CHAPTER 9

Empirical Findings

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Kruger, De Vos, Fouchè and Venter (2005:218) note that data analysis is the categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data to obtain answers to research questions. The purpose of analysis is to reduce data to an intelligible and interpretable form so that the relation of the research problems can be studied and tested and conclusions drawn.

The collected data was processed and interpreted by the researcher according to the standardized scoring instructions (Bajgar & Lane, 2003). Research results, namely the influence of the EA program which was developed by the researcher, on variables as measured in a pre- and post-test of the experimental and comparison group were statistically analysed. Computerized data analysis was utilized to organize the collected data into explicable information. The SPC XL Software for Microsoft Excel provided the statistical analysis features applicable for the analysis of the type of data collected in the study.

The data collected during the empirical phase of the study will be presented into two sections, namely (1) a description of the biographical profile of the respondents and (2) the empirical data which will focus on the following three components:

- Development of emotional vocabulary
- Levels of emotional awareness
- Gender comparison of awareness

9.2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The profile of respondents is compiled from the biographical information which is of relevance in the context of the study namely:

- age
- developmental phase
- language
- gender

9.2.1 Age and Developmental Phase of Respondents

As discussed in chapter 8, the respondents in this study were selected through purposive sampling which implies that they were selected on the basis of the researcher's own judgment regarding which respondents possess the attributes needed and who will add the best representation to the study (Babbie, 2004:183). Grade three learners of a primary school were selected. Grade three learners are more skilled in writing and expressing themselves in writing than grade one or grade two learners are. Reading and writing skills was needed for completion of the questionnaire as well as for taking part in activities in the program.

The age of the respondents thus ranged in the vicinity of eight years for that is the normal age of grade three learners. This age group resorts within the middle childhood developmental phase, a stage described by Newman and Newman (2009:296) as the period of life between ages six and twelve when the peer group joins the adult world by attending school, church and groups. They socialize outside the immediate family and receive feedback from others on the quality of their performance, master new physical and mental skills, and become more independent.

9.2.2 Language of Respondents

The respondents included in the study were learners of a double medium primary school in the Waterberg District in the Limpopo Province which has three grade three classes with Afrikaans-

speaking learners and one grade three class with English-speaking learners. In order to utilize a questionnaire in the same language for all the respondents it was necessary to make use of two classes of Afrikaans-speaking respondents; one class representing the experimental group and one class representing the comparison group. The language of all respondents (100%), in both the experimental and comparison group, was thus Afrikaans.

9.2.3 Gender of Respondents

The gender of the respondents was random to the classes' distribution of gender. A factor that affected the gender balance between respondents was learners who were absent on the day when the questionnaire was completed in either the pre- or post-test. This resulted in the exclusion of eight respondents who did not complete the questionnaire in both the pre- and post-test. In total 40 respondents from the sampled 49 respondents completed the measuring instrument in both the pre- and post-test.

The ratio between male and female respondents reflected a small difference, although both the experimental and comparison group had more female than male respondents as indicated in both Table 9.1 and Figure 9.1.

Table 9.1: Gender composition of respondents

Group	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Experimental group	Male	9	42.86%
	Female	12	57.14%
Comparison group	Male	9	47.37%
	Female	10	52.63%

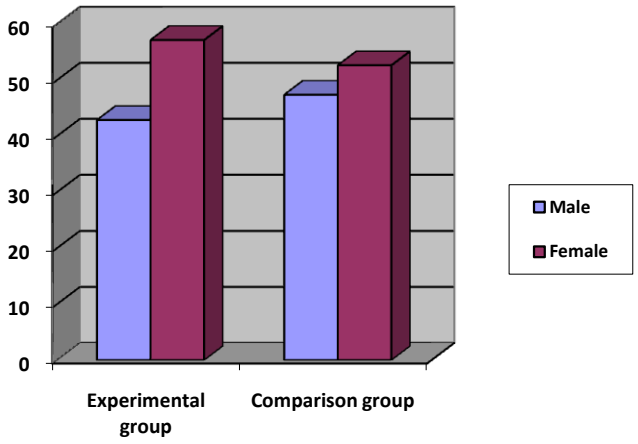


Figure 9.1: Gender composition of respondents

Fig. 9.1 provides a percentage indication of the information in Table 9.1. The gender of respondents had no significant influence on the study although it was noteworthy to compare the difference between male and female respondents, regarding their development in terms of emotional awareness, as discussed in the next section.

9.3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The following section of this chapter will focus on the empirical data acquired with the standardised scale of Lane and Bajgar (2003) namely the *Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale for Children* (LEAS-C), as described in chapter 8.

The aim was to administer the developed EA program as part of the daily curriculum in the school setting and then to determine:

- if the respondents of the experimental group acquired a higher level of emotional language in comparison to the comparison group and to what extent they were able to utilize this language for emotional expression;

- the effect that a seven week exposure to the EA program had on the respondents' emotional awareness levels; and
- whether there was a difference between male and female respondents' emotional development.

The empirical findings of this study will be presented in three parts namely:

- Development of emotional vocabulary.
- Levels of emotional awareness.
- Difference in emotional responses between male and female respondents.

9.3.1 Development of Emotional Vocabulary

The Emotional Awareness Program aspired to develop and enhance the emotional awareness of children in their middle childhood developmental phase. It was furthermore developed to particularly expand emotional vocabulary for the purpose of heightened abilities in emotional expression. This component was thus measured aside from the overall level of emotional awareness attained by the respondents.

The glossary of words which form part of the standardized measuring instrument (LEAS-C) used in this study (See Appendix A) attaches different values to words with different emotional impact, which ultimately measures the emotional awareness levels of respondents. Level zero to level three emotion words obtain their value from the glossary list but level four and five emotion words are awarded when a complexity of emotional blends (use different emotion words to describe a complex feeling) are utilized in a response. A decrease in utilizing lower levels of emotion words and an increase in utilization of higher levels of emotion words, based on pre- and post-test results, would accordingly indicate that emotional awareness (in its entirety) has enhanced. It was thus, at the outset, important to calculate the number of emotion words utilized by respondents. A comparison between the responses obtained from the experimental and comparison group will indicate whether the EA program succeeded in development and expansion of emotional

vocabulary and subsequently also the enhancement of the respondents' abilities regarding emotional expression.

The following section will thus present the results according to the number of words that were utilized by the respondents from the different levels of emotional value attached to those words. As mentioned above, these emotional values are pre-determined in the glossary of words, compiled by the developers of the standardised scale and used for scoring of the LEAS-C (Lane & Bajgar, 2003).

9.3.1.1 Frequency of responses according to LEAS-C levels of emotional value

The following graphs indicate the number of responses (emotion words) used by respondents, according to the different levels on the LEAS-C glossary of words, thus level one (low emotional value) to level five (high emotional value) responses. An insignificant number of level zero responses occurred, although a level zero response does not add any scoring value it is still indicated to present a comprehensive image of obtained responses. These graphs are discussed according to the level they present and a percentage comparison of all the different graphs (at the end of the section) supplies an overall synopsis (Fig. 9.7) of this aspect.

- **Level one**

Level one responses are labelled in the LEAS-C as responses that: *stress somatic features, e.g. "I would feel sick",* or may directly state a lack of emotional response, e.g. *"I would feel nothing"* (Lane & Bajgar, 2003). However, no level one responses occurred in any of the tests, and the discussion thus continues with level two responses.

- **Level two**

Level two responses as described in the LEAS-C: *may reflect action, e.g. "I would feel like smashing the wall" or a more global generalised response, e.g. "I would feel good"* (Lane &

Bajgar, 2003). A level two response thus entails that the respondent utilized a stronger emotion word than listed for level zero or level one responses, according to the LEAS-C's glossary of words, but it is still on a lower level or it is a less descriptive emotional term. The results in this regard is displayed in Figure 9.2

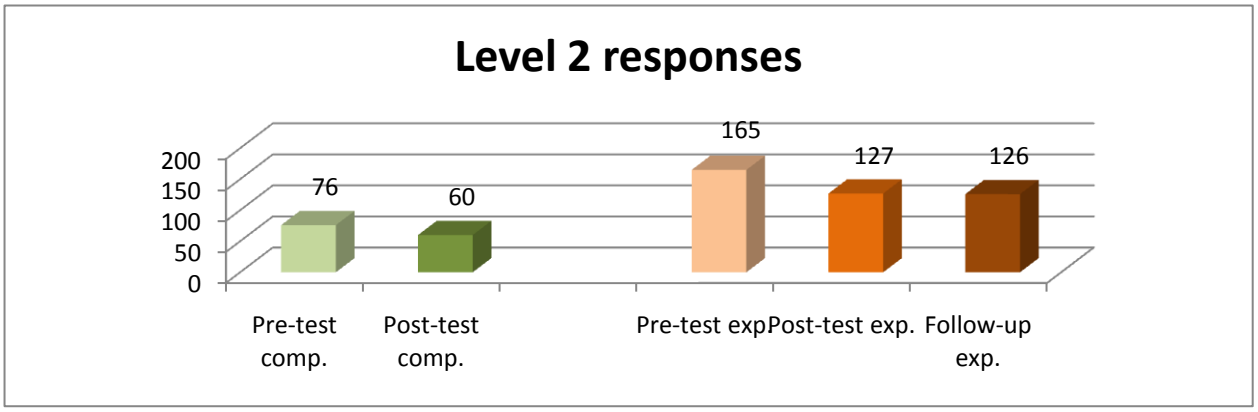


Figure 9.2: Frequency of level two responses

An inconsequential number of level two responses (emotion words) occurred in the pre-test, namely 76 from the comparison group and 165 from the experimental group. The post-test indicated a decrease in level two responses for both groups. The comparison group responded with 60 level two responses, the experimental group with 127 words, and 126 words in the follow-up test. The decrease in level two responses in the post-test is possibly due to the fact that the respondents developed their emotional vocabulary and made use of higer level responses in the post-test thus indicating a decline in their level two responses.

Figure 9.2 also clearly reflected a difference between the number of level two responses between the experimental and comparison group, with a 127 level two responses compared to the 60 level two responses of the comparison group, this calculates to 67 more level two responses from the experimental group. .

- **Level three**

The LEAS-C indicates that level three responses reflect: *undimensional emotions, e.g. "I would feel sad"* (Lane & Bajgar, 2003). Level three responses thus entail the utilization of words with significant emotional value although still utilized in isolation and without blends of emotional description. Figure 9.3 reflects the results of level three responses.

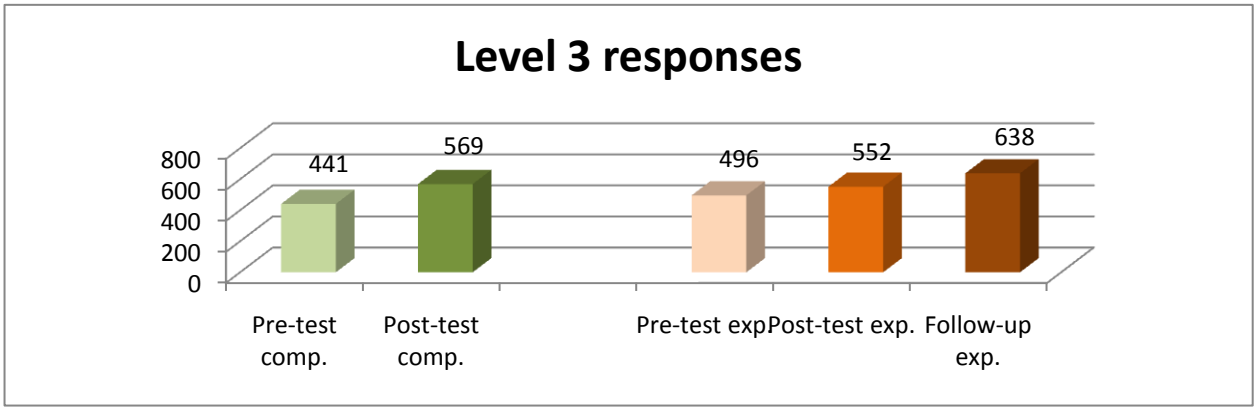


Figure 9.3: Frequency of level three responses

Figure 9.3 shows that the level three responses in all pre- and post-tests were considerably higher than level two responses. The pre-test results indicated 441 responses for the comparison group and 496 responses for the experimental group. Utilization of level three responses increased in the post-test to 569 responses for the comparison group and 552 responses for the experimetal group. Level three responses of the comparison group thus increased with 128 responses while the experimental group's responses increased with 56 responses. The higher increase of the comparison group can be explained if compared to the level four and five responses (as indicated in Figures 9.4 and 9.5), for it is indicative that the experimental group was able to better respond on level four and five as opposed to the comparison group which was not able to make much use of level four or five responses, thus utilizing mostly level three responses for emotional expression. The follow-up test of the experimental group measured an even higher number of responses, namely 638 responses.

- **Level four**

Level four responses are indicated in the LEAS-C to reflect: *greater complexity in awareness with emotion blends evident, e.g. "I would feel angry but maybe a little bit sad as well"* (Lane & Bajgar, 2003).

Level four scores are assigned to responses where a combination of words creates an intricacy of description of an emotional state and thereby indicates a higher ability in emotional perception and thus a higher development in the ability to verbally express the emotions experienced. Level four responses were displayed in Figure 9.4

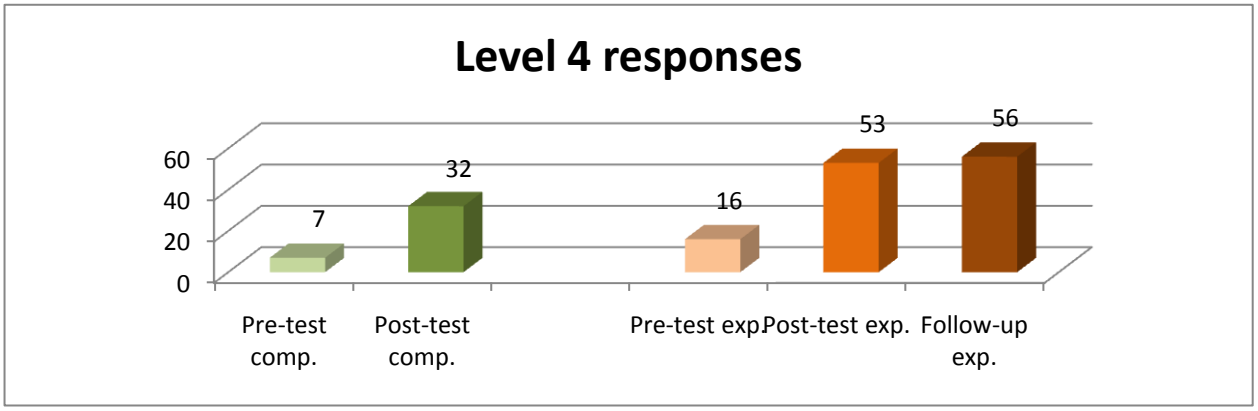


Figure 9.4: Frequency of level four responses

It is highlighted in Figure 9.4 that the responses of the pre-test measured on level four is insignificant for both groups with seven responses from the comparison group and 16 responses from the experimental group. These responses increased in the post-test from seven to 32 responses identified in the comparison group and from 16 to 53 responses in the experimental group, which further increased to 56 responses in the follow-up test. Both groups thus reflected an increase in their level four responses, with the experimental group reflecting a higher number of level four responses.

If these results are evaluated with the scoring method for level four and five responses in mind, it stands to reason that the results of the experimental group in this instance are significant. Combinations, compilations and blends of emotions from the other three levels resulted in

awarding a level four or five score (Lane & Bajgar, 2003). The fact that the experimental group's level five scores (as indicated in Figure 9.5) were also high indicated that they were able to reflect emotional blends and a greater complexity of emotional awareness in their responses, it thus shows that level four and level five responses reflect hightened emotional awareness and emotional expression abilities.

- **Level five**

In order to understand the scoring system of level five responses it is important to keep in mind (as described in chapter 8) that each of the twelve scenarios in the questionnaire (See Appendix A) require two responses, namely how the respondent would feel and how the "other person" would feel. Each question thus obtains two scores namely a score for "self" (own feelings) and "other" (the other persons' feelings). A level four score is obtained from greater complexity in the combination of emotions described and level five responses are then derived from the summed total of the combination of level four responses in the "self" and "other" total. A level five score is thus awarded due to the complexity of assortment in emotional blends and the combination of emotional content utilized. A response which scored four in the "self" and four in the "other" response will thus be awarded with a total score of five for the question, indicating a high level of emotional awareness and an optimal ability to express emotions experienced.

Figure 9.5 below gives an indication of level five responses obtained by the respondents.

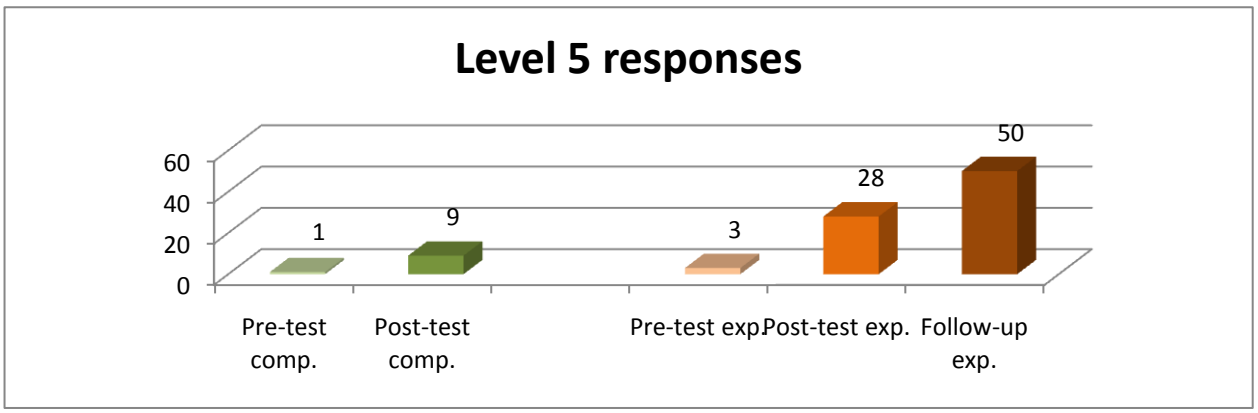


Figure 9.5: Frequency of level five responses

Figure 9.5 shows that it was almost impossible for respondents from both groups to acquire a level five score in the pre-test with merely a single level five response from the comparison group and only three responses from the experimental group. The comparison group was able to obtain nine level five responses in the post-test and the experimental group obtained 28 responses, which increased to 50 responses in the follow-up test.

The increase in the results from the experimental group for the post-test and the follow-up test indicated that the EA program succeeded in the development and enhancement of the respondents' emotional vocabulary and especially their abilities concerning emotional expression.

9.3.1.2 Comparison between level four and level five responses

Level four and five responses are only awarded where **"***greater complexity in awareness with emotion blends is evident"* (Lane & Bajgar, 2003).

The researcher's aim with the EA program, in terms of the enhancement of emotional vocabulary and abilities in emotional expression, was thus to enable respondents to obtain level four and five responses if measured with the LEAS-C measuring instrument. Figure 9.6 is a comparison of level four and five responses in order to determine whether development in this manner transpired.

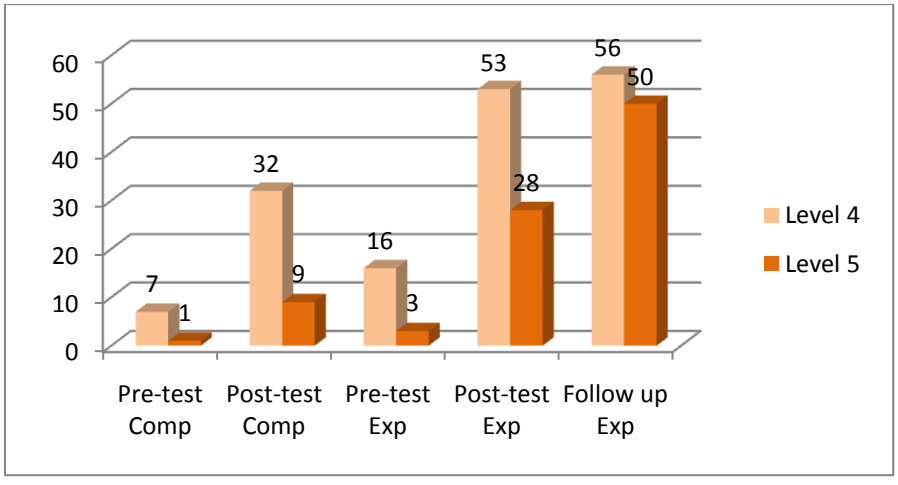


Figure 9.6: Comparison of level four and five responses between the comparison and experimental group.

Fig 9.6 gives a clear indication of the extent to which the experimental group obtained the ability to combine their emotional knowledge in more complex compilations of emotional blends. This was indicated by their ability to express their emotions regarding the scenarios depicted in the questionnaire. It is evident that the experimental group's level four and five responses developed much more from the pre- to the post-test than the comparison group's did.

The comparison group's level four responses increased with 25 responses from the pre- to the post-test, while the experimental group's level four responses increased with 37 responses. The level five responses of the comparison group increased with eight responses from the pre- to the post-test, while the experimental group indicated an increase of 25 in level five responses in their post-test which dramatically increased with another 22 responses in the follow-up test. The total increase of level five responses for the experimental group from their pre-test to follow-up test thus calculates to 47 responses.

9.3.1.3 Synopsis of response frequency

A summary of the responses as was previously discussed provides a general overview of responses regarding higher quality emotional responses and the frequency thereof, as well as an analogous format for comparison of the results between the comparison and the experimental group.

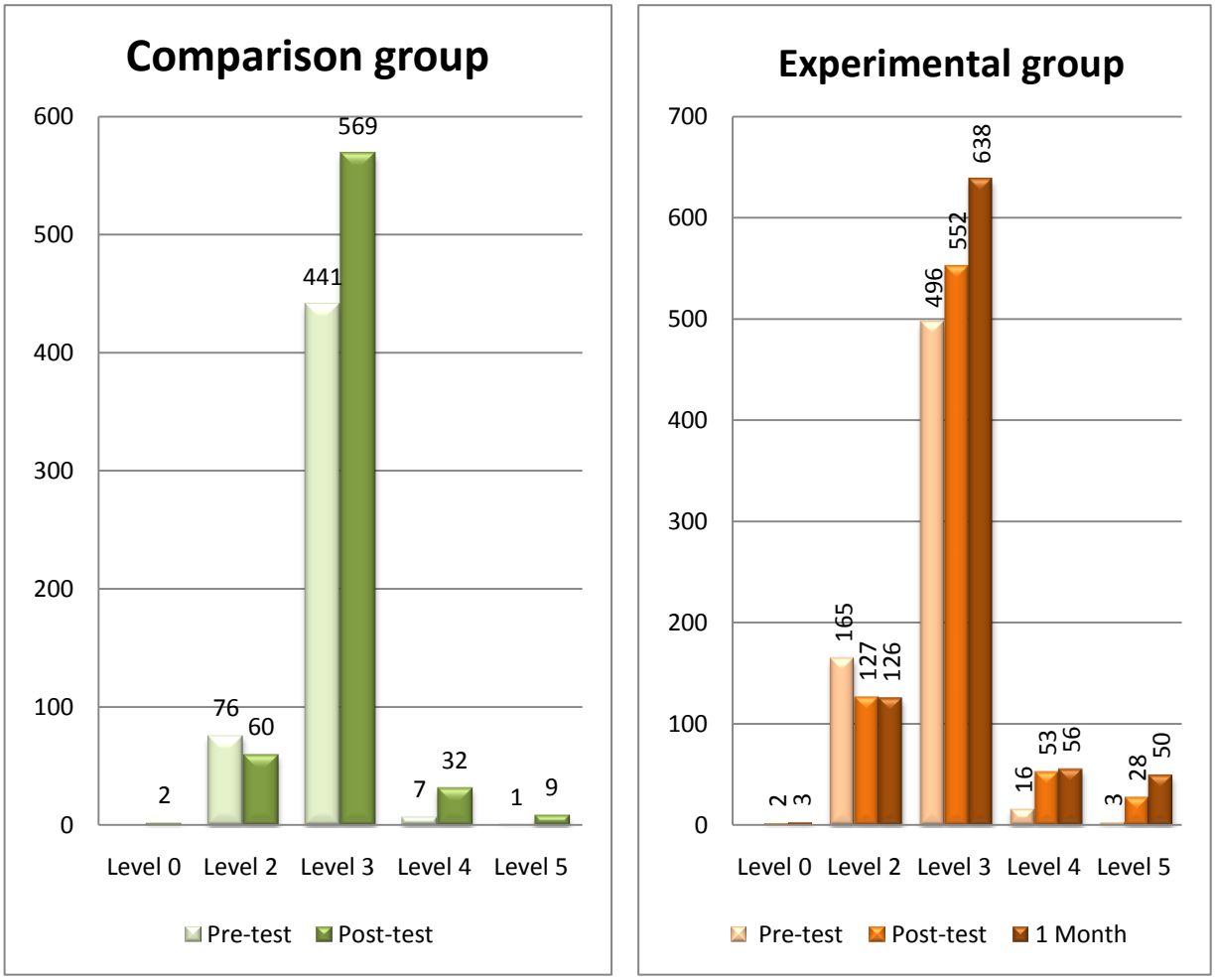


Figure 9.7: Synopsis of a comparison in response frequency between the comparison and experimental group.

Figure 9.7 highlighted that an insignificant number of level zero and no level one responses occurred in both the comparison and the experimental group. However, a significant quantity of level two responses occurred, and decreased from the pre- to post-tests, namely: in the comparison group 76 words decreased to 60 words and in the experimental group 165 words decreased to 127 words. This is identified to be due to replacement of level two responses with level three responses in the post-test. Level three words utilized by the experimental group (552 words) are lower in the post-test than the level three responses of the comparison group (569 words), which is due to the increase in level four and five responses of the experimental group. The respondents in the comparison group utilized a maximum of 32 level four words and only nine level five words,

which can be related to their abilities in emotional expression being mostly limited to level three responses. The responses of the experimental group thus indicated that those respondents did acquire higher level emotional language and methods of emotional expression from the pre- to the post-test where their level four responses increased from 16 to 53 responses and their level five responses increased from three to 28 responses and even increased further to 50 responses in the follow-up test, one month after the EA program was already completed.

It is therefore of significance to explore the actual responses or specific emotional language, previously only measured on the levels in the LEAS-C it is associated with. The following section will thus analyse the actual language utilized and further assess to what extent the emotional vocabulary of respondents developed. This may serve as a meaningful measurement whether the EA program attributed to the development of the emotional language of the experimental group. The following section of this chapter will thus focus on specific vocabulary, referring to it as "*weak"* and "*strong"* emotional words and its utilization by the respondents, as measured in the different pre- and post-tests.

9.3.1.4 Strong and weak emotion words

As part of the data analysis, the researcher also identified ordinary emotion words (*weak words*) namely: *better, good, bad, glad* and *sad* as well as words that have stronger emotional impact (*strong words*) and then compared the usage of these words by both the experimental and comparison group in their different pre- and post-tests. The *weak words* are general every day language and aquired from normal conversation. It does not really give an emotionally loaded description of a specific feeling or experience. *Strong words*, namely agony, worried, amazed, distress, deceived, disappointed, furious, excited, jealous, nervous, pity, shocked, shy and surprise are specific, descriptive words and add suggestive meaning to a feeling or emotional experience. These *strong words* are not part of normal day-to-day language for grade three learners and usage of *strong emotional words* is interpreted by the researcher as an indication of hightened emotional awareness.

A comparison of the utilization of *weak* and *strong emotion words* from the pre- to the post-test will hence indicate whether the respondents did in fact acquire higher level emotional language and the ability to utilize it correctly. It will further indicate to what extent a seven week exposure to the EA program influenced their abilities in this regard. An increase or insignificant decline in *weak word* responses from the pre- to the post-test will thus indicate that the respondents did not acquire *stronger* language to express themselves. On the other hand a significant decline in *weak word* responses with increased *stronger* word responses from the pre- to the post-test will indicate that the respondents did acquire *stronger* emotional vocabulary after their pre-test which they subsequently utilized to express themselves in the post-test.

Figure 9.8 presented the results of the utilization of *weak emotion words* by respondents in the comparison group.

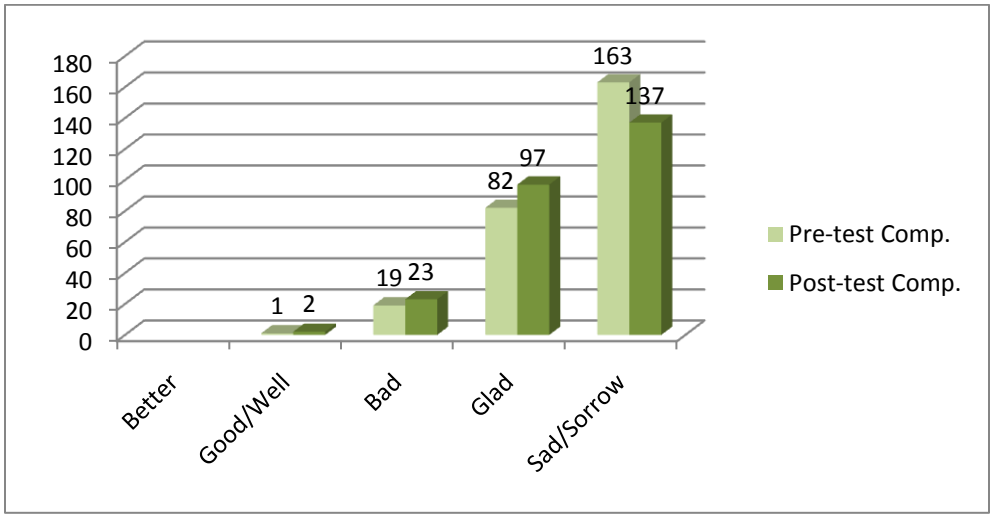


Figure 9.8: Weak emotion words utilized by the comparison group

The word *better* was not utilized by the comparison group. The words *good* and *bad* increased from the pre-test to the post-test; *good* (one in the pre-test and two in the post-test) and *bad* (19 in the pre-test and 23 in the post-test). The comparison group's utilization of *weak* emotion words indicated a high frequency for the utilization of the words *glad* and *sad.* The word *glad* increased from 82 times in the pre-test to 97 times in the post-test. The word *sad* measured significantly higher than the word *glad* with a small decline from the pre-test (163) to the post-test (137). This

indicated that respondents still made significant use of the words *glad* and *sad* after the seven weeks in which the experimental group received emotional education from the EA program. These words were thus still vocabulary they found suitable to express their feelings with even though these terms does not consist of strong emotional substance.

The following interpretation of *weak word* responses from the respondents of the experimental group puts this comparison in context as it is evident how the experimental group's utilization of weak words declined in the post-test after they acquired higher level emotion vocabulary possibly due to the EA program.

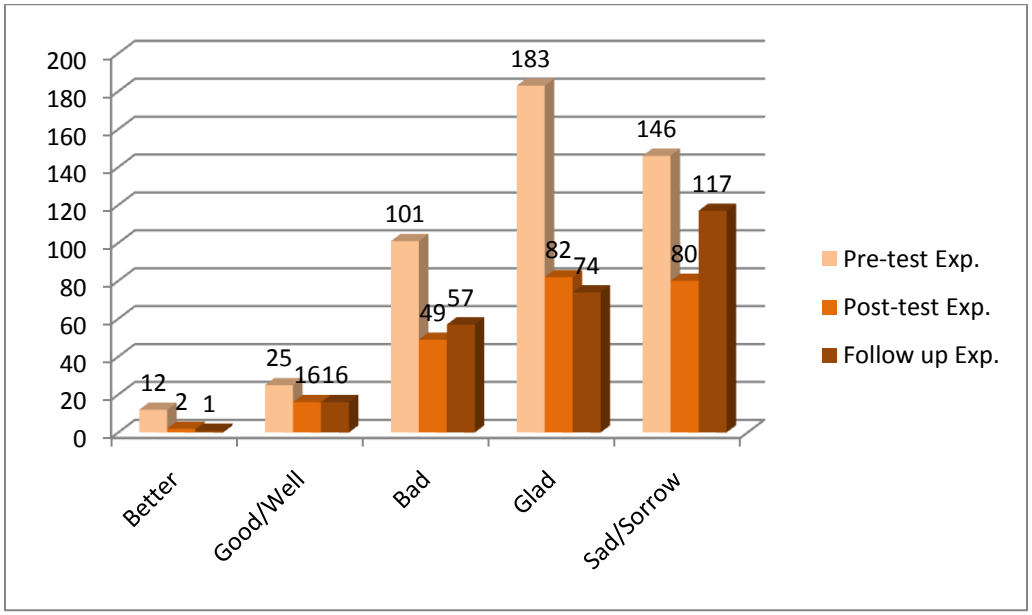


Figure 9.9: Weak emotion words used by the experimental group

In Figure 9.9 the word *better* declined from twelve times in the pre-test to two times in the post-test and the word *good* declined from 25 times in the pre-test to 16 times in the post-test. The words *bad*, *glad* and *sad* measured high in the pre-test (101, 183 and 146 respectively) but reflected a vast decline in the post-test (49, 82 and 80 respectively). This tendency indicated that it seems as if the experimental group's emotional expression abilities improved and that their emotional vocabulary increased. This is evident in the fact that they made less use of *weak* words in the post-test for they acquired *stronger* words that described their emotions more strongly in the scenarios depicted in the measuring instrument.

The following Figures compared the results of the comparison and experimental group's utilization of *strong* emotion words, which confirmed the assumptions drawn from the comparison of respondents' utilization of *weak* emotion words as indicated in Figures 9.8 and 9.9 above.

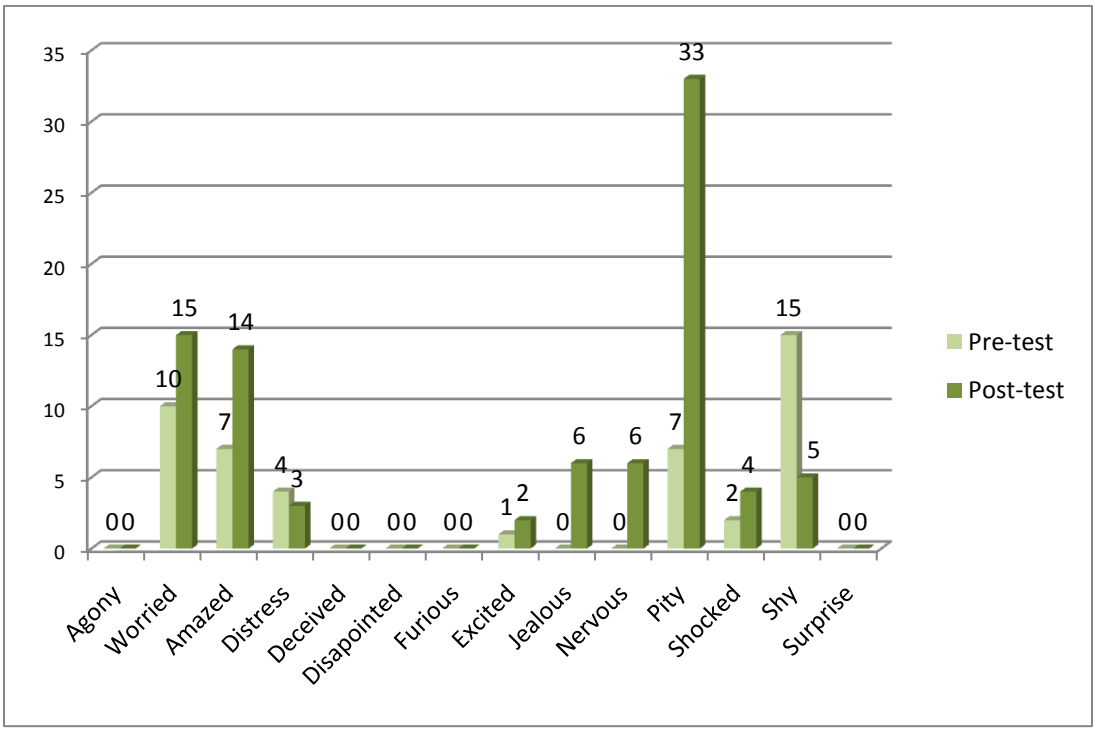


Figure 9.10: Strong emotion words used by the comparison group

Figure 9.10 indicated that the *strong words*, namely *agony*, *deceived*, *disappointed*, *furious* and *surprise*, were never utilized by the respondents in the comparison group. Only the word *pity* indicated a significant increase from being used seven times in the pre-test to 33 times in the post-test. The use of only three words, namely *worried*, *amazed* and *pity* increased to being used more than ten times in the post-test. This points to the fact that the comparison group did not show the ability to respond comprehensively to the utilization of *strong* emotion words.

The difference in development of emotional vocabulary between the experimental and comparison group becomes clear in Figure 9.11.

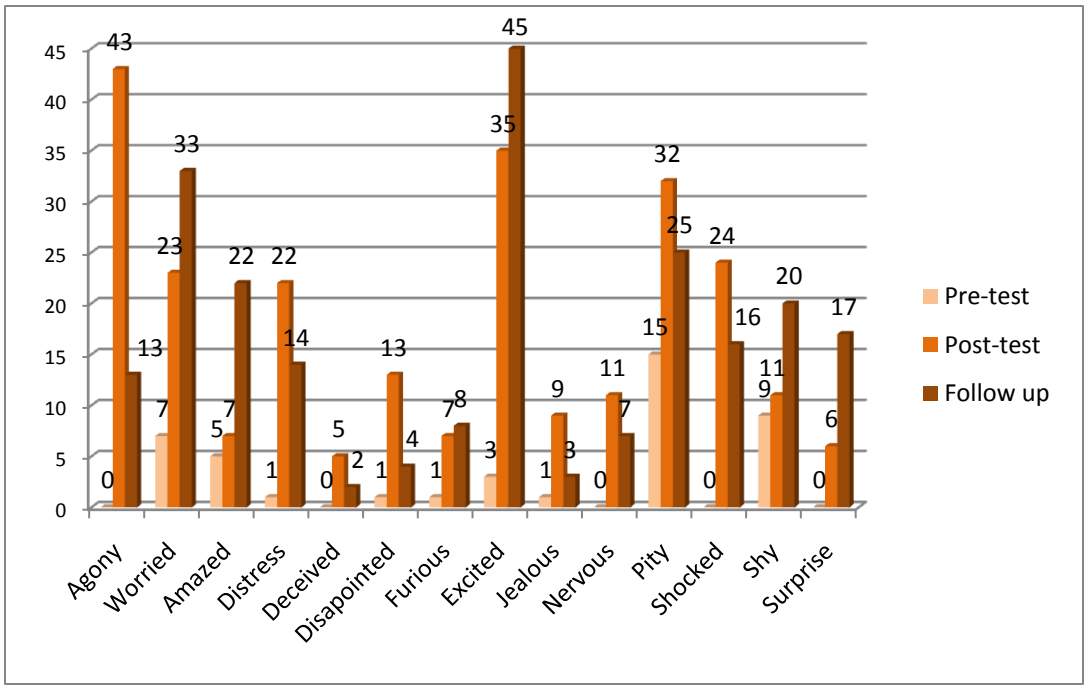


Figure 9.11: Strong emotion words used by the experimental group

The EA program focuses on emotion words that carry illuminating and explanatory emotional weight. The experimental group was exposed to the EA program and as such to the acquisition of emotion vocabulary, the correct utilization of those words and the manner in which it aids emotional expression. Figure 9.11 indicated the increase in utilization of these *strong emotion words* from the pre-test to the post-test and a further increase in utilization of some of these words in the follow-up test, one month after the EA program was completed.

Nine *strong words*, namely *agony, worried, distress, disappointed, excited, nervous, pity, shocked* and *shy* were utilized more than ten times in the post-test and nine *strong words*, namely *agony, worried, amazed, distress, excited, pity, shocked, shy* and *surprise* were used more than ten times in the follow-up test. The words *deceived, furious* and *jealous* also increased from the pre-test to the post-test and occurred five, seven and nine times respectively in the post-test.

The assumption that could be drawn from the results as indicated in Figure 9.11 was that the experimental group's emotional vocabulary and abilities in emotional expression were more developed after their seven week exposure to the EA program. The comparison between Figure 9.10 and Figure 9.11 confirmed, by the measurement of the number of *strong words* utilized by the

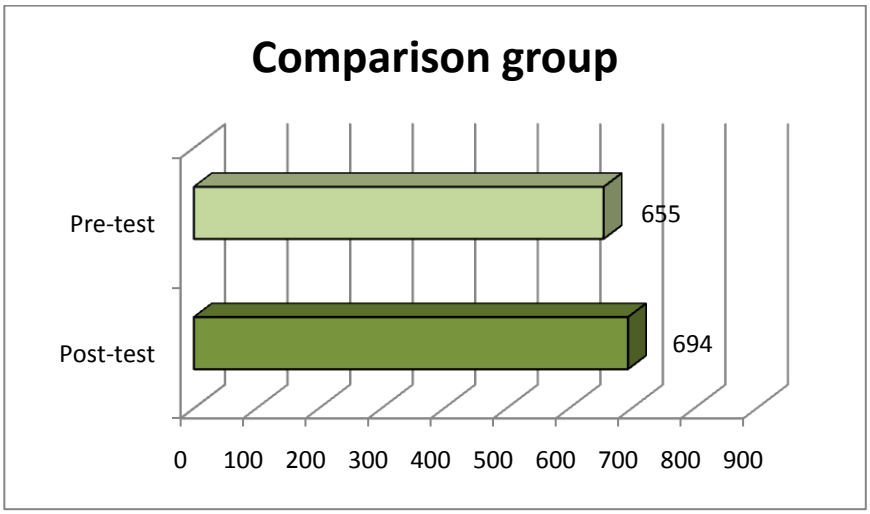
experimental group, that the intended development regarding emotional expression did occur amongst the respondents in the experimental group.

The following section will focus on the emotional awareness levels which refer to the overall emotional awareness of learners and whether the respondents' emotional awareness abilities were developed or enhanced through the implementation of the EA program.

9.3.2 Emotional Awareness Levels

Lane and Bajgar (2003) developed the LEAS-C as a standardized questionnaire for measuring the levels of emotional awareness of children. As already described in chapter 8, section 8.6.1, the measurement of the LEAS-C entails that the responses of the respondents (learners) to the scenarios depicted in the questionnaire add up to a total score according to a specified method of scoring. The combined individual scores of respondents provide totals for the group as a whole. The following graphs present the measurements for the emotional awareness of both the experimental and comparison group.

Figure 9.12 gives an indication of the emotional awareness level of the comparison group as measured by the pre- and post-test



Fiure 9.12: Emotional awareness level of comparison group

Figure 9.12 supplies the total points achieved by the comparison group in their pre- and post-test which amounted to a total of 655 points in the pre-test, and increased to 694 points in the post-test. The comparison group's level of emotional awareness thus increased by 39 points. This increase can be attributed to many factors influencing their emotional abilities at home, in their relationships with friends and family or in media content, for example in movies they saw or books they read. It can even be attributed to emotional education in their classroom activities, for there is some emotional education (although limited) included in the current curriculum for the life orientation subject. The learners were thus not deprived of all forms of emotional growth and the increase measured in the emotional awareness of the comparison group served as a possible indication of the emotional development that might occur under normal circumstances without any added emotional education.

Figure 9.13 gives an indication of the emotional awareness level of the experimental group as measured by the pre- and post-test.

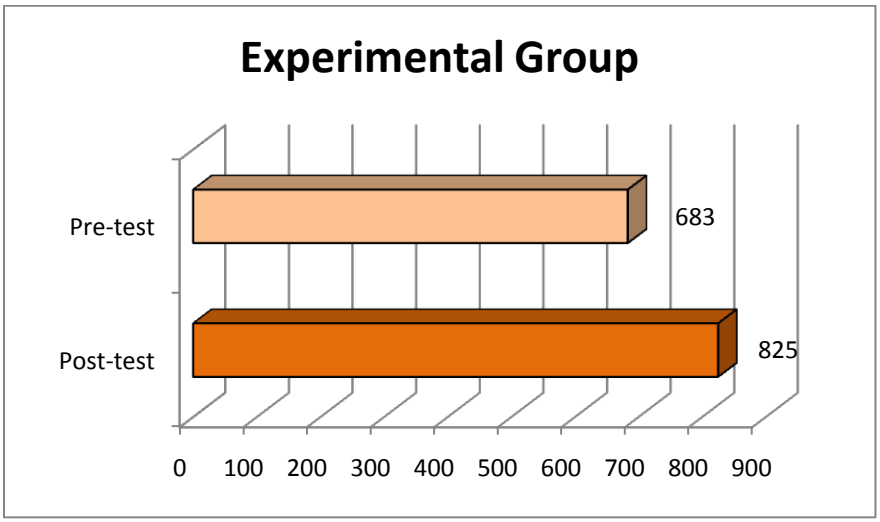


Figure 9.13: Emotional awareness level of experimental group

Figure 9.13 supplies the total points obtained by the experimental group in their pre- and post-test which amounted to a total of 683 points in the pre-test, and increased to 825 points in the post-test. An increase of 142 points was thus measured.

However, the total number of respondents in the comparison group and experimental group respectively were not the same. A comparison between the total points of the two groups is thus not a comparable measure for the increase in EA in order to determine whether the experimental group benefitted from the EA program. The percentage increase was thus calculated for each group by utilizing their respective point totals and the number of respondents in the group. A comparable evaluation of the increase in emotional awareness observed between the comparison and experimental group (from their pre-test to their post-tests) was thus hereby possible. The following discussion will address this comparison of the increase in emotional awareness between the comparison group and the experimental group as presented in Fig. 9.14.

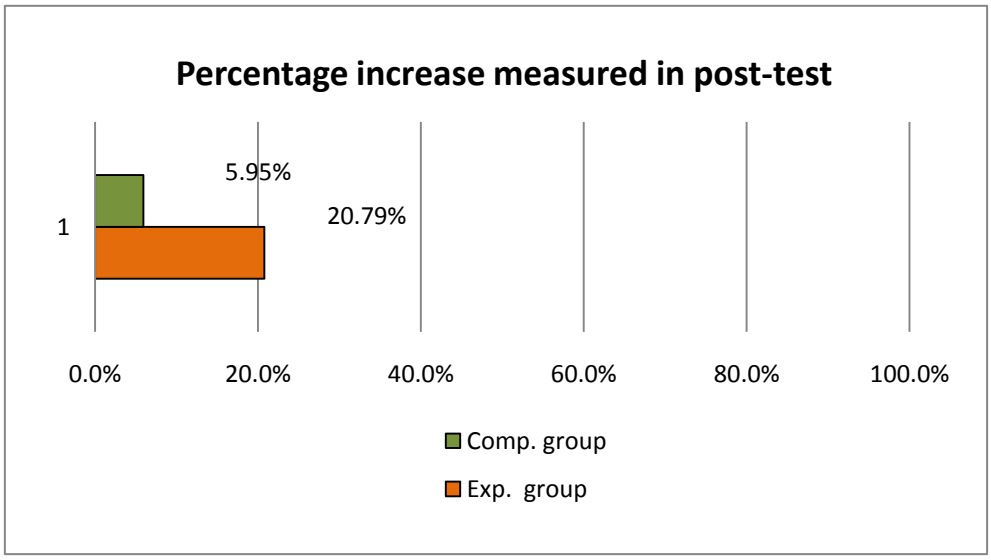


Figure 9.14: Comparison of the increase in emotional awareness between the comparison and experimental group as measured in the post-test

Figure 9.14 indicated that the comparison group's level of emotional awareness increased from the pre-test to the post-test with 5.95% while the level of emotional awareness of the experimental group increased with 20.79%. These figures suggest that the EA program to which the experimental group had been exposed might have had a significant effect on the increase in the emotional awareness of the respondents in the experimental group. Both groups had been exposed

to normal day-to-day emotional influences, but only the experimental group received a seven week exposure to formal emotional education through the EA program. It thus stands to reason that a long term exposure to these kinds of emotional content may benefit the emotional development of learners to an even greater extent.

9.3.3 Comparison of Emotional Awareness between Male and Female Respondents

Ruble, Martin and Berenbaum (2006:878) and Eliot (2009:78-79) indicate that there is a difference in emotional experience and expression between boys and girls. Carducci (2009:513) corroborates that "in addition to being more emotionally expressive than men at a number of levels, women tend to experience their emotion more intensively than men, show a higher degree of awareness of their emotions and process their emotions better than men do, with this basic pattern of results being consistent for boys and girls".

A comparison between the emotional awareness (EA) of genders was thus made to determine whether this factor was also confirmed in this study.

The following figures compare the level of emotional awareness of boys and girls between the comparison and experimental group, as measured during the pre- and post-tests.

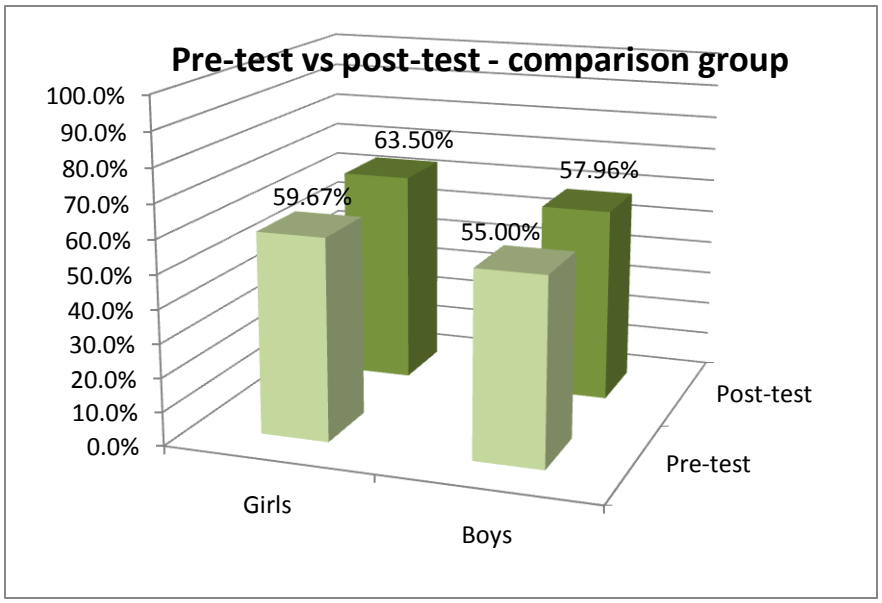


Figure 9.15: Comparison of the results measured from the responses obtained by the different genders in the comparison group

Figure 9.15 indicated that the girls' emotional awareness in the comparison group measured 59.67% in the pre-test in comparison to the 55% for the boys. The post-test measured the girls' EA on 63.50% and the EA of the boys at 57.96%. The girls' emotional awareness thus measured 4.67% higher in the pre-test than that of the boys. The girls' emotional awareness increased in the post-test and measured 5.54% higher than the boys'. The girls' EA increased with 3.83% and the boys' with 2.96% without them being exposed to a formal process of development of their emotional awareness abilities.

Figure 9.16 presents a comparison of the results measured from the responses obtained by the different genders in the experimental group.

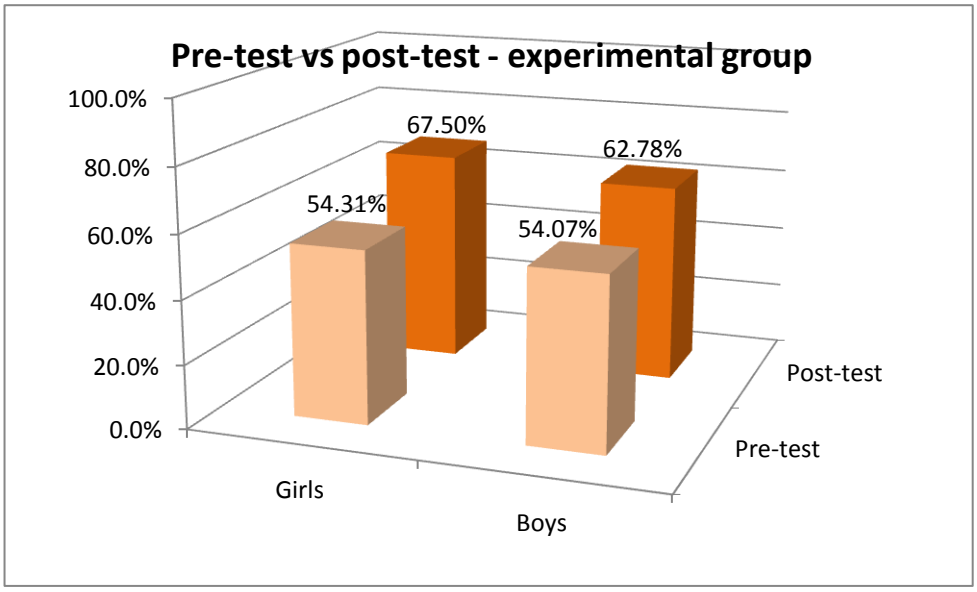


Figure 9.16: Comparison of the results measured from the responses obtained by the different genders in the experimental group

The results from the experimental group as presented in Figure 9.16 indicated the emotional awareness of the girls to be 54.31% and the boys' 54.07% in the pre-test. A 0.24% difference was thus present between the emotional awareness of the boys and girls in the pre-test. The emotional awareness of the experimental group indicated an increase and the girls obtained 67.50% compared to the emotional awareness of the boys which was 62.78% in the post-test. The boys' emotional awareness was thus 8.71% higher in the post-test compared to the girls that measured 13.2% higher than in their pre-test. The emotional awareness of the girls in the experimental group was thus 4.49% higher than that of the boys' in the post-test.

Fig. 9.17 indicates the development of emotional awareness of both the boys and girls in the comparison and experimental group, from the pre- to the post-test. The following figure presents the statistical indication of the percentage of development that was measured in an overall calculation of the increase in emotional development in the comparison group and experimental group.

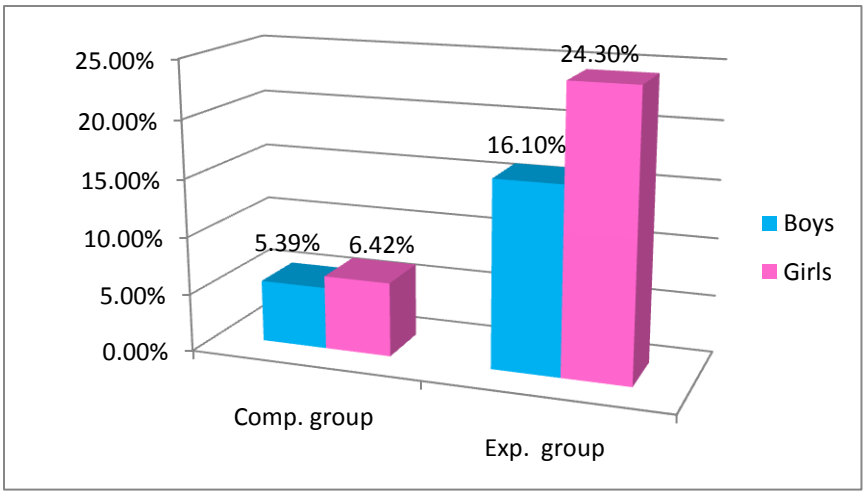


Figure 9.17: Improvement in emotional development between boys and girls

From figure 9.17 it is evident that only a small percentage increase of emotional awareness could be measured for girls as opposed to boys (1.03%) in the comparison group. The girls from the experimental group on the other hand indicated an overall increase of 24.30% in emotional awareness as opposed to the 16.10% increase in the emotional awareness of the boys.

Fig. 9.17 also indicated the extent to which the experimental group's emotional awareness increased, possibly due to their exposure to the EA program, in comparison to the percentage development of the comparison group namely a 10.71% increase for the boys and 17.88% increase for the girls in the experimental group.

The results in this study thus supports the opinion of Ruble et al. (2006:878), Eliot (2009:78-79) and Carducci (2009:513) that girls are more susceptible for emotional content and therefore more capable in aspects like emotional expression and emotional awareness.

9.4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In discussing the empirical results it is important to remember that the study was guided by the following main and sub-hypotheses:

If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, then the learners' level of emotional functioning will be enhanced.

Sub-hypotheses were set as:

1) If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, their ability to be **in contact with their emotions** will enhance.
2) If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, their ability to **discriminate between different emotions** will increase.
3) If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, they will gain the ability to **verbalize and "own"** their emotions.

In order to test these hypotheses the empirical findings will be discussed by arguing four related topics, namely: emotional expression; the development of emotional vocabulary; the development of emotional awareness levels; gender differences; and the general success of the EA program within the educational system.

- ***Emotional expression****:* Denham, Warren, von Salisch, Benga, Chin and Geangu (2011:418) label emotional expressiveness as "a key element of emotional competence which thus entails expressing emotions in a way that is advantageous for moment to moment interaction and relationships over time". It is therefore an important building block in becoming emotionally aware. Blom (2004:137-167) points to several different Gestalt play therapy techniques (some of which were utilized in the EA program) for enhancing emotional expression and she indicates in this regard that although "some children are not aware of what emotions are, this does not mean that they do not experience emotions, they often just do not know how to verbalise it".

The EA program focuses to a large extent on the development of emotional vocabulary and utilizes age applicable Gestalt play therapy exercises to educate children in the correct manner of utilizing their newly acquired vocabulary to enhance their emotional expression abilities. The empirical results in this regard indicated that the experimental group's utilization of emotion words consistently increased from the pre- to the post-test. However their level three responses increased with a lower number of emotion words than the responses of the comparison group. This phenomenon is an indication that emotional expression was positively developed in the experimental group because the results indicated that they made less use of detached emotion words. They rather utilized level three emotion words in emotional blends which obtained level four scores and even greater complexity in the combination of emotion blends (where different emotions were combined to describe a disposition towards a situation) to obtain level five scores.

A similar finding is made in the results that focused solely on the specific vocabulary that respondents obtained through their exposure to the EA program. A distinction was made between *weak* and *strong emotion words*, according to the complexity and difficulty versus average, "everyday" words. The empirical results indicated a substantial increase in utilization of *strong words* in the responses of the experimental group, while it is evident that very limited vocabulary development was present for the comparison group from their pre- to the post-test. In the same reasoning it is evident that the comparison group's utilization of *weak words* increased while the experimental group's responses mainly indicated a decrease in utilization of *weak words* from the pre- to the post-test. It is thus evident that the experimental group gained higher level emotional vocabulary during their exposure to the EA program which they utilized in the post-test in order to express the emotions which they would experienced in the scenarios depicted in the LEAS-C.

Parrish (2010:41) observes a considerable expansion in the capacity to concentrate during middle childhood as well as the ability to understand abstract concepts which influence children's behaviour, because of their increased ability to apply reason. This observation is confirmed in the results of this study for the respondents in the experimental group were only exposed to emotional content for seven weeks and their emotional vocabulary and ability

towards emotional expression indicated positive growth. It is thus suggested that exposure to emotional content, as part of the daily educational curriculum, might result in the improvement of emotional vocabulary and the ability to express emotions by middle childhood learners. The researcher is of the opinion that these results, in association with the opinion of Parrish as stated above, indicated that middle childhood is the ideal developmental phase for extensive emotional learning. Emotional knowledge obtained in middle childhood can then be reinforced and tailored all through adolescence to result in well-adapted, emotionally aware adults – better equipped to face the challenges of life.

These findings thus proved sub-hypothesis 2 and 3 to be true, because the implementation of the EA program for children in middle childhood within the educational system did enhance their ability to discriminate between different emotions (2) and to verbalize and "own" their emotions (3).

- ***Emotional awareness*:** Emotional awareness is considered by Lane and McRae (2004:91) to be a separate line of cognitive development that may proceed somewhat independently from other cognitive domains. This statement consists of three important features, namely; emotional awareness, the development thereof and cognitive qualities. These three aspects are also relevant concerning emotional awareness as an ability to be in contact with emotions as it formed part of this study, i.e.:

  - To determine whether *emotional awareness* (being in contact with emotions) will be enhanced if incorporated in the formal educational process of children in their middle childhood developmental phase.
  - To determine the success of Gestalt play therapy techniques for the *development* of emotional awareness, when included in the daily class routine and curriculum.
  - To determine whether emotional awareness can be educated in the same *cognitive* manner as Piaget's theory, as claimed by Bajgar et al. (2005:572) (see 5.3.4 in chapter 5).

  Lane and McRae (2004:90) refers to Lane and Schwartz's (1987) five levels of emotional awareness as sharing characteristics of Piaget's stages of cognitive development. These five levels of emotional awareness are relevant to this study in its entirety as the measurement of

emotional awareness is done according to these levels of emotional awareness. The levels of emotional awareness in ascending order are:

1) Awareness of physical sensations
2) Action tendencies
3) Single emotions
4) Blends of emotions
5) Blends of emotional experiences (the capacity to appreciate complexity in experiences of self and other.

The results of the LEAS-C is also calculated according to this structure and optimal emotional awareness is evident in enhanced emotional functioning, or the description thereof for the purpose of the LEAS-C, on level four and five (see detailed discussions on scoring of each level in section 9.3.1.1 of this chapter).

The LEAS-C results from the comparison group indicated a 5.95% increase in emotional awareness from their pre- to the post-test. The experimental group on the other hand indicated a 20.79% increase in emotional awareness after a seven-week exposure to the EA program. It is thus evident that the respondents' emotional awareness or their ability to be in contact with their emotions did indeed enhance.

Bosacki (2008:160) recognizes the relevance of "play" in the development of children and points out that although play is incorporated in many early childhood developmental programs it often becomes diluted over the years and takes a backseat to disciplines like mathematics, language, arts or science. He elaborates that the use of creative and imaginative play in learning activities has the potential to address almost all aspects of learning and can be adapted for any developmental level.

Gestalt play therapy as utilized in the EA program makes use of play to promote learning. Carroll in Ray (2011:59) states that Gestalt play therapy's goal is to restore healthy self-regulation, promote awareness of internal and external experiences and advance the use of the environment to get needs met. The evidence of enhancement of emotional awareness in this study correlates with this statement. The positive growth in the emotional awareness of the

experimental group may have occurred as a result of the implementation of the Gestalt play therapy techniques incorporated in the EA program. The assumption can be made that the comparison group made less progress in this regard, due to the fact that they did not receive the input of the EA program as the experimental group did.

These findings proved sub-hypothesis 1 to be true because the implementation of the EA program for children in middle childhood within the educational system did enhance their ability to be in contact with their emotions.

It was ultimately also found that emotional awareness can be educated within the South African educational system in the same manner as other cognitive abilities usually are. This manner of emotional development stands in close relation with Bosacki's (2008:176) claim that "if the educational system begins to focus and place importance and value around children's emotional health to the same extend it focuses on physical health and academic excellence there is great hope for the present and future lives of children".

- ***Gender:*** As previously indicated, reference is made to the fact that females present higher level emotional abilities than males (Ruble et al., 2006:878; Eliot, 2009:78-79; Carducci, 2009:513). This study's findings affirmed that female respondents did present higher emotional awareness than male respondents. The comparison group's girls tested 4.67% higher in their pre-test and 5.54% higher in their post-test. The girls from the experimental group tested 0.23 % higher in their pre-test and 4.72% higher in their post-test. Both tests of both groups thus indicated a higher test result for the girls compared to the results of the boys. The pre-test results of the experimental group indicated a small difference in the emotional awareness of genders, but in the end still a higher score for the girls. The post-test result of the experimental group indicated that exposure to the EA program resulted in a 16.10% increase in emotional awareness of boys, but 24.30% in girls.

- ***Success of the EA program within the educational system:*** The discussion thus far indicates that the EA program achieved what it aims to achieve, namely to develop and enhance the emotional awareness of learners in their middle childhood developmental phase, through utilization of the South African educational system.

South Africa became aware of emotional intelligence a few years ago; the role of emotional development seems to be acknowledged within the educational system as a chapter in the Life Orientation / Life Skills curriculum does address emotions (Baker & Badenhorst, 2003:44). Interviews conducted with a grade three educator (Roos, 2012) and a primary school principal (Coetzee, 2012) indicated that, in their opinion, the "emotional learning" component currently included in the curriculum is not sufficient. They indicated that it only addresses the identification of a few basic emotions and recognition of these emotions is the only requirement. A school social worker (Wessels, 2012), currently involved in a primary school setting, was also interviewed concerning this matter. From this interview it became evident that the emotional turmoil of learners that needs to be addressed by her points to the fact that these learners do not have the emotional abilities to understand, express and address their own emotions and the emotional needs of others.

The results obtained from this study evidently expand to an evaluation of the feasibility of administering a program for the development of emotional awareness within the South African educational system. This type of emotional education is already successfully implemented in other countries, for example CASEL (The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) in the U.S.A. Bosacki (2008:164) highlights CASEL as providing leadership to researchers, educators and policy makers regarding social and emotional learning and its place in school curriculum and practice (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning, 2002:3). Bosacki (2008:156) further points to a movement of educators in the Ontario province of Canada which advocates the development of children into caring and compassionate thinkers. They termed this blend of emotional and moral development "Character Education". In an e-mail interview with Booy (2012), a registered psychologist practising as a School Counsellor in Maple Ridge School District, British Columbia, she states that:

> There is a lot of criticism in North America regarding school systems not providing adequately for social-emotional learning (SEL) and much debate and disagreement on what should be done and how. However, the awareness of the importance of social-emotional learning and the commitment to make it an integral part of education is universal in most schools and classrooms. Research has indicated over

and over again that social and emotional skills and well-being contribute greatly to academic and career success. Instead of short term programs that target one or two issues that characterize many approaches to SEL, children only develop the essential social and emotional skills with ongoing exposure, practice and experience. Therefore focussing on social-emotional needs and skills should be an integral part of the child's everyday experience. In my experience, children in classrooms where their emotional needs are addressed and where they are exposed to modelling and guidance on how to deal with feelings and relationships, demonstrate:

- a better awareness of their own and others' feelings
- increased ability to manage their emotions
- better understanding of and empathy for others, resulting in improved relationships
- ability to take all aspects of a situation into account, resulting in better decision-making and problem-solving ability

This seems to be the direction that is required in order to fulfil in the South African need in this regard.

It is thus apparent that the development of emotional awareness of the youth in South Africa needs to be awarded the important position that it already holds in countries that surpasses South Africa in their knowledge and dedication to this subject. The findings of this study indicate that emotional education within the educational system appears to be feasible. If learners advanced their emotional awareness with 20% in only seven weeks of emotional learning, they will benefit much more from receiving constant emotional education. Bosacki's (2008:157) indication that educational programs in general need to address the whole child including heart and head is most probably the statement that needs to be the future direction concerning learners' emotional health.

9.5 SUMMARY

This chapter analysed the data obtained from completion of the LEAS-C in a pre- and post-test with a comparison group as well as a pre- and post-test with an experimental group. A follow-up test was also administered with the experimental group, one month after completion of the EA program. The analysis of this data was interpreted and the data was presented in graphs and tables to give comprehendible meaning to the results that were obtained.

The data analysis was presented in three parts, namely d*evelopment of emotional vocabulary, development of emotional awareness* and the *difference in responses between boys and girls.* The findings of this study indicated that the emotional vocabulary of the experimental group was positively developed and/or enhanced by the EA program. The experimental group's level of emotional awareness also improved after their exposure to the EA program in comparison to the levels of emotional awareness of the comparison group. The last part of analysis was to determine whether and to what extent it could be proven that the emotional capacity of girls measures higher than that of boys. The findings in this study support this fact as it was also found that the girls in this study measured higher emotional awareness than the boys in both the pre- and post-tests.

These conclusions drawn from the interpreted data were examined and discussed aiming to determine whether the hypothesis for this study was proved to be true or false. From the results and synthesis thereof the researcher is of the opinion that the hypothesis was proved to be true: *If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, then the learners' level of emotional functioning will be enhanced*.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Being emotionally intelligent became a much debated topic in the past decade as is evident from the opinions of the many authors quoted in this study. It became apparent that intelligence entailed much more than only the abilities that were believed to be the contributing factors in measuring an individual's intelligence quotient (IQ). Mosley (2005:1) notes that for years schools have used IQ tests in an attempt to predict which students will do well in both higher education and the workplace. It is now believed that these tests are inadequate and that future success is indicated much more accurately by the measurement of a child's social, emotional and behavioural skills. She further states that social and emotional skills are learned, first at home, and then in the wider community of which the school plays an important part.

This study distinguishes the acquiring of emotional awareness as a prerequisite for becoming emotionally intelligent. It aimed primarily to develop or enhance the emotional awareness of children in the middle childhood developmental phase within the South African educational system. This was approached by developing an Emotional Awareness Program (EA Program) for utilization by the educator within the classroom context in accordance with the goal that was set for this study namely: "To develop, implement and evaluate an emotional awareness program (EA program) for children in middle childhood for utilization in the South African educational system". This research study was directed from a Gestalt perspective and Gestalt play therapy techniques were utilized in the development of the EA Program.

The objectives that directed the study were:

1) To conceptualize emotional awareness theoretically with specific emphasis on children in middle childhood, in the context of the educational system.

2) To develop an EA program for children in middle childhood for utilization in the classroom context.

3) To train an educator in implementing the EA program for children in middle childhood within the classroom context.

4) To implement the EA program in the classroom context, with the help of a trained educator.

5) To evaluate the effectiveness of the EA program through measuring the responses of the learners (respondents).

6) To make recommendations based on the research findings, regarding the enhancement of the EA program for learners in middle childhood within the educational system.

A chapter specific literature review on the factors relevant to this study was comprehensively discussed in accordance to objective one. The different chapters addressed the following: the Gestalt approach as theoretical framework for the study in chapter 2, middle childhood developmental phase in chapter 3, neurological development of the child in chapter 4, emotional awareness in chapter 5 and the educating system in chapter 6. Objective two refers to the development of the Emotional Awareness Program and the newly developed EA program was described in chapter 7. The educator was trained and the program was implemented according to objectives three and four, respectively. Chapter 8 focused on the research methodology applicable to this study and the empirical findings were discussed and synthesized in chapter 9, according to objective five. Objective six aspire to make recommendations based on the research findings, and the following part of this chapter will thus capture objective six in presenting the conclusions of the study and making consequential recommendations from the research study.

Conclusions based on the research study and empirical findings will hence be discussed.

10.2 CONCLUSIONS

In bringing this study to a close, the following conclusions were derived from the literature review as well as the empirical research findings:

- The theoretical framework for this study, undertaken from the Gestalt approach, needs to be revisited in order to understand the conclusions derived from the study. It is also necessary to encapsulate the manner in which the Gestalt perspective ties the study and its different discussion themes (chapters) together and in what manner the study's findings can add sustainable value to the educational system.

  The Gestalt perspective suggests the child to be a whole and complex being and takes into consideration how children's development regarding awareness and contact (with self, others and environment) influences their development as "whole" human beings. It is, however, noted from this study that this viewpoint is in many ways not the point of departure in the current South African school setting. Barett (2005:ix) points out that "children should not be treated as a collection of isolated parts, they need to be treated as whole individuals with activities that address all their needs". Their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development (whole gestalt) thus need attention in order to develop in entirety, with the emotional element of the child's development as the focus of this study.

  The Gestalt approach therefore proved to be an appropriate theoretical frame of reference and most applicable to this study. Children in middle childhood develop in so many facets and the holistic viewpoint of Gestalt captures these facets as a whole. It seems though as if the full benefit of this approach is presently not acquired by children within the South African educational system as emotional education does not receive the same amount of attention as cognitive and physical development.

- The research methodology that formed the empirical foundation and body of the research study remits the conclusions derived in this regard.

Utilizing the quantitative research approach in the execution of this study benefitted the structured approach to inquiry as executed in the study. The objectives, design and sample of the study was predetermined and the utilization of a standardised questionnaire as measuring instrument therefore further positioned the quantitative approach as best suited for this study.

The study's focus on a problem in practice, namely *a need for an emotional awareness program for children in middle childhood, which was scientifically tested to be suitable in the South African education system,* categorised it as an applied research study. In the context of applied research, the study resorted under intervention research and its sub-type, namely *design and development* (Rothman & Thomas in Fouchè & de Vos, 2005:394). This type of research was appropriate in light of the researcher's aim to *design and develop technology,* namely the EA program for children in middle childhood, to *implement* the program (intervention) and to *evaluate* the effectiveness thereof for further utilization within the educational system. The comparison-group pre-test – post-test design efficiently made the pre- and post-comparison between two groups, namely the comparison group and the experimental group, possible.

- The standardized questionnaire, the LEAS-C or Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale – C, developed by Dr. Jane Bajgar and Dr. Richard Lane (2003), was an appropriate measuring instrument for the study as it is specifically developed to measure emotional awareness. The version (-C) of the LEAS utilized in this study was exclusively developed for children. It consists of attributes such as language, which was comprehendible for children and the questionnaire was not too long and kept their attention and interest throughout completion of the questionnaire. The scenarios depicted in the questionnaire were applicable to children from different settings and respondents were able to relate to it which ensured comprehensive completion of the questionnaire and therefore added value to the test results.

The questionnaires were group administered for the purpose of giving the same stimulus to all respondents. It was however established that children in this age group find it difficult to

complete the questionnaire without giving in to the urge of telling their "stories" relating to the question. The researcher thus had to constantly remind them not to discuss their experiences during completion of the questionnaire with the promise that they can do so afterwards.

- This study revolved around a specific developmental stage, namely middle childhood. Conclusions relevant to the results of the study are thus focused on the middle childhood developmental phase. This is the phase that marks the beginning of concrete operational thinking when fantasy or "make believe" type of thinking gives way to logical thinking and the ability to understand cause-and-effect relationships (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010:272). This developmental phase therefore proved to be a phase where emotional awareness started to play an important role. The "wholeness" stance of the Gestalt approach had to be incorporated with developmental abilities, namely reading and writing and comprehension of applicable aspects concerning emotional awareness. These abilities ensured successful application of the research methodology utilized in this study. Children in this phase are very susceptible to new knowledge and they already obtained the basic cognitive abilities (reading, writing and reasoning) necessary for completion of questionnaires and to comprehend the content of the EA program. Middle childhood was therefore the ideal developmental phase to utilize for the testing of the EA program.

  It was further evident that the respondents found it enjoyable to take part in the EA program and they easily took ownership of the content presented. Their level of cognitive ability as well as their ability to relate to the emotional content in the EA program, due to their developmental capacity, most probably enabled this tendency.

- In relation to their cognitive ability at this age it was important to take note of neurological development in childhood, as discussed thoroughly in chapter 4. Insufficient stimulation or deprivation of stimulation results in diminished brain development and hampers the child's ability to excel, as the brain discards that which is not used. Kiner and Feinstein (2011:16) explain that the brain judges information that is frequently used as worthy and useful. The ability to do mathematics or write a complex sentence is repetitively used so the dendrites

and synaptic connections are well preserved. Conversely, information that is not used regularly by the brain is regarded as unnecessary and worthless and allowed to wither and die.

The manner in which emotional trauma, abuse, neglect or general maltreatment affects a child's neurological abilities and overall existence is of specific importance as a conclusion in this study. Murray (2004) confirms from his work within the field of psychology that childhood abuse or trauma has a pronounced effect on brain development due to the elevated levels of the stress hormones noradrenaline and cortisol, which lead to subtle structural abnormalities in the frontal lobe. This is closely related to the limbic system — the seat of emotions. These abnormalities may result in deep-seated personality deficits, an inability to be empathetic or pathological narcissism that are not readily diagnosable as psychiatric disorders. Further influences in this regard related to the amygdala and hippocampus in the brain was discussed in chapter 4.

- Educators need to become equipped with knowledge regarding emotional awareness and its importance concerning healthy development of their learners, in order to acquire a better understanding of the possibility that a learner may have academic difficulties due to emotional obstructions. Another matter is learners who express emotional confusion through disobedience, anger, emotional episodes and anxiety attacks. If educators are able to recognize and address this kind of behaviour for what it is, they may become the safety net for those learners. Lowenthal [sa] explains that when maltreatment by primary caregivers occur, it is essential for the child to have access to alternate caregivers who will love, nurture, and protect them. This care-giving then prevents the response patterns of 'fight or flight' and dissociation to become permanently fixed in the child's brain. In this setting, the child can then acquire a sense of trust and become open to positive emotional experiences, which in turn can result in new learning.

- Ming-Tak and Wai-Shing (2008:46) and Wright (2006:10) indicate that learners need to find themselves in relation to educators who deal with them from a knowledgebase of the

significance of emotional well-being and its essence in the learner's ability to learn. This kind of educator-learner relationship will enable learners to thrive.

- Based on the research findings it seems as if the educational system is extremely well-positioned to address the emotional development of a large percentage of the population, as children spent most of their daily lives in school. The educational system is also the one system where almost every single member of the population passes through, which further emphasizes why it is ideally situated for this task.

  Educators are furthermore equipped with educational skills enabling them to deal with a variety of cognitive educational input.

  The researcher presumed that emotional awareness can be cognitively educated as indicated by Bajgar, Ciarrochi, Lane and Deane (2005:572) and Barnes (1995:139). Their opinions in this regard were confirmed in the findings of this study because the emotional awareness of the experimental group was enhanced after only seven weeks of exposure to the EA program, thus corroborating that emotional awareness can be cognitively educated. This finding thus further favourably enables the educational system for this task seeing as cognitive development is their field of expertise.

  Several means of identifying and reinforcing emotional knowledge is also readily available in the day-to-day school setting, as peer relationships, empathy, problem solving, taking responsibility for the feelings of others and coping with difficult situations or emotions are all emotional awareness skills and are all found to be present in the school environment.

- The core of this study and thus central factor of concern was *emotional awareness* which seemed to be a relatively unfamiliar term compared to the widely recognized and renowned term, *emotional intelligence*. This study positioned emotional awareness as a prerequisite for emotional intelligence. Emotions, emotional awareness and emotional intelligence are the three concepts within this study, which even though closely linked to each other are also very diverse. Kagan (2007:42) cites Lawrence Weiskrantz' uncomplicated definition of emotional awareness as "an ability to make a commentary".

Deutschendorf (2009:36) correctly states that "in the case of emotional awareness, it is not a matter of what we do not know will not hurt us. Repressed emotions do and will continue to hurt unless it is brought into one's awareness and dealt with". It is the researcher's opinion that becoming aware of emotions and their effect on functioning is "dealing" with emotions as emotional awareness and the knowledge acquired in this manner lead to becoming emotionally intelligent.

Recognition of emotional awareness as an emotional developmental requirement seems to be a relatively unverified concept within the South African context. The scientific stance regarding the perception of emotional development in South Africa appears to mainly focus on emotional intelligence as an ability rather than as being an accomplishment of other sub-factors like emotional awareness.

This conclusion may be a new contribution to the field of emotional development in the sense that emotional awareness can serve as a simplified manner of undertaking the education of emotional content to children. It may also in the same sense be the bridge, in context of this study, that connects the educator with feasible possibilities to address emotional aspects regarding learners in contrast to the very broad emotional perspective covered by emotional intelligence.

- Cowie et al. (2004:35) indicate that: "both the mental health and the emotional intelligence of everyone in a school can be improved by instituting an emotional development intervention for the whole school. Issues may be highlighted where it influenced individuals, but a whole-school response can generate benefits for everyone". The researcher developed an Emotional Awareness Program to develop and enhance the emotional awareness of learners. This EA program was implemented within the educational system by the educator (trained for the task) within the class context. The research results indicated that the EA program succeeded to a great extent in the development of emotional vocabulary, higher level emotion responses (according to the LEAS-C) and the accompanying ability of emotional expression in the experimental group when compared to the results of the comparison group.

- The overall level of emotional awareness as measured in the experimental group increased with 20.79% in contrast to an increase of 5.95% for the comparison group. The measurement of emotional awareness was the main purpose of the study and the indication that the EA program did improve the emotional awareness of learners thus indicates that the objectives of the study have been achieved. It also sustains the researcher's view that emotional awareness can successfully be implemented in the school setting and may then have an outcome beneficial to the learners, educators, schools and even the community in which these learners live.

- The measured increase of emotional awareness was derived from a seven week exposure to the EA program which may then be indicative of the results that might be achieved with daily exposure to emotional learning and a healthy emotional setting within the school environment.

- Emotional expression enables learners to label the emotions they experience and to come to an understanding of the effect derived from the experience of different emotions. Middle childhood also indicates an increased use of emotional expression to regulate closeness and distance within peer relationships, as explained by Carr (2011:58). Obtaining higher level emotional vocabulary evidently goes hand in hand with emotional expression as the child needs the appropriate vocabulary in terms of emotional language in order to be able to express the emotional experience accurately. Children who possess the ability of emotional expression make a distinction between clear emotional expressions with close friends and managed emotional displays with others. Optimal ability to express emotions explain to the child and the environment what is experienced at a specific moment in time, it therefore further serves as indicators to proper reactions in specific situations.

  Emotional expression abilities were particularly addressed in the EA Program and the empirical results suggested that the emotional vocabulary of respondents did expand. This was evident in the experimental group's ability to utilize a higher frequency of higher level

emotion words and in the indication that their emotional vocabulary – in their utilization of "strong words" – did in fact develop as discussed in chapter 9 (9.3.1.4).

In the scoring of the LEAS-C, quality of emotional expression is measured as utilization of higher level emotional response scores. The increase in the experimental group's test results in terms of utilization of emotion words thus also confirmed the proposition that emotional knowledge can be taught in the same manner that other cognitive education is.

- Gender role typifying affects the quality of emotional expression, according to Borland et al. (1998:32), as it plays a role when boys are for example taught that they should not cry and girls that they should not show aggression. This is a mindset almost unconsciously transferred over generations but if emotional awareness can be developed, as tested in the research study, undesirable gender typifying may also decrease.

- A further aspect regarding gender, applicable to the study, concerns the suggestion that females possess higher emotional capacities than males (Ruble et al., 2006:878; Eliot, 2009:78-79; Carducci, 2009:513). This study consistently measured higher responses for females compared to males. The emotional awareness of the experimental group's female respondents ultimately also increased with 24.30% while the boys only indicated an increase of 16.10%, as discussed in chapter 9 (9.3.3 and 9.4). It is thus concluded that this study confirms the view of the above authors and their opinion that females possess higher emotional abilities than males do and this study indicated that it is evident even from as young as eight years of age, as this was the average age of respondents in this study.

10.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of the findings derived from this research study, the following recommendations can be made:

- This research affords a valuable contribution to the field of social work and education in indicating how these two fields can meet each other in their collective aim to develop and empower children. This empowerment on an emotional level will benefit learners' progress in all their developmental areas and contribute to prevention and early intervention.

  Further endeavours to determine common ground and facets where social work and education may meet each other may add value to the South African educational setting. Combining the cognitive educational outlook of the educating system with the emotional and psychological input that social work can contribute to education may result in an effort to establish a more comprehensive and enriching educating experience in the best interest of learners.

  Employment of social workers (skilled in working with children) within the educational system can be recommended. The social worker will be able to implement and oversee this kind of emotional awareness and emotional development through education in schools. Social work will also serve as a support system to the educator and the educating system as a whole concerning emotional development and can also address the training and further assistance to educators regarding the following:

  - The emotional needs of learners and how to assess and address it.
  - The effect of trauma, physical and emotional abuse and neglect on the neurological abilities of children as a result of emotional insecurities.
  - Methods of dealing with learners who experience lower levels of emotional awareness which result in behaviour ranging from disobedience to aggressive outbursts due to emotional deterioration.
  - Assessment of learners who present problem behaviour on an emotional level and to plan with educators regarding means of supporting and empowering the learner.

This may ensure that these learners' involvement in their school and with their educator will benefit their development rather than further disrupt their fragile emotional state due to ignorance, as educators are not expected to be equipped in these matters.

- Another important attribute of healthy emotional development within the educational system is a classroom that conveys an emotionally safe and secure atmosphere. The manner in which educators address their learners, their attitude towards learners and their general disposition regarding the educating task is thus relevant. This study did not address this vital requirement for the enhancement of healthy emotional development of learners. It is thus recommended that further research should be undertaken on the impact of emotional education on learners in an "emotionally safe and secure classroom environment" versus emotional education to learners in an "emotionally unsafe and insecure classroom environment". It will be of interest to determine the academic, social and emotional progress of learners in both an emotionally safe and emotionally unsafe classroom atmosphere.

- The results obtained from this study indicated that it is indeed possible to develop the emotional awareness of children in middle childhood as part of the daily curriculum within the educational system. The emotional awareness of respondents was enhanced and their emotional vocabulary and emotional expression abilities were developed within a seven week exposure to the EA program. Literature on the topic suggests that peer relationships and the self-esteem of learners will also benefit from emotional awareness, but the development of these two variables were not tested in this study. Researching the extent to which development of emotional awareness within the educational system impacts on self-esteem and relationships of learners within a South African educational setting will further elucidate the benefits that might be encapsulated within emotional awareness.

- Murray (2004), De Bellis et al. (1999:1259-1270) and Diamond and Hobson (1998:2) indicate that healthy neurological development was found to play a vital role in the emotional health of children. It was further found that disobedience, aggressiveness or

disruptive behaviour amongst children may be connected to diminished brain functioning due to trauma, abuse, neglect or under-stimulation. Prevention is better than cure and this study emphasized the value to be found in well-equipped educators with knowledge in this regard. An ongoing effect of emotional harm which children may have acquired due to maltreatment, abuse or neglect by significant others or even previous educators has a deteriorating effect on neurological functioning and furthermore on all levels of the child's life. This kind of awareness by educators will not only benefit learners but insight in this manner will extensively benefit educators in their service to children. Educators need to become equipped with knowledge to comprehend diminished brain development (due to maltreatment or emotional trauma). If this is the reason for the behaviour of a rebellious, aggressive, emotional or quiet learner, the educators' relationship with those learners should have emotional development at heart rather than causing further emotional harm due to ignorance.

It is recommended that further research need to be done on the relationship between neurological functioning and its effect on the emotional awareness abilities in children. This field of research is relatively new and work already done in this regard is fascinating and of utmost importance to practitioners involved with abused and neglected children (Talay-Ongan and Ap (2005:123).

- In concurrence with the previous point, further research that might extend from this study is a study on the value that will be added to the quality of education in South Africa through emotional awareness training to educators. Tew (2007:11) states that if educators are to help learners develop their emotional literacy, it helps if they develop their own emotional literacy first. Educators should thus also be in touch with their own emotional awareness, knowledge on important emotional aspects concerning learners and knowledge on the neurological effect of emotional deficiency in learners.

- Long and Fogell (1999:28) specify the following six skills which can be taught and practiced in the school setting and then implemented in real life situations:
  - **Classroom skills:** listening, following instructions, saying thank you.

- **Friendship making skills:** introducing yourself, giving a compliment, joining in.
- **Dealing with feelings:** knowing and expressing feelings, dealing with anger or affection.
- **Alternatives to aggression:** self-control, responding to teasing, problem solving, negotiating.
- **Dealing with stress:** dealing with losing or embarrassment, reacting to failure.
- **Feeling good:** positive statements, humor, relaxation, target setting.

The educating system as a whole thus carries a responsibility and accountability regarding the educational well-being of their learners and, in the long-term, of the South African population. This study made reference to the fact that emotional health pre-determines the likelihood of normal development of learners and their ability to excel. It was also emphasized that knowledge regarding emotional deficiencies will enable educators to comprehend the rebellious attitude or disruptive behaviour of some learners. Emotional awareness will equip schools and their educators with the skills to deal with these learners in a manner that would benefit healthy emotional development. Conscious involvement from a knowledgebase of emotional awareness may influence the emotional health of the whole school, not only the individual learner. It is thus recommended that the Department of Education take responsibility in addressing this matter on a broader level by obtaining training material on this issue and enabling educators and learners to acquire emotional awareness knowledge through the department that is overseeing their best interest.

The EA Program is developed in a self explanatory manner, and it is necessary to add that although it will benefit educators and their learners greatly to equip themselves regarding emotional awareness (as discussed), it is not a requirement for the implementation of the EA Program. Any educator will be able to implement the EA Program with the guide that accompanies it.

- This study was undertaken from a Gestalt perspective and the Emotional Awareness Program that was developed as well as the research that led up to its development was directed by a Gestalt theoretical frame of reference. However, a combination of the client

centred approach combined with Gestalt perspectives might add another gradation to the viewpoints, methods and outcomes of this kind of study.

- This study measured the sustainability of the emotional awareness acquired by respondents with a follow-up test – one month after the post-test. It was found that the respondents presented further emotional growth as their utilization of higher level emotional words increased from the post-test to the follow-up test. The following results were obtained:
    - Level three: from 552 words to 638words;
    - level four: from 53 words to 56 words; and
    - level five: from 28 words to 50 words (compare chapter 9).

  Longitudinal studies to determine the long-term sustainability of the acquired emotional awareness may add further insight into the effectiveness of the developed Emotional Awareness Program.

- It would be of significant worth to repeat this kind of study on a national level in order to determine the current emotional level of primary school learners. Focussing on the benefits of emotional awareness on all levels of the learners' process would also provide an insightful view on the path we need to follow in this regard.

- Comparison studies to determine the difference in emotional awareness of learners in urban and rural areas or within different ethnic backgrounds may also prove to be of interest in terms of determining the South African setting regarding emotional awareness and the value of developing and enhancing it within the South African educational system.

- The translation of the EA program into other languages in order to broaden the scope of utilization possibilities within the diversity of the South African population can also be recommended.

- Multi disciplinary exposure to emotional awareness training and the EA program would have significant benefits for any practitioner involved with children. Knowledge in this

regard will provide them with a knowledge base from where to evaluate, develop and deal with children in a constructive and rewarding manner.

10.4 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The following goal was set for this study:

To develop, implement and evaluate an emotional awareness program for children in middle childhood for utilization in the South African educational system.

The Emotional Awareness Program was developed and implemented in a grade three class with learners in their middle childhood developmental phase. It was then evaluated by measuring the emotional awareness of an experimental and comparison group in a pre- and post-test. Results indicated that the program enhanced emotional awareness and may thus prove to be beneficial to the emotional awareness and subsequently the emotional health of learners in the South African educational system.

10.4.1 Accomplishment of the Study Objectives

Nr.	Objective	Achievement of objective
1	To conceptualize emotional awareness theoretically with specific emphasis on children in middle childhood, in the context of the educational system.	This objective was achieved as reflected in the discussion on: emotional awareness in chapter 5 middle childhood in chapter 3 educational system in chapter 6
2	To develop an emotional awareness program for children in middle childhood for utilization in classroom	The emotional awareness program was developed as described in chapter 7.

	context.	
3	To train an educator in implementing the Emotional Awareness Program for children in middle childhood within the classroom context.	The educator was successfully trained in emotional awareness and in the implementation of the EA program, as discussed in chapter 8.
4	To implement the Emotional Awareness Program in a classroom context, by the trained educator.	This objective was accomplished and proved to have been a successful intervention.
5	To evaluate the effectiveness of the Emotional Awareness Program through measuring the responses of the respondents (learners).	The objective of was accomplished as discussed in chapter 8.
6	To make recommendations based on the research findings, regarding the enhancement of the Emotional Awareness Program for learners in middle childhood within the educational system.	The objective was achieved through a summarized presentation of findings and recommendations in chapter 10

10.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The literature study of this research indicates in many instances the value and significance of different facets of this study namely:

- The substance and importance of the middle childhood phase which was viewed as a developmental phase of less importance in earlier years, in comparison to the vast development in infancy and early childhood years as well as in adolescence.
- The impact of emotions and specifically emotional awareness in terms of healthy social, emotional and psychological development of the child in the middle childhood developmental phase.

- The valuable role that the educational system can play regarding the development of emotional awareness and aiding their learners to benefit in all facets of life as a result thereof.
- The complexity of neurological development of the child's brain, simplified to assist in the comprehension of the important role emotional and psychological health play in terms of healthy brain development.

It was hypothesized that the implementation of an emotional awareness program for learners in their middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system would enhance the level of emotional functioning of learners. This hypothesis was found to be true and that learners did indeed benefit from exposure to the EA Program.

The following sub-hypotheses were set and the study found it to be proved as follows:

- *If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, their ability to be **in contact with their emotions** will enhance.* This was proved to be true. This is signified in the fact that emotional awareness increased as indicated in the empirical results, which could only happen when learners become in contact with their emotions due to emotional awareness.

- *If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, their ability to **discriminate between different emotions** will increase.* This was proved to be true. Learners' ability to discriminate between different emotions was tested through their overall results in completion of the LEAS-C but also in the calculation of the number of emotional responses they were able to utilize in their responses. Both these results indicated that the learners of the experimental group's abilities in this regard developed positively

- *If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, they will gain the ability to **verbalize and "own"** their emotions.* This was proved to be true. Emotional expression through the enhancement of emotional vocabulary was successful and the empirical results indicated that development in this regard was obtained

in the fact that the experimental group was able to utilize a significant number of higher level or "stronger" emotional words after exposure to the EA program.

The fact that it was proven that emotional awareness can be taught in the same manner as cognitive skills direct us to the many possibilities of utilization of the EA Program in order to develop and enhance the emotional awareness of children and ultimately grooming an emotional intelligent community.

This study indicates to us that emotional awareness is an easily comprehendible term, it is an easily educated concept and it can easily be incorporated in the educational system, but may then have vast benefits. Emotional awareness as an educational task needs therefore need to receive the attention that it proved to deserve in order for the educational system and its learners to reap the full benefit thereof.