarke-Stewart and Freedman (1987) state that children communicate with people around them. They react to the behaviour of others. The writers also believe that "children probably learn most about emotions and feelings from their parents" (p 247).

The emphasis of the developmental theory of Erik Erikson falls on the role parents and teachers play in a child's life to help him/her overcome the crisis s/he has to work through to successfully move on to the next stage of development. As seen in the theory, the respective different stages need to be successfully navigated to enable the child to optimally develop both socially and emotionally. The stages also refer to specific emotional difficulties a child might experience if development is not successful. The two stages or crises focus on the child's ability to develop independence, self-confidence and feelings of self-worth, satisfaction and perseverance (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998). These aspects are important for a child to develop to be emotionally ready for school. The process underlying social and emotional development and growth involves the development of an awareness of oneself and other people as separate, each with their own unique feelings and personality characteristics (Wood, 1981). An understanding of social relationships which includes the child's own relationships with other people and an understanding of the social world in general is also involved (Wood, 1981).

The following literature will focus on similar and other emotional aspects a child possesses at a certain age.

2.6 DEVELOPMENTAL AGES

Emotional school readiness is an important factor in the child's ability to pass his/her grade with success (De Witt, Rossouw & Le Roux, 1994). Pretorius (1993) states that a child will only fulfil scholastic potential if the child is emotionally school ready. Because the amendment of the Schools Act allows for children from age five or even younger to enter school, the research will focus on the factors that can determine if a child between the ages of four and seven is emotionally ready for school.

Pieterse (2001) and Kapp (2001) define the emotional readiness of children in different age categories ranging from four to seven years, while Seefeldt and Barbour (1986) describe the pre-school (3 to 4 years), early primary (5 to 6 years) and late primary development (7 to 8 years).

2.6.1 Age three to four years

The three- and four-year-old or pre-school child can be loving and cooperative the one minute and bossy and resistant the next, and they often do not cooperate during play by protesting other's instructions and keeping about their own tasks (Pieterse, 2001; Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986). They also seem to be restless and have short attention spans (Zill, Collins, West & Hausken, 1995). At this age, the child often begins to have fears (Kapp, 2001). They are also curious and generous and seem to begin to "de-centre" and see themselves as separate from others (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986, p 52).

Four-year-olds are, according to Pieterse (2001), aware of themselves and others around them, but cannot differentiate between their own feelings and thoughts, and those of others. Piaget (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998) refers to cognitive egocentrism that implies that a child views the world from his/her own personal perspective and cannot place him/herself mentally in another person's position. To the four-year-old, fantasy and reality is still very close and they are inclined to attract attention to themselves (Pieterse 2001). Fantasy and emotionally-rich associations depict their views of the world (Kapp, 2001). Friendships are formed and the child is able to play with others.

At this stage, the three- and four-year-old begins to ask “why” and also starts appreciating special events (Keep Kids Healthy, 2002). They also start showing independent behaviour (De Witt & Booysen, 1994). According to Piaget (as cited in Louw, van Ede & Louw, 1998), a child of this age does not yet understand what concepts involve. He refers to “pre-conceptual thought” (p 77). He mentions that another shortcoming of children aged four is that they can only centre their attention on one aspect at a time.

2.6.2 Age five to six years

Approval from friends is very important to five- and six-year-olds, and misbehaving could take place to win another child’s favour (Kapp, 2001; De Witt & Booysen, 1994). Children at this age can play together but they seem to be bossy and do not accept each other’s suggestions or ideas (Pieterse, 2001). According to Pieterse, children of five years cannot anticipate the consequences of their actions and do not accept responsibility. These children might question authority if they do not agree with it (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986).

Kapp (2001) comments that a child of five seems to show greater maturity than younger children. The child’s sense of self-worth and confidence increases. A five-year-old seems to be inquisitive and interested in new words although the child does not understand the meaning (De Witt & Booysen, 1994).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a child of five is dependent on his caregivers and family. At this age, the child longs for approval of others, especially adults (Kapp, 2001 and Smith, 2003). The child is aware of other’s emotions but shows little tact or diplomacy in associations with others (Slater & Brenner, 2003). Unfamiliar and unexpected situations could cause anxiety for a five-year-old. Performance and achievement is very important at this age (Kapp, 2001).

Seefeldt and Barbour (1986) believe that five-year-olds (early primary years) can carry out small tasks, while the six-year-olds become bossier and like to make rules and insist on having them obeyed. They can also change the rules regularly if these do not suit their needs anymore, but they also become ‘tattle tales’ if the rules are not

obeyed (Seefeldt & Barbour 1986; Slater & Brenner, 2003; Smith, 2003). The child in the early primary years is eager to participate in games but has a strong need to win. They tend to pout when they lose and are likely to blame their loss on someone else (De Witt & Booyesen, 1994). “The five- and six-year-olds tend to be outgoing, self-assured and socially conforming” (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986, p 55).

According to Pieterse (2001), well-adjusted five-year-olds have a will of their own and are fairly independent of others. They are very sensitive to social situations. The five-year-old tends to be ashamed when s/he does not meet the expectations of others. A fear of failure and criticism is also prominent (Bodenstein, 1982). They are able to improve their behaviour when necessary and they are loyal to their friends and teacher. At the age of five, children may easily feel rejected. If they cannot complete a task, it could cause them feelings of rejection and they might, for example, refuse to go to school (Pieterse, 2001).

The five- and six-year-olds can go through an emotional roller coaster with periods of ups and downs (De Witt & Booyesen, 1994; Pieterse, 2001). The children become aware of their emotions and are sometimes alarmed and puzzled by these conflicting feelings. Five-year-olds could be able to express their feelings in a socially-acceptable way and they are starting to understand and verbalise their emotions (Pieterse, 2001; Smith, 2003). Six-year-olds often have stormy relationships with adults, for example threatening to run away from home. According to Pieterse (2001), their emotional ups consist of enjoying humour and acting silly at times, as well as giggling and whispering. Children at this age still need to be taught to share and wait their turn as well as having to wait to have their needs met. They are also learning to control their feelings (Pieterse, 2001).

According to Pieterse (2001), children of age six are usually self-centred and like to compete with others and they could become preoccupied with their own activities. At this age, children are spontaneous and impulsive and sometimes become impatient when they do not achieve immediate success. Their moods are also erratic and they tend to become “frustrated” when they cannot do things to their own satisfaction and could even protest loudly (Pieterse, 2001, p 132).

2.6.3 Age seven to eight years

Seven-year-olds are much calmer and self-assured. They tend to be good listeners and are considerate towards others. Children at this age can distinguish between acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour. Seven-year-olds enjoy reading (Pieterse, 2001), and are eager to learn. (Kapp, 2001).

According to Seefeldt and Barbour (1986), children in the late primary years are able to separate from their family more easily as they make new attachments and meet new friends. They also seem to act more independently (Kapp, 2001). They are able to show empathy and appreciate other's points of view. The seven- and eight-year-olds are sensitive and could feel rejected when criticised or ridiculed (De Witt & Booysen, 1994; Smith, 2003). At this age, the children become independent and take care of their belongings as well as take responsibility for tasks at home and at school. They are able to distinguish between good and bad, and seven- and eight-year-olds want to please others and be good. At this stage, they can also accept responsibility for their actions (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986). The seven-year-olds are able to identify and interpret other's emotions as well as express their own emotions in an acceptable manner (Pieterse, 2001; Smith, 2003).

2.7 EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS FACTORS

Pieterse (2001) states that when a child starts school, the child should have adequate and healthy social skills. These skills include "generosity, helpfulness and the ability to wait for their turn" (p 103). She also believes a child must not only be physically and intellectually ready for school, but emotionally ready as well.

Suran and Rizzo (as cited in Pretorius 1993, p 80) believe that "... learning will bring with it demands for activity and performance". It indicates that a child should be willing to learn, participate, and emotionally believe in themselves and their ability. Pretorius (1993) believes as soon as a child is emotionally ready for school, the child reveals positive work susceptibility. Only when a child works with ease and sufficiency and without emotional strain will the child receive positive advantages

from formal teaching. Johansson (as cited in Pretorius, 1993, p 71) states that “lack of emotional readiness may affect the child’s attitude towards schoolwork”.

Kapp (2001) states that a child should fulfil certain requirements such as effective social, normative, cognitive and physical requirements to be school ready.

In the beginning of 2002, several South African newspapers focused on the aspects of school readiness after the former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, eased the age restrictions for school entry (while the act was being revised). The newspapers’ articles reported on factors they felt were important to keep in mind before sending a child to school. The *Rapport* (Cornelissen, 2002) felt that the following questions should be asked if a parent is thinking of enrolling a child in grade 1:

Is the child excessively shy, does he/she cry easily, seem to daydream and/or confuse reality with fantasy?

De Witt, Rossouw and Le Roux (1994) refer to emotional and social goals a child should reach before entering school. The writers refer to the ability to show affection, learning right from wrong and acting accordingly as well as getting along with other children as important skills a child should master.

The *Sunday Times* newspaper canvassed education experts to determine what attributes children need before they are ready for school. The parent and pre-primary school teacher questionnaire for assessing a child’s school readiness (Joubert, 1984) was also examined, as well as other literature, and the following attributes are factors the writers believe indicate emotional readiness.

2.7.1 Specific emotional school readiness factors

Literature emphasises that a child who is emotionally school ready should be able to separate from parents or caregivers without undue separation anxiety and the child should show independence (Cornelissen 2002; Johansson as cited in Pretorius, 1993; Joubert, 1984; Pieterse, 2001). Pretorius (1985) also lists feelings of security and emotional bonds with parents as important skills (as cited in De Witt & Booyesen, 1994).

According to Benson (2002), Pieterse (2001), Smith (2003), and Wentzel (1996), the child must be able to function independently, make independent decisions and be able to take responsibility. The child should display a willingness to take risks and should have at his/her disposal self-confidence, independence and a willingness to accept new challenges (Bar-On as cited in Sternberg, 2000; Merrell & Gimpel, 1998; Pretorius, 1993).

According to Pieterse (2001), a child's self-image is strongly influenced by the measures of success the child achieves in activities. Kapp (2001), Louw, van Ede & Louw (1998) and Sternberg (2000) also believes that the child should have a positive self-image including self-confidence and self-esteem.

Another important attribute of emotional school readiness is a child ability to hold his/her own in a group (Pieterse, 2001). Kapp (2001) and Slater (2003) believe the child should show group identity where the child is able to play and interact with others. Benson (2002) and Pretorius (1993) describe it as the ability to work together in a group with other children, exhibiting traits like being able to share, being sensitive to other children's feelings, acknowledge other's rights and respecting other children's belongings. The child should also have the ability to put off the desire to fulfil his/her own needs and be able to wait his/her turn (Jacobson, 2002; Joubert, 1984; Pieterse, 2001; Wentzel, 1996). Joubert (1984), Merrell and Gimpel (1998) believe a child should enjoy playing with friends of his/her own age and be able and willing to share and not be shy when interacting with others.

A child who is emotionally ready for school should, according to Pieterse (2001) and Wentzel (1996), show determination and the will to perform a task, as well as being able to think independently when completing a task. Coleman (1992) and Jacobson (2002) also see the capacity to organise, be flexible and execute tasks as an important indicator, and Benson (2002), Joubert (1984) and Smith (2003) believe these tasks should be executed with attention and concentration throughout. Planning and decision making is also important. The writers note that a child should be able to complete a task without becoming angry or frustrated or start to cry if s/he cannot complete the task. Joubert (1984) also believes it is important for a child to be able to function on his/her own and work alone at times without constant guidance.

Emotional expression and containment of emotions are some of the most important factors in determining a child's emotional readiness for school. A child should be able to control his/her emotions and personal relations (Schneider, 1993; Sternberg, 2000). Pretorius (1993) believes that children should show control over their emotions and should consider the children around them. The child should be aware of appropriate emotional behaviour in various situations and should not, for example, throw temper tantrums (Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, 1977).

The normative criterion Kapp (2001) believes is important includes a child "accepting discipline and differentiating between proper and improper manners" (p 194). The child should also be able to verbalise his/her emotions and be comfortable with communicating personal needs (Sternberg, 2000). The child should be able to recover from emotional distress and tolerate frustration (Benson, 2002; Jacobson 2002; Johansson as cited in Pretorius, 1993; Kapp, 2001; Pieterse, 2001; Pretorius, 1993).

Another aspect of emotional school readiness is a child's ability to establish friendships and communicate with the teacher and peers. Kapp (2001) states that a child should be able to share a teacher's attention with others in the class. The child should also be able to show empathy towards others (Benson, 2002; Kapp, 2001, Pieterse, 2001 and Wentzel, 1996).

Liveliness and cheerfulness are important attributes for a child. Enjoying school and experiencing freedom from care establishes a feeling of safety for the child (Joubert, 1984; Pretorius, 1993; Wentzel, 1996). The child should have a desire to learn and improve him/herself and take an interest in learning and things around him/her (Joubert, 1984). A child should be capable of handling new situations and persist in the face of setbacks (Jacobson 2002; Merrell & Gimpel, 1998; Pretorius, 1993).

A survey in the United States focused on aspects of readiness that included sleepiness, communication, enthusiasm, restlessness and taking turns (Lewit & Schuurmann, 1995). Conversational skills, skills of persuasion, negotiation and compromise, planning and evaluating relationships as well as appropriate self-

disclosure also describe the phenomenon of emotional school readiness (Schneider, 1993).

A sense of security is also important for a child when entering school (Lewit & Schuurmann, 1995). Security, according to Read (1976, as cited in Pretorius, 1993, p 16), is “the feelings that come with having had many experiences of being accepted ... or feeling safe rather than threatened”.

2.8 CONCLUSION

Hammond (1986) concludes that a child’s development is of crucial importance to allow the child to function optimally. Emotional school readiness allows a child to interact with others in a positive way. Interaction is very important to a child’s development (Kapp, 2001; Thompson & Rudolph, 2000). Through play, the child learns “thoughtfulness, sharing and unselfishness” (Kapp, 2001, p191). Interaction helps the child learn acceptable behaviour and helps the child feel safe. Gaining self-esteem, respect and responsibility is learned through interaction with others (Pretorius, 1993; Schneider, 1993).

Social and emotional readiness helps the child develop independence as well as self-expression (Lewit & Schuurmann, 1995). Interaction with other children allows a child to overcome feelings of helplessness and to experience safety and security that encourages a willingness to venture, investigate and learn (Kapp, 2001).

According to De Klerk and Le Roux (2003), Goleman (1996) and Pieterse (2001), the importance of social and emotional development is easily forgotten, although it could be regarded as the foundation of other kinds of development. Sternberg and Detterman (1988) believe that emotional intelligence may be the best predictor of success in life.

3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“It is the task of educators, parents and teachers to prepare the child gradually and deliberately for school entry.”

Kapp, 2001

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the differences in views of school readiness and other problems that arise in attempting to define and apply concepts of emotional school readiness, parents and teachers often make decisions for individual children based on their own notions of the emotional readiness concept. It is also extremely important to note the importance of parents and teachers in the child's development. A child's development does not take place in a void and the child's development is influenced by society, family, peers and especially parents and teachers (van Eeden, Robinson & Posthumus, 1994).

According to Chapey (1986, as cited in Kapp, 2001) the functions of caregivers and teachers are to help prepare a child to be school ready. Van Niekerk (1986) believes it is something that can be achieved in a positive situation and is an application of everyday living, for example, by using conversation, play and other activities. The above mentioned writer also believes that the affective and social areas of development are aided by a variety of healthy relationships (Van Niekerk, 1986 as cited in Kapp, 2001).

Teachers' views on school readiness are important for they and the school setting help facilitate the child's development on a “physical, cognitive and affective-social level” (Reilly & Hofmeyr as cited in Kapp, 2001, p 190). It is necessary to determine teachers' opinions relating to the characteristics they believe are necessary for children to be school ready. Ahola and Isherwood (1981, as cited in Schneider, 1993) conducted an exploration of schools to determine the interaction that takes place between children and thus what the teacher will be able to observe. Their findings were that almost constant communication was present between the children with a

host of opportunities for forming friendships, comparing oneself, creating boundaries of social acceptance, rejection and so forth. Social and emotional interaction was integral to almost every part of the day, dominating intervals between lessons and also subtly, but definitely, present during lessons. This study indicates that a teacher is able to constantly observe interaction and development of the child. Schneider (1993) states that teachers get to know children very well. He further postulates that they get to know children of the same age, enabling a degree of reference.

Teachers and parents are key figures in deciding a child's school readiness and making the final determination of whether or not a child will enter school. Therefore, it is helpful to know what they consider as school readiness and how important emotional school readiness is (Lewit & Schuurmann, 1995).

As stated, children of different ages develop at different rates, and that having children of different age groups in one class could affect the classroom situation negatively. The teacher's view on emotional school readiness and the impact of non-ready children needs attention, and it is also important to establish why the evaluation of emotional readiness is needed.

3.2 QUALITATIVE PROCESS

The research design will be based on a qualitative method of assessment. The research design is a plan or "blueprint" of how the researcher will be conducting the research (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2002, p 137). According to Merriam (1998), "in all forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interviews" (p 71). Merriam (1998) also believes that qualitative research is necessary to obtain information on how people perceive the world around them. Interviews as a qualitative method of research are necessary when events, emotions or opinions cannot be replicated (Merriam, 1998). According to the researcher, the decision to use a qualitative process (interviews) as the primary mode of data collection is based on the kind of information needed. The researcher agrees with Dexter (1970, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p 72) that "interviewing is the preferred tactic of data collection when it will get better and more data" than other research methods. This qualitative process will enable the researcher to secure the

themes emerging from the interview rather than to reduce the information into statistical categories.

3.2.1 Participants

The survey population will consist of six randomly-chosen grade 1 teachers who are currently employed full time at a school and have two years or more of teaching experience, in other words professional people who work with children on a day-to-day basis and specialise in grade 1 children. This population will be able to draw on practical experience and offer insight into factors they regard as relevant to emotional school readiness.

3.2.2 Ethical implications

The researcher adhered to the five general principles for a psychologist's work-related conduct, stipulated by the American Psychological Association's ethics code. These principles are summarised by Struwig & Stead (2001) and echoed by De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont (2002):

- ? The researcher will be honest, fair and respectful towards others. No attempt will be made to mislead or deceive others or the research participants.
- ? The researcher will respect the rights and dignity of others. This includes respecting privacy, confidentiality and autonomy of the research participants. The researcher will be mindful of any cultural or individual differences such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, language, and socio-economic status.
- ? The welfare of others will be a major concern to the researcher. The researcher will seek to avoid or minimise any harm to the participants. The project will be carefully monitored to assure that participants are not adversely affected by it.
- ? The researcher will accept full responsibility for her research and actions.

The researcher ensured that the participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the research. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any point in the process. They were also assured of no negative consequences

should they not wish to participate (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2002; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

Confidentiality of the participants was respected at all times. No names will appear in the research or mentioned in any form. Confidential information will not be made available to other parties without the participants' consent (Struwig & Stead, 2001), while all confidential information will be stored in a locked cabinet. However, it will be explained to participants that some of the information they share may be discussed and read by other professional people.

Participants were not deceived or misled. The nature of the research project was clearly explained to the participants (Struwig & Stead, 2001). The nature of the research is such that the researcher was present during all sessions. The participant will be given sufficient opportunity to ask questions and, of their own free will, declare themselves prepared to participate in the project by signing a consent form (see Appendix B).

3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

The flexibility of the semi-structured interview helps bring out the affective and value-laden aspects of the teachers' responses (Berg, 2001). It helps determine the personal significance of the respondent's attitudes and also helps elicit the personal and social context of beliefs and feelings (Kidder & Judd, 1986). Aspects of focus group interviews (Willig, 2001) will also be used as the information correlates and applies to semi-structured interviews. McNamara (1999) believes that focus groups are basically multiple interviews and therefore many of the same guidelines for conducting focus groups are similar to conducting individual interviews (McNamara, 1999). The objective of the semi-structured interviews is to generate qualitative data (Groups Plus, 2002).

The main reasons for choosing semi-structured interviews as the method of research are that the characteristics of this method of interviewing allow for open-ended interaction on a one-to-one basis (Marketing Navigation, 2003). Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher to elicit information to understand the

participant's point of view and the advantage of individual interviews is that respondents are not influenced or contaminated by other's reactions as in a focus group (Luntz, 2004). The semi-structured interviews will elicit information from grade 1 teachers concerning emotional school readiness (Luntz, 2004). A basic schedule will be prepared to ensure that relevant topics are covered (Merriam, 1998). The interviews will be organised around aspects of the emotional school readiness of children entering grade 1, while allowing some flexibility. The semi-structured interview allows spontaneous rather than forced responses and self-revealing and personal, rather than superficial, information (Kidder & Judd, 1986).

The main thrust of the interviews is to gain understanding of the teachers' experiences and of the meaning they give to the phenomenon of emotional school readiness (Berg, 2001).

3.2.3.1 Audio tapes

According to Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw (1998) as well as McNamara (1999), the use of audio tapes during interviewing is important. They believe it unlikely that the researcher will be able to conduct the interview, observe, take notes and concentrate on facilitating the process. McNamara (1999) stresses that relying on memory is not practical. Thus, the use of audio tape as well as the participant's agreement to this method of interviewing becomes very important.

3.2.3.2 Question preparation

As mentioned, semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to elicit information to understand the participant's point of view (Luntz, 2004). The information that will be gathered in an interview needs to relate to the specific research problem (McNamara, 1999). According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont (2002), most semi-structured interviews require a format and follow a process. This is necessary in part to limit the interview to certain topics of interest to the research project to avoid irrelevant information during the interview (Rubin, 1983).

Prior to interviewing, the information required needs to be defined (McNamara, 1999). The questions that will be used during the interview must clearly relate to the research problem. Rubin and Rubin (1995) state that a semi-structured interview is built up of three kinds of questions:

- ? *Main questions* will serve as a guide as well as a beginning to the interview.
- ? *Probing questions* refer to questions that the researcher asks if it is needed to probe. Probing is necessary if there is a lack of depth, detail or clarity. It could also be used if further examples or evidence are needed.
- ? *Follow-up questions* could follow main questions and the purpose of these is to pursue the implications of an answer to a main question.

Several types of questions can be asked to stimulate responses. Merriam (1998) refers to four major categories of questions:

- ? *Hypothetical questions* elicit a response based on the person's personal experience or on speculation.
- ? *Devil's advocate questions* challenge the respondent to consider an opposing view.
- ? *Ideal position questions* ask the respondent to describe an ideal situation. These questions can be changed into *position questions* that do not focus on an ideal, but rather on a difficult situation.
- ? *Interpretative questions* provide the opportunity to check on the researcher's understanding and will provide an opportunity to gather more information, feelings and opinions (Merriam, 1998).

Berg (2001), Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw (1998) and Merriam (1998) warn the researcher against leading questions as well as close-ended questions. Close-ended questions are possible, but if the researcher needs more information, the questions have to be combined with or followed by an open-ended question. Explosive questions, to which the answer might be explosive or sensitive, should be avoided (Berg 2001; Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw 1998; Merriam 1998). Leedy and Ormrod (2001) suggest that the researcher should consider asking questions that will elicit qualitative information. They suggest that each question should be restricted to a single idea and that the researcher should seek clarification

when necessary. Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Schaw (1998) warn against double-barrelled questions as well as introducing assumptions before posing a question. Leading questions and complex words (jargon) should also be avoided.

3.2.3.3 Schedule questions

- 1) What does the concept “emotional school readiness” mean to you?
- 2) What emotional characteristics or qualities do you think are vital for a child to have when entering school?
- 3) How important is emotional school readiness?
- 4) Do you have children in your class who you feel are not emotionally ready for school?
- 5) If the answer is yes, why do you think they are not emotionally ready?
- 6) How does a child who is not emotionally ready for school affect you as a teacher?
- 7) How does it affect your class or learning programme?
- 8) Do you think that not being emotionally ready has an effect on the child? If so, why?

3.2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis is a passport to listen to the words of the text and to better understand the perspectives of the participants (Berg, 2001). Leedy and Ormrod (2001) refer to a data spiral when discussing data analysis. The analysis consists of organisation, perusal, classification and synthesis. Berg (2001) as well as Humberman and Miles (as cited in De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurink, 2002) refer to three processes, namely reduction, display and conclusions.

Data analysis is thus made up of three basic sub-processes:

- Data reduction, including organisation and perusal
- Data display and classification
- Conclusion drawing, verification and synthesis.

3.2.4.1 Data reduction

“Data is reduced in an anticipatory way as the researcher chooses a conceptual framework, research question, cases and instruments” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurink, 1998, p 340). According to Berg (2001), data reduction transforms the raw data (transcripts) to make it more readily accessible and understandable and to draw out various themes and patterns. Leong and Austin (1996) echo this and refer to focusing, simplifying and transforming data.

The reduction of data will be based on transcripts of recorded interviews. The focus of the reduction will be on identifying themes (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw 1998). Berg (2001), Leedy and Ormrod (2001) outline some practical procedures to make the analysis more manageable. They suggest the researcher should start by organising the data and breaking large units of data into manageable units. They also believe the transcripts should be read a number of times. This will allow for perusal (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001) by getting a sense of the data, and the researcher can jot down preliminary interpretations. While reading the transcript, the researcher should note matters related to the research. The researcher will identify different themes or components during the analysis of the transcripts. The conclusions will be based on systematic and objective identification of themes (Berg, 2001).

3.2.4.2 Data display

The reduction of data allows for the display of “organised, concise assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing ...” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurnnik, 1998, p 340). Leedy and Ormrod (2001) refer to classification, where the focus is on grouping data into categories and themes and on finding meaning in the data. Data display may involve tables of data, tally sheets of themes and summaries of statements or phrases (Berg, 2001). The researcher could use margins to document emerging themes and key words to capture the essence of the text (Smith, Harré & Langenhove, 1995). The focus is on grouping the reduced themes and transformed information to make it easy to understand and interpret (Berg, 2001).

3.2.4.3 Conclusion drawing and verification

“Conclusion drawing involves making interpretations and drawing meaning from the displayed data” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurnnik, 1998, p 340). From the transcripts, a master list of themes will be produced that should be ordered and coherent (Smith, Harré & Langenhove, 1995). The synthesis of data refers to constructing tables or diagrams based on the emerging themes. These will offer hypotheses or propositions referring to the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Before the themes and hypotheses on the data can be integrated into the literature study, the researcher should verify the information gathered from the transcribed interviews. According to Berg (2001), the verification is twofold: firstly, the data needs to be confirmed or verified (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The researcher following or retracing the steps leading to the conclusions may accomplish this. It could also be done by another researcher independently examining the data and themes to see if the researchers come to the same conclusion. Berg (2001) refers to this as an “inter-coding reliability check” (p 36). The second verification involves ensuring that the procedures used to come to the conclusions are clearly articulated; in other words, ensuring that if the study were replicated and the same analysis steps were followed, it would be possible to draw comparable conclusions (Berg, 2001).

3.3 PILOT INTERVIEW

According to Neuman (1997) it is necessary for a researcher to improve reliability by implementing a pre-test or pilot version of measurement before conducting research. He further postulates that it could be necessary for the researcher to interview the pilot subject to “uncover aspects of the experiment that needs refinement” (p195).

The questions outlined in the schedule was discussed with both the researcher’s supervisor and teachers who did not form part of the study to evaluate if the questions were relevant and understood. Neuman (1997) states that it is important for the researcher to devote effort to pilot test any apparatus. In this regard the researcher tested the audio cassettes and tape recorder to be used during the interviews. To ensure the validity of the research over and above developing neat

and well-organised systems for recording data and ensuring the schedule was refined, the researcher felt it necessary to view the first interview as a possible pilot interview to identify any other unforeseen problems.

The first interview was recorded and all aspects were evaluated. There were no problems regarding the research apparatus. As a pilot, the first teacher was asked to comment and give feedback on the process of the interview as well as the questions asked. The focus was on the validity and relevancy of the questions relating to the study. The first teacher gave positive feedback and no aspects were found to need refinement. Because the first interview showed no need for alternative questions or refinement of method and because the teacher's interview yielded valuable information the researcher felt it necessary to add the findings of the first interview to the study although the teacher was identified as a pilot interviewee.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

After the pilot interview an additional five teachers were interviewed. The following are themes generated from the six individual interviews.

3.4.1 General consensus

From the interviews, it seems clear that most teachers agree on what constitutes emotional school readiness. Most of the teachers with the exception of one, currently has, or in the past had children in their class that they referred to as being emotionally unready for school. From the interviews all six teachers agree that children who are not emotionally ready for school are demanding and require constant supervision. The teachers referred to children who are not emotionally ready for school as needing "attention" (see Appendix C.4). The child taking up time (see Appendix C.1), and the teacher needing to accommodate emotionally unready children were also strongly highlighted.

Half of the teachers felt that emotional school readiness is important for a child as it could influence a child's scholastic success. Some feel that because of the unreadiness the child falls behind in his/her academic work (see Appendix C.3, C.5 &

C.6). Two teachers felt that if the child struggles to cope with academic work due to his/her emotional unreadiness it could damage the child's self-esteem (see Appendix C.3) and the child might be shunned by peers (see Appendix C.5). Most of the teachers agreed that there is a link between a child's emotional school readiness and academic success (see Appendix C.6).

3.4.2 Generating themes

Generating themes forms part of drawing conclusion and meaning from the displayed data (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurnnik, 1998). The following themes were generated from the six interviews pertaining to the emotional school readiness aspects the teachers felt important for a child to have when entering school:

3.4.2.1 Separation from parents

All six of the teachers interviewed believed that a child who is emotionally ready for school should be able to separate from his/her parents without any undue stress. One teacher referred to "separation anxiety" (see Appendix C.1). References were made to a child being able to leave his/her parents (see Appendix C.4) and be able to cope with being away from them (see Appendix C.2). One teacher further explained that separating from parents could cause "distress" and some children start crying (see Appendix C.3). The main theme generated was "separation" (see Appendix C.5 & C.6) and the child's ability to be able to separate from his/her parents without causing anxiety.

3.4.2.2 Emotional maturity

One teacher referred to children being emotionally mature (see Appendix C.1) and another stated that children should not be emotionally immature (see Appendix C.3). Most teachers agreed that a child should be able to show appropriate behaviour including coping with rules (see Appendix C.6), accepting authority (see Appendix C.3) and function in a structured environment (see Appendix C.1). One teacher

described emotional maturity as the child's ability to think not only of himself but of others, as well as the ability to interpret emotions (see Appendix C.3).

3.4.2.3 Socialising

Another aspect all six teachers mentioned is a child's ability to socialise. If a child is emotionally ready for school, the child has the ability to work with others in a group and be able to make friends. "Sharing" (see Appendix C.4) and interaction with others (see Appendix C.5) was highlighted. Participation in group activities (see Appendix C.6) included the child's ability to wait his/her turn, communicate and share the teacher's attention.

3.4.2.4 Independence

All the teacher who participated in the research felt that a child who is emotionally ready for school will be able to function independently. This independence includes a child being able to concentrate (see Appendix C.2) and be able to do things for themselves without constant supervision (see Appendix C.5). The teachers felt that the child should be able to cope with the requirements of a formal school setting (see Appendix C.6) and be able to work alone or in a group without the teacher's supervision.

3.4.2.5 Maturity

Some of the teachers referred to the child needing to be "mature" (see Appendix C.1 & C.2). Some teachers felt that children who are not emotionally ready for school shows immaturity that leads to the child not being able to wait his/her turn or children competing for the teacher's attention (see Appendix C.2). Two teachers refers to children being "egocentric" (see Appendix C.2 & C.5). Some feel that maturity can lead to self-discipline and participation (see Appendix C.1). The participation refers to a child being able to work with others in a group and not withdraw from group activities or relationships (see Appendix C.5).

3.4.2.6 Concentration

All the teachers agree that concentration is important and adds listening skills (see Appendix C.6) and being able to sit still (see Appendix C.3) as resulting factors of concentration.

3.5 DISCUSSION OF THE EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS

THEMES

The final step in data analysis consists of conclusion drawing as well as making interpretations and drawing meaning from the data (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurnnik, 1998). The aim is to use the themes generated from the interviews and to display the themes in an ordered and coherent manner (Smith, Harré & Langenhove, 1995).

As seen above many themes were identified from the interviews. These themes also correlate with literature on specific emotional school readiness factors. It is important to discuss these themes not only from the personal point of view of the teachers but also indicates how these relevant themes compare to other literature.

3.5.1 Separation from parents

All the teachers who participated in the study highlighted separation from parents as an important emotional readiness factor. The child should be able to cope with being away from home (see Appendix D). The literature refers to the inability to separate from the parents as school phobia. School phobia may grow out of fear of separation from the security of home and parents or fear of the unknown, which could cause anxiety (Thompson & Rudolph, 2000).

3.5.2. Emotional maturity

Emotional maturity or awareness as defined by the teachers indicates that a child should be aware of his/her and others' emotions and be able to interpret these emotions correctly (see Appendix D). The child's ability to react correctly to these

emotions is also important. The child should be able to cope with his/her emotions and not burst in tears (see Appendix C.3). According to De Klerk and Le Roux (2003), this phenomenon can be defined as emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify emotions as well as understand and control these emotions. Also being able to communicate these emotions and empathise with others will allow a child to develop relationships (De Klerk & Le Roux, 2003).

3.5.3 Independence

The teachers felt it important for children to be able to complete a task set before them. One teacher described a child who is able and willing to participate and complete tasks as “independent” (see Appendix D). Achievement is based on a child accepting the goals set in the learning programme and to be excited about the challenges set before him/her (Pretorius, 1998). Thus, the theme of independence can also be referred to as achievement for according to Labuschagne and Eksteen (1993) to be independence is to be separate or the ability to complete without supervision. A child who shows independence will be able to complete tasks successfully as they have a desire to attain or achieve a goal (Reber & Reber, 2001).

3.5.4. Maturity

Some teachers felt that a child should be mature or responsibility and show self-discipline (see Appendix D). Some teachers try to accommodate children with their approach to discipline, but some children are still “egocentric” (see Appendix D) and do not listen to the teacher. Maturity and responsibility refers to the ability to meet one’s needs without infringing on other people’s rights (Pieterse, 2001). Immature or dependant children may believe they are not capable of functioning or thinking for themselves. The literature refers to maturity and responsibility as similar themes. Further Thompson and Rudolph (2000, p 545) states that children who are immature or not responsible “... usually do not achieve well in school ...” These children may also have trouble with interpersonal relationships because their immature behaviour might result in social isolation or discipline problems. Reber and Reber (2001) refers to maturity as the child’s ability to reflect sound judgement and responsibility

corresponding to socially accepted norms. They further state that responsibility is to act in a particular manner owing to the presence of others.

3.5.5 Socialising

The child should be able to work in a group with others and get along with peers as well as accept authority (see Appendix D). The ability to socialise was also described by some teachers as the child's ability to accept and work together with others as well as being able to share (see Appendix D). The children should also be able to socialise with other children of different age groups on the playground and not isolate themselves from social interaction (see Appendix D). Socialising enables a child to form "positive interactions ..." (Wenar & Kerig, 2000, p 131). Wentzel (1996) refers to socialising as the ability of the child to get along with friends and form bonds as well as the ability to establish a relationship with the teacher. Reber and Reber (2001) further define the teachers role as to encourage interaction and defines socialising as the child's ability to interact freely with others.

3.6. OTHER THEMES

Although not part of the schedule questions, or the main aim of the study, the teachers identified two other important aspects they felt they needed to share regarding their experience relating to emotional school readiness.

3.6.1 Five-year-old learners

Although the theme of the amended schools act and admission of five-year-olds were not part of the schedule it was interesting to note that almost all the teachers discussed this aspect during the interview process.

Most of the teachers interviewed felt that the age requirement is too low and that most of the emotional unreadiness was identified in younger children, specifically five-year-olds. In other words, all the teachers classified the five-year-olds they have contact with as emotionally unready for school. Some teachers placed a lot of emphasis on the five-year-olds. One teacher currently has five five-year-olds in her

class and, importantly, she feels that the five-year-olds' self-esteem and personality is being "broken" and suppressed (see Appendix C.3). She believes the child does not have the space in a formal class setting to live out the needs s/he has as a five-year-old, for higher-aged expectations are placed on a child who is still inclined to play than to learn. One teacher quoted her headmaster and said "... it's like having fruit on a tree ... if you fiddle and prod at it, it is going to be bruised at the end of the day. You just need to give it time to ripen and that is true for a lot of children ... especially the five-year-olds" (see Appendix C.1).

Some teachers felt that expecting five-year-olds to enter school is neither fair towards the child and his/her development nor fair towards the teacher. The teachers feel stressed (see Appendix D) and pressured to complete the curriculum while giving individual help and attention to the child who is not emotionally ready for school.

It seems that all teachers agree that placing five-year-olds in a formal school setting is not to the five-year-olds advantage and could do more harm than good. They are, however, aware of the law and feel that the problem can be regulated by sending the five-year-old to grade 0 to help the child prepare for formal schooling that will enable a child to develop emotionally and reach his/her full potential (see Appendix D).

3.6.2 Cultural aspects

The researcher chose teachers who were interviewed randomly in the Pretoria area. From this random interviewing, it was identified that the teachers work with children from different cultural, racial and language backgrounds. This includes black learners of different language backgrounds, Afrikaans-speaking learners as well as English- and Dutch-speaking learners. Reference was also made to Korean learners.

Although the teachers are from such a different spectrum of cultural and language schools, it is clear that all the teachers' feedback seems to be similar when discussing emotional school readiness. For example, all teachers agreed that a child should be able to separate from his/her parents (see Appendix D). It could thus be concluded to some extent that the emotional school readiness themes the teachers

identified pertains to all the children in their class, regardless of race, language or cultural background.

3.7 CONCLUSION

During the primary years, children typically have extended contact with teachers who may become important elements of the child's interpersonal field, development and formation of their personality (Schneider, 1993). According to van Eeden, Robinson and Posthumus (1994), emotional evaluation can make an important contribution to the optimal development of the child. The above-mentioned writers also believe that teachers are invaluable to the child's development. However, they do believe that a formal measuring instrument has the advantage to make a more objective evaluation, whereas the teacher relies on observation and experience.

The next chapter will integrate the findings of the literature and interviews to formulate an emotional school readiness checklist and related programme that will focus on determining whether a child is emotionally ready for school. Furthermore, these indicators can also be used to identify specific emotional problems a child might have.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS CHECKLIST AND RELATED PROGRAMME

“The child does not learn only with his mind, but with his whole being.”

Potgieter, 1961

(Kapp, 2001)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, the importance of emotional school readiness has been highlighted such as its contribution to academic success and should not be underestimated. According to Penning (1987), a school readiness test is a method to determine the child’s development, and in doing so, establish the child’s readiness level. The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme that will be developed during the study could help identify a child’s emotional shortcomings and it will enable school personnel, parents and psychologists to design strategies based on the outcomes of the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme that may prevent or diminish more pervasive future difficulties (NCREL, n.d.).

4.2 METHODS OF ASSESSMENT OF EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS

According to Nell (as cited in Pretorius, 1993), there are two basic categories of assessment, namely standardised testing and informal evaluation.

4.2.1 Standardised tests

Standardised tests include school readiness tests such as the School-Readiness Evaluation by Trained Teachers (SETT) (Bender, 1985), Aptitude Test for School Beginners (ASB) (Bender, 1985), Metropolitan Readiness Test (Jordaan, 1994), First Grade Screening Test (AGS) (De Lange, 1990) and The Group Test for Five- and Six-year-olds of the National Bureau for Educational and Social research (NBG5/6) (Horne, 1970).

Standardised tests also include intelligence (IQ) tests such as the Columbia Mental Maturity Scale (CMMS) (Lambrechts, 1981), Junior South African Individual Scale (JSAIS) and the Individual Scale for General Scholastic Aptitude (ISASA) (Kruger, 2002). According to Kruger (2002), standardised tests could effectively be used to determine an important factor of school readiness, namely intellectual maturity.

Perceptual and motor co-ordination tests such as the American Beery Developmental Test for Visual-motor Integration (VMI) also qualifies as a standardised test (Voster, 1994). Most of these tests focus on a child's cognitive development as well as his/her physical and motor development.

It is necessary it reiterate that most of these tests evaluate a child's academic and cognitive school readiness and does not place much emphasis on emotional school readiness if any at all. Alternative standardised tests that could be used to evaluate emotional aspects include projective testes such as the Children's Apperception Test (Bellak & Bellak, 1997) and drawings (Gillespie, 1994).

4.2.2 Informal tests

Informal evaluation consists of interviews and observations (Egan, 2002). Reports and questionnaires could also be used to gather information. Structured screening tests that have not been standardised by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) could also be used in an informal way such as the Feelings, Attitudes and Behaviours Scale for Children (FAB-C). This scale is designed to assess possible emotional and behavioural problems (Van Rooyen, 2002).

This method of assessment can give a person an overall view of the child and could also be used as early indicators for possible problems the child might have. Observation and interaction with the child are very important and will be part of the emotional school readiness programme to be developed.

It is important to keep both the formal and informal methods of assessment in mind when developing indicators. To develop comprehensive and reliable indicators of

emotional school readiness, it is imperative to include all these different aspects of evaluation.

4.2.3 Cross-cultural testing

When developing the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme, it is important to try to make the indicators “culture-fair” (Anastasi, 1979, p 50). It is not possible to design a culture-free test (Altmaier & Meyer, 1985), but Anastasi (1959) states that it is possible to construct a test that considers experiences that are common to different cultures. Such a test will not be free from cultural influences, but rather employ elements common to many different cultures (Anastasi 1959 and 1979). This idea of culture-fair testing will be used when developing the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme. In the previous chapter, it was identified that the teachers interviewed work with a variety of children from different cultural, racial and language backgrounds. It seems that these children share common problems when referring to the child’s emotional school readiness.

4.3 IMPORTANT EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS ASPECTS

In chapter two, the literature study discussed the emotional aspects considered important in a child’s development. Chapter three discussed emotional school readiness themes identified by teachers. All these aspects have been evaluated, and the following factors are considered important indicators of emotional school readiness.

4.3.1 Emotional intelligence

The emotional intelligence aspect refers to the child’s ability to understand and verbalise his/her own and other’s emotions. It also implies the child’s ability to control emotions and express them in a socially acceptable manner. The child should not, for example, throw temper tantrums or start crying unnecessarily. The child should also be lively and energetic. A child should be able to separate from his/her parents or caregiver without any undue stress or anxiety (Thompson & Rudolph, 2000). The child should also be free from worries and not experience the school or classroom as

hostile (Appendix D; Benson, 2002; De Klerk & Le Roux, 2003; Jacobson, 2002; Johansson as cited in Pretorius, 1993; Joubert, 1984; Kapp, 2001; Pieterse, 2001; Pretorius, 1993; Wentzel, 1996).

4.3.2 Socialising

Socialising refers to the child's ability to communicate and play with other children. It also includes the child's ability to establish relationships with peers and teachers. A child should display confidence in him/herself and his/her abilities. Confidence is important and includes feelings of self-worth and usefulness. The child should have the confidence to take on new situations and tasks without feeling threatened or unsure. The child should show self-control and not have aggressive outbursts (Appendix D; Benson, 2002; Johansson as cited in Pretorius, 1993; Joubert, 1984; Kapp, 2001; Pieterse, 2001; Schaefer & Howard, 1981; Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986).

4.3.3 Responsibility and attitude towards work

Responsibility refers to the ability to meet one's needs without infringing on other people's rights to meet their needs. Immature or dependant children may believe they are not capable of functioning or thinking for themselves (Thompson & Rudolph, 2000). Responsibility and attitude towards work also refers to the child acting responsibly and taking responsibility for his/her actions. The child should be able to accept authority and take responsibility for his/her work and other tasks. The child should also be able to complete a task on his/her own without needing constant supervision. The child should be able to concentrate and keep attention for the duration of a task. The child should not come across as over-active or restless (Appendix D; Benson, 2002; Kapp, 2001; Merrell & Gimpel, 1998; Pieterse, 2001; Pretorius, 1993; Schneider, 1993).

4.3.4 Achievement

Achievement refers to a child's willingness and ability to achieve. The child should want to achieve academically and enjoy the work and tasks that he/she has to complete. A child should also show a willingness to learn. The child should have a

positive attitude towards school. This includes enjoying learning and interacting with others and displaying a willingness and eagerness to go to school and learn (Appendix D; Benson, 2002; De Klerk & Le Roux, 2003; Jacobson, 2002; Joubert, 1984; Kapp, 2001; Pieterse, 2001; Pretorius, 1993; Wentzel, 1996).

4.4. EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS CHECKLIST

4.4.1 Background

The format of the emotional school readiness checklist is based on similar formats such as the teacher and parent questionnaire of school readiness (both designed by Joubert, 1984), the evaluation scale of school readiness (designed by Pretorius, 1993) and Wentzel's (1996) social-emotional readiness test. The emotional school readiness checklist will be used as a qualitative method of assessment. The response format for the emotional school readiness checklist will be closed-ended questions. The advantages of the closed-ended questions are that they clarify the response alternative for the respondent and reduce the possibility of vague or inconclusive answers (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 1998).

4.4.2. Motivation for emotional school readiness checklist

A checklist is a method whereby the actions and ability of a child can be rated. The checklist:

- Assesses a child's emotional school readiness
- Is structured
- Can be used by professionals, parents as well as teachers
- Is time- and cost-effective
- Is easy to understand
- Makes scoring and interpreting easy and saves time
(Grazino & Raulin, 2000).

4.5 EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS CHECKLIST

4.5.1 Introduction

The emotional school readiness checklist has been designed to evaluate a child's emotional school readiness. The checklist should be completed by both the child's teacher and parents together. The collaboration between the teacher and parents will allow for a more detailed outline of the child's emotional readiness. If it is not possible for the teacher and parents to work together on the checklist, it is then necessary for both to complete a checklist individually. This allows the therapist to have insight into the child's emotional functioning at school in a more structured environment and the child's emotional behaviour at home.

The emotional school readiness checklist will consist of close ended questions relating to the four main emotional factors identified in chapter two as well as chapter three and discussed in chapter four, namely:

- Emotional intelligence
- Socialising
- Responsibility and attitude towards work
- Achievement

The emotional school readiness checklist consists of 25 questions. Each question has four possible answers.

Almost never	1	(0 – 20% of the time)
Seldom	2	(20 – 40% of the time)
Most of the time	3	(40 – 80% of the time)
Almost always	4	(80 – 100% of the time)

Choose the answer most suited to the child and only choose one answer.

QUESTIONS	ALMOST ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	SELDOM	ALMOST NEVER
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ASPECTS				
1) Is the child able to verbalise his/her emotions?	4	3	2	1
2) Can the child control his/her emotions?	4	3	2	1
3) The child does not get easily upset or cry easily?	4	3	2	1
4) Can the child separate from his/her parents or caregiver without signs of unnecessary distress?	4	3	2	1
5) Does the child show appropriate behaviour?	4	3	2	1
6) Can the child establish a relationship and communicate well with others?	4	3	2	1
SOCIAL ASPECTS				
7) Does the child make friends easily?	4	3	2	1
8) Does the child show consideration towards others?	4	3	2	1
9) Can the child work together in a group?	4	3	2	1
10) Can the child hold his/her own in a group?	4	3	2	1
11) Can the child wait his/her turn?				
12) Can the child communicate with others?	4	3	2	1
13) Can the child share attention?	4	3	2	1
RESPONSIBILITY AND ATTITUDE ASPECTS				
14) Is the child cheerful, happy and lively?	4	3	2	1
15) Does the child take responsibility for his/her actions?	4	3	2	1
16) Can the child complete a task?	4	3	2	1
17) The child does not need constant supervision/help in order to complete a task?	4	3	2	1
18) Can the child keep his/her concentration?	4	3	2	1
19) The child is not over-active.	4	3	2	1
20) Over-activity or liveliness does not influence his/her work negatively.	4	3	2	1
21) Does the child accept authority?	4	3	2	1
ACHIEVEMENT				
22) Does the child enjoy completing tasks?	4	3	2	1
23) Is the child positive about school?	4	3	2	1
24) Is the child able to plan and organise?	4	3	2	1
25) Is the child willing to learn? / Does he/she want to learn?	4	3	2	1
Subtotal				
TOTAL				

26). Do you feel the child is emotionally ready for school and why?

4.6 SCORING OF THE EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS CHECKLIST

4.6.1 Full-scale results

Scoring of this checklist is based on a similar scoring method used by Wentzel (1996) in her social-emotional readiness test.

The aim of the numeric scale (1 to 4) is to obtain a score to be able to determine if a child is emotionally ready for school. Only the first 25 questions are marked. The 26th question is to qualitatively determine the view of the teacher and parent completing the checklist about the child.

The scores in each column should be added and written in the sub-total blocks. The sub-totals are then added together to calculate a total score.

The results of the total can be defined as follows:

75-100 marks:	Definitely emotionally school ready.
50-75 marks:	Emotionally ready for school, but aspects need to be attended to.
0-50 marks:	Not emotionally ready for school.

4.6.2 Sub-totals

There are four areas of emotional school readiness on which the checklist focuses. If a child scores between the following scores on the different sub-scales, it could be

an indication of aspects where the child might have difficulties:

ASPECTS (SUB-SCALES)	SCORES INDICATING POSSIBLE PROBLEMS (minimum score)
Emotional intelligence aspects	Between 6 and 12
Social aspects	Between 7 and 16
Responsibility and attitude aspects	Between 8 and 18
Achievement aspects	Between 4 and 10

The child could be emotionally school ready on the full-scale results, but the separate sub-scales are also important for early detection of possible aspects that are lacking in a child's emotional development.

4.6.3 Individual scores

The individual questions are, as mentioned above, important to determine problems the child might have. A score of one or two for a specific question could indicate specific problems and should receive attention. All these aspects can be incorporated into a possible therapeutic plan for the child.

4.7 EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMME

4.7.1 Motivation for the emotional school readiness programme

The motivation for the school readiness programme and the way it is constructed is based on the writings of Wortham. He states that:

Children communicate with us through their eyes, the quality of their voices, their body postures, their gestures, their mannerisms, their smiles, their jumping up and down, their listlessness. They show us, by the way they do things as well as by what they do, what is going on inside them (Wortham, 1990, p 89).

It is thus important to evaluate a child's emotional school readiness not just through questions but through play and acting as well, to be able to observe the child. The emotional aspects that were identified at the beginning of chapter four will be used to develop scenarios to determine a child's emotional school readiness through observation, play and conversation.

4.7.2 Introduction to the emotional school readiness programme

The emotional school readiness programme has been designed to accompany the emotional school readiness checklist and the aspects that will enjoy attention are an extension of the questions of the emotional school readiness checklist.

The programme will consist mostly of oral directions. According to Anastasi (1959), oral directions in the administration of pre-school tests can now be relied on to a greater extent. The writer does, however, highlight that problems such as motivation, interest, short attention span and susceptibility to fatigue still remain and should be considered when assessing a young child.

The tester should be aware that observation plays an integral role in this programme. The rationale, instruction and outline of material needed are included in every exercise. The emotional school readiness programme consists of 13 exercises that cover the four main emotional factors identified in chapter two as well as chapter three and discussed in chapter four, namely:

- Emotions
- Socialising
- Responsibility and attitude towards work
- Achievement

It is important for the tester to read all the exercises thoroughly before administering the emotional school readiness programme. Some of the exercises rely on observation, not only of the specific exercise but also how the child acts for the duration of the assessment. Therefore, it is very important for the tester to familiarise

him/herself with the programme. Materials are also necessary and the tester should familiarise him/herself with the material and its specific use.

4.7.3 Language used in the emotional school readiness programme

Rationale	refers to the reason why the specific exercise is being implemented.
Media	refers to the specific media that will be necessary to complete the exercise.
Instructions	include the implementation method as well as an outline of what will be expected of the tester to say to the child during the specific exercises.
Score	refers to the marks a child receives for each answer.

4.7.4 Alteration of the pictures

Anastasi states that it is necessary to construct indicators that consider experiences that are common to different cultures. The indicators will not be free from cultural influences, but rather employ elements common to many different cultures (Anastasi 1959 and 1979). As the emotional school readiness programme has been developed to assist in assessing the emotional school readiness of South African children, the programme has been developed to be gender, racial and cultural sensitive to be free from prejudice and allow most South African children to be able to relate to the exercises.

Anastasi, (1979, p 50) refers to “culture-fair” testing material. It was thus necessary for the researcher to choose some of the pictures to allow the pictures to represent both male and female children as well as the variety of cultural and racial backgrounds representative of most South African children.

4.7.5 Gender use in the emotional school readiness programme

It is important to note that the programme’s aim is to be cultural and gender fair (Anastasi, 1979). The programme is suitable for both male and female children.

Although the aim is not to be gender specific, some of the pictures, especially the Bar-Ilan pictures (Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982) are gender specific. It is important to note that although the male forms of the pictures were used it is recommended to substitute the male form of the Bar-Ilan pictures with the female form of the pictures when testing a girl. The tester should also consider the language used during questioning or the reading of the instructions and refer to 'him' or 'his' when testing a male child and 'her' or 'she' when testing a female child.

4.8 EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMME EXERCISE OUTLINE

4.8.1 Exercise 1

Rationale

Liveliness and energy, as well as willingness to participate, is an important emotional aspect.

Media

None.

Instructions

Liveliness and energy should be kept in mind throughout the evaluation. Observation is thus very important. Keep the following questions in mind:

Does the child seem to enjoy the exercises?

Does the child complete or answer with flattened effect or does the child seem lively?

Does the child want to participate?

Score

This exercise is evaluated qualitatively and is dependent on the tester's observation and discretion.

2 marks The child enjoys the work and is lively.

1 mark The child seems to enjoy work but not thoroughly.

0 mark The child shows little or no interest, flattened effect or inappropriate emotion and behaviour.

4.8.2 Exercise 2

Rationale

The child should be able to concentrate and keep his/her attention for the duration of a task. The child should not come across as hyperactive or restless. Concentration and attention should be evaluated throughout the assessment.

Media

None.

Instructions

Observe the child during the exercises. The focus will be on concentration and attention throughout the exercises.

Score

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 2 marks | The child seems to be able to keep his/her concentration and attention. |
| 1 mark | The child seems to sometimes lose concentration but it will not affect his/her regular functioning. |
| 0 mark | The child is not able to keep his/her attention or concentration. |

Qualitative opinion should be given on a child's attention and hyperactivity. If there seem to be discrepancies, the tester could consider using the Cognitive Control Battery (CCB) of Santostefano (Santostefano, 1994) to determine attention, concentration and motor tempo.

4.8.3 Exercise 3

Rationale

The child should show self-control and not have aggressive outbursts. The child should have the confidence to take on new situations and tasks without feeling threatened or unsure. This should be evaluated throughout the assessment.

Media

None.

Instructions

Observation is key. Observe the child's self-control and aggression throughout the exercises. The next exercise (exercise 4) could be frustrating to some children. Observe how the child handles frustrating and challenging exercises.

Score

2 marks	Child is able to show self-control and keep his/her aggression under control.
1 mark	Child seems to sometimes get frustrated.
0 mark	Child loses his/her temper and control.

4.8.4 Exercise 4

Rationale

A child should display self-confidence and self- efficiency. This confidence and competency is important and includes feelings of self-worth and usefulness. Observation is very important. Observe the child's behaviour and note it. Correct building of the blocks and completion of the patterns are not important, rather the child's approach to the exercise and his/her own ability.

Media

Senior South African Individual Scale (SSAIS) blocks and pattern booklet (Van Eden, 1984).

Instructions

Show the child the blocks and booklet. Explain to the child that you would like him/her to complete the patterns. The tester should do the first pattern as example. Complete the first pattern and show the child how the exercise will work. Ask the child to complete the second pattern and help the child if necessary. Only after the child understands the exercise should marks be given. Remember that completing the blocks correctly is not the aim of the exercise.

Score

- 2 marks The child is able to complete a task without crying or negative feelings towards him/herself or the exercise.
- 1 mark The child is negative about him/herself and/or the task but does attempt to complete the task and show perseverance.
- 0 mark The child is negative towards him/herself and his own abilities or the task and does not attempt to finish the exercise.
-

4.8.5 Exercise 5

Rationale

A child should be able to identify different emotions in a social setting.

Media

A picture of a beach scene with characters displaying different emotions.



(Picture: Parent Assisted Learning, 2001, p 29).

Instructions

Ask the child to identify the emotions. Say to the child: “I am going to read you some words describing different emotions or way people feel. You have to show me which person in this picture will fit the best with the emotion that I will read to you”. Place the card in front of the child and say: “The first word is excited. Which person in this picture looks excited? Point that person out to me”.

Repeat the question with the remaining three emotions. The child does not have to tell you which person s/he feels is the correct answer, the child can just point. If the child describes the wrong person in the picture, ask the child to point to the picture. If the child points out the right person but described the picture incorrectly, the child receives a mark. If the child describes and points to the wrong picture, s/he does not receive a mark.

Answers:

Excited : Girl with tennis ball and bat.

Happy : Boy with ice cream.

Naughty : Boy with doll in his hand.

Angry : Girl with dotted swimsuit.

Score

1 mark Correct identification.

0 mark Incorrect identification.

4.8.6 Exercise 6

Rationale

Socialising refers to the child’s ability to communicate and play with other children.

Media

Four puppets representing children. Two female and two male.

The puppets also represent different race groups.

Instructions

Take the puppets and explain to the child that these are friends the child has met at school. The focus will be on how the child interacts with the puppets.

Ask questions such as:

- ? What are they playing?
- ? Show me how are they playing
- ? What are they saying to each other?

Score

- 2 marks The children are playing and enjoying themselves. They are getting along very well. They like playing together.
- 1 mark The child does not mind playing with the other children, but will rather play on his/her own. The child can communicate with the children but it seems forced and unnatural.
- 0 mark If the children fight and do not get along. If the child prefers not playing. If the child does not want to share or is rejecting others or the games they play. The child's handling of the puppets is aggressive.

An alternative to this exercise, if puppets are not available, is picture number 3 of the Bar-Ilan picture test (Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982). The same scenario can be told to the child and the same questions asked. When using the picture, the focus of the tester will fall on the child's verbal communication and body language.



(Picture: Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982).

4.8.7 Exercise 7

Rationale

Achievement refers to a child's will and ability to achieve. The child should want to achieve academically and enjoy the work and tasks s/he has to complete. A child should also show a willingness to learn. The child should have a positive attitude towards school. This includes enjoying learning and interacting with others and displaying a willingness and eagerness to go to school.

Media

Questionnaire consisting of four questions.

Instructions

Tell the child you are going to ask him/her a few questions. Reassure the child that these questions have no right or wrong answer and the child should relax and say the first thing that comes to mind. Fill in the child's answers in the space below the question.

Questionnaire:

? Do you like competing with your friends?

? Will you leave a task and stop doing it if it is too hard for you?

? Do you enjoy school?

? What do you enjoy about school?

Score

Each of the child's answers should be marked individually.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 2 marks | Appropriate positive answer such as "I enjoy school". |
| 1 mark | Acceptable answer such as "school is OK". |
| 0 mark | Negative answer such as "I hate school". |

4.8.8 Exercise 8

Rationale

Emotional aspect refers to the child's ability to understand and verbalise his/her own and other's emotions.

Media

In this exercise, the tester should have a box of pictures with different facial expressions.

Identification and explanation of the pictures:

- | | | |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| Picture 1 | : | Surprised |
| Picture 2 | : | Angry |
| Picture 3 | : | Sad |
| Picture 4 | : | Happy |
| Picture 5 | : | Scared/worried |

Instructions

The child should be asked to identify the emotions and explain how the specific emotion feels. Say to the child: “There are five pictures in this exercise. This (show) is the first picture. Could you tell me how this person is feeling?”

If the child only gives the word without explanation, ask: “how can you tell this person is feeling that way or can you explain how you feel when you feel, for example, happy”. Repeat the exercise for all five pictures. The questions were adapted from the Learning Begins at Home booklet (Gouws & Lätti, 2001).



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

(Pictures: Rooth, 1995, p 62 and p 97; Parent Assisted Learning, 2001, p 32).

Score

2 marks	Correct identification and explanation of emotions.
1 mark	Correct identification but no explanation (after prompting) OR incorrect identification of the emotion but correct explanation. For example: the child identifies picture 1 as sad (which is incorrect) but the explanation of sad (the emotion) is correct.
0 mark	Wrong identification.

4.8.9 Exercise 9

Rationale

A child should be able to separate from parents or caregiver without any undue stress or anxiety.

Media

Use puppets or dolls to play out the roles of the child, mother (father or caregiver) and teacher.

Instructions

Ask the child if s/he would like to name the characters.

Start the role-play by giving the child the doll representing a child and tell the following story (using appropriate sex):

“Mommy is bringing (child’s name) to school. Look, here is his new teacher Mrs (teacher’s name). Mommy is dropping the child off at school where he is going to learn something new today. She bends down and kisses the child on the head and tells him/her to enjoy the day at school and she will be back later to pick him/her up”. The tester and child should play out all the movements such as kissing on the head. The tester then takes the doll, representing mother, and puts it behind the tester’s back or in a box out of sight.

Ask the child how the doll (child) is feeling.

Ask the child what s/he thinks of the teacher.

Score

- 2 marks The child is looking forward to school and shows no signs of distress.
- 1 mark The child will miss the mother very much but will be able to be without her.
- 0 mark The child is not able to cope with the mother leaving.
-

4.8.10 Exercise 10

Rationale

Responsibility and attitude towards work refers to the child acting responsibly and taking responsibility for his/her actions.

Media

Two pictures taken from the Bar-Ilan picture test (Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982), number 2 and 4.

Instructions

The pictures should be shown to the child and the scenario explained.

Scenario 1:



(Picture: Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982).

Tell the child that “the child in the picture dropped his mother’s favourite flower pot. What does the child say to his mother when she asks him about the broken flower pot?”

Scenario 2:

In the second picture, the child is told “this boy did not do his homework, what will he tell his teacher?”



(Picture: Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982).

Score

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 2 marks | The child takes responsibility for his/her actions by, for example, telling the mother/teacher what s/he did and apologising for it. |
| 1 mark | The child shows apprehension in telling the mother/teacher but admits his/her mistake. |
| 0 mark | The child lies or shows emotional distress at the thought of admitting his/her mistakes. |
-

4.8.11 Exercise 11

Rationale

Emotional aspects imply the child's ability to control his/her emotions and expressing them in a socially acceptable manner. The child should be aware of his/her own and other's feelings. The child should understand how his/her actions impact on others.

Media

"How do people feel?" Exercise page (Parent Assisted Learning, 2001, p22). The exercise page consists of four pictures representing a social situation and answering sheet. The questions and rationale of the exercise were adapted from a similar exercise by De Klerk & Le Roux (2003).

Instructions

Read the page with the child. Explain the following: "Here are four different situations. You have to tell me how this person (in picture 1) will feel in this specific situation".

The first situation is an example and will not be scored. Use a blank piece of paper to cover the other pictures so that the child's attention is not distracted. The tester will ask the child what is happening in every first picture. If the child is incorrect, the tester must correct the child. The tester may help the child with every first picture (stage 1) in all four scenarios. If the child identifies the faces/emotions wrongly in stage 2 of scenario 2 to 4, the tester should not correct the child. The tester can only help the child with the whole of scenario 1. After that, the child can only be helped with the first pictures (stage 1) identifying the deed in every scenario.

The tester fills in the answering sheet if the child identified the emotions/faces and also writes down the child's answers to "what should he/she do?" on the answering page in the last column.

STAGE 1

STAGE 2

STAGE 3



This boy feels ...



happy



cross



sick

What should he do?



The little girl feels ...



scared



excited



hurt

What should she do?



This girl should not feel happy, she should feel ...



angry

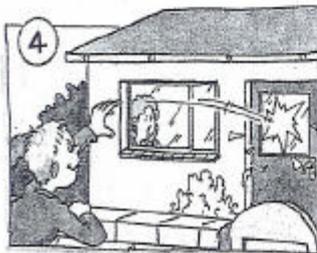


scared



sorry

What should she do?



The woman in the house feels ...



surprised



cross



sick

What should she do?

(Picture: Parent Assisted Learning, 2001, p 22).

Scenario 1:

“The first picture is of a boy. Can you tell me what he is doing?” (child answers). If the child’s answer is incorrect, help the child by explaining that the boy is smoking. “Is it right for him to be smoking?” (child answers). “Now here are three faces (show and name the emotions). You have to tell me how you think this boy is feeling now.” (child answers). “Yes, he is feeling sick. What should he do?” If the child identifies the wrong emotion, the tester should say, “no, he is not happy because smoking is bad for you and can make you sick.” Write down the child’s answers. Remember: scenario 1 is an example and does not receive marks.

Scenario 2:

“Here we see a boy and a girl. What is the boy doing?” (child answers). Correct the child if s/he is wrong. “Here are three ways the girl can feel (show and name the emotions). How is she feeling?” (child answers). Do not help the child if his/her identification of the emotion is wrong. Score the child’s answer on the answering sheet and then ask “and what should she do?”

Scenario 3:

“Here we see a girl, what is she doing?” (child answers). Show and read the different emotions to the child. Say “This girl should not feel happy, she should feel ...” (child answers). Do not help the child if the identification of the emotion is wrong. Score the answer on the answering sheet and then ask “and what should she do?”

Scenario 4:

“Here is a boy outside and a woman in the house. What is happening?” (child answers). “How is the woman in the house feeling, is she feeling ... (show and name the emotions). Do not help the child if the identification of the emotion is wrong. Score the child’s answer on the answering sheet and then ask “and what should she do?”

Answering sheet

PICTURE	FEELING	v or x	CHILD'S RESPONS
1. Child smoking	Sick		_____ _____
2. Boy pulling girl's hair	Hurt		_____ _____
PICTURE	FEELING	v or x	(CHILD'S RESPONS
3. A girl littering	Sorry		_____ _____
4. A boy breaking a window with a stone	Surprised		_____ _____

Score

The tester should keep in mind that there are many different answers to the question "what should he/she do?" and the tester should use discretion. A child's answers can be compared with the examples given in the scoring.

2 marks Correct identification of emotions/faces and correct answer to what the child should do.

Examples of correct answers:

Scenario 1: Sick – he should stop smoking, or put out the cigarette.

Scenario 2: Hurt – She should tell him to stop, or she should tell an adult.

Scenario 3: Sorry – She should pick up the can, or throw it away in a litterbin.

Scenario 4: Surprised – She should tell him to stop, or she should phone his parents.

(For scenario 4, cross is not the correct answer. The woman in the house has an expression of surprise on her face).

1 mark Correct identification of the emotion but limited description of what the child should do (for example if the child answers "I don't know or I'm not sure").

0 marks Wrong identification of the emotion and/or inappropriate answer to what the person should do (for example, the girl should leave the can on the ground).

4.8.12 Exercise 12

Rationale

The child should be able to accept authority and take responsibility for his/her work and other tasks.

Media

Bar-Ilan picture test's picture number 7 depicting a mother in the bedroom doorway and the children in the room (Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982).



(Picture: Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982).

Instructions

This exercise is to determine how a child responds to authority. Tell the child that this is a picture of a mother and her two sons. She is asking them to clean the room before they can watch television.

Ask the child the following questions:

“How does the child feel when his mother tells him to clean his room?”

“If he does not feel like cleaning his room and then doing his homework, but his mother asks him to, what do you think he will say to her?”

“If his mother is upset with him for not cleaning his room or not doing his homework, and she gives him a punishment, what do you think he will do or say?”

Score

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 2 marks | If the child accepts authority. The child is allowed to question the authority, but not extensively. |
| 1 mark | If the child accepts authority but puts up a fight and disputes the punishment. |
| 0 mark | If the child does not accept authority by not giving attention to the mother or protesting profusely or throwing a temper tantrum and refuses. |
-

4.8.13 Exercise 13

Rationale

Socialising includes the child's ability to establish relationships with peers and teachers.

Media

Puppets used in exercise 6 and exercise 9.

Instructions

Take the puppets and ask the child:

“if these were new friends you meet for the first time, what would you do/say?”

“How will you introduce yourself?”

Score

- 2 marks Introduce him/herself by name, give some background information, and show an interest in who the other children are.
- 1 marks Just introducing him/herself and no further interaction.
- 0 mark Does not want to introduce him/herself or is too shy to do so.
-

4.9 SCORING OF THE EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMME

The programme consists of 13 exercises ranging from 0 to 2 marks for every answer. The maximum column on the marking sheet represents the maximum score the child can achieve on the specific exercise. The minimum score is the minimum a child should receive on the different exercises.

EXERCISE	MAXIMUM	SCORE	MINIMUM
1	2		1
2	2		1
3	2		1
4	2		1
5	2		1
6	4		2
7	8		4
8	2		1
9	10		5
10	2		1
11	4		1
12	6		3
13	2		1
TOTAL			

The maximum total score a child could receive on this programme is 48. The exercises where the child performs below the minimum requirement should be investigated for possible further emotional intervention.

A rough percentage estimate can be made with the following formula:

The child's score, divided by (\div) the maximum score (48) = answer. Multiply the answer by 100 and it will give an estimated percentage.

A score between 36 and 48 indicates emotional school readiness (75-100%).

A score between 24 and 35 indicates probable emotional readiness but that the aspects on which the child did not perform well should be considered for further evaluation and intervention (50-74%).

A score of between 0 and 23 indicates a child who is not emotionally ready for school (0-50%).

4.10 HOLISTIC APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

From the literature study in chapter two and the interviews conducted in chapter three, four main aspects were identified for a child to be emotionally school ready. These aspects were integrated into the emotional school readiness checklist and further developed into the emotional school readiness programme. When trying to identify a child's emotional school readiness, a holistic or integrated method will be most suited as many parties are involved with the child's development (Pieterse, 2001).

Firstly, the emotional school readiness checklist should be completed by both the parents and teacher of the child. Both these parties have to bring to the checklist their knowledge and observation of the child. The parents are able to observe the child in a less formal environment and the child's interaction with siblings and family. The teacher observes the child in the formal school setting and observes the child's interaction in class and on the playground with peers. It is therefore important to have both parties fill in one checklist to give a combined or holistic and comprehensive view of the child's emotional school readiness.

The therapist will use the emotional school readiness programme to assess a child's emotional school readiness. The therapist will be able to compare the scores and findings of the programme with the checklist. Both the discrepancies and similarities in the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme should be discussed between the therapist, parents and teacher to agree on the aspects with which the child might have difficulty and how to address these difficulties in therapy. It is necessary for all parties involved to apply their knowledge of the child to prevent or find solutions to the emotional school readiness difficulties the child faces. It will enable them to help the child learn and work through these aspects to be able to function successfully and according to what society deems essential for success (Bennett, 1985).

The input of both parents and teacher will be valuable to the therapeutic process for aspects such as time tables, likes and dislikes of the child and other aspects could be discussed. This holistic approach to emotional school readiness also allows for fair evaluation of the child, allows for less discrimination towards the child, and avoids abuse of the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme by one individual.

4.11 CONCLUSION

The researcher believes it important to develop the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme to assess a child's emotional school readiness, for children who are not emotionally ready "... usually do not achieve well in school ..." (Thompson & Rudolph, 2000, p 545). From the interviews and literature study (chapter two and three), it seems imperative to prepare a child emotionally to enter school. Most of the teachers and writers mentioned agree that not being emotionally ready for school could be to the child's disadvantage (Appendix D; Pieterse, 2001; Pretorius, 1993; Wentzel, 1996). It is important to evaluate all the aspects of a child's readiness for school, including emotional readiness because these aspects could influence a child's development. It is important to repeat that emotional school readiness and emotional development could be seen as the most important aspect of school readiness for they lay the foundation for other development (De Klerk & Le Roux, 2003; Goleman, 1996; Pieterse, 2001).

An important factor that needs to be remembered is that the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme should be viewed as in a developing phase and that the reliability and validity cannot yet be guaranteed. Both the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme are still in their infant stage and the researcher is aware that the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme still need to be investigated and reworked before they could be considered as a tool for assessing emotional school readiness.

The emotional school readiness programme is a rough outline of ideas based on the research done so far in this study and consequently needs to be scrutinised and evaluated. The emotional school readiness checklist is based on other forms of questionnaires, both standardised by the HSRC (Joubert, 1984) and informal (Wentzel, 1996). Therefore, the emotional school readiness checklist can be seen as more reliable and fact-based than the programme. The result is that the emotional school readiness checklist will be used to illustrate possible therapeutic intervention by means of a case study and the related programme will be recommended for further investigation.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLEMENTATION OF EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS CHECKLIST

“The child who is not yet ready for school on entry is already at a disadvantage in the formal learning situation”

Kapp, 2001

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Currently it is possible for a child to enter school at the age of five, but it presents a dilemma for the child who is not school ready, but of school-going age. Although school readiness tests and aptitude tests are helpful when determining intellectual readiness of children, the emotional aspects do not enjoy as much attention. An alternative to this dilemma is to view the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme as the first step to understand better where a child might be struggling emotionally. The emotional school readiness indicators that were designed will help to determine where a child might have emotional difficulties and this will allow a psychologist to design a therapeutic programme based on the possible problems the child showed through the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme. Thus, the main concept of this chapter will be to illustrate how the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme can be used to develop a therapeutic programme and the emphasis will be on the intervention and not the indicators. The application of the school readiness checklist will, however, be illustrated to indicate the scoring method.

5.2 PRACTICAL USE OF THE EMOTIONAL SCHOOL READINESS CHECKLIST

As stated in the conclusion of chapter four, the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme needs to be viewed as in its developing phase and further investigation is needed. Thus, the researcher believed it necessary to indicate the final goal of the research. The final goal is to illustrate how the emotional school readiness checklist could be used in future to develop therapeutic intervention for a child who is not emotionally ready for school. The focus of this research is therefore

not on the implementation of the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme, but rather its use for therapeutic means. It is recommended that the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme should first be reworked and redesigned (if necessary) before an attempt is made to assess a child.

A research hypothesis states a specific testable prediction about the relationship between specific variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). In the case of the emotional school readiness checklist, the variables include therapeutic intervention based on emotional problems identified by the checklist. A causal hypothesis will be found only after rejecting a null and confounding variable hypothesis (Graziano & Raulin, 2000).

Because there are many different examples of similar questionnaires as designed by Joubert (1984), Pretorius (1993) and Wentzel (1996), the validity of the emotional school readiness checklist will not be questioned. The aim is rather to show the implementation of the checklist. To eliminate the possibility of a null hypothesis, the checklist will be based on a case study rather than an actual participant. The causal hypothesis in this case will then be that the emotional school readiness checklist can be used to identify emotional problems and help design therapeutic intervention for the identified problems. As the researcher is aware that the emotional school readiness programme is still in its infant stage, it will not be utilised in the case study. Another reason for only implementing the emotional school readiness checklist and not the related programme is that the emotional school readiness programme is based on the same emotional readiness factors of the checklist and is thus an extension of the emotional school readiness checklist. The conclusion is that both indicators evaluate the same aspects and thus only one indicator will be utilised.

5.3 CASE STUDY

Zoleka is 4 years 11 months old. She will be turning six before 30 June 2005 and thus falls within the age requirement for entering grade 1 next year. Zoleka is an only child. Her mother is an architect and her father is an engineer. Zoleka is currently in a nursery school and has been attending this school for the past two years. Zoleka is a bright young girl with an above-average intellectual ability. Zoleka's mother feels that her daughter is school ready. She states that Zoleka is bright and can count to ten

and write her own name. Zoleka's mother feels her daughter is intellectually more advanced than the other children in Zoleka's class and she feels that she will rather place Zoleka into grade 1 than place her in grade 0. Zoleka's mother was asked to comment on her daughter's emotional school readiness and her mother was not sure if her daughter is emotionally school ready. She did, however, question the importance of emotional school readiness if her daughter is cognitively and academically ready for the formal school setting.

5.3.1 Case study checklist

The following checklist has been completed by both Zoleka's mother and Zoleka's nursery school teacher. No discrepancies were found and both the mother and teacher agreed on all the questions filled in.

QUESTIONS	ALMOST ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	SELDOM	ALMOST NEVER
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ASPECTS				
1) Is the child able to verbalise his/her emotions?	4	(3)	2	1
2) Can the child control his/her emotions?	4	(3)	2	1
3) The child does not get easily upset or cry easily?	(4)	3	2	1
4) Can the child separate from his/her parents or caregiver without signs of unnecessary distress?	(4)	3	2	1
5) Does the child show appropriate behaviour?	4	3	(2)	1
6) Can the child establish a relationship and communicate well with others?	4	3	2	(1)
SOCIAL ASPECTS				
7) Does the child make friends easily?	4	3	2	(1)
8) Does the child show consideration towards others?	4	3	(2)	1
9) Can the child work together in a group?	4	3	2	(1)
10) Can the child hold his/her own in a group?	4	3	(2)	1
11) Can the child wait his/her turn?	(4)	3	2	1
12) Can the child communicate with others?	4	3	(2)	1
13) Can the child share attention?	4	(3)	2	1
RESPONSIBILITY & ATTITUDE ASPECTS				
14) Is the child cheerful, happy and lively?	4	3	(2)	1
15) Does the child take responsibility for his/her actions?	4	(3)	2	1

QUESTIONS	ALMOST ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	SELDOM	ALMOST NEVER
16) Can the child complete a task?	4	3	2	1
17) The child does not need constant supervision/help in order to complete a task?	4	3	2	1
18) Can the child keep his/her concentration?	4	3	2	1
19) The child is not over-active.	4	3	2	1
20) Over-activity or liveliness does not influence his/her work negatively.	4	3	2	1
21) Does the child accept authority?	4	3	2	1
ACCHIEVEMENT				
22) Does the child enjoy completing tasks?	4	3	2	1
23) Is the child positive about school?	4	3	2	1
24) Is the child able to plan and organise?	4	3	2	1
25) Is the child willing to learn? / Does he/she want to learn?	4	3	2	1
Subtotal	32	27	10	3
TOTAL	72			

5.3.2 Scoring of the emotional school readiness checklist

5.3.2.1. Full-scale results

Zoleka scored 72. A score of between 50 and 75 indicates that she is, overall, emotionally ready for school but there are aspects that need attention.

5.3.2.2. Sub-totals

For the following emotional readiness aspects, Zoleka scored the following results: (The results in brackets are the minimum score, and if Zoleka's scores fall within these minimum ranges, it indicates possible problems that might need therapeutic intervention).

? Emotional intelligence aspects	:	17	(minimum score: 6-12)
? Social aspects	:	15	(minimum score: 7-16)
? Responsibility and attitude aspects	:	27	(minimum score: 8-18)
? Achievement aspects	:	13	(minimum score: 4-10)

Zoleka's score on the social aspects is below the required total for sub-scores and indicates that she might have problems concerning socialising. The emotional intelligence aspects also show slight problems and need attention.

5.3.2.3. Individual scores

The individual questions are important to determine problems Zoleka might have on specific aspects. A score of one or two for a specific question could indicate problems. The following questions indicate a score of 1 or 2:

- 5) Does the child show appropriate behaviour? (2 – seldom)
- 6) Can the child establish a relationship and communicate well with others?
(1 – almost never)
- 7) Does the child make friends easily? (1 – almost never)
- 8) Does the child show consideration towards others? (2 – seldom)
- 9) Can the child work together in a group? (1 – almost never)
- 10) Can the child hold his/her own in a group? (2 – seldom)
- 12) Can the child communicate with others? (2 – seldom)
- 14) Is the child cheerful, happy and lively? (2 – seldom)

5.3.3. Indicated problems

The emotional school readiness checklist scores indicate that Zoleka is emotionally ready for school based on her full-scale results. However, she seems to show problems with social and emotional aspects. The individual questions and sub-themes should be investigated and a therapeutic programme can be implemented.

5.4 THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMME FOR CASE STUDY

The social and emotional aspects of the emotional school readiness checklist seem to indicate that Zoleka has problems with communication and socialising as well as working in a group along with uncertainty, self-knowledge and self-esteem. According to Schaefer and Howard (1981), socialising refers to interaction with a group as well as feeling a sense of belonging. On the other side of the coin is isolation, where the

child prefers to be on her own and separated from a group. “Social isolation is highly correlated with other problems such as school difficulties ...” (Schaefer & Howard, 1981, p 263). A therapist should keep in mind that, at times, bright, creative children choose to be alone and not join in a group. These children may be able to be productive and feel happy. For the purpose of this case study, we assume this isolation is not functional or helpful to Zoleka.

It is necessary for a child to interact with others at school (Coleman, 1992). Socialising includes self-disclosure that helps develop friendships. In groups and friendships, peer values are shared, and are instrumental to a child’s feeling that she belongs (De Witt & Booyesen, 1995). The child will also interact and learn appropriate and acceptable behaviour. Reasons for Zoleka’s isolating behaviour could be because of fear of others or lack in social skills. It is important for the therapist to identify the reason for the isolation (Schaefer & Howard, 1981; Schneider, 1993).

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme will allow the therapist to develop a hypothesis based on Zoleka’s results. The therapist can, for example, start by looking at theories such as “internalising” (Kruger & Adams, 2002, p 258). This is a broad description of behaviour outlined by the writers as behaviour that could reflect emotional problems such as depression and withdrawal. It may also include embarrassment, self-consciousness, sadness and anxiety (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994).

What could be discussed is what makes Zoleka a valued group member (Schaefer & Howard, 1981). The aim is to aid Zoleka in feeling more poised, self-confident and creative (Griesel & Jacobs, 1991). Thompson and Rudolph (2000) describe a valued group member as generous, sharing, considerate, cooperative and a person who contributes. They are cheerful and ask permission to use others’ belongings (Thompson & Rudolph, 2000). There is a willingness to follow majority rule and play and work according to group standards.

Zoleka’s parents should also be part of the therapeutic process for “children who do not feel a sense of belonging and acceptance at home find it difficult to participate in unfamiliar groups” (Schaefer & Howard, 1981, p 265). The therapist can help

promote self-confidence and risk-taking as well. Griesel and Jacobs (1991) believe that if a person shows any difficulties, the family is also affected and therefore believe that parents can continue the therapeutic process at home or after completion of therapy.

Therapy can be continued by Zoleka's parents and teacher through modelling, teaching and discussing positive group belongingness as well as rewarding social interaction and actively encouraging group participation (Schaefer & Howard, 1981; Schneider, 1993; Thompson & Rudolph, 2000). The teacher will thus be valuable in assisting the parents.

5.4.1 Tips for Zoleka's teacher and parents to help promote her emotional school readiness

According to De Klerk and Le Roux (2003), Goleman (1996) as well as Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg (1977), there are tips a teacher and parents can follow to help a child develop emotional intelligence. The teacher and parents can help Zoleka build up a "feeling vocabulary" (Jacobson, 2002) and help name and explain feelings. Give recognition to Zoleka for her efforts as well as regular positive feedback. Emphasise self-knowledge and encourage her to take risks and solve her own problems. Zoleka's parents and teacher should keep in mind that each child's emotional set-up is unique and should be treated as such (De Klerk and Le Roux 2003; Goleman, 1996; Jacobson, 2002; Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg 1977).

5.5 CONCLUSION

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme could be invaluable when measuring a child's emotional readiness for school. The checklist and programme should be used as indicators for possible emotional difficulties a child might be experiencing in, or outside, a school setting. The main reason for developing the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme is to possibly identify problems so that the therapeutic process to help the child can be as short but effective as possible. The main reason for this is that a child who is not emotionally ready for school but finds him/herself in a school setting still needs to

function and participate in school activities. This indicates that a child in school will not have as much time to participate in a long therapeutic process. The child might also have other difficulties that require intervention such as occupational therapy or speech therapy. The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme as methods of exploration were designed to shorten the exploration period during therapy and concentrate on the possible difficulties identified by the indicators.

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme should be seen as "... an exploration of the child's world and not as an oracle foretelling the child's future" (Whittle, 1982, p 26).

6. CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

“There can never be a perfect measure of school readiness ...”

*Duncan Hindle
(Jacobson, 2002)*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Social and emotional school readiness is essential for young children’s early school success. This is demonstrated by confidence, friendliness, good peer relations, as well as the ability to tackle and persist with challenging tasks, just to name a few (Lang, Jackim & McGregor, 2000).

6.2 FINDINGS

6.2.1 Reason for undertaking the research

The South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 was revised and amended in 2002. The new age requirement for entering grade 1 is defined as follows: “the admission age of a learner to a public school to grade 1 is age five turning six by 30 June in the year of admission” (section 5(4)). The implication is that children from age five will be allowed to enter school.

The research has shown that there are many emotional differences between children of different ages. Under the new policy, a teacher could have children from age seven- to five-, even four-years-old in a class. Another implication is that some of these children might not be school ready, whether academically or emotionally, and the child might show difficulty in optimal development if s/he is not ready for formal schooling.

Parents seem to want to send their children to school earlier and the amended schools act allows for this to happen. The research and development of the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme is to identify emotional

problems children might have. These indicators are to assist a teacher and professional person in identifying possible difficulties and to apply them in designing therapeutic intervention. The aim is to assist a child who is in school to overcome emotional difficulties to allow the child to function optimally in grade 1.

6.2.2 Emotional school readiness as important factor for success

According to De Klerk and Le Roux (2003), Goleman (1996) and Pieterse (2001), the importance of social and emotional development is easily forgotten, although it could be regarded as the foundation of other kinds of development. A child should fulfil certain requirements such as affective-social, normative, cognitive, physical and emotional requirements to be school ready (Kapp, 2001). Children who enter school without these characteristics are less likely to be successful during the early years of school, which may create social and academic problems later in life (Lang, Jackim & McGregor, 2000).

According to Hanekom and Robinson (1991), it is the right of every child to have educational opportunities that will be as favourable as possible for the child's positive development. If a child enters the formal school setting without being emotionally ready, there may be negative implications for the child's adjustment to school and self-concept. Johansson (1965, as cited in Pretorius, 1993, p 71) believes that "lack of emotional readiness may affect the child's attitude towards schoolwork", and according to Pieterse (2001), a child's self-image is strongly influenced by the measures of success the child achieves in schoolwork and other activities.

6.2.3 Important emotional school readiness factors

The importance of emotional maturity and ability to understand, verbalise and interpret emotions has been highlighted. The ability to socialise and interact with others as well as a child's confidence and control are also important factors. Concentration and the child's ability to control his/her impulses and not be over-active have also been noted. Other important factors that have been identified include a child taking responsibility and acting in a socially acceptable manner. Task completion and a child's willingness and ability to achieve were also highlighted.

The child should want to achieve academically and enjoy the work and tasks s/he has to complete. A child should also show a willingness to learn and a positive attitude towards school. This includes enjoying learning and interacting with others and displaying a willingness and eagerness to go to school and learn (Benson, 2002; Coleman, 1992; Jacobson 2002; Johansson as cited in Pretorius, 1993; Kapp, 2001; Merrell & Gimpel, 1998; Pieterse, 2001; Pretorius, 1993; Schneider, 1993; Sternberg, 2000).

6.2.4 Other findings

The teachers who participated in the research were chosen randomly. One unexpected finding was that the teachers dealt with children of different race and cultural groups as well as different language backgrounds. The findings were that all the teachers shared similar expectations and points of views on emotional school readiness. It could be concluded that children of different language, culture and race groups present similar emotional school readiness problems. This finding should however be further investigated to determine if the preliminary finding is correct and viable.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions drawn from this study indicate that:

- ? Total school readiness is critical for a child entering school.
- ? Emotional school readiness for formal schooling is an important factor in school readiness as is physical and intellectual readiness.
- ? Emotional school readiness and stability is essential, for if the child shows emotional security it will allow the child to concentrate, be creative and enjoy formal schooling.
- ? If a child is emotionally ready for school, the child will show self-confidence and be able to assert him/herself.
- ? A child who is school ready should have the potential to complete his/her school career without any distress.

- ? Emotional unreadiness for school can affect a child's functioning in all aspects at school, including academic and social success.
- ? Emotional problems may go unheeded for too long. Emotional problems may affect a child's ability to learn in school as well as the quality of life (Kruger & Adams, 2002).

6.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Evaluating a child's school readiness with formal standardised tests as well as with the developed emotional school readiness checklist and related programme will give an integrated and holistic view of the developing child.

The emotional school readiness checklist that has been developed can be used by teachers and parents to identify possible emotional problems a child might have.

The emotional school readiness programme is an extension of the emotional school readiness checklist and will be used to further identify or concur with the information gathered from the emotional school readiness checklist.

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme function as early indicators of possible emotional difficulties. The indicators can serve as a starting point for therapeutic intervention.

It should be kept in mind that a child cannot necessarily be kept out of school as a result of not being school ready. These methods of assessment are therefore not to establish a child's readiness to keep a child from entering school, but rather to identify in which aspects a child might be lagging to develop therapy that will assist a child to overcome these difficulties, whether or not s/he is in school.

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme could be used to identify problems faster and allow therapy to be shorter and more focused.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

- ? This study has a number of deficiencies that should be addressed in future studies of this nature. The main aspect that needs to be considered is that the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme was not practically administered on participants. This means that all the following recommendations are based on possible problem areas that might be encountered, but are not necessarily true. Nevertheless, the results of this study does deliver interesting leads that can be followed up in future studies.
- ? First and foremost it is necessary to scrutinise the validity of the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme before assessing a child. As mentioned before the checklist and programme should be viewed as being in its developmental phase and that the reliability and validity of the data obtained from it cannot yet be guaranteed.
- ? The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme cannot yet be seen as representative of all South African children. It was identified in the interviews that teachers have children of different language, race and cultural backgrounds in a class. Further results of the interviews indicate that although cultural differences are present, it seems that the children regardless of race or language do have similar emotional school readiness difficulties. This should be investigated. Further studies should include samples of each cultural group in South Africa. It would also be advisable to conduct the studies in not only one area, but rather a nationwide random draw of participants. One limitation is that previously disadvantaged and rural areas were not targeted during this research and this needs to be further researched.
- ? For future study and implementation of the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme, the following guidelines can be used to identify the subject group:

Description of subject group

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme can be administered on any child for determining emotional school readiness. The indicators should be used in conjunction with a standardised school readiness test. The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme is to be used on a child who is suspected of having emotional difficulties that need attention before the child enters school or if a child is currently in school.

Age

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme was designed for children between the ages of four and seven years.

Gender

Both the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme was designed not to be gender specific although some of the pictures present in the emotional school readiness programme illustrates male children. The programme will need some adjustment such as using the female form of the Bar-Ilan pictures (Itskovitz & Strauss, 1982) for girls and the male pictures (included in the programme) for boys. The gender in the instruction and questions of the emotional school readiness programme should be changed from “him” to “her” if it is to be used for girls. Thus, if the appropriate changes are made the inventory can be used on both male and female participants.

Language

The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme has been written in English and should only be applied to English-speaking children unless the person using the indicators is fluent in another language such as Afrikaans and will be able to correctly translate the

questions to the child. However, it is recommended that an accredited translator should be used to assist in translating the work.

Culture

During interviews with the teachers (see Appendix D), it was established that children of different cultures and language backgrounds seem to present the same emotional difficulties when discussing emotional school readiness. The emotional school readiness checklist and related programme is designed not to be culturally specific, but there might be cultural differences that will influence the results. These aspects should be investigated and identified before the indicators are administered.

Schooling

The children that will be assessed will have to have gone to nursery school and/or preferably grade 0.

Functioning

Functioning refers to the current functioning of the child. The child could be suspected as not being ready for school by the teacher and the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme could be used in conjunction with a school readiness test to determine in what areas the child might not be school ready, in other words emotional, cognitively or physically. Otherwise, the child could be described as being suspected of not being emotionally ready for school or lacking emotional skills. The checklist and related programme will then be used to determine what emotional aspects the child is having difficulty with.

- ? It is of utmost importance to recommend that if the emotional school readiness checklist or related programme is to be used to assess children, the safety and

confidentiality of the children be assured. It is recommended that the study be done based on sound psychology ethics to safeguard the children.

- ? The participants might not comprehend some of the questions in both the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme. It is recommended that the material be examined and only then implemented and these aspects monitored for possible correction.
- ? If a child's school readiness is in question, the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme should not be the main source of information for neither is a reliable forms of assessment. It is recommended that standardised tests be used and the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme be added to a comprehensive battery of school readiness tests.
- ? If the emotional school readiness checklist and related programme are used as indicators, this should be part of a holistic view of the child. This implies that the therapist, parents and teacher, with observation from all parties, should each play an important role when determining a child's emotional school readiness.
- ? Based on the interviews, it is identified that there are problems with integrating five-year-olds into the grade 1 system. It is recommended that the impact of enrolling five-year-olds into school (based on the amended schools act) should be investigated more closely.
- ? For future studies or duplication of this study it is necessary to obtain more comprehensive information regarding the school readiness of children. In this view not only should the grade 1 teachers be consulted on their view of emotional school readiness but also professionals such as psychologists, parents, and other persons with knowledge regarding emotional school readiness such as the education department. This will ensure a more integrated and detailed notion of emotional school readiness.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Entering school is a symbolic step of a child entering a great adventure. “The child is taking an important step on a long road ...” (Jersild, 1975, as cited in Pretorius, 1993, p 169). This road will be filled with many obstacles the child needs to overcome and if the child is not emotionally ready to face these obstacles, it could be a very frustrating, difficult and rocky road.

Perhaps even beginning to address some of the important factors that determine emotional school readiness is an impossible task, as any attempt to define the factors will leave out many of the others that equally merit attention. There is a clear need for an integrated, comprehensive, developmental model of readiness that draws from various disciplines engaged in the emotional readiness concern. It is critical to integrate the current knowledge, and identify the gaps that exist within this current conceptualisation of the emotional readiness of the South African child.

“Unless the foundation of a house is firmly, strongly made, the walls and the roof will not stand” (McEvilly & Magau, 1984, as cited in Lang, Jackim & McGregor, 2000, p 34).

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APPENDIX A

Letter of approval – Education Department

An original letter of approval from the Gauteng Education Department granting permission to the researcher to interview grade 1 teachers



UMnyango WezeMfundo
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Date:	18 August 2004
Name of Researcher:	Fauconnier Justine
Address of Researcher:	14 Seringpark
	Wapadrand Road
	Pretoria, 0001
Telephone Number:	(012) 8073630
Fax Number:	(011) 4639249
Research Topic:	Developing Indicators of Emotional School Readiness of South African Children and Possible use therefore
Number and type of schools:	6 Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane South & North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

- 1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
- 2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
- 3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

Office of the Senior Manager – Strategic Policy Research & Development
Room 525, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001 P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000
Tel: (011) 355-0488 Fax: (011) 355-0286

4. *A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
5. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
6. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Senior Manager (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
7. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.*
8. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
9. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
10. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
12. *On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Senior Manager: Strategic Policy Development, Management & Research Coordination with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.*
13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Senior Manager concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

pp. Nomvula Ubisi

ALBERT CHANEE
ACTING DIVISIONAL MANAGER: OFSTED

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.	
Signature of Researcher:	
Date:	

APPENDIX B

Participant's informed consent form

Example of the consent form completed by the grade 1
teachers participating in the research

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, **Justine Fauconnier**, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of the research: **Developing indicators of emotional school readiness of South African children and possible therapeutic use thereof**. I understand the information given about the project and its purpose.

I am aware that the results of the project, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, qualifications and name will be anonymously processed into a final report for a Master’s dissertation as undertaken by **Justine Fauconnier** for MA Psychology.

I declare that I have received all relevant information pertaining to the project, including the personal details of the researcher, including name, qualifications, age and contact details as stated below.

I may at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the project. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and, of my own free will, declare myself prepared to participate in the project.

Participant’s name _____ (Please print)

Participant’s signature _____ Date _____

.....

TO BE RECEIVED BY PARTICIPANT - TEAR OFF

Name: **Justine Fauconnier** Age: 25 years
Qualifications: BA (3 yrs), Honours in Psychology (1 yr), Masters in Psychology (3rd yr)
Contact numbers: **082-427-7823** or (012) 807-3630 (Home)
PO Box 98654, Sloane Park 2152.

APPENDIX C

Individual interviews

Appendix C.1: Teacher 1

Appendix C.2: Teacher 2

Appendix C.3: Teacher 3

Appendix C.4: Teacher 4

Appendix C.5: Teacher 5

Appendix C.6: Teacher 6

APPENDIX C.1: TEACHER 1

1) What does the concept “emotional school readiness” mean to you?

The child should have some sort of self-awareness and the ability to control themselves within this more structured environment.

2) What emotional characteristics or qualities do you think are vital for a child to have when entering school?

I feel independence is also a sign of emotional maturity or readiness, and distraction as well ... the child thinks I'm supposed to be doing this but so-and-so has dropped his pencil and I will watch him for half an hour and then, O my goodness, everyone has finished their work and I haven't. O well, close my book and off I go. So concentration and self-discipline is important. Well separation anxiety is one of them, and then ability to socialise ... and wait your turn and concentrate ... and also a lot of tension for the child I should think ... handling tension.

3) How important is emotional school readiness?

My headmaster use to say ... it's like having fruit on a tree ... if you fiddle and prod at it, it is going to be bruised. At the end of the day, you just need to give it time to ripen and that is true for a lot of children, especially the five-year-old boys.

RESEARCHER: So the emotional thing is ...

TEACHER: It's huge ... I think it's huge ... There is nothing to base it on except observation and experience. Parents say their child is always bright and always clever and always ready and the child is bored at home, whatever ... you know, and I say to the parents that is fine, and it is possible that they might cope, but if there is that small barrier like a small visual discrimination problem, it will be a huge mountain for the child especially if the child is emotionally not ready on top of that ... And why do you want a child to finish school a year earlier? Not only are you sending an immature child off to school, you will have an immature child leaving school in matric ... what for? ... wait a year ...

Children cope better if they are emotionally mature or ready for school. Some of them might have other physical difficulties or struggle with ... like Maths ... but you can often farm them out a bit to peers who are coping, because they can socialise with them, they can help each other whereas with the immature ones you can't do that. They are too much of a handful. So from that point of view, the emotionally immature ones take a lot of the teacher's time.

4) Do you have children in your class who you feel are not emotionally ready for school?

This year I'm very fortunate that I don't, but I taught at Halfway House last year and had many, many of them coming in totally not; and many of them had not been to nursery school and are not socialised at all ... so the emotional intelligence is not there.

We have all these divorces, assaults, the violence the children are exposed to ... they are often emotionally traumatised and just can't cope. We've got a couple now that I'm truly concerned about because I think they are depressed in grade 1 and grade 2 and part of it is they just don't cope ... they are emotionally immature.

5) If the answer is yes, why do you think they are not emotionally ready?

Well, the five-year-olds are a nightmare. There are one or two of them that are OK, but most of them are an absolute nightmare. It's just the whole routine ... the toilet training ... the everything else ... they're not ready. I have a little one with separation anxiety that is lagging. The fuss that gets created some mornings is incredible. He works himself up so that he makes himself vomit ... I have got a little one this year who did not go to nursery school. And he has not got the skills. So we have had stealing, bullying, many of those sort of negative things from him because he does not know how to relate to these children and he gets frustrated and then it flows over into negative kind of behaviour. You also have the five-year-old going me, me, me, me, all the time and the seven-year-old is more independent.

6) How does a child who is not emotionally ready for school affect you as a teacher?

Well, it is very, very disruptive, and when you have a number of them in your class you don't get to work and they don't have self-discipline, they can't sit still, they can't concentrate ... it is a huge problem. The child with the separation anxiety is demanding. And that's the trouble. You try and accommodate that child and you are with your approach with discipline, you are more lenient with him because he can't cope with the demands of the formal setting. So it is like all these balls balancing in the air on this thin line between total chaos ... and accomplishing something ... almost like a juggler, and it's difficult sometimes. They take up time and effort, for you have to keep those children busy, especially if they are younger and cannot do all of the work.

7) How does it affect your class or learning programme?

You have, let's say, 30 others who are completely capable and able of doing whatever it is that you are planning to do but it's always disrupted by the baby ... the emotionally unready child...

Yes, absolutely ... and in fact with this little one that I was telling you about with the separation anxiety, the whole school eventually gets involved because he's screaming from the gate and the prefects are all mother-henning him and telling the teacher and and it's terrible. So it does not only affect your class ... it can affect the school as well.

8) Do you think that not being emotionally ready has an effect on the child?

If so, why?

Absolutely, and I think it goes all the way through their school career with them ... what for? With the little one with separation anxiety, he's actually got to suck it up and get on with it at some stage. He can't be carried like this, he has got to take some responsibility for his own emotional states. We do the breathing and relax now and circles on the back, and but you spend sometimes 20 minutes in the morning

with this little boy on my lap or whatever, trying to calm him down while I'm telling the others to get out your writing books and draw the zig-zag pattern, and they are going on, on their own, because you can't leave him dissolved in "snot en trane" ... And as he is sitting on your lap, he is not doing any work ... so he's falling behind academically as well...

I know ... the five-year-olds have got to do sport and change for swimming and now they've got to unbutton their shirt, take off the tie, keep the clothes together, afterwards put the shoes back on, tie them, re-button the shirt ... and a five-year-old has trouble with that and so the teacher ends up doing all that and that becomes an expectation of I don't have to cause mommy does and teacher does and when do they ever become independent? And it spills over into other things, I don't have to do writing cause just as teacher did my button she's going to come and help me do this writing, so they don't need to make the effort ...

And keeping the younger children busy is bad for the five-year-old himself, they learn everyone else has to do it, but I don't have to yet, it does not matter cause my teacher knows and they develop a bad work ethic, and next year when they are ready for school, they still have that bad work ethic that now comes along with them...

APPENDIX C.2: TEACHER 2

1) What does the concept “emotional school readiness” mean to you?

Is the child really ready to cope with everything in the class and being away from his parents or then the nursery school, ready to sit in a classroom situation and work with all the ... you know, in a group with all the different kids, is he emotionally ready to do that. Can he cope with me telling him to wait and not to go and sit on the carpet. Is he ready to accept that, why I'm telling him ... And to be ready to accept that suddenly in a formal school situation they can't do it anymore. If my teacher does say to me don't do this or don't do that I don't burst out in tears because I wanted to do that. If in the group, I can't have my way all the time I'm not the first one to do things all the time, or I'm the best ... then he should be ready to accept this that somebody may be better than he is or the teacher giving each one a chance. But the little ones that are not emotionally ready for these things can't cope. And also the main thing ... I'm thinking all over, but I'm just saying what comes to mind ... to be away from his mom, I mean suddenly, OK he has been in a nursery school, but that is a different environment. I'm not going to class and now have to sit on my chair but now I have to sit down and do what the teacher told me to do and the child is not emotionally ready to be away from his parents or his mom; he will not accept it. To know, you know, in the group there are a lot of kids to compete for the teacher's attention and it is that he will not always be first or if he forgets something, that it is fine, I mean that the teacher is not going to do anything to me, I will just overcome it, but the kids who are not emotionally ready cannot accept it because in their little minds they don't want to do this ...

2) What emotional characteristics or qualities do you think are vital for a child to have when entering school?

Independent ... Mature ... The child has to be able to separate from his parents. He should be able to work in a group and accept authority. He should be able to work with others. Be able to socialise and get along. If the child is not emotionally ready, the child cannot cope or work and do things for himself. Like dress himself and all these things affect them. Emotional awareness is also important.

3) How important is emotional school readiness?

Some people, especially parents, do not see emotionally readiness for school as very important. We use to assess children before entering school and as long as the child performed academically, the parents did not seem to be bothered with the emotional stuff. Even if you talk to them, they would say but he can write and count and does so well ... because they don't see a child in the same environment we do. The structure is not at home.

4) Do you have children in your class who you feel are not emotionally ready for school?

I had last year. It's not always age that is the reason for emotional readiness. You can have a seven-year-old who is emotionally immature and a child who is five that is emotionally ready for school.

5) If the answer is yes, why do you think they are not emotionally ready?

Some of the children who are not emotionally ready for school are still egocentric and little things like standing in line ... they always want to be first and they want their books marked first. The little ones are egocentric and what I want to do I want to do now. And that's why I let my kids stand from the shortest to the longest. They still find it difficult to express their feelings so they are not emotionally ready. I had a child last year that is eight ... and he was the biggest baby of the lot. But the younger ones get tired and they are not ready to sit for long periods of time. He was turning eight in grade 1, and he was a real baby, he could not get himself dressed and swimming was a problem. He was an only child and his parents babied him. If his dad came to pick him up, he will literally pick him up and carry him to the car. Emotionally for him, he was always in a fight with one or other of his friends cause you know how kids borrow things from each other; he could not... everything was his ... he could not share or socialise with others. But he was in a nursery school.

This year not, but last year definitely ... I had a little boy who turned six in December, at end of grade 1. The nursery school told the parents he was not ready for school.

He did attend OT classes but his dad wanted him in school and I must say, for most of the year, the child was not ready emotionally for school. Concentration and everything also came in, but over the whole, he was not ready, not only emotionally. He was not ready to let go or be away from his parents. He could not accept that he had to sit on his chair, he wants to stand up when he wanted to and do what he wanted to, he wanted everyone to do what he wanted them to do including his friends. I have 12 boys in my class. Eight of them come from broken homes where the parents are divorced. And I have the most problems with them. Bullying others and fighting ... I'm not sure if it is emotional unreadiness, because they seem to be emotionally ready, it's just sometimes that they seem to be this way ...

6) How does a child who is not emotionally ready for school affect you as a teacher?

He (eight-year-old) took up a lot of time, sometimes the emotionally unready child starts accepting a teacher and maybe she is off sick, it is the emotionally unready child who disrupts the substitute teacher's class and makes it unbearable. He does not want to do his work, throws temper tantrums and so on. But as grade 1 teachers, we try and avoid taking time off for the sake of the children because change is big for them, even the emotionally ready children. With this child specifically, I had to help him get dressed, help him find his clothes and I spent a lot of time helping and not teaching.

7) How does it affect your class or learning programme?

Some children will ridicule and tease others and the emotionally unready child would get angry and in the classroom, the child will shout or cry. In the classroom situation, the one who is emotionally unready for school is the one who disrupts class.

8) Do you think that not being emotionally ready has an effect on the child?

If so, why?

Yes. With this little eight-year-old, it affected his self-esteem and friendships with his friends and so on. Kids are cruel, as soon as they see a child can't cope, they start

to tease the children. With the eight-year-old whom I had to help dress, he was teased and called a baby, and that of course affects the child even more because he hears this and starts crying and it gets worse cause he is doing what a baby will do and gets ridiculed even more. Some emotional unreadiness is caused by situations. I have a little boy who is ready for school. Even emotionally, but if he spent the weekend with his dad, he does not want to come to school and is disobedient. Emotional problems affect the child's academic work. Sometimes after an emotional outburst, he is tired and does not have the energy to work. Some need settling in the beginning of the day so it takes a while to get to their work and sometimes they get behind, but only a little. I think there will be conflict between children of different ages. If one of the children fails, you will have a child who is eight in grade 1 and then you have this little five-year-old keeping him up and taking all the time. Some of them don't take well to little ones interfering.

Anything else you would like to add?

As I said, the age policy does not necessarily mean that the younger child will not be ready for school, there are some that will be able to cope with school. But our school system's pace is so fast that some of the older kids struggle. How will a younger one be able to? We want them to develop at their own rate, but the rate will be too fast for the young ones and too slow for the older kids. But I feel that most five-year-olds will not be ready for school. In all aspects, not just emotional. This means that we will have more and more children entering grade 1 who are not ready to go to school. I'm sorry to say, they will not be able to cope. I do feel the OBE does help with things like life skills and maybe they will learn like the socialising in time with the life skills, but there is not enough time to do life skills the whole day to help them catch up with the emotional aspects. But I don't feel you can change your whole class and programme just to fit one or two children who are behind. That's why they should go to nursery school and grade 0 first to be ready. Our grade 0 class helps to ready the children for the work they will have to do in grade 1. So our grade 0 class prepares them for our grade 1. There is no way we can pamper a five-year-old in class and not give attention to the programme ... the children have to learn a certain amount to ready them for grade 2, and we cannot work slower to accommodate 1 or 2 who are behind cause then the whole class falls behind and the children do not complete all the work.

APPENDIX C.3: TEACHER 3

1) What does the concept “emotional school readiness” mean to you?

The child has to be able to adapt to a situation where there are about 40 children in a class. The child is to be able to cope emotionally. In other words, the child should not burst out in tears and should be able to finish their work. We refer to the children as emotionally immature.

2) What emotional characteristics or qualities do you think are vital for a child to have when entering school?

The child should be able to concentrate and finish his work. The younger the child is, the more emotional they are. And this leads to them not being able to cope and concentrate. The child needs to be independent and accept authority. The child should also be able to finish his worksheets in the 20 minutes. The child should be able to socialise and work in a group with others as well as share. The child should be able to socialise with children of other ages on the playground and my five-year-olds keep to themselves. They form their own group isolated from the others because they know they are different. The child should be able to understand and interpret emotions, of the friends and how the teacher feels. They have to be able to sit still. They should also not only think of themselves but of others as well. The child should have discipline, that is very important.

3) How important is emotional school readiness?

Very important. The emotional readiness of a child affects him throughout his life, and if it is not given, attention to it could cause worse problems in the future. The emotional aspects play a very important role. It could affect the child's academic performance and the child could fail the year. Socialising is so important for acceptance and fitting in as well.

4) Do you have children in your class who you feel are not emotionally ready for school?

I have. My five-year-olds turning six this year. They are not emotionally ready. Some of the children who are not emotionally ready for school will have a very negative attitude towards the teacher, his friends and the work.

5) If the answer is yes, why do you think they are not emotionally ready?

The five-year-olds cannot handle the formal schooling yet, they still want to play and have fun and thus cannot sit still or concentrate. In addition, all of them are like that. Even the smartest one in the class is not coping because she is not emotionally ready for school. Most of the five-year-olds cry in the morning, so they have trouble separating from their parents and during the day all they want to do is play. If I do discipline the children, they tend to also start crying because they take it very personal, even if I do not discipline them but another child, they still take it very personally and seem distressed. Some of the children who are immature will not listen to authority. They do not accept it for some never had it.

6) How does a child who is not emotionally ready for school affect you as a teacher?

Tears are a big problem. You struggle with the children if they cry. They need extra attention from me ... the whole day ... The two who are very emotional need physical attention and I have to give them hugs constantly, so they are around me the whole time. The other three are not just emotionally not ready for school but over all aspects and they need the most attention and it is constant, otherwise they fall behind. I refer to “re-teaching” these children, so you re-do a lot of work that the other children have done and understand. Only yesterday it became too much to handle, for the children who are not emotionally ready need constant supervision and I have a class of up to 30 children that should be educated. They do not listen and I ended up in tears in class. I know it is unprofessional, but you cannot cope with all the extra work that these children need. It places a lot of stress on you to cope with these children. I tried talking to the children but some of them do not seem to be able to

understand my emotions and what is expected of them. This is my 9th group of grade 1 I have and this is the first year that I'm struggling with the teaching. And it seems to be the five-year-olds that disrupt the class and take up all of the time and they make teaching impossible for me as teacher. It is not fair to the teacher or the children.

7) How does it affect your class or learning programme?

So every day I sit with them in class time individually in this big class and I have to give them attention. This results in the rest of the class having to continue on their own while I'm busy. The five-year-olds I can never leave alone. The other children have to go on, on their own. I will give them extra work while I'm focused on the five-year-olds. It is extremely difficult. You have five-year-olds, six-year-olds turning seven and if a child failed, you even have seven-year-olds turning eight, all in one class and all with different needs. Some of the five-year-olds are very smart and have the cognitive ability, but because of the emotional immaturity, they fall behind in their work. I think the child who is ready for school also gets affected. He is there to learn and develop and he does not receive as much attention because the teacher is busy with the five-year-old and that child could feel that he needs and wants attention but is not getting it. Some might feel unwanted or slack in their work because the teacher does not check their work and they start to become lazy and unproductive.

8) Do you think that not being emotionally ready has an effect on the child?

If so, why?

I feel that giving a child discipline so early in life, especially if they have not been to nursery school or have discipline at home, you feel like you are breaking down the child's self-esteem. Most of the time, emotional immaturity affects the child's academic performance. Some of the children, especially the five-year-olds, pick up that there is something wrong with them if they need extra work done and it affects their self-esteem, the progress in the class and me as a teacher. The child is aware that there are problems and that he is different. I feel that if a child is not emotionally ready for school you repress his personality. Some of the five-year-olds do not have social skills and end up isolating themselves and most of them show unacceptable behaviour such as hitting one another, stealing ... stealing is a big problem. Some

children fail because of emotional difficulties. They do not fail because they are immature or emotionally not ready, but the emotional immaturity causes the child not to complete work, fall behind, not understand or concentrate and all of these aspects can cause a child not to pass the year.

Anything else you would like to add?

Grade 0 would have been ideal for all the five-year-olds in my class. Grade 0 prepares a child for grade 1. Our school does not have a grade 0 class, there is no space, but then I feel if the education department wants to send children to school earlier, they should help the school establish grade 0 classes to help prepare that child to be able to fulfil all the requirements of grade 1 with success. The child gets used to the school and the setting and although it is not as disciplined as grade 1, the child learns how to sit still, concentrate, complete a task and just develop naturally to emotional readiness. Not all my five-year-olds are emotionally ready for school and even their development is still not complete. They are expected to do things they only should be able to do at seven years. We are trying to make some children ready two years before they have to be and I feel this will break the child. For if the child, especially the five-year-olds, still want to play and interact which is normal for their age, they are being forced to sit down, not talk and complete tasks that are not part of their personality yet. They still have to play at this age and now you are forcing them into this mould, which stops his development. It is not fair to the child to force him into a mould that is made for seven-year-olds.

A big problem is the different cultures, being a white teacher in an all-black school ... there are differences, but even between the different language groups. Some children need praise, others need discipline, others don't pay attention to discipline but will listen if you have a ruler in your hand ... it can cause problems. Language is a big problem with the black children, they are being schooled in maybe a second or third language, some of them have never been to a pre-school and most of them come from single-parent houses where the parent works and the child is not exposed to authority or rules, because the child can do as he pleases while he is alone.

APPENDIX C.4: TEACHER 4

1) What does the concept “emotional school readiness” mean to you?

Maybe the most important is that they are able to leave their parents, to be on their own and be independent.

2) What emotional characteristics or qualities do you think are vital for a child to have when entering school?

The children should be able to interact with people. In other words be able to behave, have good manners in a way as well. As I said be able to concentrate, separate and cope with school. Be able to share and have good listening abilities. They should be able to wait their turn when they want to talk. Another part is that our day is quite long and the children should be able to stay at school for the whole day and concentrate as well. Of course they play and do other things as well, but they need to be able to focus on their work when expected of them.

3) How important is emotional school readiness?

Very important, but I'm lucky to say that we have not experienced that problem so far.

4) Do you have children in your class who you feel are not emotionally ready for school?

Not really. None that I feel will not be able to manage through the year. Some of the children are more ready emotionally than others, but no one is not emotionally unready for school. At our school, we have a nursery school and grade 0 structure at the foundation level and I feel these prepare the children for school and allow them to be emotionally ready for grade 1. Most of the parents are aware of these problems and will prefer not to enrol them into school.

5) If the answer is yes, why do you think they are not emotionally ready?

Some of the children do cry sometimes because of bullying or that they have to stay after school and it gets to be a long day, but these are not because they are emotionally unready, these are just normal reactions under these circumstances. Some of them tire more easily than others. It is more pressure than not being ready. There is no test we can use to be able to determine if there are emotional problems or not.

6) How does a child who is not emotionally ready for school affect you as a teacher?

I think a child who is not emotionally ready will need more time and attention from the teacher. I do try and avoid not spending time with the whole class. Because my children all seem to be emotionally ready for school, I place the ones who might struggle a bit with a friend who is stronger and more ready and they help each other to cope and complete the work. But I think it should be tiring for a teacher. I have a small class of only 24 children, but I think a teacher with a bigger class will have her hands full.

7) How does it affect your class or learning programme?

I think they could be disruptive and take time from the programme, but I cannot actually say.

8) Do you think that not being emotionally ready has an effect on the child?

If so, why?

I think it depends on the teacher. The teacher can put the child down and discipline him and tell him he is stupid and this will affect the child negatively, but the teacher should help and encourage the child and assist him to overcome the emotional difficulties and help resolve it before he goes to the next grade.

APPENDIX C.5: TEACHER 5

1) What does the concept “emotional school readiness” mean to you?

The child needs to be ready for all aspects of school and the emotional pressure that comes with it. They should be able to listen, handle pressure and cope.

2) What emotional characteristics or qualities do you think are vital for a child to have when entering school?

Definitely separation, that's number one. The child should also be able to interact with other children and should be able to work in a group. The child should be able to share information, equipment and so on. They must also be able to handle being corrected by the teacher.

3) How important is emotional school readiness?

It is very important. Emotional school readiness allows a child to cope with school.

4) Do you have children in your class who you feel are not emotionally ready for school?

I do have some five-year-olds who seem not to be emotionally ready for school. I feel these children, especially the younger ones, get cheated out of a year of development.

5) If the answer is yes, why do you think they are not emotionally ready?

These children are very egotistical. They are also very sensitive, if you look at them wrong they start to cry. They do not like being said no to. There are some five-year-olds who are not as focused as the older learners. It seems that they are in their own world. It is not that they are distracted, it just seems that they're not at home in the class environment. Some of them tend to invert or withdraw from the class. I find that their concentration is very weak. They seem not to be able to concentrate and this

influences the children around them in a group situation. They don't participate and they just sit back and they let the older ones do the work for them because they are use to mommy doing everything at home for them.

6) How does a child who is not emotionally ready for school affect you as a teacher?

They take the teacher's time and they are very demanding. These children need constant supervision and help. Sometimes you feel like you're being a mother. Especially with the younger children. You wipe their nose, you take them to the bathroom ... the others are already that step further. These are times when you do not get to work with the others cause you have to help the child find his clothes and find his scissors and so on ...

7) How does it affect your class or learning programme?

Well, as I said, these children do sometimes withdraw and do not participate in group activities and this is a problem for the OBE for the child has to work in a group and the emotionally unready child leaves the work or does not participate and expects the group to do the work for them. So this puts pressure on the rest of the group to carry a child who is not doing his part. They rely on others and become a burden. Sometimes, the emotionally unready child irritates the other children, they get impatient and some will even grab the pencil and do the work for the child.

**8) Do you think that not being emotionally ready has an effect on the child?
If so, why?**

I cannot say that the emotionally unready children in my class have problems with things like numbers or things like that but they are in general behind ... everything they do is so much slower. Their little bodies even. They fall behind in their work and need to be taught basic things before we can get to the work and they fall behind. I think not being emotionally ready will definitely catch up with these kids, if not now maybe by grade 4 where they start to go from one teacher and subject to the next and no personal attention can be given. These children have a problem fitting in.

These children are not able to handle even the morning work, they should be out playing and developing, especially the five-year-olds. They should not be in a class trying to function as a seven-year-old. The most damaging thing is that I think these children's psyche hits rock bottom because they are not stupid, they know they are not as good or as fast as the others in the class. The worst is to see this emotionally unready child give up. Some of them do and this affects their performance and outlook on schooling. They feel that they are failing, they feel that they are not good enough and you as teacher can say what you want, he's not stupid, he can see but I'm only doing two sums and my friend has done ten and teacher has to help me all the time and talk to me. And you know, children are not very nice to each other and they tell him you are stupid. They do get shunned by peers, they do.

Anything else you would like to add?

I'm not saying all five-year-olds are not emotionally ready for school and we find that it is the boys who are more likely to be unready than the girls. I actually have a five-year-old in the class who is quite ready for school. She is a little Korean girl and it seems that the girls function better than the boys. The boys seem more unready for school than the girls. I find with the younger children that they do not have all the experiences of life as some of the older children have. For example, we discussed making tea. The older children knew what I meant by stirring and carried on, but some of the little ones did not know and you have to teach them basic concepts, so it is about learning, but these basic skills or knowledge should already be known before they enter school.

I feel that putting five-year-olds in a class is not a very good idea. I think they should be put in grade 0 first. These children are not ready for school and now the problem is that if you have five-year-olds in a class, your alternative is to drop your standard to accommodate these children. That negatively affects the six- and seven-year-olds because they are not being stimulated, especially if they have been to a grade 0 class 'cause you end up having to do things that the five-year-old would have learnt in grade 0 in grade 1 and the children fall behind in their work. And not only one class can lessen the tempo or the work load; all the grade 1 classes in the school have to do that. Even if they do not have five-year-olds in the class, for you can't have one

out of the four classes doing less work, for you will have children that are behind when entering grade 2 compared to children from another grade 1 class, so the whole school's standard has to drop.

APPENDIX C.6: TEACHER 6

1) What does the concept “emotional school readiness” mean to you?

It means that the child has to be ready for school, both academically and emotionally. If the child is in class, he should not feel that things are getting too much for him, he should be able to listen and be ready for what the formal school setting requires of him. He should be able to cope with all the tasks he has to complete.

2) What emotional characteristics or qualities do you think are vital for a child to have when entering school?

Separation from parents is important. He has to be ready for school work. With friends, he should be able to socialise and give his co-operation to the teacher. He should be able to work with peers in a group. Listening skills is priority number one. Being able to listen to the teacher. A child who is socially and emotionally ready will be able to cope with things like school rules. The child should not be easily distracted and be able to concentrate and multi-task.

3) How important is emotional school readiness?

Of the utmost importance. This (emotional school readiness) at the end of the day will determine if the child will be successful or not. The question is if the child is ready to do his work or not.

4) Do you have children in your class who you feel are not emotionally ready for school?

Yes, here is quite a lot.

5) If the answer is yes, why do you think they are not emotionally ready?

It also depends on which pre-primary they attended. Some play schools do not give the structure as grade 0 classes. Most of these children are usually distractible. They

don't seem to be independent. They cry about everything and need everyone to help them do things. Especially if their needs are not met, they start crying. I have one little boy who you can literally see that he is not school ready. He seems to curl up in an infant position on his chair and he seems so unsure and bewildered in the class. He tends to be quiet and needs a lot of encouragement. He does not have any social skills and struggles with the easiest of tasks. I'm worried that grade 1 might affect this child badly because he might feel that he cannot do anything right.

6) How does a child who is not emotionally ready for school affect you as a teacher?

You have to accommodate these children. The ones who are not emotionally ready for school. You cannot just leave them to fate. As teacher, I try and get the best from my children. I also try and get the parents involved to help with doing homework and sometimes those parents are at work and the child has to stay after school. So I have to be in contact with the parents and after-school teacher. So it is not just work with this child but all the other people involved. Having to do different assessments on the children of different levels of maturity takes up the most of my time. It becomes very complicated. The little boy I spoke about whose body language is infantile; his mother still dresses him, and it becomes my job at school if he needs to get dressed for activities, and I feel like I mother him and teach. I do not mind occasionally taking the role of mother to help and support the children. I try and make them feel safe and positive like a mother would, but with this little boy I need to go and look for his clothes or go to the bathroom with him to get him dressed correctly while the rest of the class sits and waits.

7) How does it affect your class or learning programme?

I try and place the child who is not emotionally ready with strong learners in a group to help and support the unready child. But sometimes even then the child can't cope and it leads to this child holding the rest of the group back. The biggest problem is if the child cannot socialise and fit into the group. It causes disruption and fighting in the group and the group does not function optimally. It is sometimes necessary to work slower to help the emotionally unready child catch up with the work.

8) Do you think that not being emotionally ready has an effect on the child?

If so, why?

It largely depends on how the child handles his unreadiness. Most of these unready children are also remedial cases and if they are not ready it's like prodding at a fruit and at the end you bruise the child. It seems that the child who is not ready, emotionally for school seems to be withholding. They seem scared to take chances for they are not sure of themselves or independent yet. If they do not take a chance, this child will not put up his hand in class to ask a question and this in turn results in the child not understanding the work and too scared to ask and not knowing influences his academic performance ... he falls behind in his work. This again inhibits or impedes his IQ. This child might be very smart, but if his academics are behind and he does not have any self-esteem, he does not perform to the best of his ability and then he does not enhance his ability IQ as other children do. Not being venturesome causes the child to doubt himself and his abilities. The child will work on one question for 20 minutes because he is not sure if he did it right and he is too scared to ask, so the emotionally unready child does only one question where the child who is ready and takes a chance with his worksheet will try and finish all 10 questions.

Anything else you would like to add?

You have many aspects to cover in grade 1. The 3 Rs are very important: reading, writing and arithmetic ... but there are also other aspects such as orals, aspects of history and life skills. It is a fast and hard pace for the child to keep up with, even for a child who is able to cope, concentrate and focus. So for the emotionally unready child, it is an even harder battle just to keep up, never mind perform and excel. These unready children have trouble just doing the minimum of work, so the whole class falls behind if I have to work slower for one or two children. Ready or not, these children need to learn these skills to pass grade 1 and cope with grade 2. As I said, the other problem is assessing these children. How do you assess children under the same standard if they do not do the work the same? My emotionally ready children work faster and do not need assistance with the work. Some of them are daring and try and do work without the apparatus we give them, for example doing maths

without the abacus. This child let's say get 7 questions right without help from the teacher or apparatus and he worked fast and independent. A child who is not ready emotionally to take these chances will ask about every question and you end up doing all the 10 questions with him and showing him how to use the apparatus. So the emotionally ready child ends up with only 70% of his question correct and the emotionally unready child gets full marks. And if you put marks down that is what you write. How do you assess these kids under the same rules if the assistance they receive differs?

APPENDIX D

Integrated Interviews

Integrated summary of the six individual interviews conducted
with the grade 1 teachers

APPENDIX D: INTEGRATED INTERVIEWS

1) What does the concept “emotional school readiness” mean to you?

The child needs to be ready for all aspects of school and the emotional pressure that comes with it. The child should have self-awareness and the ability to control themselves in this more structured environment. The child should be able to cope with being away from his/her parents, be able to work in a group and be able to wait and not need instant gratification. The child should be able to cope, overcome any aspects, and not burst into tears. The child has to be able to adapt to the class situation. The child should be able to cope emotionally with the formal school setting. Therefore, the child should be emotionally mature and responsible. The child should be able to cope with pressure and be able to listen. The child should be able to cope with tasks and other aspects.

2) What emotional characteristics or qualities do you think are vital for a child to have when entering school?

Independence

Being able to avoid distraction

Concentrate and not be distracted easily

Have self-discipline

Not being inclined to separation anxiety and thus cope with being away from parents

Ability to socialise

Ability to wait their turn, cope with the teacher telling them to wait and being able to handle not having their way

Handling tension

Work in a group with peers

Not burst into tears

Overcome any obstacles

Maturity

Accepting authority

Emotional awareness

Be able to finish work / complete a task

Be able to share with others
Socialise and interact with other children
Understand and interpret emotions
Sit still
Think not only of themselves but also of others
Cope with school
Good listening skills
Share information and equipment
Cooperate
Listening skills
Cope with school rules
Be able to multi-task

3) How important is emotional school readiness?

All the teachers felt that emotional school readiness is very important.

“My headmaster use to say ... it's like having fruit on a tree ... if you fiddle and prod at it, it is going to be bruised at the end of the day. You just need to give it time to ripen and that is true for a lot of children ... especially the five-year-olds.” Children cope better if they are emotionally mature or ready for school. Some people, especially parents, do not see emotional readiness for school as very important. The emotional readiness of a child can affect him/her throughout his/her life and it can affect the child's self-esteem. Emotional unreadiness can affect a child's academic performance and socialising. Emotional school readiness allows a child to cope with school. At the end of the day, emotional school readiness will determine if the child will be successful or not.

4) Do you have children in your class who you feel are not emotionally ready for school?

Most of the teachers have or have had children in their class they felt were not emotionally school ready. Only one teacher did not seem to have children who are not emotionally ready for school: she did however describe some of the children as

more ready, emotionally, than others, but felt not one is emotionally unready for school.

5) If the answer is yes, why do you think they are not emotionally ready?

“The five-year-olds are a nightmare. It’s just the whole routine ... they’re not ready, they don’t have self-discipline, they can’t sit still, they can’t concentrate”. One teacher refers to a child with separation anxiety who is lagging. The teacher experienced stealing and bullying from the child because he does not know how to relate to these children and he gets frustrated and it flows over into negative behaviour. The children who are not emotionally ready for school are still egocentric, they always want to be first. The younger ones get tired and they are not ready to sit for long periods. A teacher had a child in 2003 who got into fights with friends because he could not share or socialise with others. The five-year-olds still want to play and this causes problems with concentration. Most of them cry in the morning so they have trouble separating. They do not take well to discipline. They are very sensitive and they do not like being said “no” to. Some even seem distressed and they do not listen to authority. They are not focused and it seems as if they are in their own world. Some even seem to withdraw inward. Their concentration is also weak. These children are usually distractible. They don’t seem to be independent and need help from others. They seem to cry easily, especially if their needs are not met. A child who is not emotionally ready needs a lot of encouragement. They don’t have sufficient social skills and struggle with tasks.

6) How does a child who is not emotionally ready for school affect you as a teacher?

It is very disruptive, and when a teacher has a number of them in her class, she does not get to work and it is a huge problem. The child is demanding. The teachers try to accommodate that child. It is like all these balls balancing in the air on this thin line between total chaos ... and accomplishing something ... almost like a juggler, and it’s difficult sometimes. They take up time and effort. They are too much of a handful. Therefore, from that point of view, the emotionally immature ones take a lot of the teacher’s time. Some children throw temper tantrums and they need constant

supervision and help and this puts a lot of pressure on the teachers. They spend most of their time “re-teaching” them. The children disrupt the class and it is not fair to the emotionally unready child, the peers or the teacher. It seems to be the five-year-olds who disrupt the class and take up all the time and they make teaching sometimes impossible. They are very demanding. These children need constant supervision and sometimes teachers feel like mothers.

7) How does it affect your class or learning programme?

Disruption by the emotionally unready child is a problem. Some children tease the child who is emotionally unready and they get angry, and in the classroom, the child will shout or cry and disrupt class. The teachers have to sit with every child who is not emotionally ready and work with them individually. The rest of the class then has to work on their own. The whole programme is sometimes slowed down to accommodate these children. The emotionally unready child does not participate in group activities and they rely on others in the group to do their work. Sometimes fighting occurs for the older children get impatient and it disrupts the class and group and the group does not function optimally. These children tend to keep their group back. The child has difficulty socialising and fitting into the group.

8) Do you think that not being emotionally ready has an effect on the child? If so, why?

All the teachers felt that not being emotionally ready for school is to the detriment of the child.

Most children fail because of emotional difficulties. Emotional problems affect the children’s academic performance, they get behind in their work and this results in poor marks, even failure of grade 1. They sometimes fall behind in their work and need to be taught basic concepts the others already understand. If these children withhold or do not take a chance because they do not want to ask questions and will rather fall behind than ask if they do not understand, this influences their performance. The child starts to doubt him/herself and his/her abilities. Some of these children fall behind academically and because the teacher helps them with

work, they could start not putting in effort, expecting their teacher to help. It affects their self-esteem and friendships with friends. Children are cruel, as soon as they see a child can't cope, they start to tease the child. Some children need settling in the beginning of the day so it takes a while to get to their work and sometimes they fall behind. The child's development is also being affected. Their personalities are being repressed if they cannot be themselves or act their age. Some of the children do not have adequate social skills and this causes isolation. Some emotionally unready children show unacceptable behaviour such as hitting one another and stealing. The effects of emotional unreadiness can also depend on the teacher. The teacher can put the child down and discipline him/her and tell the child s/he is stupid; this will affect the child negatively, but the teacher should help and encourage the child and assist to overcome the emotional difficulties and help resolve these before the child advances to the next grade. These children have problems fitting in. The child's psyche hits rock bottom, they know they are not as good as the others. Some of them even give up and it influences their performance. They also are shunned by peers.

Anything else you would like to add?

The school system's pace is so fast that even some of the older children struggle. How will a younger child be able to cope? They are expected to develop at their own rate, but the rate will be too fast for the young children and too slow for the older children. Some teachers feel that most five-year-olds will not be ready for school; in all aspects, not just emotional. This means there will be more and more children entering grade 1 who are not ready to go to school and they will not be able to cope. The teachers feel that changing the whole class and programme just to fit one or two children who are behind will not be the answer and that the younger children should rather attend nursery school and grade 0 first to be ready. Grade 0 will be ideal for all the five-year-olds. The education department should help the school establish grade 0 classes to help prepare those children to be able to fulfil all the requirements of grade 1 with success. The child learns how to sit still, concentrate, complete a task and just develop naturally to emotional readiness. Not all five-year-olds are emotionally ready for school and even their development is still not complete. They are expected to do things they only should be able to do at seven years. The five-

year-old children are not ready for school and the problem is that if a teacher has five-year-olds in a class, the alternative is to drop the standard to accommodate these children. That negatively affects the six- and seven-year-olds because they are not being stimulated especially if they have been to a grade 0 class.

It is not implied that all five-year-olds are emotionally unready for school and it was found that boys are more likely to be unready than girls. There are teachers who have five-year-olds in the class who are ready for school. The one teacher refers to a five-year-old Korean girl and it seems that the girls function better than the boys. Therefore, boys seem more unready for school than girls do. The teacher found that some of the younger children do not have all the experiences of life as some of the older children might have.

Grade 1 is a fast and hard pace for the child to keep up with, even for a child who is able to cope concentrate and focus. Therefore, for the emotionally unready child, it is an even harder battle just to keep up, never mind perform and excel. These unready children have trouble just doing the minimum of work, so the whole class falls behind if the teacher has to work slower for one or two children.

How do you assess children with the same standard if they do not do the work the same? The emotionally ready child works independently and tries to work without apparatus or help whereas the emotionally unready child needs help with everything. It is expected of a teacher to give a mark based on a standard, but how do you evaluate children on the same standard if the one child works alone, independently and efficiently and the other works slowly and with help.

Another problem identified is the different cultures. There are racial differences, and even differences between same races of different language groups. Language is a big problem with the black children, they are being schooled in maybe a second or third language.