

An Emotional Awareness Program for Children in Middle  
Childhood, for Utilization in the Educational System

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree

Doctor Philosophia (DPhil)

in the Department of Social work and Criminology at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

SUPERVISOR: PROF. C.S.L. DELPORT

September 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing my DPhil degree is definitely one of the most challenging activities I endeavored in my life thus far. Although a venture like this sets high demands on many levels of your life, the experience was unquestionably still a rewarding and fulfilling one. This is probably the case due to the support and cooperation of persons and institutions involved with myself or with my study. I would therefore like to express my gratitude to:

My study leader, Prof. Rina Delpont, for her guidance, support and motivation throughout the four years that she spent alongside me in completion of this study. Her dedication to my study stimulated and inspired me and challenges resulting from her own academic or personal responsibilities never held my studies back.

Heartfelt thanks to my husband for being my devoted inspiration and motivation. His constant confidence in me and loving support and assistance in taking responsibility when I was confined behind my computer eased many challenges away from me, to dedicate my time to my study.

A loving thank you goes to my children Marieda, Ignus and Erick who had to make many sacrifices during the course of these four years. Their support and efforts to help out in each of their own ways helped a lot as well as their understanding regarding my time and company which was almost constantly absorbed by my study.

I gratefully acknowledge all my friends, colleagues and family, especially my mother, for ongoing interest in my progress as well as for support and encouragement on the up hills but also for being there to catch me on the down hills.

I would further like to thank Mrs. Marga Roos who dedicatedly, implemented the Emotional Awareness Program in her class and played an important role in the success of this research study.

Another word of thanks goes to the Dept. of Education in Limpopo and the school's governing body for allowing me to undertake my research study within Laerskool Warmbad.

Above all I thank the Lord for directing me towards this challenging task and for faithfully carrying me through it. May the knowledge I acquired through this venture benefit His children and their emotional health in such a manner that it would ultimately glorify His name. ***“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such” Luke 18:16.***

# ABSTRACT

## **An emotional awareness program for children in middle childhood, for utilization in the educational system**

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This study's contribution to knowledge is the contextualizing of emotional awareness as a prerequisite for becoming emotionally intelligent, and developing a program to educate emotional awareness, as a developmental ability, within the educational system.

Emotional intelligence is a familiar and widely recognized term, but is in fundamental nature more of a broad and overreaching outcome, rather than an ability. This research focused on children in the middle childhood developmental phase and how emotional awareness can be taught to them. An Emotional Awareness Program (EA Program) was developed and implemented within the classroom context and its effectiveness was evaluated to determine whether the EA Program did have an influence on emotional vocabulary, emotional expression and the general level of emotional awareness displayed by the learners.

Being emotionally aware, benefits children on different levels of their functioning. Various authors, as cited in this study, conclude that relationships, self-esteem, academic performance, independent functioning and self expression all benefit from the development of emotional awareness. Entering the school setting is often the child's first move into relationships with peers and adults other than family members. Learners spend most of their waking lives, during their middle childhood, in school. Many aspects necessary for emotional education may be found within the school

environment. These consist of peer relationships, empathy for others, problem-solving, developing a regard for the feelings of others and coping with difficult situations or emotions.

A child suffering physical and emotional abuse, neglect, trauma or insufficient stimulation presents neurological deterioration in neurons (the “building blocks” of the brain). Diminished brain functioning may result in anger, emotional episodes and disruptive behaviour as methods of emotional expression in some learners.

Neurological damage, suffered in this manner, can be reversed via the intervention of a caring adult. This interaction stimulates healthy neurons, and causes them to migrate to the area that suffered damage, thus illustrating the immense role educators are required to play in the future development and restoration of neurological health of some learners.

The educational system is ideally positioned to deal with children from a holistic perspective by addressing not only their cognitive and physical needs, but also their emotional and subsequent social needs. Furthermore, the development of the emotional awareness of educators will equip them with the necessary insight into the emotional needs of learners. It is anticipated that emotional awareness will benefit learners in general and have a positive ripple effect on schools and communities as a whole.

The study found that the Gestalt approach is best suited for the research study, as it presupposes that the child is “a whole and complex being”; and considers, as a backdrop, the child’s development regarding awareness and the influence that this has on their progress. It was noted from the study that this viewpoint is not always the point of departure of the current school set-up.

This investigation was executed using a quantitative research approach, with a structured method of inquiry. This consisted of the formulation of a specific and constant hypothesis, a predetermined research process and a standardized questionnaire. The researcher wanted to measure the effectiveness of an EA program on specific variables such as the learners’ ability to:

- be in contact with their emotions;
- discriminate between different emotions;
- verbalize and take ownership of their emotions;

This study resorted within the description of applied research, as it was undertaken to acquire new knowledge and was primarily directed towards practical objectives. It focused on a practical problem; the need for an EA Program for children in middle childhood that was scientifically tested within the South African Education System. Within the context of applied research, intervention research was applicable to this study as it aimed to develop technology, useful to the educational profession.

The design and development sub-type of intervention research best encompassed the researcher's intent to design and develop technology, namely the EA Program, to implement the program (intervention) and to evaluate the effectiveness thereof for further implementation within the education system. A quasi-experimental design namely the comparison group pre-test – post-test design was utilized.

A standardized questionnaire entitled Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale (LEAS-C), developed by Dr. Jane Bajgar and Dr. Richard Lane (2003), was used as the measuring instrument. This questionnaire was developed specifically so that its use of language, the length and content of the form would be child appropriate.

The study focused on children in the middle childhood developmental phase, which proved to be the phase where emotional awareness begins to play an important role. Children in this phase are particularly susceptible to new knowledge as they have already obtained the basic cognitive abilities (reading, writing and reasoning) necessary to comprehend the content of the EA program.

The following conclusions were derived from the execution of this research study:

*Emotional awareness* seemed to be a relatively unfamiliar term in comparison with the widely recognized and renowned term, *emotional intelligence*. This study positioned emotional awareness as a prerequisite for emotional intelligence; as it is a practical awareness of cognitively obtainable knowledge regarding the emotions of self and others. Emotional intelligence on the other hand is achieved through constructive and optimal emotional awareness abilities.

Based on the research findings, and as suggested earlier, it appears that the education system is particularly well positioned to address the emotional development of a large percentage of the school going population. It is assumed that emotional awareness can be cognitively educated and educators

are equipped with the necessary educational skills. The education system is thus further favourably equipped to educate emotional content due to the fact that cognitive development is their field of expertise.

The research findings indicated that the EA Program succeeded to a great extent in developing emotional vocabulary, higher level emotional responses and the accompanying ability of emotional expression within the experimental group. This measured increase was derived from a seven week exposure to the EA program, which may be indicative of the results that could be achieved with daily exposure to emotional learning, and a healthy emotional setting within the school environment.

Obtaining higher level emotional vocabulary is evidently accompanied by emotional expression as the appropriate vocabulary, which is necessary to express the emotional experience accurately. Emotional expression abilities were addressed in particular by the EA Program, and the empirical results suggest that the emotional vocabulary of respondents did expand.

A caring educator, well equipped with insight into emotional awareness, may in many instances prove to be a safety net for many learners. This may well serve as a catalyst for reprogramming the brain of the emotionally scarred learner to trust, and risk getting back in the circle of life again, a better alternative than having the learner only surviving by adopting ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ strategies.

Educators must become equipped with the knowledge to comprehend the possibly diminished brain development of the rebellious, aggressive, emotional or introverted learner. This will ensure that their response to such learners has emotional development at heart rather than further emotional harm. Educators should therefore be in touch with their own emotional awareness as well. Indeed, it may prove interesting to determine the value that would be added to the quality of education in South Africa through emotional awareness training to educators. The education system as a whole possesses a responsibility and accountability regarding the educational wellbeing of their learners, as emotional health pre-determines the learners’ ability to thrive.

This study made a valuable contribution to the field of both social work and education in their collective aim to develop and empower children. It is recommended that the common grounds where these two professions may meet should be further explored to determine where such a partnership can add further value to the South African educational setting. Providing an emotionally safe and secure

classroom atmosphere requires further exploration, as it is an additional factor relating to the ability of learners to excel in class.

Existing literature suggests that peer relationships and self-esteem will also benefit from emotional awareness, but the development of these two variables was not tested in this study, and may be a topic for further research.

It would be significant to repeat this study on a national level to determine the current emotional level of primary school learners. Comparative studies to determine the differences in emotional awareness of learners in urban and rural areas, or within different ethnic backgrounds may also be of value. This will assist in determining the South African situation regarding emotional awareness and to develop the means to enhance it within the South African education system. This study demonstrated that emotional awareness is an easily comprehensible term which can be easily educated but presents vast benefits.

### **Key concepts**

- Emotional awareness;
- Emotional intelligence;
- Emotions;
- Middle childhood;
- Gestalt;
- Emotional expression
- Emotional vocabulary
- Educating system;
- Educator;
- Emotional Awareness Program.

# OPSOMMING

## **’n Emosionele bewussyn program vir kinders in die middel kinderjare ontwikkelingsfase, vir benutting in die onderwys sisteem**

Deur

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Hierdie studie se belangrikste kennisbydrae is die kontekstualisering van emosionele bewussyn as ’n voorvereiste om emosionele intelligensie te kan bereik. Hieruit het die ontwikkeling van ’n program om emosionele bewussyn as ’n ontwikkelingstaak binne die onderwys sisteem te onderrig, voortgevloei.

Emosionele intelligensie is ’n bekende (persepsie) en erkende term, maar is fundamenteel ’n uitkoms eerder as ’n vermoë. Hierdie navorsingstudie het gefokus op kinders in die middel kinderjare ontwikkelingsfase en hoe hulle in emosionele bewussyn onderrig kan word. ’n Emosionele Bewussyn Program (EB Program) was ontwikkel en in die klaskamerkonteks geïmplimenteer. Die effektiwiteit van die EB Program was ge-evalueer om te bepaal of dit daarin geslaag het om die emosionele woordeskat, emosionele uitdrukking en algemene vlak van emosionele bewussyn van leerders te verhoog.

Emosionele bewussyn bevoordeel leerders op verskillende vlakke van funksionering. Verskillende outeurs, soos aangehaal in hierdie studie, kom tot die slotsom dat aspekte soos verhoudings, selfbeeld, akademiese prestasie, onafhanklikheid en selfbeskikking beïnvloed word deur verhoogde emosionele bewussyn.



Toetreding tot die skoolsisteem is dikwels leerders se eerste formele kennismaking met portuurgroepverhoudings en verhoudings met volwassenes buite hulle familiekring. Leerders spandeer die grootste deel van hulle lewe, in die middel kinderjare ontwikkelingsfase, in die skool. Verskeie aspekte noodsaaklik vir emosionele onderrig is algemeen teenwoordig in die onderrigsisteem en skool omgewing. Dit sluit in: verhoudings, empatie, probleemoplossing, besorgdheid oor die gevoelens van ander en om moeilike situasies te hanteer. Hierin is 'n gesonde vlak van neurologiese ontwikkeling dus ook van belang.

'n Kind wat gebuk gaan onder fisieke en emosionele mishandeling, verwaarlosing, trauma of 'n gebrek aan stimulasie presenteer neurologiese afbreking van neurone (boustene van die brein) wat beperking in breinfunksionering tot gevolg het. Beperkte funksionering van hierdie aard presenteer meestal in aggressie, emosionele uitreagering en destruktiewe gedrag as metodes van emosionele uitdrukking by sommige leerders.

Neurologiese skade, wat op hierdie wyse opgedoen is, hoef egter nie permanent te wees nie en kan omgekeer word deur die betrokkenheid van 'n liefdevolle en versorgende volwassene. Die kind se interaksie, geborgenheid en veiligheid binne die verhouding met so 'n volwassene stimuleer gesonde neurone en bring mee dat hulle migreer na die areas waar skade opgedoen is. Hierin word die belangrike rol wat onderwysers kan speel in die toekomstige ontwikkeling en herstel van die neurologiese gesondheid van hulle leerders duidelik illustreer.

Die onderwysstelsel is ideaal geposisioneer om leerders vanuit 'n holistiese perspektief op te voed deur nie alleen kognitiewe en fisieke ontwikkeling nie maar ook emosionele en gepaardgaande sosiale behoeftes aan te spreek. Daar word antisipeer dat emosionele bewussyn by leerders ook 'n rimpel-effek vir die hele skool en gemeenskap as geheel sou kon inhou. Die ontwikkeling van emosionele bewussyn van onderwysers is 'n verdere belangrike aspek omdat dit hulle sal bemagtig met die nodige insig in hulle eie emosionele ervarings asook met begrip vir die emosionele behoeftes van leerders.

Die Gestalt benadering was identifiseer as die mees toepaslike teoretiese onderbou vir hierdie studie aangesien dit veronderstel dat die kind 'n saamgestelde en komplekse wese is. Dit maak ook daarvoor voorsiening om op die agtergrond die kind se ontwikkeling ten opsigte van bewussyn en die invloed daarvan in die kind se ontwikkeling en prestasie, in gedagte te hou.

Daar was deur hierdie studie identifiseer dat hierdie uitgangspunt nie noodwendig binne die huidige Suid Afrikaanse skoolsisteem toegepas word nie, `n aspek wat deur hierdie studie aangespreek word.

Hierdie ondersoek was uitgevoer vanuit `n kwantitatiewe navorsingsbenadering, met `n gestruktureerde metode van navraag. Dit het bestaan uit die formulering van spesifieke hipoteses, `n vooraf bepaalde navorsingsproses en `n gestandaardiseerde vraelys. Die navorser se doel was om die effektiwiteit van `n EB Program op spesifieke veranderlikes te meet naamlik, leerders se vermoë om:

- in kontak met hulle emosies te kom;
- tussen verskillende emosies te kan diskrimineer;
- eienaarskap van hulle emosies te neem en dit te kan verbaliseer;

Hierdie studie het resorteer binne die beskrywing van toegepaste navorsing, aangesien dit onderneem was om nuwe kennis te ontgin en primêr gefokus was op praktiese doelwitte. Dit het verder gefokus op `n praktiese probleem; die behoefte aan `n EB Program vir kinders in die middelkinderjare (ontwikkelingsstadium) wat wetenskaplik binne die Suid Afrikaanse onderwysstelsel getoets is. Binne die konteks van toegepaste navorsing was intervensie- navorsing toepaslik in die studie as gevolg van die feit dat dit die ontwikkeling van tegnologie vir beide maatskaplike werk en die onderwys ten doel gehad het.

Die ontwerp en ontwikkeling sub-tipe van intervensienavorsing het hierdie studie ten beste omlin aangesien die navorser tegnologie ontwerp en ontwikkel het, naamlik die ontwerp van die EB Program, die implimentering van die EB Program (intervensie) en die evaluering van die effektiwiteit daarvan vir toekomstige implementering binne die onderwysstelsel. `n Kwasi-eksperimentele ontwerp, naamlik die vergelykende groep voortoets – natoets ontwerp was benut.

`n Gestandaardiseerde vraelys getitel “Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale (LEAS-C)”, ontwikkel deur Dr. Jane Bajgar and Dr. Richard Lane (2003), was as meetinstrument aangewend. Hierdie vraelys is spesifiek ontwikkel sodat die taal waaruit dit bestaan, die lengte van die inhoud en vorm waarin dit aangebied word toepaslik vir die ontwikkelingsvlak en vermoëns van kinders sal wees.

Hierdie studie het gefokus op kinders in die middelkinderjare ontwikkelingsfase, `n fase waar emosionele bewussyn `n beduidende rol begin speel. Kinders in hierdie fase is veral vatbaar vir nuwe

inligting aangesien hulle reeds die basiese kognitiewe vermoëns (lees, skryf en redenering) bemeester het. Hierdie vaardighede was noodsaaklik om die inhoud van die EB Program en vraelys te begryp.

Die volgende gevolgtrekkings kon vanuit die uitvoering van hierdie studie gemaak word:

*Emosionele bewussyn* blyk `n relatief onbekende begrip in vergelyking met die algemeen bekende en erkende term *emosionele intelligensie*, te wees. Hierdie studie het emosionele bewussyn posisioneer as `n voorvereiste vir die bereiking van emosionele intelligensie; daar dit `n praktiese bewussyn of kognitief bereikbare kennis rakende eie emosies en die emosies van ander is. Emosionele intelligensie aan die ander kant is `n uitkoms wat bereik word wanneer konstruktiewe en optimale kennis en vaardighede op die gebied van emosionele bewussyn bekom is.

Gebasseer op die navorsingsbevindinge blyk dit dat die onderwyssisteem veral goed geposisioneer is om die emosionele ontwikkeling van `n hoë persentasie van die skoolgaande populasie aan te spreek. Die mening bestaan dat emosionele bewussyn kognitief onderrig kan word en onderwysers is toegerus met die onderrigvaardighede wat hiervoor benodig word. Die onderwyssisteem is dus in `n gunstige posisie om emosionele inhoud te onderrig gesien in die lig daarvan dat kognitiewe ontwikkeling die onderwys se spesialiteitsveld is.

Die navorsingsbevindinge dui aan dat die EB Program in `n groot mate daarin geslaag het om emosionele woordeskat by die respondente te ontwikkel asook hoër vlak emosionele response en die gepaardgaande vermoë tot emosionele uitdrukking by die eksperimentele groep te ontwikkel. Die toename wat gemeet is, was verkry van `n sewe weke blootstelling aan die EB Program, wat aanduidend kan wees van die resultate wat verkry behoort te word deur daaglikse blootstelling aan emosionele onderrig en `n gesonde emosionele atmosfeer binne die skoolomgewing.

Verkryging van hoër vlak emosionele woordeskat gaan gepaard met emosionele uitdrukking aangesien toepaslike woordeskat benodig word om `n emosionele ervaring akkuraat te kan beskryf. Emosionele uitdrukking as `n vaardigheid was in besonder deur die EB Program aangespreek en die empiriese resultate dui daarop dat die emosionele woordeskat van respondente wel verhoog het.

`n Toegewyde onderwyser, toegerus met insig in emosionele bewussyn sou in menige opsigte `n vangnet kon wees vir leerders met emosionele skade. Dit sou kan dien as katalisator vir herprogrammering van die brein van `n emosioneel beskadigde leerder om weer te vertrou en die waagmoed te ontwikkel om weer met selfvertroue tot die lewe toe te tree. Dit is vanselfsprekend `n

beter alternatief vir 'n leerder wie andersins slegs sou oorleef deur middel van 'n veg-of-vlug strategie.

Hierdie studie maak verder 'n waardevolle bydrae tot die veld van beide maatskaplike werk en die onderwys in hulle gesamentlike doel om kinders te beskerm en te bemagtig. Daar word aanbeveel dat die gemeenskaplike gronde waar hierdie twee professies kan ontmoet verder ge-eksplorieer word ten einde te bepaal op watter wyse so 'n vennootskap verdere waarde tot die Suid Afrikaanse onderrigstelsel kan toevoeg. 'n Veilige emosionele atmosfeer binne die klaskamer behoort ook verder ge-eksplorieer te word aangesien dit 'n addisionele faktor is wat verband hou met leerders se vermoë om te presteer. Onderwysers behoort toegerus te word met kennis en begrip van die moontlikheid van beperkte breinontwikkeling by die rebelse, aggressiewe, oor-emosionele of introvert leerder. Dit sal verseker dat hulle hantering van sulke leerders emosionele ontwikkeling ten doel het eerder as verdere emosionele skade. Onderwysers behoort om hierdie rede ook optimaal in voeling te kom met hulle eie emosionele bewussyn. Dit sou gevolglik van belang wees om te bepaal hoeveel waarde tot die kwaliteit van onderrig in Suid Afrika toegevoeg kan word deur onderrig ten opsigte van emosionele bewussyn, aan onderwysers. Hierdie belangrike taak rus grotendeels op die skouers van die onderwysstelsel wat die verantwoordelikheid vir die emosionele gesondheid van leerders kan neem wat dan verder die vermoë om op verskillende vlakke te presteer, sal bevorder.

Bestaande literatuur dui aan dat portuurverhoudings en selfbeeld ook voordelig beïnvloed sal word deur emosionele bewussyn, maar die ontwikkeling van hierdie twee veranderlikes was nie in hierdie studie getoets nie en kan as die onderwerp vir verdere navorsing benut word.

In die lig van die gevolgtrekkings van hierdie studie sal dit waarde inhou om die studie op nasionale vlak te herhaal ten einde die huidige vlak van emosionele bewussyn van laerskool- leerders te bepaal. Vergelykende studies om die verskil te bepaal in emosionele bewussyn van leerders in stedelike en landelike gebiede of tussen leerders van verskillende etniese agtergronde, sal ook waardevolle kennis inwin. 'n Studie van hierdie aard sou ook bydra tot die bepaling van die Suid Afrikaanse situasie ten opsigte van emosionele bewussyn en om metodes te ontwikkel om emosionele bewussyn op breë vlak binne die Suid Afrikaanse onderrigstelsel te ontwikkel.

Hierdie navorsingstudie het demonstreeer dat emosionele bewussyn `n eenvoudig verstaanbare term is en `n konsep wat eenvoudig onderrig kan word maar wat verrykende voordele vir ontwikkeling kan inhou.

### **Sleutel begrippe**

- Emosionele bewussyn;
- Emosionele intelligensie;
- Emosie;
- Middelkinderjare;
- Gestalt;
- Emosionele uitdrukking;
- Emosionele woordeskat;
- Onderwyssisteem;
- Onderwyser;
- Emosionele Bewussyn Program.

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# CHAPTER 1

## General Introduction

*“The sign of intelligent people is their ability to control emotions by the application of reason”.*

*- Marya Mannes*

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the unique features of humans is their reliance on emotions to form social bonds and build complex socio-cultural structures. This is confirmed by Turner and Stets (2005:1) who postulate that:

“with just a moment’s thought, it immediately becomes evident that emotions are the ‘glue’ binding people together and generating commitments to larger scale social and cultural structures. Experience, behaviour, interaction, and organization are connected to the mobilization and expression of emotions”.

Our hurried lives and the high expectance for success place an enormous amount of strain on daily performance. The pressure on children in this sense does not differ much from that on adults. Cohen (2001:4) echoes this statement in his indication that how children feel about themselves and others, colours and shapes their ability to learn. Their social emotional capacities powerfully affect, and even determine, their actions in terms of their ability to listen and communicate; to concentrate; to recognize, understand, and solve problems; to cooperate; to modulate their emotional states; to become self-motivating; and to resolve conflicts adaptively.

The significance of emotional capacities, in this sense, is elucidated by Stein (2009:13) in his indication that people are judged by their actions rather than by how much they know. He illustrates this by stating that people who care about others are generally valued higher than someone who is, for instance, able to memorize the periodic table. Children need to make this connection. Rothbard and Sheese (2007:331) conclude that emotions signal the need to change or adjust our behaviour in the face of environmental challenges and therefore function to help us



realize our short-term and long-term intrapersonal and interpersonal needs. Linking the inner world to the outer experience thus enables awareness through emotional knowledge.

The way in which children express their emotions, according to Blom (2004:138), bears relation to their personal processes and manifests more in behaviour than in verbal communication. Violet Oaklander, specialist Gestalt play therapist, found that children are likely to suppress their negative emotions, but it is then observed in their behaviour (Oaklander, 1988:139).

A child's negative emotional experiences may therefore manifest as disobedience, anger, anxiety attacks and emotional episodes in the child who is not emotionally educated. Emotional education is defined by Crawspeth (2005:49-72) as: "(i) becoming aware of what is happening in our emotional process and (ii) learning how to influence this happening". The educator who is thus not equipped in the field of emotional awareness can then in turn gravely misinterpret this kind of behaviour and their handling of the child can do more harm than good. The importance of a well equipped educator is confirmed by Maritz (2008), an educational psychologist involved with children in a children's home in the Limpopo Province, who states that "educators who are not sensitive to the emotional needs of children, especially traumatized children, may administer additional trauma and strengthen the negative emotions within the child". She has further mentioned that aggression is one of the main negative reactions regarding emotional disturbances that she has to deal with. She experienced noticeable improvement in positive behaviour once she and a child worked through emotional uncertainties, which emphasizes the importance of emotional awareness skills. According to Maritz (2008) this aspect is especially important for children in the middle childhood developmental phase (age six to twelve), which will be the target group in this study. Maritz (2008) notes that children between the ages of six and twelve years (middle childhood developmental phase) experience almost everything they are involved in on an emotional level and that emotions are therefore the most intense experience for children in this developmental stage. This is supported by Bronson (2000:227) who indicates that their [children in the middle childhood developmental phase] development towards the end of this stage changes from being "emotionally-focused" to "problem-focused".

Brain development of the young child is a further aspect of utmost importance if one aims to comprehend the extent of healthy development in developing children. Talay-Ongan and Ap

(2005:123) point to the findings of studies with children who experienced sexual and physical abuse during the ages of one to six years, who endured these circumstances for at least six years before they were placed in foster care. It was found that:

- many children recovered from post-traumatic-stress when they found themselves in nurturing environments, in others there was evidence of alterations in the physiology of their fear-stress system, similar to conditions where high levels of cortisol was released.
- with neural-imaging comparisons with healthy and intact children, the abused children had considerably smaller brain-volumes, with the extent of damage proportional to the duration of abuse.

Bearing these findings in mind it is evident that the educator may serve as a daily nurturer to the child residing in circumstances of maltreatment and neglect. The educator may thus well be the difference in this child's capacity for emotional recovery and healthy brain potential. The huge role of brain development and maltreatment in the shaping of children is extensively discussed in Chapter 4.

Knowledge of emotions as well as the effect of emotional experiences is thus crucial when dealing with the child in the middle childhood developmental phase. Rathus (2011:425) indicate that, children become more capable of taking the role or perspective of another person in the middle childhood developmental phase. Lanius, Vermetten and Pain (2010:280) designate that this inferential ability about the emotional states of others depends on the understanding of one's own emotional experience. In this way children or adults who lack emotional awareness about themselves will also have difficulty understanding the emotional expression of others.

If children are allowed to recognize their emotions as a natural part of their human nature, they will be enabled to learn skills to express emotions in a healthy and socially acceptable manner (Blom, 2004:138). Optimal emotional knowledge can hence explain psychological reactions to specific anxieties and fears in the child's life, which result in the child owning it and therefore obtaining better control over it (Geldard & Geldard, 2002:48; Blom 2004:15).

Emotional education, according to Cohen (2001:3), refers to learning skills, understandings and values that enhance the ability to “read” oneself and others and then utilize this information to become a flexible problem solver and creative learner. Weare (2004:3) elaborates on this in his indication that some key emotional competencies are essential for optimal development, namely self-understanding, understanding and managing emotions, understanding social situations, and building relationships. The interrelation of these aspects is an important issue in this study, for it is the researcher’s opinion that the total being of the child in the middle childhood developmental phase can be enhanced through emotional awareness, as emotional instability and insecurity similarly affect the child’s overall existence.

Jameson (2004) refers to research done by The USA Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a movement focussed on research and development of Social and Emotional Learning, which has found that:

Children with social and emotional competence are most likely to succeed academically, have a sense of well-being in their personal lives, and act as contributors to their communities. They know what their strengths and challenges are and are optimistic about the future; they have meaningful relationships and maintain happy lives. They are able to set and achieve goals and solve problems effectively. They are able to empathize with and show respect for others, appreciate diversity, and live in accordance with their values, making positive contributions to their communities.

The study, which focuses on the development and evaluation of an emotional awareness program for children in the middle childhood developmental phase in a South African educational setting, may consequently be of value to children in all of the above-mentioned facets of their lives.

It seems thus as if emotional education should receive the same amount of attention as cognitive education in the educational system. It implies that educators should therefore have knowledge regarding emotional awareness to ensure that the whole child is developed and educated. This is confirmed by Coetzee (2008), who states that primary school educators, now more than ever, need to be equipped with knowledge on the development of emotional and social skills, and an understanding of the emotional behaviour of their learners. Coetzee (2008) emphasizes that he and his personnel are in desperate need of education in this field.

In foregoing research to this study, conducted by Knoetze (2006), educators' knowledge of emotional awareness was investigated and it was found that educators were of the opinion that the development of emotional awareness as a developmental task in the middle childhood developmental phase is significant. Research results indicated further that respondents were of the opinion that they do not have sufficient knowledge of children's emotional awareness and means to develop it in their classes. A 100% response was received for a need in further development and education in this field (Knoetze, 2006:109).

The development and implementation of a program that will enhance emotional awareness and social capacities in the primary school learner would consequently benefit not only the learner, but the educators and school as a whole. Weare (2004:13) indicates that many large-scale reviews of research in this area have concluded that programs which teach social and emotional competencies can result in gains that are central to the goals of schools. These goals include improved school atmospheres, learning that is more effective, better behaviour, higher school attendance, higher motivation, higher morale of students and educators, and better results for students and schools. Bartlett and Burton (2003:22) agree with this statement and identified four aspects that indicate successful education of the developing child, namely the development of a healthy child, a strong child, a competent child and a child skilled in communication techniques.

The focus of this study is therefore be on the development and evaluation of the effectiveness of an emotional awareness program for children in the middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system. The study is undertaken from a Gestalt therapeutic perspective. The Gestalt perspective approaches the child in entirety and offers comprehensive guidelines for emotional well-being. Ray (2011:54) states that Violet Oaklander is noted as the founder of Gestalt play therapy and the most prolific author on its use. Oaklander (1988:194) indicates that once children understand their needs, they can start in the direction of fulfilment of that need. The Gestalt approach and its applicability in this study are extensively discussed in Chapter 2.

## 1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Chakraborty and Konar (2009:10) state that a portion of the human cortical and sub-cortical brain system is found to be responsible for our emotional expression. These emotional reactions change and develop through experiences and situations, which occur during an individual's life.

Maag (1996:127) provides an excellent comparison applicable to this study and therefore it is included in this discussion even though it is from an older source. He states that emotional and psychological sensations are confusing in comparison to physiological feelings and illustrates it with the example that when the body experiences a feeling of dehydration it develops a feeling of thirst. Thirst is not a positive feeling and an instinctive reaction indicates to the individual that he needs to have a drink. Nobody needs therapy for thirst, because an instinctive physiological reaction takes care of the problem. However, there is a contrast between the ease with which physiological needs are interpreted and reacted on, versus an individual's ability to act with knowledge and understanding on emotions or psychological needs.

This simplified example clearly illustrates the need for emotional awareness. Heightened emotional awareness will enable children to recognize the sensation of specific emotions in their body and mind. The child can then naturally react to the emotion from grounded knowledge and awareness of specific emotions and its effect on the body. Awareness of emotions will furthermore result in a less traumatic or threatening experience of negative emotions as a result of heightened wellness and the ability to function more effectively through self-regulation (Oaklander, 1988:122). Graham's (2005:161-167) cognitive behavioural program for sexually abused children points to the successful way in which emotional skills can be taught in the same manner that cognitive skills are. The opposite would thus have the effect that optimal cognitive training without emotional and social skills can prevent the child from developing into a responsible and productive human being. Bronson (2000:59) corroborates this argument in her findings that cognitive developmental theorists have associated the control of emotions and behaviour with overall cognitive development.

In a study conducted by Knoetze (2006) it is found that educators also recognize emotional awareness as an important building block for the healthy development of children and they value

the role the educational system has to play in the development of emotional awareness. These findings are supported by Kincheloe, Burzstyn and Steinberg (2004:106), who point out that recent research regarding the interconnectedness of emotions, thinking and learning recognize that there is no separation of these constructs. They further stress the importance of upholding the rightful and necessary inclusion of emotions in learning.

A further aspect of importance in this matter is observed by Eric Jensen (in Mortiboys, 2005:29) in his indication that “the ‘state’ you are in is the most important factor determining readiness to learn”. He further postulates that “all learning is ‘state’ dependent. The ‘state’ you are in is determined by the collection of emotions you are feeling”. The classroom situation renders a great deal of potential to induce feelings which do not create a “learning state”. Tileston (2004:32) confirmed this opinion in her study regarding the motivation of learners, when she found that it becomes easier to work with learners when they feel safe enough to discuss their emotions. The emphasis is thus not only on understanding the emotional needs of learners and being able to identify and address it, but also on creating an emotionally safe classroom environment in the process.

Kuscke, Riggs and Greenberg in Zins, Weissberg, Wang and Walberg (2004:172) state that social and emotional competence has become as critical for the basic knowledge repertoire of all children as reading, writing and arithmetic. Kuscke, Riggs and Greenberg in Zins et al. (2004:172) elaborate that educators acknowledge that they have little background or established strategies to deal with these competencies and these authors thus emphasise that it is necessary to provide detailed lessons, materials and instructions to them.

This was also confirmed in the study conducted by Knoetze (2006), where educators expressed the opinion that emotional awareness has an important role to play and indicated that there exists a need for development and training in this field, but confirmed that they were not equipped to fulfil this need.

The integration of social and emotional learning into school curriculums is thus the ideal solution and is viewed by Utne O’Brien et al. (2008) as a vital intervention in order to prepare children for life in the twenty first century. Shriver and Weissberg (in Utne O’Brien et al., 2008), leaders of

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), point out that the choice between academic and social-emotional learning is a false one: “The two kinds of learning are intimately connected. This supposes that promoting students' social and emotional skills plays a critical role in improving their academic performance”. They further indicate that there is solid evidence to support this statement in research synthesis of over 300 studies, conducted by Joseph Durlak of Loyola University and Roger Weissberg of CASEL and the University of Illinois (Utne O’Brien et al., 2008). These studies indicate that social and emotional learning programs significantly improve students' academic performance. The study shows, for example, that an average student enrolled in a social and emotional learning program ranks at least ten percentage points higher on achievement tests than students who do not participate in such programs.

These studies on emotional learning were done internationally. The researcher could not find an indication of empirical research focussing specifically on the skill of awareness of different emotions, its effect on physical and psychological functioning and appropriate ways to positively act on these emotions within the educational system in South Africa. Studies regarding emotional development for children done within the South African context are studies focussing on emotional intelligence as a broader concept of being emotionally capable and equipped (Blom, 2000; Le Roux & de Klerk, 2004; Vermeulen, 1999). It seems thus as if there is currently a need for an appropriate learning program to enhance this fundamental starting point towards growth into an emotionally intelligent person, namely developing the emotional awareness of children in the middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system. Such a program, which could be included as part of the normal school day and learners’ learning material will thus prepare children emotionally better for life (Utne O’Brien et al., 2008) and educators will also be equipped to better understand the emotional needs of children and be able to identify and address it because they will receive the material and content in a program already applicable in their classrooms.

Coetzee (2008) indicates that the current focus is more on all kinds of creative forms of discipline, because educators are losing control over a large group of learners. These learners are labelled as misbehaved, uncontrollable or delinquent and some of them end up in schools of industry. Less attention is given to emotional education; hence emotional awareness has the potential to constructively enhance positive behaviour. The need for the emotional education of learners within

the educational context was highlighted by Coetzee (2008) and is supported by Cohen (2001:3) in the statement that there is a growing body of research and practice that underscores that learning how to “read” ourselves and the reactions of others is as important as learning how to read words and numbers.

Education in emotional awareness is a new concept compared to conventional education of cognitive learning. Successful emotional awareness in learners depends on educators being equipped to teach emotional awareness to their learners, and this is not the case in the current South African educational system (Knoetze, 2006:121). This study’s findings indicated that educators view emotional awareness as:

- significant in children’s development;
- an important area to attain knowledge on;
- an aspect that stands in relation with problem behaviour, academic achievements, relationships, self-knowledge, health and psycho somatic ailments of learners;
- an aspect which ought to be more intensively addressed within the educational system;
- just as important as cognitive education; and
- a subject on which they do not have sufficient knowledge and express the willingness to be educated in this regard.

Jameson (2004) supports these findings in his indication that children’s emotional knowledge enhances their development on all levels of their being.

The development of an emotional awareness program for children in the middle childhood developmental phase for utilization in the South African educational system will thus fill a need and an educational gap within the current educational system. The study will depart from the viewpoint that emotional reactions are born into the most primitive limbic part of the brain and have an influence on all levels of a person’s being. Being aware of specific emotions and their effect on a person’s life will promote a favourable understanding of and reaction to specific situations. Children in the middle childhood developmental phase experience almost everything in their existence on an emotional level. Heightened emotional awareness will enable them to recognize the sensation of specific emotions in their body and mind and act accordingly.



Awareness of emotions will thus have the potential to result in a less negative or threatening experience for children and increase their ability to self-regulate to a balanced existence.

The intention is to teach emotional skills in the same manner that the educational system teaches cognitive skills. Emotional awareness of learners could contribute to a more positive classroom atmosphere which is especially important in the promotion of a learning ‘state’. Learners will be in a better ‘state’ if they feel emotionally safe and secure in the educator’s presence, as well as in the group that they are part of. Integrating social and emotional learning into school curriculums is vital to the preparation of children for life in the twenty first century.

The need to enhance the emotional awareness of children in the middle childhood developmental phase will thus not only fill a research and educational gap, but will also improve the academic, social and emotional performance of learners in a primary school in the South African context. In order to fulfil this need, the focus of the study is to develop, implement and evaluate an emotional awareness program for children in the middle childhood developmental phase meant for utilization within the educational system.

### **1.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The goal and objectives of this study follow below.

#### **1.3.1 Goal**

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

#### **1.3.2 Objectives**

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

- To develop an emotional awareness program for children in the middle childhood developmental phase for utilization in classroom context.
- To train an educator in implementing the Emotional Awareness Program for children in the middle childhood developmental phase within the classroom context.
- To implement the Emotional Awareness Program in a classroom context, by the trained educator.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the EA program through measuring the responses of the learners (respondents).
- To make recommendations based on the research findings, regarding the enhancement of the EA program for learners in the middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system.

Against this background the following hypotheses were guiding the study.

## 1.4 HYPOTHESIS

Barker (2003:206) defines a hypothesis as a tentative proposition that describes a possible relationship among facts that can be observed and measured. Kumar (2005:73) elaborates on this definition by stating that a hypothesis brings clarity, specificity and focus to a research problem, but is not essential for a study. Balnaves and Caputi (2001:60) add that a hypothesis is a statement about the relationship between constructs.

The following main and sub-hypotheses are applicable in the context of this study:

**Main hypothesis:** If an emotional awareness program is implemented for children in the middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system, then the learners' level of emotional functioning will be enhanced.

### Sub-hypotheses:

- If an emotional awareness program is implemented for children in the middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system, their ability to be **in contact with their emotions** will be enhanced.
- If an emotional awareness program is implemented for children in the middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system, their ability to **discriminate between different emotions** will be increased.
- If an emotional awareness program is implemented for children in the middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system, they will gain the ability to **verbalize and “own”** their emotions.

## 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher utilized a quantitative research approach in the execution of this study, because a structured approach to inquiry was used in the researcher’s aim to objectively measure the effectiveness of an emotional awareness program (EA program). The researcher wanted to measure the effectiveness of an EA program on specific variables, namely the learners’ ability to:

- be in contact with their emotions;
- discriminate between different emotions;
- verbalize and “own” their emotions.

This study resorts within the description of applied research. It was undertaken to acquire new knowledge, and primarily directed towards practical objectives. It focused on a problem in practice, namely a need for an emotional awareness program for children in the middle childhood developmental phase that was scientifically tested in the South African education system.

In the context of applied research, intervention research was applicable in this study as it aimed to develop technology, or technological items, useful to the educational profession. The sub-type of intervention research, namely design and development, best encompassed the researcher’s intent to

design and develop technology, namely an EA program for children in the middle childhood developmental phase, to implement the program (intervention) and to evaluate the effectiveness thereof for further implementation within the educational system.

A quasi-experimental design, namely the comparison group pre-test– post-test design (Schneider, Gruman & Coutts, 2005:46), was utilized because the dependent variable (emotional awareness) was measured (pre-test) when no independent variable (EA program) was present. An independent variable was subsequently introduced (EA program), followed by repeating the measurement (post-test) of the dependent variable (emotional awareness) for comparison between the two measurements. The comparison group received both the pre-test and the post-test but did not receive the independent variable (EA program). Measures of the pre- and post-tests of both the experimental and comparison group regarding the dependent variable were compared in order to evaluate the impact of the independent variable (EA program).

The population in this research study was learners in the middle childhood developmental phase, namely grade three learners between the age of eight and nine years, involved in primary education in the Waterberg district of the Limpopo Province.

A sample of 49 learners in the middle childhood developmental phase of a specific primary school in the Waterberg District of the Limpopo Province was selected. An experimental and a comparison group according to the following criteria were selected:

- **Location:** A primary school in the Waterberg District of the Limpopo Province.
- **Level of education:** Grade three learners
- **Manner of education:** Learners who spent the most of their school day in the presence of the same educator.
- **Age:** Children between eight and nine years.
- **Language:** Afrikaans-speaking learners.

The school included in the study was selected through utilization of availability sampling. In order to enhance objective sampling, purposive sampling was utilized for the sampling of the classes involved. This study needed to be conducted with learners in a specific developmental phase,

namely the developmental phase and more specifically grade three learners between eight and nine years of age. It is also aimed at the educational system and in a classroom context to determine the effect of the Emotional Awareness Program on the respondents. Grade three is thus the grade purposively sampled for inclusion in this study.

The selected primary school had four grade three classes consisting of three Afrikaans-speaking classes and one English-speaking class. In order to achieve optimal comparison it was important to utilize groups of the same language. Three grade three Afrikaans-speaking classes were thus available and a random selection, according to the simple random sampling method, was undertaken to determine which class would serve as the experimental group and which one as the comparison group.

The data of the study was collected with the *Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale for Children (LEAS-C)* (see Appendix A), a standardised questionnaire developed by Dr. Richard Lane and Dr. Jane Bajgar (Lane & Bajgar, 2003). The fact that a standardised questionnaire was used annulled the purpose of a pilot test as the validity and reliability of the questionnaire was already tested. The questionnaire was developed for children and the content therefore fully comprehensible for eight year old learners. The questionnaire and its scoring measurements were translated from English to Afrikaans (due to the respondents being Afrikaans-speaking) with the permission of its developers (see Appendix B). Dr. Lane indicated that translated questionnaires were already successfully utilized in other languages as well. The questionnaire was completed as a pre-test by the experimental and comparison group of grade three learners. The questionnaire was administered as a *group-administered questionnaire* ensuring that all respondents received the same stimulus and completed their questionnaires without discussion with other respondents. The researcher initially explained the purpose and method of completing the questionnaire to all the respondents. Questions were then dealt with one by one and in similar manner, which warranted a similar stimulus from the explanation of questions.

The researcher trained the educator of the experimental group on emotional awareness and the middle childhood developmental phase as well as on the different modules and activities in the EA program. Educators are already equipped with basic knowledge and personal experience on the emotional and mental needs of children which serve as a solid foundation for the training regarding

emotional awareness. The educator thus needn't have any additional expertise in the field of emotional awareness. The training she received aimed to equip her (properly) towards the accurate implementation of the EA program in her class (experimental group). It was also important to improve her understanding of the emotional being of her learners and to enlighten her on the significance of the different constructs included in the EA program. The EA program was then implemented with a different topic for each week and different activities to develop and enhance that aspect.

After completion of the EA program, a post-test was conducted with both the experimental and comparison group. A follow-up test was conducted one month later (only with the experimental group) to determine whether their emotional awareness developed further or deteriorated a month after they were no longer exposed to the EA program. This one-month-follow-up measurement points to the consistency of knowledge obtained from the EA program.

Due to practical constraints in the school's program it wasn't possible to expose the comparison group to the EA program on completion of the study, as would be ethically accepted. The researcher's agreement with the school was hence that the school will receive the program to implement to all the learners in the school, which would thus include the learners who were part of the comparison group.

The collected data was processed and interpreted by the researcher using computerized data analysis to configure the collected data into comprehensible information by using SPC XL Software for Microsoft Excel program. Research results, namely the influence of the Emotional Awareness Program, developed by the researcher, on variables as measured in a pre- and post-test of the experimental and the comparison group was statistically analysed, and then presented through graphical presentations in graphs, diagrams and tables to bring order, structure and meaning to the collected data.

## 1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

During the course of this study, the following limitations were identified:

- The research results of the study cannot be generalized because the EA program was only presented once and thus only within this one sample of respondents. Even so, sound conclusions could be drawn from the study's results due to the fact that a significant number of respondents was included.
- Language constraints limited the boundaries of the study. Only Afrikaans-speaking respondents were included to ensure empirically sound practice by keeping the stimulus content in the questionnaire uniform. The primary school that was utilized in this study also had only one English class and three Afrikaans classes, which limited the options for utilization of English-speaking learners. However, the results obtained despite this fact are believed to be an accurate indication of the impact of the EA program, for language does not determine the presence or absence of emotional health.
- The EA program was developed to enhance emotional awareness through education on specific emotional content and the correct manner of reacting to it. A further facet of the EA program was to expand the respondents' vocabulary regarding emotions in order to increase their capabilities concerning emotional expression. The LEAS-C standardized questionnaire measured the levels of emotional awareness of the respondents but not their development regarding their vocal ability to express their emotional experiences. This limitation was overcome by utilizing the glossary of words supplied for the scoring of the LEAS-C to draw comparisons between the pre-, post- and follow-up test after one month in order to determine to what extent development of emotion vocabulary and emotional expression took place.
- Respondents who were absent for the pre-test or post-test had to be excluded from the study, which resulted in a lower number of useable questionnaires.
- The group-administered questionnaire has the disadvantage that the one or two respondents who did not take the process seriously distract the rest of the group resulting in a negative influence on other respondents' efforts. The researcher has experience in working with children, especially misbehaviour in this manner, and was therefore able to take control of such behaviour. The presence of their class educator also proved valuable in this regard.

## **1.7 DEFINITIONS OF MAIN CONCEPTS**

### **1.7.1 Awareness**

Awareness is a diverse term and different types of awareness can be identified. A general explanation of awareness is found in the Oxford Dictionary (2012) where it is defined as “the knowledge or perception of a situation or fact.” Kirchner (2012) narrows it down to a definition of awareness within the context of Gestalt in her indication that “awareness is more than the pure thought of a problem but is integrative, implying wholeness, allowing for appropriate responses to a given situation in accordance with one's needs and the possibilities of the environment”.

The researcher defines awareness, in the context of this study, as the ability to recognize, understand and handle a specific emotional experience or situation on the grounds of knowledge and experience about the effect and result the situation will have, as well as knowledge on fitting reactions to it.

### **1.7.2 Emotions**

West and Turner (2011:217) define emotion as “the critical internal structure that orients us to and engages us with what matters in our lives, our feelings about ourselves and others”.

Blocker-Adams (2010:20) defines emotion as “a mental and physiological state associated with a wide variety of feelings, thoughts and behaviours. It is a prime determinant of the sense of subjective well-being and appears to play a central role in many human activities”.

Emotion is defined, in the context of this study, as a mostly unconscious mental state associated with feelings, thoughts and behaviours that usually occur spontaneously rather than through conscious effort. The occurrence of an emotional episode is often accompanied by physiological and psychological changes.



### **1.7.3 Emotional Awareness**

According to Steiner (1997:27), emotional awareness is the enhancing of contact with feelings that results in the strengthening of relationships. Emotional awareness can be experienced on different levels, namely above and below verbal boundaries. The levels above verbal boundaries are an indication of an increase in verbal emotional communication, which in turn results in an increase in awareness of feelings. Levels below verbal boundaries indicate an inability to verbalize feelings, which in turn indicates an inability to own these feelings.

The functionality of emotional awareness is described by Ellis and Newton (2000:245) in their definition of emotional awareness as a motivational component for the planning and direction of instrumental behaviour, subjective feelings and moods. Lane in Carblis (2008:99) defines emotional awareness in terms of emotional intelligence as “the ability to use emotional information gained from emotional awareness in a constructive and adaptive manner”.

Gross (2007:271) supplies a definition of the concept of emotional awareness in stating that “the awareness of an emotion helps people engage in voluntary controlled actions and may thus promote adaptive behaviour”.

The researcher believes emotional awareness to be the enhancing of contact with one’s feelings. Underdeveloped emotional awareness is evident in an inability to verbalize feelings and thus an inability to own these feelings. Emotional awareness provides the knowledge to discriminate between different emotions and utilize that information to direct thinking and actions. In the context of this study, emotional awareness determines the learner’s level of functioning in the strengthening of relationships, as a result of the ability to be in contact with own emotions and to discriminate between different emotions and emotions of others.

### **1.7.4 The Middle Childhood Developmental Phase**

Fass and Grossberg (2012:60) indicate that developmentalists, a diverse group that includes psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, geneticists, neuroscientists, biologists and educators, define as the period from roughly age five to twelve. Cooper (2005:211) agrees with this

submission when he indicates that the span of the ages six to twelve years define the middle childhood developmental phase. Rathus (2013:268, 276, 308) defines to be a time for learning many new motor skills, enhancement of self-esteem and acceptance by peers. During this phase, children make enormous strides in their cognitive development and their thought process and language becomes more logical. The acquisition of cognitive and social skills is a major developmental task in the middle childhood developmental phase.

In the context of this study, the researcher defines the middle childhood developmental phase as the stage following the mastering of a vast amount of developmental abilities. Language, control over bodily functions, eating habits and cognitive abilities are all developed when reaching the middle childhood developmental phase. Although these abilities still need shaping, it is emotional development and especially the self-concept and the role and place the individual has in the system surrounding him/her that receives the most developmental concentration.

The middle childhood developmental phase presents in the primary school years, approximately between the ages of six and twelve years. The middle childhood developmental phase can further be divided into two sub-phases, as is the differentiation in primary education, namely junior primary and senior primary. Most of the development in this phase is done during the ages six to twelve years. A vast developmental and cognitive difference is evident between the capacity of learners in grade one to grade three where basic learning skills and cognitive abilities is required, and learners in grade four to grade seven where advanced cognitive skills as well as advanced emotional and social abilities are needed (Maritz, 2008).

In the context of this study the respondents are children in the middle childhood developmental phase, with specific referral to children in grade three, between the ages of eight and nine years.

### **1.7.5 Program**

Program is defined by Barker (2003:66) in the Social Work Dictionary, as a plan or guideline about what is to be done.

Morris and Pinto (2007:117) defines a program as a collection of change actions (projects and operational activities) purposefully grouped together to realize strategic and/or tactical benefits.

The researcher defines program in the context of this study as guidelines for the expansion of knowledge on a specific subject, namely emotional awareness and directions for the application of that knowledge.

## **1.8 COMPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT**

The research report is constructed and organised into the following nine chapters:

- Chapter 1:** General introduction, summary of research methodology and exposition of the study.
- Chapter 2:** The Gestalt perspective as the theoretical frame of reference for the study.
- Chapter 3:** Discussion of middle childhood as developmental phase.
- Chapter 4:** Neurological development of the child's brain and its influence on a child's emotional development and ability to learn.
- Chapter 5:** Emotional awareness as a concept and decisive component of development in the middle childhood developmental phase through elaboration on emotional awareness, its attributes and the value of optimal emotional awareness for the child in the middle childhood developmental phase.
- Chapter 6:** Utilization of the educating system as medium for the development and enhancement of the emotional awareness of the child in the middle childhood developmental phase.
- Chapter 7:** Emotional Awareness Program developed for education in emotional awareness.
- Chapter 8:** Discussion of the research methodology as utilized in the study.

**Chapter 9:** Empirical findings from the research of the study and analysis of data

**Chapter 10:** Summary, conclusions and recommendations arising from the study.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter outlined emotional awareness and its importance within the development of the child in the middle childhood developmental phase. The significance and consequence of educating children on emotional awareness within their school setting was evaluated. This discussion concluded with the role and function of implementing an emotional awareness program, developed from a Gestalt play therapeutic perspective, within the educational system and with defining the main concepts utilized in the study.

The following chapter will focus on the Gestalt perspective as the theoretical frame of reference for the study.

## CHAPTER 2

# Gestalt Approach as the Theoretical Framework for the Study

*I do my thing and you do your thing.*

*I am not in this world to live up to your expectations, and you are not in this world to live up to mine. You are you, and I am I, and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.*

*If not, it can't be helped. ~ Gestalt prayer of Fritz Perls*

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Children in our modern day are faced with many expectations on academic, sport, cultural, emotional, social and physical developmental areas. Children need to be equipped for the challenges they will have to address in their attempt to reach adulthood as well as to become adjusted, assertive and emotionally balanced human beings. The role of emotional knowledge and the awareness of one's emotional needs, values and strengths is a subject which has long caught the attention of social scientists and educators alike, in studies regarding *emotional intelligence* and the development thereof (Blom, 2000; Goleman, 2012; Le Roux & De Klerk, 2004). These studies focus on the significance of being or becoming emotionally intelligent. The researcher is of the opinion that the way to optimal emotional intelligence is through a separation of the state of being "emotionally intelligent" into different building blocks inadmissible in achieving optimal emotional intelligence.

Geldard and Geldard (2002:67) refer to *awareness* as an essential facet of the therapeutic process in the Gestalt approach and *emotional awareness*, as conceptualized within the Gestalt approach, is identified by the researcher as one of the building blocks and a method of achieving optimal emotional intelligence.

For the purpose of this study emotional intelligence is thus acknowledged as the end result or outcome of thorough emotional awareness and awareness skills from a Gestalt perspective.

The rationale behind this study was to develop a program for the development and/or enhancement of the emotional awareness of children in their middle childhood developmental phase. The program was developed for utilization within the educational system as it is meant to not only have benefit for individual children but also the educational system as a whole. The current focus on emotional intelligence, emotional knowledge, as well as social and emotional learning is mostly available where children are exposed to specific courses, books on the topic or where parents take particular responsibility in educating their children in this manner. The researcher found in daily social work practice that a very small number of children do receive emotional education of any sort, although it seems that a vast amount of difficulties in their lives could often be drawn back to the child's inability to cope with situations due to inadequate emotional awareness. The researcher is of the opinion that optimal emotional awareness and knowledge will benefit children in their:

- concept of themselves;
- relationships with the people in their direct environment;
- reaction to difficulties and specific situations occurring in their day to day life; and
- adaptability to the world that surrounds them.

Inclusion of this totality of aspects that is required for positive emotional development necessitates the utilization of a theoretical approach, which can uphold this wholeness of being.

According to De Vos (2005:37),

“the theoretical foundation of a scientific study needs to be universally and interdisciplinary acceptable with empirically tested or testable propositions. These propositions are woven into a network of integrated statements with a view to understanding, explaining and predicting the behaviour of a phenomenon or phenomena”.

This study was conducted from a Gestalt approach and the following part of this chapter will discuss the Gestalt approach and its content in order to provide a broad perspective of its applicability for this study.

## 2.2 RATIONALE FOR THE GESTALT APPROACH AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

Friederich Salomon Perls, born in 1893 in a Jewish ghetto on the outskirts of Berlin, founded the Gestalt approach to therapy (fritzperls.com, 2012).

The word “Gestalt” has no adequate English equivalent. The word is just much richer and more complex, and thus impossible to translate. This is why the German word Gestalt is also used in other languages. Glatzeder, Goel and Von Müller (2010:50) draw this together in their indication that the most basic concept of Gestalt is of course “Gestalt” itself.

The Gestalt approach provides a theoretical foundation with a basis appropriately relevant to this study. Ginger (2007:3) designates Gestalt to be a natural universal approach for people of all ages, all levels, from diverse cultural backgrounds and in variety of situations. The Gestalt approach therefore seems to be best suited to be utilized as the theoretical framework for this study.

Wholeness and awareness are two important concepts of the Gestalt approach. Mann (2010:29) points to the awareness continuum to be related to every aspect of Gestalt. He states that the aim of Gestalt is “awareness” which is being in contact with one’s existence and *what is* at this moment in time. Clarkson (2004:1) suggests that the definition of Gestalt connotes to the structural entity which is both different from and much more than the sum of its parts. Clarkson (2004:1) utilizes the idea of a family as a useful example to describe the concept of wholeness. She states that a family is made up of separate members, each with his or her individual psychology. One can analyse each of them without seeing the others, but the way in which the family operates as a systemic whole is uniquely more than, and different from, the sum total of the individual psychologies of the family members. This factor correlates with the viewpoint of the Gestalt approach if kept in mind that a person’s wholeness is imperative within the Gestalt approach. The rationale for the implementation of an emotional awareness program from a Gestalt approach within the educational system is thus primarily the facets of *wholeness and awareness*. **Wholeness** because change in one component (emotion) could affect the child’s entire configuration and produce a new meaning for the child (Thomas, 2005:351) and **awareness** because when

emphasizing raised awareness, Gestalt therapy enables the child to get in touch with their current experiences with regard to somatic or bodily sensations, emotional feelings and thoughts (Geldard & Geldard, 2002:67).

Children are faced with challenges, embedded within their day-to-day experiences in school. The experiences or situations which need to be faced within the school environment encompass a broad scope of mental, cognitive, social, emotional, psychological and physical components. The researcher identified a variety of different challenges they have to face, in the sense that:

- they are exposed to supportive as well as demanding relationships;
- they need to communicate efficiently with peers, peer leaders, younger learners, educators and parents of other learners;
- they need to grasp the concept of their abilities, strengths and weak points; and
- they are involved with authority figures (educators) whom they cherish as well as those they fear or despise and need to be able to cope with all of these relationships in a manner that delivers growth potential.

Children are thus on a daily basis involved in experiencing all kinds of emotional turmoil within their school and peer group environment. These experiences do not only remain emotional, they are also experienced physically (e.g. tummy aches or headaches due to anxiety), and affect their social skills and relationships (e.g. aggressiveness in an effort to disguise another emotion or uncertainty), self-esteem and cognitive abilities (Cohen, 2001:3; Jensen in Mortiboys, 2005:29; Prinsloo, Tileston, 2004:32; Vorster & Sibaya, 1996:34). Geldard and Geldard (2002:106) support these authors in this regard when they add that many children who experience emotional difficulties seem to have some impairment in their contact functioning, that is listening, touching, talking, moving, smelling, looking and tasting.

It is therefore imperative that the theoretical framework within which this study will be conducted supports the child as a holistic being and takes other influences in his environment into consideration.



The essence of the motivation behind the utilization of the Gestalt approach as theoretical framework for this study is best recapitulated in Clarkson's (2004:3) indication that "modern Gestalt aims for an integration of body, feelings and intellect, seeing the person's most basic needs within the context of the social environment". The Gestalt is thus a 'natural bridge' for the research methodology of this study.

This chapter will thus focus on the Gestalt approach's concepts, fundamental principles, goals and theoretical frame. This chapter furthermore aims to clarify the applicability of the Gestalt approach as frame of reference for this study. In closing, the chapter seeks to clarify how Gestalt play therapy is of importance in the context of this study being the method or tool that will be utilized in the program for development or enhancement of the emotional awareness of children in the middle childhood developmental phase. Full comprehension of the Gestalt approach would include an understanding of the concepts from which the approach derives its conclusions. These concepts also provide the terms, which will clarify the indication to certain matters throughout the study. These concepts will hence need to be discussed ahead of proceeding into discussions regarding emotional awareness and the developmental stage concerned in this study.

## **2.3 CONCEPTS OF THE GESTALT APPROACH**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

Dubin, in De Vos (2005:28), emphasizes that "for those aspects of the world that constitutes the subject matter of a given scientific discipline, terms must be available". The main concepts embedded in the Gestalt approach and its relevance and applicability in the context of this study are hence important. In addition to the understanding of the concepts, it is also important to take the applicability of these concepts within the child's development into consideration.

The following section will subsequently focus on a discussion of the main concepts within the Gestalt approach. Where applicable, it will be discussed in relation to children, taking the purpose and aim of this study into consideration.

### 2.3.2 Gestalt

Although there are ways in which people are similar, Korb, Davenport and Korb [Sa] indicate that in the Gestalt approach each person is distinct and significantly different from all others, and perceives the world in unique ways. This unique perception is the aspect which provides the distinction between different people due to the significance of the combination of their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual experiences.

The cornerstone of the Gestalt approach, according to Clarkson (2004:2) is its emphasis on the wholeness of a person, and not just the intrapsychic or merely the interpersonal dimension. In this regard Blom (2004:10) postulates that gestalt or holism is an inseparable entity of the body, emotional and spiritual aspects, language, thought and behaviour.

Gazda, Ginter and Home (2001:128) elucidate this matter in their explanation that:

When a need is met, the gestalt it organized becomes complete, and it no longer exerts an influence – the organism is free to form new gestalten. When this gestalt formation and destruction are blocked or rigidified at any stage, when needs are not recognized and expressed, the flexible harmony and flow of the incomplete gestalten, clamors for attention and, therefore, interfere with the formation of new gestalten.

Perls, in O’Leary and Knopek (1992:10), suggests that any aspect of a person’s behaviour could be regarded as a manifestation of this gestalt or whole. In this way, what individuals do provides as much information as what they feel, think or say. The human being is thus a unit consisting of many parts, which functions interrelated to each other.

Gestalt intervention thus enables a person to become well adjusted and accommodating to oneself in the formation of a complete gestalt, contributing to development and psychological health, which is where the emphasis of this study lies.

Carroll and Oaklander (1997:184), (renowned Gestalt play therapists) validate that children are born as fully functioning, integrated organisms encompassing senses, body, emotions and intellect. As children develop according to their unique genetic blueprint, these processes become more differentiated and their individuality evolves. Blom (2004:10) echoes this viewpoint regarding

children in her indication that, from the Gestalt theory point of view, children can also be considered as holistic entities, which means that the sum total of their physical, emotional and spiritual aspects, language, thought and behaviour is more than its components. Their emotional experiences will thus also have an effect on the other components.

This study is concerned with the child's emotional development and is undertaken within the educational system as it is, according to the concept of gestalt/wholeness, necessary to take into regard that children are not only emotional beings, but holistic entities with many factors influencing their emotional functioning. Children's wholeness within the educational system are influenced by their school environment, relationships with peers and authority figures, their cognitive abilities, their achievements and failures as well as the psychological and physiological facets of their lives. The presence of these factors within the educational system will thus benefit the study of children's emotional awareness and development thereof within the concept of their wholeness/gestalt.

Blom (2004:10) indicates in this regard that the focus of Gestalt therapy with children will hence need to be on their physical, emotional and spiritual aspects, as well as language, thought and behaviour, in order to approach them as holistic individuals. This consequently needs to be taken into consideration in the development of a program for the enhancement of the emotional awareness of children, as is the aim of this study.

### **2.3.3 Figure and Ground**

Figure and ground is an important concept of the Gestalt theory as it refers to the perception a person derives from his surroundings and is described by Korb et al. [Sa] as a perception of the individual's environment as a total unit; he/she responds to the whole of what is seen. This whole is composed of the stimuli of which the person is aware of or to which he/she attends, the "*spontaneous concentration*" of contact (the figure) and those of which the person is not aware or does not attend to (the ground). The figure/ground process is perceptual and changes momentarily.

O'Leary & Knopek (1992:11) provided a constructive example for his indication that when a person's experiences are from a meaningful whole, healthy functioning exists. A smooth transition

results when certain happenings are in the focus of awareness, while others are in the background. O'Leary uses the example of being busy with writing while becoming aware of your car being parked in a no-parking zone after 9:00 am. It is 10:45 and as you continue writing, the need to move the car becomes more persistent, so that it becomes difficult to concentrate. You go and move the car.

This example demonstrates the figure / ground dichotomy of the Gestalt approach. While thoughts were expressed on paper it was the important object of awareness and thus the figure at that moment. The ground or background is the street where the car is parked. As awareness moved to the car, writing was no longer of primary importance as the car became the figure of attention. Moving the car psychologically freed you to return to your work. Healthy functioning requires this fluidity of process.

Blom (2004:13) states that children organise their sense, thoughts, cognition and behaviour around a specific need until it is satisfied. Once it is satisfied, the child is in a state of withdrawal, rest or balance until a new need appears and the cycle is repeated. If the child experiences more than one need simultaneously, the healthy organism will pay attention to the most dominant need. The healthy organism can identify the most dominant need on his or her foreground, in order to use resources within him or herself or the environment to satisfy these.

#### **2.3.4 Awareness**

Bronwell (2010:77) states that awareness in Gestalt consists of the first person perspective of self-conscious experience in which one "owns" his/her experience. The task of the therapist according to Mann (2010:227) relates to a wider awareness of the whole therapy situation rather than simply heightening the clients' awareness of certain problem areas. To *be aware* and to *pay attention* are acknowledged by Korb, Davenport and Korb [Sa] as habits that will enable clear communication and interaction with one's environment and with one's self in the "now" or present moment.

Increasing awareness is described by Gestalt authors like Woldt and Toman (2005:82) as being the heart of the Gestalt philosophy and methodology and is characterized by contact, sensing and Gestalt formation.

Mann (2010:29) indicate the aim of Gestalt to be awareness and describes it as “being in contact with one’s existence and with *what is* at this moment in time”. It is thus evident that the development of emotional awareness can have a significant influence on the total being of the child and may benefit the child on different levels, as is the intention with the planned study.

### **2.3.5 Self-regulation / Homeostasis**

Perls in Reynolds and Woldt (2002:245) clarify that the process of homeostasis can be called a process of self-regulation. The process of maintaining balance, organismic self-regulation and homeostasis are accomplished in a cyclic manner. A person first becomes aware of a need that impacts the person’s equilibrium, and then he/she moves to make contact within the self, environment or others in order to satisfy the need. The person returns to a state of balance or homeostasis when that need is met or another satisfactory alternative is discovered. To clearly grasp this concept and its applicability for the child client one needs to examine it from an “awareness” point of view.

The concept of homeostasis or process of organismic self-regulation entails that the child constantly experiences diverse needs, which can be of a physical, emotional, social, spiritual or intellectual nature. This causes discomfort, up to the point where the child becomes aware of or is lead to become aware of the reason for the discomfort. Action is then taken to satisfy this need, upon which homeostasis is restored. The process whereby this action and restoration takes place in order to satisfy needs and restore balance is termed organismic self-regulation (Blom, 2004:11).

### **2.3.6 Contact**

Contact, according to Clarkson (2004:41), is equivalent to focusing clearly and vividly on the most important aspect of a personal situation without extraneous or background stimuli distorting the

fullness of attention or the quality of the interaction. Yontef and Jacobs in Blom (2004:19) elucidate this viewpoint in their indication that contact refers to “being in touch with what is emerging here and now, moment to moment”. Blom (2004:19) further explains that “contact takes place as soon as the organism uses the environment to satisfy its needs”.

Clarkson (2004:40) specifies that “the sensory motor functions (seeing, hearing, feeling, moving and touching) are potentially the functions through which contact is made”. She elaborates that it is important to remember that just as the whole is more than merely the sum of its parts, contact is more than the sum of all the possible functions that may go into it. Clarkson thus indicates that seeing and hearing is no guarantee of good contact, it is rather *how* one sees or hears that determines the quality of contact.

Blom (2004:19) points out that in contact regarding children, in the Gestalt theory, both intrapersonal contact (contact between children and aspects of themselves) and interpersonal contact (contact between children and the environment) are important and notes that:

Contact boundaries in this regard are also present and can be regarded as the point where children experiences the “I” in relation to that which is “not I” in other words that which is within (part of) and outside (foreign to) themselves. Through contact making and appropriate withdrawal, children’s needs are met and they grow. When the child’s boundary is rigid and not flexible, it obstructs change, which is then referred to as isolation.

Contact boundary disturbances are aspects that are very relevant in work with children for they frequently utilize it to prevent contact with therapists or contact with unfinished business in an effort to protect themselves from the discomfort that it brings along. These disturbances are thus further discussed, as it is also part of the concept *contact*.

### **2.3.6.1 Contact boundary disturbances**

Turner (2011:260) suggests contact boundary disturbances to be the problems that occur at the point of “contact”. Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2012:200) state that “individuals may have characteristic styles of interrupting or resisting contact and that repeated interrupting or resisting contact may result in psychopathology”. Different contact boundary disturbances (ways

of resisting contact) are identified by different authors in Gestalt, five of which are acknowledged by most authors, i.e. *confluence*, *retroreflection*, *introjections*, *projection* and *deflection*.

These contact boundary disturbances will hence be described from the viewpoint of Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2012), Lebow (2008), Turner (2011) and Nelson-Jones (2000), as well as its application in working with children, according to Blom (2004).

- ***Confluence***

Lebow (2008:153) indicates confluence to be a weak or inadequate boundary between the self and the environment, thus over-identification with the environment. According to Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2012:201) when there is a merging of boundaries, there can be a feeling of not really knowing where one person stops and the other begins. Confluence can be associated with excessively over-accommodating behaviour among people who desperately want to be liked and approved by others. Turner (2011:261) adds to the description of confluence that it is also the denial of differences and a unrealistic focus on similarities.

Blom (2004:26) applies this boundary to children in explaining that confluence implies that children's own identity became lost, and that they do not have a sense of self that distinguishes them from their environment. A common example of confluence is a parent that has specific expectations of his or her child, which are not at all related to the child's need.

- ***Retroreflection***

Nelson-Jones (2000:159) describes retroreflection as occurring when the individual fails to discriminate self and others by treating themselves the way they originally wanted to treat other people or objects. They redirect their activity inward and substitute themselves instead of the environment as the target of their behaviour. Lebow (2008:153) summarizes it to be "an impulse directed towards the environment that is turned against the self". Turner (2011:261) simplifies this boundary disturbance as the process during which individuals do to themselves as they would like to do to someone else or have someone else do to them. Children often retroreflect emotions of grief and anger by means of symptoms such as headaches, stomach-aches, asthma attacks or hyperactivity (Blom, 2004:27).

- ***Introjection***

Lebow (2008:153) explains introjection to be a term taken from psychoanalysis to describe unexamined taking in of ideas, beliefs and identity without awareness. Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2012:201) agree that it involves uncritical acceptance of the beliefs of others as standards. Turner (2011:261) elaborates on this boundary as “the inappropriate intake of information from others, e.g. internalization of parental messages with the result that the person is plagued by commands of “*I should*”, “*I ought to*” or “*I have to*”.

Blom (2004:22, 23) states that introjection in children occurs when they take in contents from their environment without criticism and awareness; they thus sacrifice their own opinion and beliefs and accept the point of view of others without questioning it. Introjection can negatively influence children’s self-awareness, for instance when they get the message that certain emotions are negative and may not be experienced or expressed, e.g. boys don’t cry.

- ***Projection***

According to Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2012:201) projection occurs when a person places (or projects) his/her emotions or traits onto others and Lebow (2008:153) points to projection as “not being able to own an experience”. Turner (2011:261) describes the process of projection as “disavowing parts of oneself and projecting these parts unto others”. This behaviour takes away power and gives the environment more control than warranted.

Blom (2004:24) observes that by means of projection, children deny their own personal experience and often tell lies and deny their emotions, because they have too little ego strength to take responsibility for their actions. They blame others for the unpleasant events in their lives and these emotions are projected, since it is too painful to possess them.

- ***Deflection***

Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2012:201) describe deflection to be “a distraction designed to defuse or reduce contact; this can include avoiding physical contact, using humour excessively and talking about others instead of the self”.



According to Blom (2004:28, 29) children use deflection as a handling strategy for painful experiences by outbursts of anger or other forms of reactionary behaviour, or by fantasising and daydreaming. Deflection manifests itself in children to protect them against emotional pain. The child may for instance change the subject or get up and move to another part of the playroom during therapy in order to avoid the issue at hand.

### **2.3.7 Topdog / Underdog**

A well-known term identified by Perls is that of the so called ‘topdog/underdog’ concept. Clarkson (2004:107) explains the topdog/underdog concept in that the ‘topdog’ represents that part of the personality which comments and passes judgement on the person’s ongoing life, behaviour and feelings, very often in a critical and dismissive way – sometimes in ways that are quite cruel, e.g. “who would want to be friends with you, you’re so ugly”. The underdog represents that part of the personality that is apparently the victim or the oppressed one. It is forever promising to do better next time, these promises tend to get broken very easily.

Korb et al. [Sa] elucidate the concept of ‘topdog vs. underdog’ as follows:

A common way of manipulating the self to stay blocked from healthy contact with the environment. The topdog part of the personality is the demander of perfection, the manifestation of a set of introjected *should’s* and *should not’s*. "I should be on time, I should keep my room clean". The underdog is the manifestation of resistance to external demands. Essentially, the underdog agrees that the topdog’s demands are appropriate; however, internal sabotage assures that these demands will never be met: “I’ll never be on time, I will never be able to keep my room clean”. In the topdog/underdog encounter, the underdog usually wins, triggering incipient depression or anxiety due to this feeling of incapacity.

Since we cannot lead a whole life without both of these aspects of ourselves, the Gestalt approach works towards an integration of the two, where neither will dominate but where a balance of both is effectively achieved.

### **2.3.8 Unfinished Business**

Clarkson (2004:51) labels the idea of unfinished business as a core notion in the Gestalt approach to explain how energy becomes blocked or “interrupted”. She indicates that when a person does not move easily and spontaneously around the awareness cycle to get their needs met, the event is unfinished.

Mann (2010:57) elucidates the concept of unfinished business as “being concerned with our need to complete the uncompleted”. Lichner Ingram (2011:192) elaborates that when the Gestalt therapist formulates the problem in terms of unfinished business, the finishing of the business occurs through intense and full expression of emotion. Unfinished business thus also points to a person’s unwillingness to experience the pain that they feel in order to move forward.

### **2.3.9 Present Centeredness**

In an overview of Gestalt therapy on the website of the Gestalt Therapy Institute of Philadelphia [Sa], present-centeredness is regarded as a concept indicating that “living now is more central than dwelling in the past – or imagining a future divorced from the present”. They further indicate that the Gestalt approach will start from the surface and then follow a person’s experience – not seeking out the unconscious, but staying with what is present and aware.

Turner (2011:257) states that the Gestalt therapists do not dwell on the past although they recognize that past experiences have an effect on the present experiences of the client. The aim will thus be to focus on exercises to facilitate understanding of past experiences in context of the here and now. Mann (2010:15) elucidates that the focus in “here and now” is on immediate experiences and in doing so concentrating on *what* and *how* the situation is *now* perceived, rather than digging round in an attempt to discover *why* the situation might be perceived in a certain manner.

The following section will now focus on the fundamental principles which is underlying to the Gestalt approach.

## **2.4 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES AS POINT OF DEPARTURE OF THE GESTALT APPROACH**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

Perls (1976:16) said that “no individual is self-sufficient and can only exist in an environmental field. The nature between him and his environment determines the human being’s behaviour”.

Clarkson (2004:5) corroborates this conviction in her indication that the Gestalt approach is therefore concerned with “defining the nature of human lives in terms of meaningful wholes, whether these are biological or spiritual”. Most of Gestalt practice (derived from Gestalt theory), is based on an exploration of:

- how such human needs arise,
- how they are frustrated, and
- how they are satisfied.

The Gestalt Therapy Institute of Philadelphia [sa] indicates the Gestalt approach to be a complete, complex and highly developed approach to human psychological functioning. Both Gestalt theory and practice are based on several profound areas of thought and study, and includes field theory, philosophy, psychoanalysis and psychology.

### **2.4.2 Gestalt as Phenomenological-Existential Approach**

Yontef [sa] summarizes the Gestalt approach, which is the basis of Gestalt therapy, as:

“a phenomenological-existential therapy which teaches therapists and patients a phenomenological method of awareness, in which feeling, perceiving, and acting are distinguished from interpreting and reshuffling pre-existing attitudes. Explanations and interpretations are considered to be less reliable than what is directly perceived and felt”.

Clarkson (2004:4) points out that Perls saw Gestalt as the “only psychotherapy based purely on phenomenology – a psychological approach based on a philosophy, which works away from concepts and towards pure awareness”. Blom (2004:2) validates this with her description of the Gestalt approach as “a humanist and process-oriented form of therapy as well as an existential approach, due to the emphasis on awareness of the present and immediate experience”.

Geldard and Geldard (2002:35, 67) simplify the viewpoints of these authors in their indication that the Gestalt approach is based on the idea that individuals should accept responsibility and find their own way through life. They indicate a significant factor in Gestalt to be the *here and now* experience, any blockages or *unfinished business* which are experienced should be worked through in an attempt to be completely aware of current bodily sensations, emotional feelings and related thoughts (the whole). This is to be mastered rather than blaming the past or others for the current state that is being experienced. Inadequate mastering of the ability to identify here and now experiences and to work through unfinished business thus results in being troubled by these issues which leads to an inability to function optimally in an emotionally healthy manner.

Henderson and Thompson (2011:226) summarize Perls’ conclusion of troubled people to be “people that cause themselves additional problems by not handling their lives appropriately” in the following six categories:

- ***Lacking contact with the environment:*** Becoming so rigid that they cut themselves off from others or from resources in the environment.
- ***Confluence:*** Incorporation of too much of self into others or incorporation of too much of the environment into themselves that they lose touch with where they are. The environment then takes control.
- ***Unfinished business:*** Unfulfilled needs, unexpressed feelings, unfinished situations.
- ***Fragmentation:*** The effort to try to deny or discover a need, e.g. through aggression. A person’s inability to find what he/she needs might be the result of fragmentation of the person’s life.

- **Topdog/underdog:** The experience of a split in a person's personality namely what a person thinks he/she should do (topdog) and what he/she wants to do (underdog).
- **Polarities (dichotomies):** Floundering between existing natural dichotomies in life, such as body-mind, infantile-mature, spontaneous-deliberate, love-aggression, and unconscious-conscious. Much of everyday living seems to be involved in resolving conflicts posed by these competing polarities.

### 2.4.3 Awareness

Geldard and Geldard (2002:35, 67) explain that the client in Gestalt therapy is directed, through awareness, to get in touch with and to release strong emotions and to ultimately achieve a feeling of being more integrated. The central goal of Gestalt therapy, according to Perls in Thompson and Rudolph (2000:163) is deeper awareness, which promotes a sense of living fully in the here and now. His measure of success in Gestalt therapy was the extent to which clients grow in awareness, take responsibility for their actions and move from environmental support to self-support. Thomson and Rudolph (2000:164, 165) confirm that with full awareness, a state of organismic self-regulation develops and the total person takes control. This is done when the person focuses on one need (the figure) at a time and relegates other needs to the background. When the need is met, the gestalt is closed or completed and a new need come into focus and becomes the figure.

Yontef [sa] adds that:

“clients and therapists in Gestalt therapy dialogue with each other or communicate their phenomenological perspectives. Differences in perspectives become the focus of experimentation and continued dialogue. The goal is for clients to become aware of what they are doing, how they are doing it and how they can change themselves, and at the same time learn to accept and value themselves. The emphasis in this regard is on what is being done, thought and felt at that moment, rather than on what was, might be, could be, or should be. Gestalt therapy focuses more on the process of what is happening than the content of what is being discussed”.

#### 2.4.4 Structure of the Personality

Perls (1973:136) devised five layers to depict how people fragment their lives and prevent themselves from succeeding and maturing. The five layers form a series of counselling stages and can be considered as five steps to a better Gestalt way of life; also compare Thompson, Rudolph and Henderson (2004:186), Thompson and Rudolph (2000:166, 167), as well as Blom (2004:35-40).

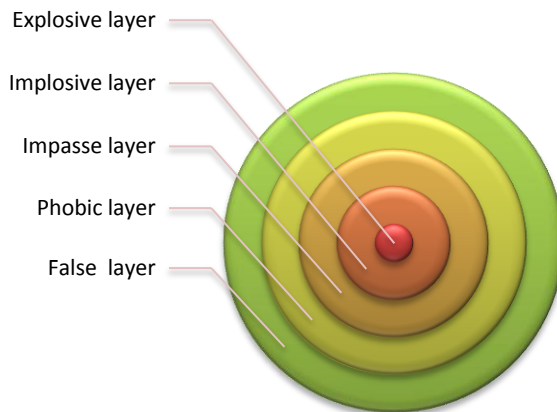
***Layer 1 - The phony layer:*** When a person is trapped in trying to be what he is not. This layer is characterized by many conflicts that are never resolved.

***Layer 2 - The phobic layer:*** When the person becomes aware of his phony games, he becomes aware of his fears that maintain the games. This experience is often frightening.

***Layer 3 - The impasse layer:*** The layer a person reaches when he sheds the environmental support of his games and finds he does not know a better way to cope with his fears and dislikes. People often become stuck here and refuse to move on.

***Layer 4 - The implosive layer:*** When a person becomes aware of how he limits himself, and begins to experiment with new behaviours within the counselling setting.

***Layer 5 - The explosive layer:*** If experiments with new behaviours are successful outside the counselling setting, a person reaches the explosive layer, where he finds much unused energy that had been tied up in maintaining a phony existence. Figure 2.1 displays these layers in a graphical manner.



**Figure 2.1: Structure of the personality (Blom, 2004:39)**

Thompson and Rudolph (2000:167) conclude that the Gestalt approach is not concerned with symptoms and analysis but rather with total existence and integration. Gestalt thus rather focuses on the healing and future mental health than getting stuck in the rationale and grounds for the problem.

It is hence relevant to focus on the goals the Gestalt approach set out to achieve.

## **2.5 GOALS OF THE GESTALT APPROACH**

The viewpoint of different authors varies regarding the main goal of the Gestalt approach. The researcher summarizes the goals of Gestalt as it is highlighted by the authors incorporated in the previous discussion on Gestalt. In light of this study being concerned with children in their middle childhood developmental phase, goals which entail this end are considered the Gestalt goals regarding this study.

According to Corey (2012:290) the basic goal of Gestalt therapy is awareness, which by and of itself is seen as curative or growth producing. Blom (2004:3) considers the Gestalt approach as a form of psychotherapy that focuses or promotes awareness on that which is immediately present. The aim of this goal in the Gestalt approach is thus to help the child client to improve the perceptions of his or her experiences in their totality.

Perls (founder of Gestalt) in O’Leary and Knopek (1992:18) describes the principal objective of the Gestalt approach as “an eliciting personal responsibility for achieving *self-regulation*”. He states that the aim of Gestalt therapy is “to enable individuals to be aware of their own potential for independence”. This is significant in working with children for they can do many more things than they believe they could. They need not lead their lives according to the expectation of others, nor directly regulate themselves.

Korb et al. [Sa] point towards *maturation* as a goal of the Gestalt approach. They explicate this as “the movement from *ill-health* (child-like dependence upon, or neurotic manipulation of, the environment for necessary support) towards *health* (self-support independent of, and interactive with the environment), in healthy ways with awareness of distinctions and boundaries”.

Bronwell (2010:90) is of the opinion that the goal of the Gestalt approach is practical in healing and growth. The concerns in Gestalt is not to find out whether there is truth in the story being told but to understand the meaning given to the people and events in the story as it was experienced.

In conclusion Blom (2006:215) states that to her the goal of Gestalt is “to help children to become aware of their process, which is what they do, how they do it and how they satisfy their needs”. Heightened awareness is created when children are able to identify who they are, what they feel, what they like and dislike, their choices and how their needs are met.

## 2.6 SUMMARY

The Gestalt approach can be summarized as a phenomenological-existential approach, which educates a phenomenological method of awareness. It indicates that sensation and performance must be determined from interpreting and reorganizing pre-existing mind-sets. The reasoning behind this is that the interpretation of something is not as reliable as that which is directly felt and perceived (Gestalt Therapy, 2004).

Thomas (2005:347) indicates that when the Gestalt approach is applied to child development, it perceives the child as a whole integrated organism. In this regard Thomas (2005:347) postulates that:



To the holistic or field theorist, a new stimulus or experience does not simply add a new element to a child's store of actions or knowledge, leaving the previous elements undisturbed. Instead, every new experience can alter the relationship of many or all of the existing elements that have made up the personality to this point, so the patterning of the child's entire individuality is influenced.

The Gestalt approach is thus considered the most appropriate theoretical foundation for this study as it involves the child as a whole and complex being and takes into consideration how children's development regarding awareness and contact (with self, others and environment) influences their whole performance. The Gestalt approach furthermore focuses on children's senses, bodily awareness and emotional awareness. The inclusion of these factors is crucial to a program for the enhancement of emotional awareness and emotional abilities.

Children in their middle childhood developmental phase are especially involved in situations where multiple aspects have an influence on their actions and behaviour. This study derives its purpose and aim from the viewpoint that a child is composed from a complexity of mental, physical, social, spiritual and emotional factors, and that all of these factors need to be taken into consideration from the viewpoint of a scientific approach which supports this notion. It is therefore the reason why the researcher is conducting this study from a Gestalt approach to child development and intervention.

The following chapter will focus on the middle childhood developmental phase as developmental phase in the development of a human being. The focus will be on the characteristics of the middle childhood developmental phase as well as the specific needs of the child in this developmental phase, in relation to this study.

## CHAPTER 3

# Middle Childhood as Developmental Phase

*Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning. ~Albert Einstein*

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Middle childhood development signifies the phase between early childhood and adolescence. The focus of this study is on the development of emotional awareness within the child in this phase. It is therefore imperative to identify, explore and understand the vital elements that this developmental phase entails. In order to understand emotional awareness within middle childhood, this chapter will solely focus on the middle childhood phase before emotional awareness can be brought into the picture. Although emotional awareness is the essence of the study, in this chapter emotional development is addressed in general as it is present during middle childhood. A detailed investigation on emotional awareness is thoroughly discussed in chapter 4.

A child's transition from total physical and psychological dependency to self-sufficiency and independence occurs gradually. Development and maturing during childhood can be understood as periods of transition and reorganization – and is described by Thomson, Rudolph and Henderson (2004:11) as “a lifelong process of growing, maturing and change”.

Many different theories on the development of children are available and mainly describe the development and change in different stages of development. Finnan (2008:12) points out that for each of the stages theorists assigned a name and set an age range that should fall within each particular stage. Within several of these theoretical constructs the stage in which upper elementary school children resort is considered transitional, thus the intermediary between two other phases. This intermediary or “middle” childhood phase includes children of six to twelve years of age (Harold & Hay, 2003:7).

Cooper (2005:5) states that Freud called middle childhood the latency period. It was thought that in these years of innocence and tranquillity, children simply refined the skills they acquired in early childhood. Finnan (2008:12) states that the term latency brings to mind “dormancy or a rest from one extreme stage and preparation for future trials”. Cooper (2005:5) postulates that consequently, policies and programs focusses on providing support resources and opportunities from infancy to pre-school years and again in the risky years of adolescence. However in the middle-childhood years, children are left without structural provisions to accommodate their changing needs.

Finnan (2008:12) and Cooper (2005:5) corroborate that middle childhood is the phase where children’s worlds expand as they begin to experience the environment outside the home as it generally marks the child’s first significant entrance into institutions beyond the family. They begin school, learn to participate in their wider community and children and families increasingly navigate across multiple contexts such as home, work, school, peers, sports and religious activities. Cooper (2005:12) postulates that by giving attention to children in middle childhood we may take action to help children stay on track and also boost those who may otherwise never get back on track.

From the opinions voiced in the above it is evident that the middle childhood phase has an important part to play in the healthy development of children on their path to adulthood. This research study also focuses on middle childhood and it is of significance to take note of the theoretical viewpoints on child development with specific emphasis on development in the middle childhood phase, developmental areas, and developmental tasks which should be mastered during middle childhood.

### **3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES REGARDING CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

In order to fit the middle childhood phase in its proper place regarding the child’s development, we need to take note of the different theoretical viewpoints concerning childhood development per se.

Many theories of child development exist and many different perspectives and opinions are therefore offered. Taking note of the theoretical perspectives regarding different areas of child development is necessary to comprehend where middle childhood development and, later on, emotions and emotional awareness has its place.

Geldard and Geldard (2002:31) summarize the work of different theorists regarding child development as follows in Table 3.1:

**Table 3.1: Summary of different theories of child development**

Name	Summary of viewpoints of the theory
<b>The work of the early pioneers (1880-1940)</b>	
Sigmund Freud	Psychoanalytic psychotherapy and concepts of unconscious processes, defence mechanisms, id, ego, superego, resistance, free association, transference, psychosexual development.
Anna Freud	Sought an affectionate attachment with the child. Interpreted child's non-directed free play after an affectionate attachment with the child had been established.
Melanie Klein	Started to interpret the child's behaviour early in the therapeutic relationship. Interpreted child's non-directive free play.
Carl Jung	Introduced ideas about the symbolic representation of a collective unconscious.
Margaret Lowenfeld	Used symbols in a sand tray as a substitute for verbal communication.
Alfred Adler	Introduced the need to take account of social context.
<b>Theories of child development (1920-1975)</b>	
Abraham Maslow	Introduced the idea of a hierarchy of needs
Erik Erikson	Postulated eight stages of development. Believed that ego-strength was gained through successful resolution of developmental crises. Ability to solve own problems.
Jean Piaget	Conceptualize that children obtain particular skills and behaviours at

	particular developmental stages and recognized stages of cognitive development.
Lawrence Kohlberg	Looked at the relationship between Piaget’s concepts and the acquisition of moral concepts.
John Bowlby	Introduced theory of attachment whereby a child’s emotional and behavioural development was seen to be related to the way in which a child was able to attach to its mother.

**Source: Geldard and Geldard (2002)**

From Table 3.1 it is clear how theories on the development of children evolved through the years and signifies the valuable contribution each of these viewpoints made to the current field of knowledge on child development.

This is confirmed by Aldridge and Goldman (2007:96-99) in their reference to the numerous theories of development that have influenced educational practices during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that postmodern conceptions have changed the way we think of children and how to educate them. Borland, Laybourn, Hill and Brown (1998:129) observed that the first stage’s theories concentrated on relationships and the later theories focused more on the intellectual development of children.

Three classical stage theorists, namely Freud, Erikson and Piaget, made a significant contribution to the fundamental perception of the development of children and are hence summarized as follows:

## **Freud**

Aldridge and Goldman (2007:97) postulate that:

“ Freud's (1935) psychoanalytic theory served as the theoretical basis for analysis of behaviour disorders during the 1920s through the 1940s. Freud viewed behaviour problems displayed by children as symbolic manifestations of unresolved conflict which he said often emanated from early caregiver-child interactions”.

According to Gestwicki and Bertrand (2012:188) Freud believed that basic personality is formed in the first few years in life and he developed five stages of development from infancy to adolescence.

## **Erikson**

Cherry (sa), a child psychologist with at Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Idaho State University and a Master of Science in Education from the Boise State University, highlights that Freud's famous work influenced a number of other psychoanalysts, including theorist Erik Erikson. While Erikson's theory shared some similarities with Freud's, it is dramatically different in many ways. Erikson believed that social interaction and experience played a decisive role in children's development.

Gestwicki and Bertrand (2012:188) state that Erikson was one of the first to suggest that children develop in the context of their societies, expectations and prohibitions. His eight-stage theory of human development describes this process from infancy through death. During each stage, people are faced with a developmental conflict that impacts later functioning and further growth. Cherry (sa) points to Erikson's indication that success or failure in dealing with the conflicts at each stage can impact overall functioning.

## **Piaget**

According to Gestwicki and Bertrand (2012:188), Piaget's theories dominated developmental child psychology research and educational practices since the 1960s. Cherry (sa) states that "theorist Jean Piaget suggested that children think differently than adults and proposed a stage theory of cognitive development. He was the first to note that children play an active role in gaining knowledge of the world". Gestwicki and Bertrand (2012:188) indicate further that Piaget's theory suggests that children actively construct their own knowledge as they manipulate and explore their own world. He believed that children adapt their thinking to include their new ideas and that this additional information furthers their understanding.

The above discussion of a theoretical foundation for child development gives us a broad perspective of the academic thought regarding this issue. From this broad perspective the focus of the next section will be specifically on the middle childhood phase as this study concentrates on children in their middle childhood developmental phase.

### **3.3 MIDDLE CHILDHOOD AS DEVELOPMENTAL PHASE**

In the previous discussion it was indicated how the middle childhood phase was observed as a stagnant phase characterized by latency after the eventful development of the early childhood years and in waiting for adolescence. The argument that was raised in the first section of this chapter in this regard is supported by Click and Parker (2012:83-84) in their statement that “latency phase” indicates a period of latent or quiet feelings. Cooper (2005:12) disagrees with this statement and focuses on the aspects which point out that the middle childhood developmental phase indeed does have an important role and does matter in studying child development. She describes middle childhood to be “the time when children meet different overlapping contexts which they need to negotiate as they move into adolescence and adulthood”.

Parrish (2010:41) indicates that aspects of academic accomplishment and skill building are often the focus of children’s attention and efforts during the middle childhood phase. School occupies the majority of most children’s weekday and provides a crucial backdrop to academic and social achievements in middle childhood. Thomson et al. (2004:11) agree that children in middle childhood most definitely experience almost daily changes on physical, cognitive, social and emotional levels and that indicators of their success are their secure attachments, satisfying relationships and effective coping skills.

Thomson et al. (2004:12) conclude that children may display certain symptoms at one stage of development and completely different symptomatic behaviour in another. It is thus important to clarify in this chapter what the middle childhood developmental phase entails and why it is a significant stage, especially with regard to a child’s emotional development.

Though some common themes and concerns apply generally in middle childhood namely children between 6-12 years of age, it is important to note that the life of eight-year-old children are clearly quite different from that of children approaching their teens. Borland et al. (1998:25-26) indicate that developmental psychology points to the growing capacity of children as they get older, to expand, reflect, decentre and generalise. Their studies, although from 1998, supply a detailed and comprehensive exposition of developmental differences between different age groups within the middle childhood developmental phase. Borland, Laybourn, Hill and Brown's study is quoted by many recent authors (Churchill, 2011:226; Scourfield, 2006:156; Finnan, 2008:12) and thus appears to be judged as still relevant in current writing on this matter.

- **Five to six years old:** Children in this age bracket are mostly concerned with their own, immediate and concrete needs and advantages. Feelings of happiness in this age group were derived from sweets, toys or trips to McDonalds', while unhappiness was caused by having these kinds of things denied.
- **Seven years old:** Children in this age group show signs of a shift to relationships and achievement, and were aware of a widening social network. Happiness was now connected to family holidays, activities of various kinds and having friends over to play. Negative emotions become more complex and relationship based. Punishment and reprimands by parents are resented and cause anger. This is also a peak period for fears, e.g. nightmares and ghosts.
- **Nine years old:** The importance of relationships becomes a growing consciousness. Having friends are a constituent of happiness, losing them the most common source of misery. Adults are losing their aura of omnipotence and are discovered to have feet of clay, so that unfair treatment by parents and educators was now a major source of anger. Achievements in clubs and sports are vital and fears become more reality-based like bullies, being home alone or parental arguments.
- **Eleven to twelve years old:** Children in this age group carry the concerns of nine year old children at a more sophisticated level. Friends are still central and now in many circumstance the major confidants. Individual and family issues are still important but group identity and achievements were increasingly important. They become much more critical of adults and discriminate between them: some educators could be trusted to deal



with a situation and other are regarded as unimpressive. A sense of injustice develops, extended to the wider world, e.g. world hunger, wars, racism, poverty and cruelty to animals.

Collins, Madson and Susman-Stillman in Huston and Ripke (2006:23) state:

Between age 5 to adolescence transition occur in physical maturity, cognitive abilities and learning the diversity and impact of relationships with others and exposure to new settings, opportunities and demands. These changes inevitably alter the amount, kind, content and significance of children's interactions with a rapidly expanding social network.

Harold and Hay (2003:9) summarize in conclusion that in middle childhood, children reach new levels of cognitive, emotional and social functioning that allow them to interpret and engage with their social worlds as a preparatory step for the challenges that the next years will inevitably bring.

Emphases on the different developmental areas that expand in middle childhood are of further importance in context of this study. A thorough perception of this developmental phase and its important role regarding emotional awareness is required to comprehend the direction of further discussions regarding aim and process in the study.

### **3.4 AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT DURING MIDDLE CHILDHOOD**

Middle childhood carries the burden of responsibility for many changes due to development on various levels in the life of the child in this developmental phase. Bowden and Greenberg (2010:198) postulate that:

Middle childhood is a stage of tremendous changes in the child's life. They substantiates this by pointing to middle childhood as the stage where children enter into full time schooling, experience increased exposure to peers, have constant exposure to new skills and knowledge, find many changes in schedules and routines

and are ultimately expected to show progress and performance in different developmental areas.

Charlesworth, Wood and Viggiani (2011:181) echo these opinions and explore advancing in middle childhood within several different dimensions of a child's development. They also point out that although developmental areas are considered separately for analytical purposes, the changes in the developing child reflect a dynamic interaction, constantly occurring across these dimensions. These authors further identify a significant increase in the following areas:

- vocabulary;
- imagination;
- creativity and self-care skills;
- motor skill development;
- ability to cooperate;
- ability to play fairly;
- ability to follow social rules; and
- moral thinking and humour.

Children's development during middle childhood in physical, cognitive, emotional and social dimensions is of particular interest. These developmental areas will thus need further elucidation in order to obtain insight into the issues of concern regarding middle childhood as the developmental phase focused on for the purpose of this study.

### **3.4.1 Physical Development**

Click and Parker (2012:52) indicate that physical development in the middle childhood developmental phase is slower than it was in the early childhood developmental phase and they will not experience another growth spurt until adolescence. Physical development in middle childhood results in differences becoming present in the size and physical abilities of different children, and Nuttall (2002) points out that this affects the way they get along with others and how

they feel about themselves. Finer development in muscle skills occurs during the later stages of middle childhood and they are physically active and reluctant to rest even when they are tired.

Huitt (2007) (Ph.D. Educational Psychology - University of Florida) lists the following as further developmental attributes of middle childhood:

- The brain reaches its adult size and weight during the middle childhood years.
- Respiratory system functions more economically as elasticity of lungs expand, resulting in breathing becoming deeper and slower.
- Temporary teeth are replaced by permanent teeth and large muscles in arms and legs become more developed than small muscles.
- They can bounce a ball.
- They can run but in the initial years of this phase, they have difficulty doing it at the same time.

Charlesworth et al. (2011:182) point out the development of gross motor skills that is evident during this phase. They further highlight that children in the middle childhood phase are normally encouraged to gain a high level of mastery over physical skills associated with particular interests such as dance, sports or music.

### **3.4.2 Cognitive Development**

Baumeister and Bushman (2011:37) state that cognitive development during the period of middle childhood is marked by significant development and refinement with one of the most striking changes being the change in their memory. Their ability to remember and pay attention increases and the ability to speak and express ideas grows rapidly.

According to Huitt (2007) they develop in three different memory dimensions, namely:

- *Semantic memory*: Knowledge of concepts, rules, facts and the meaning of words.
- *Episodic/autobiographic memory*: Memory on personal experience.
- *Work memory*: The aspect of memory involved with temporary maintenance and

manipulation of information needed to carry out complex cognitive tasks.

Memory is also related to school and Nuttall (2002) points to the fact that children start school in middle childhood, which consequently has a significant effect on their cognitive development. Baumeister and Bushman (2011:37) add children's ability to remember as a determining factor in their increased knowledgebase and subsequent cognitive development. They learn to plan ahead and evaluate what they do because of their increased ability to think and reason, and they enjoy different types of activities such as clubs, games with rules and collecting things. They are still very self-centred although there is a tendency of beginning to think of others (Nuttall, 2002).

Smith (2008) discusses cognitive development in middle childhood, in accordance to Jean Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, which is based on stages where each builds upon the last. In accordance with this theory, middle childhood falls into the concrete operational stage. This stage is characterized by the active and appropriate use of logic. Children's logical abilities are limited to the real world or to concrete examples, for they are not quite yet ready for anfractuious abstract thinking. O'Donnell, Reeve and Smith (2012:76), Salkind (2004:257) and Click and Parker (2010:65) discuss four main aspects of operational thinking during middle childhood which is summarized as follows:

**Logic:** where children learn not to be fooled by appearances.

**Decentration:** the ability to coordinate more than one aspect of a situation at the same time.

**Reversibility:** the understanding that numbers or objects can be changed, and then returned to their original state.

**Causality:** an understanding of cause and effect paired with the ability to see how a child's actions and those of others relate to consequence.

During the middle childhood phase things tend to be black or white, right or wrong, great or disgusting, fun or boring according to Nuttall (1995) who is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Connecticut. He further states the opinion that to children in their middle childhood developmental phase, there are very few middle grounds in their experiences in this regard.

### 3.4.3 Emotional Development

The focus of this study is the emotional development of children and is thus the most important aspect of development in middle childhood regarding this study. For that purpose a thorough investigation of emotional development is required; the next chapter will therefore solely focus on this aspect. A detailed discussion on the matter is therefore not covered in this chapter and only a broad overview of emotional development is included in this chapter's discussion on emotional development.

Emotional development within middle childhood is identified by Macintyre (2001:33) as a difficult area to understand. He motivates this statement with the example of confidence, which only becomes apparent when carrying out another task. Judging emotional behaviour is thus not as concrete as, for example, the judgement of progress in mathematics.

Shaffer and Kipp (2010:432) state that in middle childhood the causes for children's anxieties or fears shift from threats (real or imagined) which they cannot explain to important real-life issues such as meeting academic challenges or establishing good relationships. Nuttal (1995) agrees and adds that due to their higher emotional flexibility and differentiation in middle childhood, children are enabled to experience more feelings; they therefore need help in expressing their feelings in appropriate ways when they are for instance upset, worried, anxious or scared.

In this regard Borland et al. (1998:32) conducted a study by requesting a group of primary school children to identify what emotion might be inferred from a cardboard face they were shown and the following list of emotions was produced: cross, angry, grumpy, moody, frustrated, upset, sad, annoyed and unhappy. The variety of responses given in relation to the same face illustrates that there are quite a lot of differences in interpretation of more ambiguous expressions. Externally directed feelings like anger may be confused with internalised emotions like sadness and uncertainty. If transferred to real life situations, this could lead to definite misunderstandings.

According to Carr (2011:58), middle childhood indicates increased use of emotional expression to regulate closeness and distance within peer relationships. Within this context, children in middle childhood make distinction between clear emotional expressions with close friends and managed

emotional displays with others. Gender role typifying also affects the quality of this kind of emotional expression according to Borland et al. (1998:32), when boys are taught for example that they should not cry and girls should not show aggression.

Carr (2011:58) states that children in their middle childhood developmental phase prefer to autonomously regulate their emotional states and prefer to depend on their own resources in dealing with peers, rather than looking to parents or caregivers to help them manage their feelings and relationships.

The greater emphasis on social aspects like friendships and teamwork are significant developments in middle childhood and this phase sets the scene for children's desire to be liked and accepted by friends. Emotional development thus closely parallels the social development of children in their middle childhood developmental phase.

#### **3.4.4 Social Development**

Kostelnik, Gregory and Soderman (2012:2) state that people are social beings; from birth a lifetime is spent actively engaged in others. They also indicate that companionship, stimulation and a sense of belonging is gained through social interaction. Smith and Hart (2011:321) found a shift to mutual co-regulation in middle childhood as these children "take more responsibility for initiating contact, monitoring and maintaining the availability and accessibility of attachment figures". During middle childhood, peer friendships take on a more prominent role than ever before. During these years, children begin to develop a sense of who they are, what they can do, and how they fit in. Friends become very important and they develop ideas about right and wrong, and personal responsibility.

A scientific view into the social development of children is found in the developmental theory of Erik Erikson. His theory on social and emotional development was derived from his belief that the most important force impelling human behaviour and the development of personality was social interaction (Huitt, 2007). Huitt (2007) augments on this theory regarding middle childhood and explains Erikson's view in this regard, to be that children at this age "are becoming more aware of

themselves as individuals”. They work hard at “being responsible, being good, and doing it right”. They are now more reasonable and able to share and cooperate, they are eager to learn and accomplish skills that are more complex: reading, writing and telling time. They also get to form moral values and start to express their independence by being disobedient, using back talk and being rebellious (Huitt, 2007).

Charlesworth et al. (2011:192) point out that gains in cognitive abilities promote more complex communication skills and greater social awareness, which facilitates more complex peer interaction – a vital resource for the development of social competence. Newman and Newman (2009:279) point to the fact that not all children enter middle childhood with the same capacity to make friends and enjoy the benefits of close peer relationships.

This is most probably why Erikson viewed these years as critical for the development of self-confidence. In this regard Martin and Fabes (2009:404) point to Erikson’s indication that:

“Individuals derive pleasure from *industry* or being productive and successful in contrast to *inferiority* or a sense of failure that causes individuals to avoid opportunities to succeed or make them so nervous that their anxieties interfere with their abilities.”

Peer relations and friendships become vital during middle childhood, attributable to children spending a significant amount of time with their peers. They evaluate their performances and measure themselves to the aptitudes of peers. It is consequently essential for them to find (and keep) a position within their social group, necessitating increased attention to social rules and improved ability to reflect on the point of view of others. Social status becomes significant and children start to compete for it (Balter & Tamis-LeMonda, 2003:238).

Nuttal (1995) emphasizes that children in this phase want to do things by and for themselves, yet they need adults who will help when asked or when needed. They need guidance, rules, limits and help in solving problems and they start to see things from another child’s point of view. They need more love, attention and approval than criticism, for their self-concept develops rapidly in these years and it is hence an important period, for specific experiences entail significant results for the development of self-concepts.

Charlesworth et al. (2011:192) point out that gains in cognitive abilities promote more complex communication skills and greater social awareness, which facilitates more complex peer interaction – a vital resource for the development of social competence. Kostelnik, Gregory and Soderman (2012:2) indicate that typical categories of behaviour associated with social competence include:

- Social values
- Personal identity
- Emotional intelligence
- Interpersonal skills
- Self-regulation
- Planning, organizing and decision making
- Cultural competence

Furthermore, children in middle childhood start to define themselves in psychological terms which Harter (2012:681) indicate to be correctness in self-valuation. This ability is affected by their developmental level. The cognitive advances in middle childhood promote more realistic appraisals and the ability to engage in social comparison to construct discrepancies between real and ideal self-image. It may lead to more negative self-appraisals as reality testing skills emerge and they start to recognize both positive and negative, they realize how they *are* (true self) and how they *would like to be* (ideal self).

Kachmar and Blair (2007:125) explain that children's self-concept during the middle childhood phase continue to be refined and moves beyond observable characteristics and beliefs to include psychological traits. Some of the salient gains in self-understanding noted by them are:

- Children begin to make social comparisons, interpreting their own abilities and behaviour in relation to those around them.
- The typical high self-esteem of the early childhood years drop to a more realistic level as older children begin to incorporate feedback about their own skills and competencies in comparison to the skills and abilities of others.



- Self-esteem also differentiates in middle childhood, yielding at least four separate categories, including academic competence, social competence, physical and athletic competence and physical appearance.

Development of the child in middle childhood is an ongoing process and in many ways involuntary in kind but aside from natural development seen during these years there are also developmental tasks which are mostly dependant on the child's circumstances, upbringing and environment. These developmental tasks are to a large extent responsible for the child's success in future, as experienced by the researcher in work with children in this age group and therefore an important matter in the discussion of childhood development.

### **3.5 DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD**

Sreevani (2007:33) indicates that it is typical for children in the middle childhood phase to looking beyond the family and interact with their social system; they also need to acquire social skills, incorporate social values and patterns and interact with peers. Louw, van Ede and Ferns (1998:326) elaborate by mentioning that children's development in this phase, especially their expansion of experience, prepares them for the challenges of the adolescent years that follow. Balanced development during middle childhood thus serves as the foundation for later development. Newman and Newman (2009:279) state that new developmental tasks emerge as children become focused on friendship formation, concrete mental operations, skill learning, self-evaluation and team play. The developmental tasks relevant in this study, which need to be mastered during middle childhood, are: self-image, relationships, cognitive and language development, emotional development, gender role identification and moral judgment and behaviour.

#### **3.5.1 Self-image**

Zembar and Blume (2009:234) point out that many related terms are used by developmental, clinical and personality psychologists to describe individuals' understanding and evaluation of

themselves. Self-image, self-concept, self-worth and self-esteem are used interchangeably by authors to describe the phenomenon of a person's estimation of what he/she is presenting to others. The researcher hence views the acquisition of a positive self-image in this regard as the developmental task of middle childhood and the other factors as means or indicators of the self-image that a child has obtained, whether positive or negative.

According to Harter (2006:375-377), children experience some degree of discrepancy between what they like to be (or think they ought to be) and what they think they are. When that discrepancy is high, the child's self-esteem will be low, and vice versa. She further indicates that self-esteem of children manifests in their behaviour.

Dombeck and Oswalt (2010) agree and elucidate that children's picture of who they are and what they are capable of become more complex in middle childhood. They start to compare themselves to others, across a wide variety of traits and characteristics such as appearance, intelligence, physical abilities or artistic abilities. Children consequently start to view themselves as more or less capable within different domains of accomplishment (academic, social, athletics, appearance, etc.). Their self-esteem reflects their feelings of personal worthiness with the result that children may see themselves as very capable in some areas but not in others. A boy might for example determine that he is a promising artist but a much worse athlete than his friend is.

Geldard and Geldard (2002:115) observe that a negative self-concept develops "when children interpret their participation in past and subsequent experiences as sneaky, incompetent, inept, disloyal, secretive, naughty, nasty or stupid".

Children's overall self-esteem may fluctuate or decrease as they start this process of social comparison in earnest. However, with proper caregiver support and guidance, children's self-esteem will generally rise again during this period as children find and focus on their strengths, address their weaknesses, and recognize that their general acceptability to those they depend upon does not depend on their becoming perfect people. Of course, this process of self-esteem regulation does not happen for everyone and some children will go on to develop quite negative self-images at this time (Dombeck & Oswalt, 2010).

This discussion indicated that self-image and the development thereof stand related to the relationships in the child's life and their comparison of their own abilities to the abilities of their friends. Acquiring and managing positive relationships is thus a further developmental task of middle childhood.

### **3.5.2 Relationships**

A positive experience of the self (self-image, self-worth, self-esteem, self-concept) develops from children's belief that they belong, have worth and are successful. Relationships with parents, siblings, and peers become of greater importance and social participation expands during middle childhood.

Smith and Hart (2011:328) indicate that "by middle childhood peers has greater salience in children's lives, with them developing and maintaining friendship, functioning in stable groups of peers and spending a considerable amount of time with peers". How their peers treat them places them into a certain category of social status. Newman and Newman (2009:279) view peer relationships as "the forming of meaningful dyadic and group relationships, participating in larger peer networks and experiencing peer acceptance or rejection". Charlesworth et al. (2011:192) point to the acquisition of positive group identity or identities as a developmental task widely associated with middle childhood.

This requires an increased attention to social rules and an increased ability to consider other people's point of view. Social status also becomes important and children compete for this. Fisher and Lerner (2005:817) agree in their statement that peer relationships become increasingly more significant during middle childhood as reliance on parents for social needs is replaced with a need for companionship, intimacy and enhancement of worth from peers and friends. Huston and Ripke (2006:11) elaborate in this regard that deviant peers can lead children astray and prosocial peers can support positive direction which further highlights the fact that friendship and social skills are crucial influences on children's well-being and future relationships.

Gottman, Katz and Hooven (1997:101) argue further by stating the following:

We can see that the basic elements and skills a child learns through emotion coaching (labelling, expressing one's feelings, and talking about one's feelings) become liabilities in the peer social world in middle childhood, if they were to be simply transferred by the child from the home to the school. Thus, it is clear that the basic model linking emotion coaching in preschool to peer relations in middle childhood cannot be a simple isomorphic transfer of social skills model. Instead, it becomes necessary to identify a mechanism operative in the preschool period that makes it possible for the child to learn something in the preschool period that underlies the development of appropriate social skills across this major developmental shift in what constitutes social competence with peers.

Huston and Ripke (2006:11) conclude that children with good peer relationships in middle childhood show better academic performance in adolescence are more likely to be engaged with school, are more successful in the workplace when they reach adulthood and are more likely to feel secure in romantic relationships. This matter points us in the direction of a further developmental task in middle childhood, namely gender role identification as discussed in the following section.

### **3.5.3 Gender Role Identification**

Ghosh (2009) defines gender identity as “a personal conception of oneself as male or female which intimately relates to the concept of gender role; which is defined as ‘the outward manifested personality that reflects the gender identity’”. Schor (1999:89) postulates on the gender theme in his indication that gender identification continues to become more firmly established in middle childhood, not only in children's interest in playing more exclusively with youngsters of their own sex, but also in their interest in acting like, looking like and having things like their same-sex peers. During this time of life, children express their gender identity through gender-specific role behaviour.

“Gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified, as a result of a combination of inherent and extrinsic or environmental factors; gender role, on the other hand, is manifested within society by observable factors such as behaviour and appearance of the adults surrounding the child, gender expectations and imitation of these roles through the child's play” (Ghosh, 2009).

Children separate into gender-segregated groups in middle childhood that seem to operate by their own set of peer-driven rules. A typical boys' group is large, competitive, hierarchical, and organized around large group outdoor activities such as sports. Rough-and-tumble play and

displays of strength and toughness frequently occur. In contrast, girls' groups tend to be smaller and dependent on intense relationships and are characterized with intimate conversations where the emphasis is upon maintaining group cohesion (Maccoby, 1998:32).

### **3.5.4 Cognitive and Language Development**

Cognitive and language skills are a further important developmental task in this phase. Cognitive development in middle childhood, happens "beneath the surface", so to speak according to Oswalt (2010). She bases this statement on the fact that it is difficult, for instance, to track the development of children's cognitive operations or the expansion of their information processing abilities across time without observing what children do when confronted with specially designed problems and tasks or to having them sit through formal tests of attention and memory.

While most children master the basics of language in preschool and early childhood, the middle childhood period continues to be important to the mastery of language. Cohan (2001:74) collaborate that memory improve in middle childhood and that language plays a role here because information that can be encoded verbally is more likely to be remembered.

According to Bauer, Lukowski and Pathman (2011:37) major advances in language development are mostly complete in middle childhood but subtle refinements in language continue throughout the school years as they continue to add words to their vocabularies. Bauman, Font, Edwards and Boland, in Zembar and Blume (2009:193), elaborate by mentioning that "semantic development in middle childhood seems to rely heavily on the context of the conversation and children's ability to figure out the meaning of a word or phrase by what another person intended to say, rather than a literal interpretation of word choice". Bauer et al. (2011:37) further indicate that it is estimated that a child's vocabulary has 10 000 words when they start school but increases to approximately 40 000 words in the fifth grade.

Shaffer and Kipp (2010:242) elaborate on vocabulary in their indication that in middle childhood children also become able to alter their speech and mannerisms in order to accommodate the situation, for example being more polite in the presence of adults or strangers. They ask for

clarification if they do not understand and are more aware of a listener's comprehension of what is said and will slow down or repeat phrases if the listener is lost. Zembler and Blume (2009:192) indicate that with the advancement of cognition in middle childhood, children become better communicators and possess a more sophisticated sense of humour.

Oswalt (2010) is of the opinion that a far more visible expression of children's cognitive development during middle childhood is found in their ability to use and appreciate increasingly sophisticated forms of language. Commonly, children need to master several subtle but powerful communication skills during their middle childhood years. Shaffer and Kipp (2010:242) conclude that children are thus truly active participants in their own language development.

### **3.5.5 Moral Judgment and Behaviour**

Moral values and its eminence in the lives of children are further developed in the middle childhood years. Lawrence Kohlberg, inspired by the work of Piaget, made an important contribution to our understanding of the moral development of children. Geldard and Geldard (2002:33) note that Kohlberg's outlook links the relationship between Piaget's concepts of cognitive development and gaining moral values.

Oswalt (2010) indicates that, according to Kohlberg, children in their middle childhood stage of development typically display "pre-conventional" moral reasoning. They thus display internalized, basic, culturally prescribed rules, governing right and wrong behaviour. They will, for example, recognize that it is considered immoral to steal from others. Children will tend to live in accordance with these rules but primarily for selfish reasons, as a way of avoiding punishment and obtaining praise for themselves. Carpendale (2000:193) points out that in the later years of middle childhood, children realize that morally good behaviours get attention and derive praise and positive regard from peers and adults, while morally bad choices bring about unpleasant and harmful consequences.

Oswalt (2010) voices the opinion that children begin to question whether parents and educators are infallible during their early middle childhood years. In middle childhood they develop the most

respect for those adults who are fair and know how to be in charge. They need to understand the necessity of rules and develop the need to participate in making the rules. They may start to realize that children have opinions too, and they begin to sort out which values profit them most “what’s in it for me”.

### 3.5.6 Emotional Development

Emotional development is an imperative developmental task in middle childhood and seeing as it is the focus of this study, it is a vital issue to deal with in this context. Tokuhama-Espinosa (2011:54) points to the fact that one of the first links between emotions and learning was introduced as the *affective filter hypothesis*, suggesting that how we feel influences what we are able to learn. Thus indicating that emotions affect how, what and why we learn.

The next chapter is solely focussed on emotions and its setting within the study. Emotional development as a developmental task within middle childhood will thus be highlighted in broad terms in chapter 4.

Crawford [sa] indicates that children need to develop emotional abilities in different areas in middle childhood, namely.

***Self-conscious emotions:*** Pride and guilt become self-governed by accomplishments and awareness of transgressions. Pride motivates children to try new things, guilt prompts them to make amends and try harder. Shaming on the other hand, based on negative judgments of the child’s qualities or personality, is destructive and will kill motivation.

***Emotional understanding:*** Children need to learn to appreciate mixed emotions, for example something good may also hold something disappointing. They also need to realize that people do not always show what they feel.

***Emotional self-regulation:*** If the anxiety-producing event is controllable (e.g. a test), the child can work towards success and engage support. If the event is not controllable, they can distract themselves or redefine the situation (e.g. sour grapes). If they can manage the situation well, they

develop a sense of *emotional self-efficacy* (feeling in control of their emotional experience). These children tend to be happier, more empathic, helpful and better liked by peers. Less emotionally controlled children have peer problems and less empathy.

Long and Fogell (1999:10) indicate that by the time children arrive in school, they have already reached a sophisticated stage of emotional development. Throughout their time in the primary school (middle childhood) children continue to develop in complexity of response and insight into the emotional state of others.

Kostelnik, Gregory and Soderman (2012:127, 128) describe the emotional developmental path from birth to middle childhood with the indication that although there are some beliefs that new born babies can show some emotion there are also scientists who indicate that babies' reactions are only reflex and that babies can only experience emotion weeks later when their cognitive processes are developed enough to allow interpreting of what is experienced. Emotional maturation emerges according to developmental sequences and Kostelnik et al. (2012:127) consider joy, anger, sadness and fear to be the primary emotions from which other, more differentiated emotions eventually develop. Thus, by the end of the first year a child's repertoire of emotions has moved from the primary four to include surprise, elation, frustration, separation, anxiety and stranger distress. Development of emotions up to middle childhood is hence summarized as follows:

- 6 Weeks: Joy
- 4-6 Months: Anger
- 5-7 Months: Sadness
- 6-12 Months: Fear
- 2 years: Children become more self-conscious and reveal emotions like embarrassment, affection, envy, defiance and contempt.
- 3 years: Children become increasingly focused on others, signs of empathy emerge and a difference in affection for adults and children is present. They also start to make judgments about their actions with pride when they succeed and shame when they fail.



- 3-5 years: Children become increasingly accurate in identifying the emotions of others by relying on facial expression and tone of voice in doing so.
- Middle childhood: Children combine physical, situational and historic information to understand. With maturity and experience they come to understand that a friend is sad because her dog is lost, not because she is crying and that the emotion can change to happiness when the dog is found. They gradually learn that the source a feeling may be internal as well as physical or situational, like memories which produce feelings even though the event is long past. They also discover that a similar situation may prompt different effect on different people or different responses from the same person on different occasions. Because of these variations, recognizing emotions and those of others seem to be a challenge throughout this period.

Le Doux in Long and Fogell (1999:11) mention the following with regard to emotional development:

Once emotions occur they become powerful motivators of future behaviour. They chart the course of moment-to-moment action and long-term achievements. Nevertheless, emotions can also get one into trouble, when fear becomes anxiety, desire gives way to greed, annoyance turns to anger, anger to hatred, friendship to envy, love to obsession or pleasure to addiction. Mental health is maintained by emotional hygiene, and mental problems, largely reflect a breakdown of emotional order.

Emotions can thus have both useful and pathological consequences for an individual, and hence need to be managed in a responsible manner once it was mastered as a developmental task. It is therefore significant to take note of the roots of emotion and its obvious effect on learning in order to obtain an inclusive understanding of its consequences and value. These roots evidently originate in the brain as the core managing organ in the human body, which the researcher will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

### 3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter summarizes middle childhood and the needs, abilities, concerns and attributes of children in this developmental phase, which fall broadly within the primary school years. Children's development in this phase can be paralleled with the example of their formal academic learning. At first they need to acquire the fundamentals of reading, writing and basic mathematic skills. By the third or fourth grade, the goal of reading a paragraph is no longer to decipher the words, but also to understand the content. The overall emotional, social and mental development in the middle childhood developmental phase encompasses acquiring the fundamentals at first and developing that into not only deciphering the aspects it includes but also understanding the content. The researcher is of the opinion that effort put into the fundamentals of emotional awareness during the middle childhood would aid children in the ability to decipher the emotional concepts that forms part of their daily experiences. This will result in an understanding of their social and emotional needs and enable them to live fulfilling lives.

Middle childhood further 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. Throughout middle childhood, children gradually become more goal-orientated and enjoy planning and organizing tasks. These factors are further significant aspects in their emotional education during this developmental phase for logical thinking, the relationship between cause-and-effect and the planning of tasks are all present in emotional education and development. Children in this phase are not good at problem solving because it requires abstract thinking which is usually only acquired during adolescent development. The researcher observes this aspect thus as one of the main problem areas where children can obtain severe emotional, social or mental injury in the form of self-image, relationship, labelling or aggression problems due to their inability to handle situations where problem solving skills are necessary. Education in being aware of emotions, its specific role in their existence and mechanisms of positive emotional functioning will most probably enable children to maintain stability and lessen the possibilities of emotional trauma due to ineffective handling of emotional situations.

According to Salovey and Sluyter (1997:109) research suggests that different brain regions may contribute in varying degrees to the experience of different emotions. Tileston (2004:21) states that emotion is the strongest force for embedding information into the brain's long-term memory as it has the power to shut down our thinking or to strengthen an experience so that we remember it for life. The middle childhood phase is depicted as a phase with a lot of development in the areas of creativity, vocabulary, imagination, social abilities, moral thinking and cognitive competence. The opinions of the authors quoted in this chapter conclude to the fact that emotional capacities determine to what extent the developmental tasks within the middle childhood phase can successfully be mastered. The role brain development has to play within this phase with regard to emotional aspects is consequently very important and therefore central to the study of emotional awareness.

The emotional development and, more importantly, the awareness of children in middle childhood regarding emotions is the focus of this study. The origin of emotions within the brain and its specific method of dealing with emotions thus need to be addressed in order to obtain a thorough view of this phenomenon. The following chapter thus focuses on neurological development and its influence on children's ability to learn and acquire and retain emotional health.

# CHAPTER 4

## Neurological Development and its Influence on Children's Ability to Learn

*From the brain and the brain alone arise our pleasures, joys, laughter and jests, as well as our sorrows, pains and griefs. ~Hippocrates*

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The relation between the human mind and the brain has been debated for centuries, according to Driver, Haggard and Shallice (2008:1). The question underlying this debate was how seemingly immaterial entities such as memories and thoughts can arise from biological material. The current notion in this matter, in their opinion, is that advances in neuroscience have now led to wide acceptance in science and medicine that all aspects of our mental life – our perceptions, thoughts, memories, actions, plans and understanding of others – in fact depend on brain functioning.

In short, the brain dictates the behaviours that allow us to survive and makes us who we are. Ongoing scientific studies for many years unravelled the complexity of the brain. Our understanding of the brain and its functionality within our existence were greatly improved by these studies and furthermore adds to the understanding of the functioning of human beings as a whole.

Herschkowitz and Herschkowitz (2002:4-6) label the brain as a basis for memory, learning and actions and at the same time it is the seat of our emotions. Even our hopes and desires arise in the brain, as do the strategies that we evolve to reach our goals. Diamond and Hobson (1998:2) add that the brain with its complex architecture and limitless potential is a constantly changing entity that is powerfully shaped by our experiences in childhood and throughout life. EAUDE (2006:63) substantiates that unless children's emotional needs are met, all learning will be impaired.

Whether emotional needs are met and learning subsequently impaired or promoted is a factor dependant on the structure, compound and functioning of the brain and the overall ability, capacity and potential of the brain and its development. Alcamo (2003:98) describes the brain and spinal cord as “the central control system of the human body which receives and interprets stimuli to dispatch impulses for appropriate actions”. The brain is the area from where everything regarding learning, living and overall being stems from. The researcher is of the opinion that emotional awareness, education and cognition need to be brought into context of their origin within the brain and brain development of children. This in turn will prove fundamental in order to obtain a complete picture of the role the educational system has to play within emotional awareness.

For the purpose of this study, it is deemed important to explore the brain regarding its development and expansion through early childhood and the effect thereof on the child’s potential and emotional development, when middle childhood is reached.

## **4.2 THE BRAIN: CONTROL SYSTEM OF THE HUMAN BODY AND MIND**

Kirp (2011:22) quotes Mrs. Hillary Clinton of the USA in saying: “...years ago we thought a baby’s brain structure was virtually complete at birth. Now we understand that everything we do with a child has somehow potential physical influence on that rapidly forming brain”. He then adds that this influence would by implication be on the individual’s entire life.

Herschkowitz and Herschkowitz (2002:4-6) describe the brain as an immense network with numerous sub-systems working together. The brain plays an active role in everything we think, feel and do. It is the organ that interprets the multitude of signals from our sensory organs and forms associations among them. Sylwester (2010:4) states that although the brain is awesomely complex it also has an elegant functional simplicity. He is of the opinion that it therefore is possible for persons with a limited understanding of biology to develop a functional understanding of basic brain systems and processes. He stresses the importance of understanding the biology of

children, especially by those who attempt to nurture them. This is thus the rationale for including a chapter on the influence of neurology on children's emotions and their ability to learn.

The science behind neurology and brain structure is so vast that this chapter will only touch on a very small facet thereof starting out with a concise discussion on the development and structure of the brain. The developmental effect of brain functioning on the child's future positions this chapter in context of the researcher's study, as one cannot research emotions without including the system responsible for acknowledging and processing emotions and emotional reactions. The chapter then concludes with a discussion on emotional education versus brain functioning, combining the arguments on the brain and the study's focus on emotional awareness.

#### **4.2.1 Development of the brain**

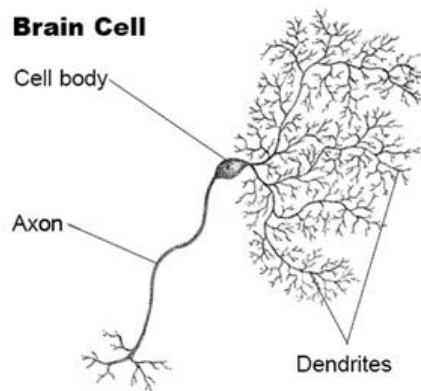
From the previous section it is clear that the development of the brain as the core of human functioning is an essential facet underlying the understanding of human behaviour. Emotional development and the maintenance of emotional health thus also need to be put in context of their origin and continuation within brain processes. The following section furnishes a succinct discussion on the development and basic functioning of the brain, for the purpose of positioning the focus of the study (emotional awareness) within the context of brain functioning.

Kirp (2011:22) postulates that studies on how the brain functions indicate that at no other time in a person's life does the brain develop as rapidly as in the first years. Engel-Smothers and Heim (2008:4) indicate that at age three a baby's brain has added 70% of its mass at birth and will grow to 90% of its adult weight.

Brain development results from the formation of billions of neurons (the cellular building blocks of the brain) and trillions of synapses (the connections that receive and send electrochemical signals) according to the Centre of Educational research and innovation (2007:162).

Graham and Forstadt (2001) elaborate that “the basic building blocks of the brain are specialized nerve cells that make up the central nervous system: neurons”. As a safety measure to ensure that newborns gets the best possible chance of coming into the world with healthy brains the foetus’ brain produces roughly twice as many neurons as it will ultimately need.

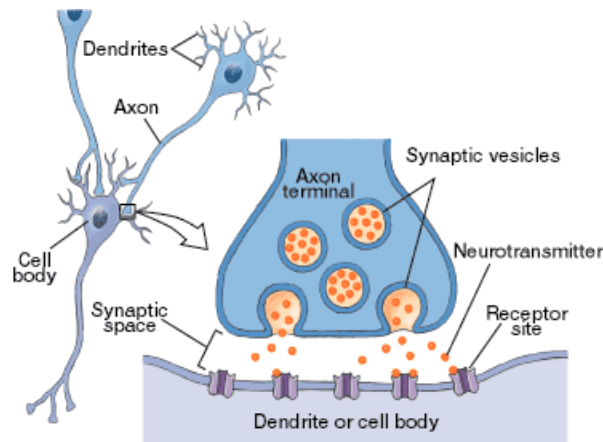
Every neuron has an “output” fibre or *axon*, with the ability to send impulses to other neurons. Each neuron also has many short, hair-like “input” fibres or *dendrites* – with the ability to receive impulses from other neurons (Graham & Forstadt, 2001) This is why neurons are constructed to form connections as illustrated in Figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1: Brain cells or neurons (Graham & Forstadt, 2001)**

Huang (2008) explains that neurons deploy a bushy array of fibres called dendrites that extend to gather signals from the many neurons in the cerebellum and send signals to other parts of the body.

Huang (2008) and his colleagues traced the chemical signals leading neurons to form synapses with specific parts of other neurons and indicate synapses to be the tiny gaps across which nerve cells exchange signals, conveyed by chemicals called neurotransmitters as can be observed in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2: Neurotransmitter of the synapse (The biological basis of behaviour, 2002)**

Sherwood (2013:106) indicates that synapsis means “junction”, thus pointing to the junction between two neurons to be termed a synapse. Synapses are responsible for the chemical junctions between two neurons. Young (2007) explains that a potential action is transmitted down the axon to the axon terminal. In the axon terminal vesicles fuse with the membrane in response to the potential action; this releases neurotransmitters into the synaptic cleft. The neurotransmitters bind receptors on the dendrites of the post-synaptic neuron, triggering electrical potentials in that neuron which can result in a potential action in the next neuron down the line.

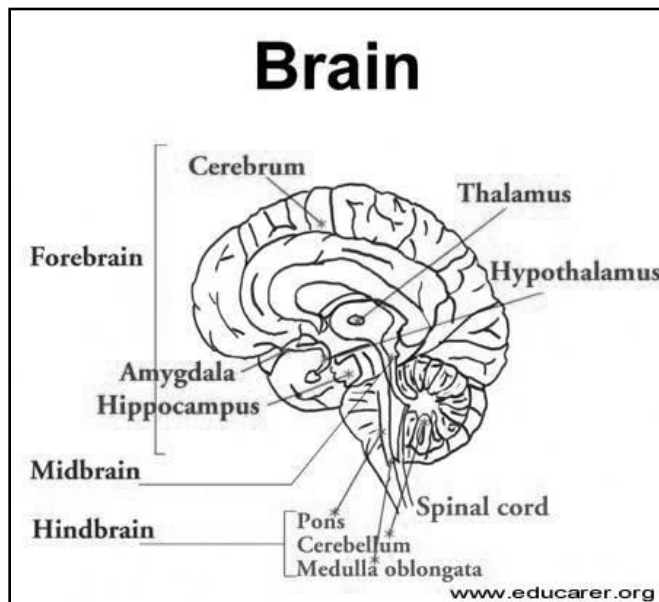
Acquiring an understanding of the “building blocks” of the brain and their method of “communicating” through neurotransmitting directs the discussion to the structure within which these particles fulfil their purpose. The following section will briefly focus on brain structure as well as the attributes and function of each of these sections of the brain.

## 4.2.2 Brain Structure

Graham and Forstadt (2001) explain the brain to be part of the central nervous system that plays a decisive role in controlling many functions, including both voluntary activities like walking or speaking and involuntary ones like breathing or blinking.



Different parts of the brain control different kinds of functions. Porter (2007) summarizes the functions of the different sections of the brain according to the following sketch.



**Figure 4.3: Condensed version of brain function (Porter, 2007)**

Figure 4.3 supplies an indication of where the different sections of the brain is situated, each of these parts will hence be briefly described and its functions listed.

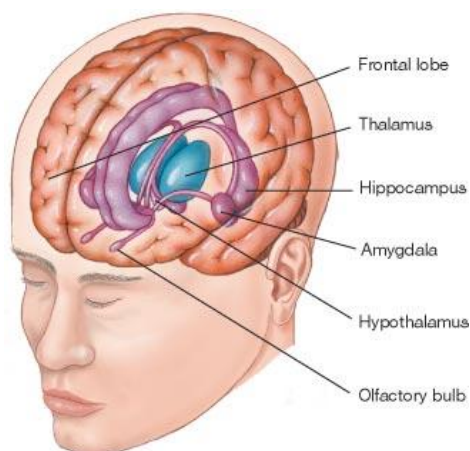
- **Cerebrum:** Largest part of the brain.  
Functions: Perception, thought, voluntary movement, language, reasoning.
- **Thalamus:** “Grand Central Station”.  
Functions: Sensory and motor integration.
- **Hypothalamus:** Size of a pea with 22 nuclei.  
Functions: Regulation of body temperature, hunger, thirst and stress.
- **Pons:** Connects cerebellum to the cerebral hemisphere.
- **Cerebellum:** Behind and below the cerebrum.  
Functions: Movement, balance, posture.
- **Medulla oblongata:** Continuation of the spinal cord and lowest part of the brain.  
Functions: Controls breathing, heart rate, blood pressure.
- **Amygdala:** Part of limbic system.

Functions: Tags life events for emotional content and processes negative events and fears.

- **Hippocampus:** Part of limbic system.

Functions: Emotions, memory, special orientation.

The amygdala and hippocampus seem to be the parts of the brain where the functions relevant to this study are situated



**Fig. 4.4: The amygdala and hippocampus** (*The biological basis of behaviour, 2002*)

Figure 4.4 indicates the location of the amygdala and the hippocampus and their function can be described as follows:

- **Amygdala**

Pastorino and Doyle-Portillo (2013:58) indicate the role of the amygdala to involve emotion regulation; they are of the opinion that the amygdala plays an essential role in a person's ability to judge an emotionally loaded social situation and in turn regulate the emotional reaction relevant to that situation.

- **Hippocampus**

Bernstein (2011:63) points to the hippocampus as being responsible for the formation of new memories. Pastorino and Doyle-Portillo (2013:58) confirm that the hippocampus is a structure related to learning and memory and plays a role in the transfer of information from short- to long-

term memory. In the context of this study the hippocampus is thus the part of the brain that would be responsible for transferring information (EA program) from short- to long-term memory, in order for the respondents to indicate enhancement of emotional awareness in their post-test.

The total composition of the brain and the manner in which its functioning results in management of the human body and mind influence our overall perception of the developing child, as discussed in the following section.

### **4.2.3 Brain Functioning and its Developmental Effect on the Child's Future**

*Zero to three* is the national centre for infants, toddlers and families located in Washington. This is a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers. *Zero to three* (2000) explains a brain development activity, namely *pruning*, as an activity which:

...allows the brain to keep the connections that have a purpose, while eliminating those that are not doing anything. In short, pruning increases the efficiency with which the brain can do what it needs to do. The brain operates on the "use it or lose it" rule and "over-pruning" of these connections can occur when a child is deprived of normally expected experiences in the early years. This leaves the child struggling to do what would have come more naturally otherwise.

Kiner and Feinstein (2011:16) explain that the brain judges information that it frequently uses 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 researcher experiences in the practice of social work that children who are abused, maltreated or neglected as well as the children of poorly educated, low-income parents often do not reach the same intellectual levels as children of well-educated, wealthy parents and who find themselves in healthy thriving family situations. Research in brain development now provides us with the insights into why this is so.

Zero to three (2000), points to the fact that parents who are preoccupied with a daily struggle to ensure that their children have enough to eat and are safe from harm may not have the resources, information, or time they need to provide the stimulating experiences that foster optimal brain development. Infants and children who are rarely spoken to, who are exposed to few toys, and who have little opportunity to explore and experiment with their environment may fail to fully develop the neural connections and pathways that facilitate later learning.

De Bellis, Baum, Birmaher, Keshavan, Eccard, Boring, Jenkins and Ryan (1999:1259-1270) found in their study that children who receive sensitive, responsive care from their parents and other caregivers in the first years of life enjoy an important head start toward success in their lives. The secure relationships they develop with the important adults in their lives lay the foundation for emotional development and help protect them from the many stresses they may face as they grow.

Murray (2004) confirms this 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 adrenaline 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. Maria (2009:140) corroborates this notion in his indication that the acute and chronic stress of maltreatment in childhood is associated with neuropsychiatric disorders, cognition and adaptation, and in adverse brain development. Neural pathways must be stimulated during critical periods of development for natural maturation and pruning to occur. The specific brain regions most vulnerable to excessive pruning associated with early stress and adverse circumstances appear to include the hippocampus and amygdala.

The question thus would be, where does this leave us regarding mental healing and emotional comfort to children who had been exposed to this kind of disruption? Are they lost and their prognoses unchangeable? It seems as if it is not the case. There are studies and indications that the brain can be stimulated to regenerate to some extent into reprogramming neurons to relocate so that they can fill some of the gaps left by the trauma (Shore, 1997; Applegate and Shapiro, 2005; Stien and Kendall, 2004).

Gunner (2006), a child development psychologist at the University of Minnesota, indicates that some children from stressful environments are able to "neutralize" their stress through a caring parent or an involved adult. According to Gunner (2006) "the things that are associated with resiliency have to do with protective factors like the quality of home life, the parent-child relationship or another relationship that provides some security for the child". Lowenthal [sa] agrees that when maltreatment by the primary caregivers occurs, it is essential for the child to have access to alternate caregivers who will love, nurture and protect them. Those alternate caregivers may be grandparents, extended family members, foster and adoptive parents or educators. Alternate caregivers can provide children who have been traumatized by maltreatment the safety and nurturance they need to recover from their traumas. This care giving then prevents the response patterns of 'fight or flight' and dissociation from becoming 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.

This is the point where the necessity of this study becomes relevant. Brain development and function are explanatory of the way children are put together and why many of them act or react the way they do. The educator and school setting have a huge role to play in the shaping of children and their input in the lives of traumatized children is indispensable. The educator's input is subsequently just as important to the emotionally healthy child. An educator who is frequently involved in negative scolding and insulting or who resorts to yelling and tempers tantrums to get the message across is in a process of dismantling the emotional health and future potential of the learner's trust in him/her. The discussion up to this point indicated that children's ability to learn and thrive academically is dependent on the way their brains are equipped and programmed to handle the expectations life will set to them. Thus whether children were neglected, abused, undernourished, optimally stimulated, loved or cherished, educators are in a position to make a difference and that is what this study intends to explore.

Understanding the brain, its compound and functioning are one leg of the issue of emotional health and development; the other leg would be how emotional information needs to be taught to achieve optimal results. The rest of this chapter will hence focus on emotional education with brain functioning in mind.

### **4.3 EMOTIONAL EDUCATION VS. BRAIN FUNCTIONING**

It was evident from previous discussions that emotional experiences prove to have an effect on the child-brain's ability to cognitively perform. Lucido (2010:161) emphasizes the importance of enhancing a classroom atmosphere to best suit learners in order to maximize the potential for brain compatible learning. A brain learns best when it is fed and healthy and when levels of fear and threat are reduced. Schultz (2011:5) also refers to the Whole-brain theory, which is education based on how the brain learns naturally and is based on the actual structure and function of the human brain at varying developmental stages.

The development of the emotional awareness abilities of learners, with consideration to their developmental stage, will thus expand their ability to cope with the emotional turmoil they might experience and consequently promote their ability to learn and excel. The following section addresses different aspects of importance in this regard.

#### **4.3.1 Brain- friendly Education**

Hare and Reynolds (2004:11) identify the following specific aspects which are enhanced through the utilization of the whole brain. Emotional education with emotional content is brought into consideration in this regard, and can be summarized as follows:

- The inclusion of emotion in the educational process brings about that the brain releases neurotransmitters, which enhances memory fixation. The content of a thought is thus neurologically associated with a specific feeling or emotion.
- The ideal educational environment is where low stress and high challenges are present. When stress levels that the learner is experiencing are too high, a need for survival dominates and temporarily locks the neo-cortex down. This implies that the educational capacity of learners who are emotionally caught up are much lower.
- More than 80% of the brain is inter neurons, designed to identify shapes and then give meaning to it. The human brain learns better when there are moved away from instructions by adding meaning to instructions. Learners should therefore receive the maximum opportunity for

experience, which then helps them to obtain meaning. Emotion is an aspect the child experiences daily – in emotional education the experience is enlightened and meaning is given to it to generate knowledge.

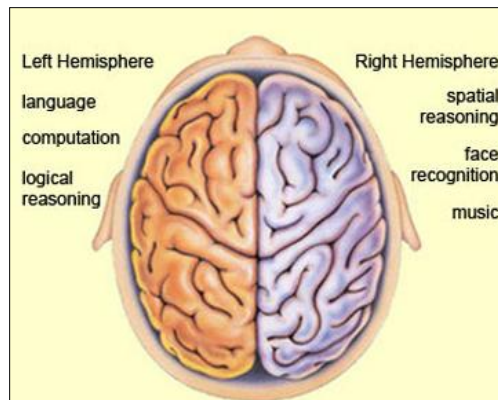
- When new information is given before information that was already retrieved is processed, the old information gets lost. The middle-brain's capacity is limited and information that was not yet moved to the cortex before new information is gained is replaced with the new information. Repetition, revision and time are thus essential in the educating process. This emphasizes the worth of emotional elucidation as part of the daily educational process within the school environment.

Neurologic association with emotions, low stress, situations with high challenges and repetition are thus the essential ingredients of education which has emotional awareness and optimal development at heart.

### **4.3.2 Left or Right Brain Dominance**

The realization of the fact that there are different functions settled in the two different sides of the brain had a dramatic effect on educational thinking, according to Weare (2004:97). Wright (2006:7) explains that the brain's central site for learning is called the neo-cortex, which is divided into the left and right hemispheres. These hemispheres work in different ways. The left hemisphere processes information in a logical or sequential way, a step at a time, while the right hemisphere works holistically, dealing with information in a random way by processing bits that are significant rather than in the order they arrive. The right hemisphere also responds to the more emotive stimuli such as colour, music and pictures.

Both sides of the brain are essential for effective thinking, experiencing and feeling. However, a dynamic balance between the two different sides of the brain is very important. Weare (2004:98) is of the opinion that the role of the educational system, where emotional awareness and emotional intelligence is concerned, is to include learners in experiencing emotion which triggers the right brain and should then further be guided to process the experience in a manner which utilizes the left brain. Figure 4.4 illustrates the left and right hemispheres of the brain.



**Figure 4.4: Right and left brain functions (Joseph, 2000)**

It is therefore essential to be aware of the differences between the so called ‘left and right brain learners’ in the educational system, as described in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Difference between left and right brain learners**

<b>Left brain – Analytic learners</b>	<b>Right brain – Holistic learners</b>
Concentrate on differences and detail. Make use of parts to form a whole.	Need to understand the whole picture. Assimilate detail and differences within the whole.
Make use redirected reasoning and logical focus.	Association – search for the association between aspects.
Consequential processing.	Equal processing.
Attempt to do things better rather than different.	Make use of spontaneity and intuition.
Realistic – prefer to concentrate on things that are feasible.	Enjoy new things and doing things differently.
Conformity – enjoy repetition which accumulates in time. Follow rules and authority figures.	Idealistic – see what could be, rather than what is.
Determined and reflecting.	Generate ideas and think for themselves.
React on facts, evidence, logic and reasoning.	Reacts on experience, education, pictures, shapes and forms, visualizing and play.

**Source: Weare (2004:98)**

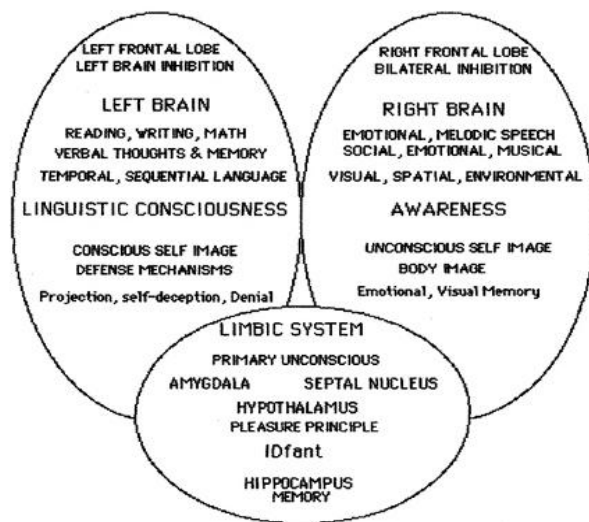


From Table 4.1 it is thus clear that the utilization of the total brain suggests that the learners get more freedom and flexibility between holistic and specific or between the whole picture and detail as well as between innovation and known procedure.

Joseph (2000) states that:

“it has been well established that the right cerebral hemisphere is dominant over the left in regard to perception, expression and mediation of almost all aspects of social and emotional functioning, including the recall of emotional memories. This emotional dominance extends to bilateral control over the autonomic nervous system, including heart rate, blood pressure regulation, galvanic skin conductance and the secretion of cortisol in emotionally upsetting or exciting situations. It is also dominant for most aspects of visual-spatial perceptual functioning, the recognition of faces of friends, loved ones, and one's own face in the mirror. Faces, of course, convey emotion which is recognized in the limbic system of the brain”

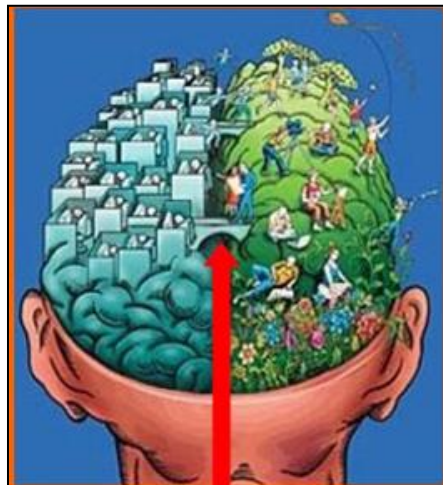
This explanation stands in correlation with the right and left hemisphere of the brain as indicated in Figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.5: The limbic system in correlation with the right and left hemispheres of the brain (Joseph, 2000).**

According to Johnson (2011:302) the right hemisphere is dominant in perception, conciliation of almost all aspects of emotion including emotional expression. In fact, although the left hemisphere is dominant for language, the right hemisphere continues to participate in language processing by evoking or sensing the feeling accompanying the language.

To best understand the unique capabilities of the right hemisphere, it is important to review the functions associated with it. The left cerebral hemisphere is associated with the organization and categorization of information into discrete temporal units, the sequential control of finger, hand, arm, gestural, and articulatory movements (Joseph, 2000) as illustrated in Fig. 4.6.



**Fig. 4.6: A graphic illustration of the difference in hemisphere functioning. (Joseph, 2000).**

It is thus understood that the right hemisphere of the brain is the one mostly concerned with and developed to comprehend, process and act on emotion. A program for the development of accurate emotional knowledge would thus have to focus on techniques which would attract the best possible interest from the right brain. Play therapy and play therapy techniques are therefore important techniques for this purpose due to its use of picture, colour, storytelling, fantasy, music and a variety of activities utilizing creative thought.

## 4.4 SUMMARY

It is thus clear that the human brain in all its complexity is a magnificent organ in the human body. Knowledge of the brain, its parts and functions provide us with the information to act in the best interest of the child's developing brain in an effort to develop the total child. .

Prevention is better than cure and if educators become equipped with awareness of the “damage” that some children may have suffered due to maltreatment by parents, siblings or even previous educators it will benefit not only the learner but the educator as well. An educator in possession of the knowledge to understand the probability of the diminished brain development of the rebellious, aggressive, emotional or quiet learner in front of him/her, would be able to react in a way that would develop rather than further harm the learner.

Learners who are educated by educators who handle them from a knowledgebase of the importance of emotional wellbeing and its value in the learner's ability to learn and show academic progress, will thrive and achieve much more than learners whose educators do not.

Emotional awareness will provide answers to learners who are in emotional turmoil. The presence of a caring educator, well equipped in these matters, might in many cases prove to be the rescue net that will reprogram their brains to risk getting back in the circle of life rather than handling life through fight or flight.

The next chapter focuses on emotional awareness and contextualize emotional awareness within emotions and its eminence regarding emotions and emotional behaviour in children.

# CHAPTER 5

## Emotional Awareness

*Human emotion involves "...physiological arousal, expressive behaviors, and conscious experience". ~ David Myers*

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Harold and Hay (2003:9) indicate that physical, cognitive and emotional matters as well as relationships collectively influence the adaptive or maladaptive pathways that children chart from childhood to adulthood.

Emotions, emotional development and emotional awareness are therefore imperative to the positive development of children. This study focuses on this very important aspect regarding childhood development with the emphasis on the emotional awareness of the child in the middle childhood developmental phase. Due to the capacious nature of this subject, this chapter will solely focus on relevant facets of emotions with an emphasis on emotional awareness, which we need to take note of in order to comprehend the direction and aim of this study.

Oatley, Keltner and Jenkins (2006:5) are of the opinion that Charles Darwin's book *The expression of the emotions in man and animal* published in 1872, is one of the most important publications on emotions yet written. Darwin asks two questions, namely:

- (1) Where do emotions come from?
- (2) How are emotions expressed?

In the opinion of Oatley et al. (2006:5) these are the two questions still asked regarding this topic.

Stein (2007:57) tracks the origin and importance of emotions and emotional awareness back to when man lived in caves and hunted for a living. Occasionally when a larger, stronger, carnivorous

animal was encountered, emotional intelligence meant the difference between eating and being eaten. The successful navigation of the “fight or flight” response determined whether he would survive. Stein (2007:57) points toward this being an early example of managing emotions.

Bronson (2000:148) substantiates this by saying that emotional responses exert powerful influences on self-regulation and that emotional reactions appear to evolve with behavioural responses as part of the human adaptive system for survival. In our modern society we are no longer in daily confrontation and fear for physical survival, although our hectic lives and the high expectations of modern day life present another quest for survival in itself. We therefore need to determine where emotions fit into our daily existence.

Diener, Lucas and Oishi (2005:63) investigated subjective well-being or as they stated it “*what makes a good life?*” They found that emotional reactions to events as well as the cognitive judgment of satisfaction and fulfilment thereof are the role-players here. The experiencing of emotions, low levels of negative moods and high life satisfaction are thus what makes life rewarding. It is therefore evident that we are still rotating in the same cycle of survival even though the playing field has changed.

Becoming aware of the emotions that direct our satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life is the core of this study and, as indicated, plays an important role in the cycle of “survival” from early times to our current day. Emotional awareness forms part of an emotional structure, which in turn forms the core of our well-being and the origin, components and function thereof are hence significant for the purpose of the study. Deutschendorf (2009:36) lays emphasis on the fact that one needs to become aware of emotions before they can serve a meaningful purpose. It is evident in the comparison of strong and more subtle emotions. Emotions like anger or fear are very strong emotions and thus obvious, but others like shame or guilt are more subtle and one would consciously need to become aware of them. Children’s awareness in this regard is thus just as important for their development.

Children’s knowledge about emotions and the expression of their own feelings, as well as reactions to the emotions of those around them are highlighted by Barnes (1995:138) as designated childhood tasks. Being able to recognize emotions means that children can make sense, for

example, of a parent's anger or sadness rather than experiencing anxiousness or fear as a result thereof. Macklem (2008:55) indicates in this regard that if children are punished when they experience negative feelings, they associate the emotion with negative consequences increasing their distress and the intensity of the emotion, so that it becomes difficult to regulate their emotions. Seeing that brain functioning is at the core of all systems involved in human behaviour and performance it also plays an important part in emotional development and daily operation.

As indicated and discussed in the previous chapter, Bronson (2000:148) confirms that the principal brain structures that mediate emotional reactions are situated in the limbic system, a middle area of the brain between the brain stem and the cerebral cortex. There are more neural fibres connecting the limbic system to the logical and rational centres in the cerebral cortex than travelling in the opposite direction, so emotions are more likely to influence thinking and decision making than rational processes are to change emotions. It is therefore suitable to remark that emotions are at the centre of our being and therefore a determining facet within the development of human beings. It is for that reason important within this study to determine what emotion, emotional development and emotional awareness entail in order to understand the intention, purpose and benefit of emotions within healthy development and daily life.

This chapter will discuss emotions in two parts by initially commencing with a focus on the concept of emotion and then broadening the discussion from there to emotional development and awareness and concluding with an in-depth focus on the emotions and emotional awareness of children.

## **5.2 EMOTION IN GENERAL**

Kostelnik, Gregory and Soderman (2011:127) observe that positive emotions indicate to children that all is right with the world and prompt them to continue or repeat pleasurable activities. On the other hand, some emotions signal discontent, misfortune or danger and alert the child that something is wrong. The important role of emotions in the daily lives of children is thus evident for its indication of pleasure, danger or even only for the colour it adds to daily experiences.

The following section of this chapter will focus on the concepts of emotions and conceptualize emotion from different perspectives and discuss the theories underlying emotion.

### **5.2.1 Conceptualization of the Concept Emotion**

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary [sa], the concept emotion came from the Latin word *exmovere*, meaning to *move out, agitate, or excite*. Where emotions are stirred, they bring movement or action about, and that is how it becomes a part of us. Emotions are defined by Webster Stratton (1999:285) as “the response to stimuli or situations that affect a person strongly”. West and Turner (2011:217) define emotion as “the critical internal structure that orients us to, and engages us with, what matters in our lives; our feelings about ourselves and others”. Baumeister and Bushman (2011:161) explain emotion to be “a conscious evaluation reaction to something, and that the person who has the emotion - knows it”.

A broader description of emotions is given by Morris (2009:75), who describes emotion as “an alert system, much of which operates on a subconscious level to keep us on the right course for a flourishing existence”. Kagan (2007:1) states that “every emotion originates in brain activity. An emotion is hence first and foremost a psychological activity which is determined by a brain state because each brain profile can give rise to an envelope of emotions. The specific emotion that emerges thus depends on the setting and always on the person’s history and biology”. White (2002:166) elaborates on this notion when he further highlights that “emotions are typically accompanied by bodily sensations, although not invariably so. Some emotions may be as free of bodily sensation as to be virtually mere thoughts”. Morris (2009:75) on the other hand signifies emotions to be a concept with two basic functions: “they draw us towards objects, people and events that ensure our survival but also drive us away from objects, people and events that threaten our survival”.

Emotions are thus defined by the researcher as an internal process orientating a person regarding events or people in his or her life; this orientation implies a positive or negative experience and is accompanied by an indication of a reaction to the event or person involved. The different definitions for emotion as cited above indicate the many different viewpoints from which emotions

are approached. It is thus apparent that the concept of emotion needs to be approached from different perspectives in order to comprehend the full meaning of this concept.

## 5.2.2 The Concept Emotion from Different Perspectives

Due to the complexity of emotions, the concept emotion is viewed from different perspectives. In this regard Webster Stratton (1999:285) observes emotional responses to occur on three levels namely, *biological*, *behavioural* and *cognitive*. These levels seem to provide the foundation for the views of different perspectives regarding emotion. The levels on which emotions occur according to Webster Stratton (1999:285) will hence be briefly discussed followed by a discussion on the viewpoints of the different perspectives regarding emotion.

- The first, most basic level involves *neurophysiological and biochemical or biological* reactions to stimuli, including all the bodily processes regulated by the autonomic nervous system: heart rate, blood flow, respiration, hormonal secretions and neural responses. A person who feels angry, for example, will feel his/her heart race and face redden.
- The second level of emotional response is *behavioural*, where expression of emotion is a person's actions. This level includes facial expressions and behaviour such as crying, sullen gazes, withdrawal from interactions with others, defiant actions and delayed responses; thus sociological and psychological responses.
- The third level is *cognitive* and involves language (whether spoken, written or thought) by which a person labels his/her feelings as in, "I feel angry!"

The levels of emotional response as mentioned above can be incorporated in the following perspectives and is discussed according to the perspectives standpoint regarding emotions.

### 5.2.2.1 Biological perspective

The Miller-Keane and O'Toole Encyclopaedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health (Miller-Keane & O'Toole, 2005:189) describes emotion to be "a state of arousal characterized by alteration of feeling tone and by physiologic behavioural changes". The external manifestation of emotion is called affect; a pervasive and sustained emotional state or mood. The



physical form of emotion may be outward and evident to others, as in crying, laughing, blushing, or a variety of facial expressions. However, emotion is not always reflected in a person's appearance and actions even though psychological changes are taking place.

The biological perspective on emotions thus entails affective behaviour brought about as a result of an emotion and is externally visible.

### **5.2.2.2 Sociological perspective**

Turner and Stets (2005:2) believe that most sociologists indicate emotions to be socially constructed in the sense that what people feel is conditioned by socialization into culture and by participation in social structures. According to these authors "cultural ideologies, beliefs and norms as they impinge on social structures define what emotions are experienced and how these culturally defined emotions are to be expressed". Sociology therefore labels emotions as social constructions.

### **5.2.2.3 Psychological perspective**

Kagan (2007:23) states that a large number of psychologists regard the idea of human emotion as "an abstract, value free construct referring to four different, imperfectly related phenomena, namely:

- a change in brain activity to select incentives;
- a consciously detected change in feeling that has sensory qualities;
- cognitive processes that interpret and/or label the feeling with words; and
- a preparedness for, or display of a behavioural response".

Cherry (2011) a psychosocial rehabilitation specialist utilizes behavioral, cognitive and socialization strategies to help children cope with family relationships, peer interactions, aggression, social skills and academic difficulties. She echoes the above description of Kagan when she summarizes that in psychology, emotion is often defined as "a complex state of feeling

that results in physical and psychological changes which influence thought and behaviour”. He concludes that “emotionality is associated with a range of psychological phenomena including temperament, personality, mood and motivation”. It thus seems as if the psychological perspective combines a number of attributes which form part of some of the other perspectives and thereby provide a very inclusive view on emotions.

#### **5.2.2.4 The cognitive perspective**

The studies of Hynes, Baird and Grafton (2006:167-178) point toward the deficit in empathic ability after injury to the orbital frontal lobe of the brain. In a functional magnetic resonance imaging study with healthy participants, emotional perspective-taking was contrasted with cognitive perspective-taking in order to examine the role of the orbital frontal lobe in subcomponents of theory of mind processing. They found that the frontal lobe was preferentially involved in emotional as compared to cognitive perspective taking.

Lane and Nadal (2002:4) found it evident that emotion has important effects on mental functions that are indisputably cognitive such as memory, attention and perception. This important area of study clearly belongs in cognitive neuroscience. Lane and Nadal (2002:408) summarize their studies regarding the link between cognitive neuroscience and emotions in the explanation that there is a distinction between implicit and explicit processes found in many areas of cognitive neuroscience such as memory, language, perception and motor control. The process whereby emotional significance and behavioural responses are generated often steps outside of conscious awareness.

It is partly due to the notion that emotion has these strong cognitive ties that this study intends to indicate the important role the educational system can play in promoting emotional awareness of learners.

This very broad spectrum of ideas regarding emotion necessitates a focused investigation into the scientific thought behind emotion and emotional development. The theoretical basis of

understanding emotion is therefore an essential starting point in this study's attempt to add on to the existing knowledge and the current and earlier basis of emotional comprehension.

### 5.2.3 Theories on Emotions

The term theory is extensively defined in the *Merriam Webster Online Dictionary* [sa] and provides an expanded view on the meaning of the term 'theory'. It is significant to take note of this broad explanation due to the different approaches to emotion, which need to be included in our understanding of the views, conceptions and perceptions of emotion which brought us to the understanding that will serve as the point of departure for this study.

Theory is thus described in the *Merriam Webster Online Dictionary* [sa] as:

- the analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another
- abstract thought or speculation
- the general or abstract principles of a body of fact, a science, or an art
- a belief, policy, or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action
- an ideal or hypothetical set of facts, principles, or circumstances
- plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles offered to explain phenomena
- an unproved assumption presenting a concise systematic view of a subject.

If theories concerning emotion and the effect of emotional abilities are investigated, a vast amount of different theories with related different viewpoints are available. These theories are not all relevant to this study but it gives a clear indication of the immense effect of emotions on the whole of the human being. It therefore supports the importance of emotional awareness in an effort to direct the child to holistic positive development. Straker [Sa] summarizes some of these theories on the website: *Changing Minds. Disciplines, Techniques, Principles, Explanations, Theories* [Sa]. He lists the following academic theories, with a broad description, applicable to emotional influences:

- **Cognitive Appraisal Theories of Emotion:** One decides what to feel after interpreting events.
- **Durability bias:** We over-estimate how long emotions will last.
- **Focalism:** We think an emotion is driven by a single event.
- **Impact bias:** Over-estimation of the effect of emotional events.
- **James-Lange Theory of Emotion:** Physiological changes lead to emotions.
- **Love:** Difference in types of affection.
- **Cannon-Bard Theory of Emotion:** Emotions lead to physiological changes.
- **Mood-Congruent Judgment:** Our moods bias our judgments.
- **Mood memory:** We recall things that match our current mood.
- **Opponent-Process Theory:** Opposite emotions can work together.
- **Social Contagion:** We catch emotions from others.
- **Schachter-Singer / Two-Factor Theory of Emotion:** We deduce feelings from our situation.
- **Affect Perseverance:** Preference persists after disconfirmation.
- **Aggression:** A learned and social act.
- **Buffer effect of Social Support:** People that are supported feel less stressed.

Specific theories attempting to explain emotion, its origin and effect arise from as early as 1872 with Darwin's theory on man and animal's expression on emotion. The investigation into emotion developed from thereon and different early theories emerged in an attempt to shed light on this phenomenon (Ten Houten, 2007:xi). The following section will focus on some early theories as well as current theories on emotion in order to put emotion within theoretical perspective in terms of this research study.

### 5.2.3.1 Early theories of emotion

*The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* is a book by Charles Darwin published in 1872. In this publication, Darwin expresses his belief that members of a specie communicate by means of body movements and facial expressions (body language, or nonverbal communication). He suggested that although emotional expressions are initially learned behaviour, they eventually evolve to become innate in a specie because they have survival value. Recognition by one animal

that a second animal is afraid rather than angry, for example, allows appropriate survival actions to be undertaken (Sonderegger, 1998:216).

From these first thoughts on emotion evolved several different viewpoints in later times. The major early theories on emotion include three main categories, namely: cognitive, physiological and neurological theories. Cherry (sa) differentiates them as follows:

- Cognitive theories argue that mental activity and the individual's thoughts play a fundamental role in the construction of emotions.
- Physiological theories imply that responses within the body are initially accountable for the formation of emotions.
- Neurological theories suggest that brain activity leads to emotional responses.

Different theories on emotion have been developed and studied within all of the above fields of study. In order to comprehend emotions in context of this study, the following four initial theories on emotions set the foundation for this study:

*i) James-Lange Theory of Emotion*

Sonderegger (1998:83) signifies that two theorists, William James in 1884 and Carl Lange in 1885, independently proposed that emotions do not immediately follow the perception of an event but rather occur after the body has responded to the event. Their ideas were combined into the James-Lange Theory of Emotion as described by Pastorino and Doyle-Portillo (2011:333), Coon and Mitterer (2011:377) and Sonderegger (1998:83). According to this theory, you see an external stimulus that leads to a physiological reaction. Your emotional reaction depends on your interpretation of the physical reactions. They made use of the example of an individual walking in the woods when he sees a grizzly bear. He starts to tremble and his heart begins to race. The James-Lange theory thus proposes that his interpretation of his physical reactions will direct him to the conclusion that he is frightened "I am trembling, therefore I am afraid". This theory thus labels an instinctive experience (gut reaction) as an emotional state. Autonomic reaction to stimuli is observed and these physical sensations are labelled as feelings.

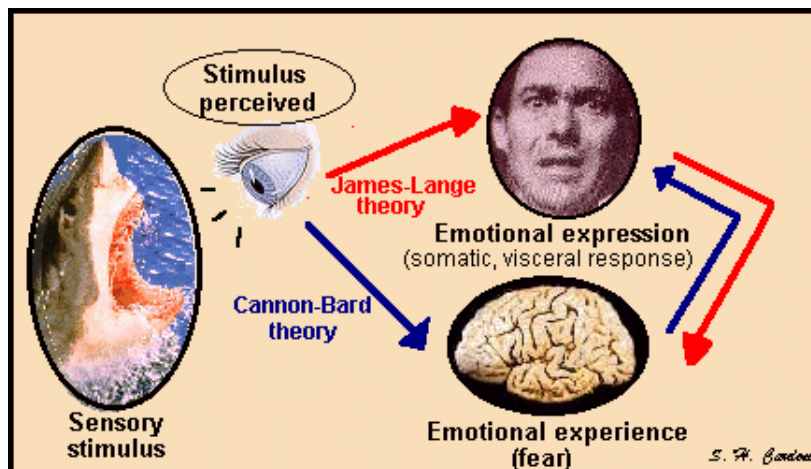
Pastorino and Doyle-Portillo (2013:311-312) indicate that the theory was regarded as a good start but was questioned regarding aspects like the fact that instinctive responses may not occur quickly enough to account for sudden emotions and some intuitive responses. The range of emotions that can be experienced is much broader and more complex than the range of physiological responses or “gut” reactions taken into account by James and Lange.

In the 1990s some new evidence gave the James-Lange theory new life, for scientists now have more sophisticated ways of measuring physiological changes by the minute which designate that the theory may have some valid conclusions (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2011:334).

*ii) The Cannon-Bard Theory of Emotion*

The Cannon-Bard theory is another well-known physiological explanation of emotion. Nevid (2008:311) elucidates that this theory was developed by Walter Cannon and Philip Bard, who stated that emotions and experiencing of physiological reactions happen simultaneously. They took the view that feedback from physiological changes cannot cause emotion because these changes happen too slowly to explain the almost immediate experience of an emotion (Franzoi, 2011:169). Philip Bard agreed with Cannon and expanded on his work in what is now known as the Cannon-Bard Theory (also called the Emergency Theory) which argues that the thalamus, a lower brain stem structure (part of the limbic system), is necessary for emotional responses. The thalamus sends messages to the cortex for interpretation of the emotion and simultaneously to the sympathetic nervous system for appropriate physical responses. According to the Cannon-Bard Theory, then, the identification (experience) of an emotion occurs at the same time as the activation of bodily responses and not because of them (as the James-Lange theory proposed). Coon and Mitterer (2011:377) explain that this theory thus indicates that when a stimulus is presented, it activates the thalamus in the brain. The thalamus then simultaneously signals the cortex (produces emotional feelings and behaviour) and the hypothalamus (triggers a chain of events that arouses the body) for action. They simplify this with the example that if a danger becomes present (a bear), brain activity will simultaneously produce bodily arousal (running) and a feeling of fear.

Rocha do Amaral and de Oliveira [sa] compare the two physiological theories of Cannon-Bard and James-Lange with each other and depict its differences in the following schematic exposition.



**Figure 5.1: Comparison between the James-Lange and the Cannon-Bard theories on emotion. (Source: Rocha do Amaral and de Oliveira [sa])**

Figure 5.1 presents a comparison between the James-Lange and the Cannon-Bard theories. The James-Lange Theory states that when the sensory stimulus (shark) is perceived a person first experiences the somatic reaction to what is perceived (racing heartbeat) which is then communicated to the brain and formed into a emotion (fear). The Cannon-Bard Theory on the other hand indicates that when the sensory stimulus (shark) is perceived the situation is first appraised in the brain and evaluated as a emotion (fear) and only after the emotion is identified does the somatic reaction (racing heartbeat) occur in accordance to the emotion identified.

*iii) The Schachter-Singer Theory/"Two Factor Theory"/Cognitive-Arousal Theory.*

Also known as the Two Factor Theory of Emotion, the Schachter-Singer Theory is an example of a cognitive theory of emotion. Shiota and Kalat (2011:15) designate that this theory advocates that physiological arousal often accompanies emotion and is essential for determining how strong the emotional feeling will be, but it does not identify the emotion.

Roeckelain (2006:536) elucidates on the reason why this theory is also referred to as the “Two Factor Theory” in his explanation that the theory indicates that emotion depends on two components being present, namely:

- some kind of objective physiological arousal; and
- a subjective cognitive process of appraisal whereby bodily changes are interpreted and labelled.

A stimulus thus causes physiological arousal; this is considered in light of environmental and social cues which then aid its interpretation as an emotional state, based on these cues. In other words, the environment and in particular the behaviour of other people is utilized to explain a physiological state.

*iv) The Lazarus' Cognitive-Mediational Theory*

This theory by Richard Lazarus is relatively new as it stems from 1995. Lazarus’s theory is an extension of the Schacter-Singer theory. Carter and Seifert (2012:428) explain that this theory indicates to our cognitive appraisal of a situation to determine which emotion we will feel in a specific situation. They elaborate that different cognitive appraisals explain why similar situations can create different emotions in different people. Fontaine (2012:62) elucidate this further in their indication that according to Lazarus’ Cognitive-Mediational Theory, emotions play an adaptive role in that they serve to orient and prepare a person to respond to alternative situations as a direct result of how the individual assesses the situation.

Kerig, Schultz and Hauzer (2012:20) add that in Lazarus’s model, two categories of appraisal work together to shape the quality and intensity of emotional experience, namely:

- *Primary appraisal*: determines whether an event is relevant to one’s beliefs and goals. Only when assessed that there is a personal stake in an encounter, such as preservation of self-image, does an emotion occur. Emotion thus acts as a signal to the individual and others that something of significance is at stake for the individual.



- *Secondary appraisal*: involves an evaluation of how our actions might influence a situation. Coping in stressful situations might be directed at reducing the effect of the harm or avoiding further harm. In a situation that elicits positive emotion, efforts may be directed at enhancing the benefit of the experience.

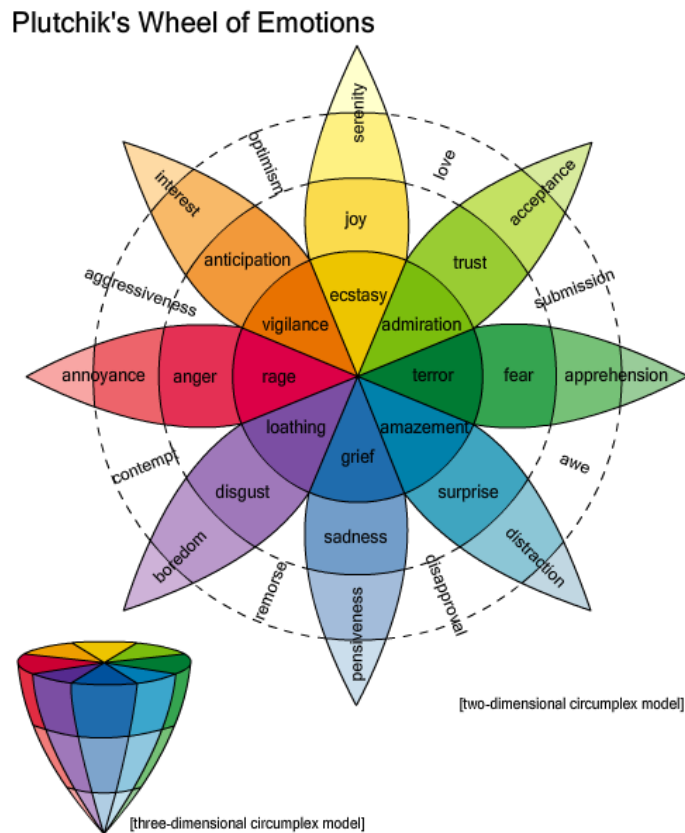
These theoretical views on emotion conclude to the fact that emotions and their dimensions have intrigued scientists for centuries, and the study of emotions is still a field of study with a magnitude of possibilities. A factor that we have learned from the different components (social, physiological, emotional and psychological) of the human being and which we need to keep in mind is that it is all inextricably connected with each other and emotions seem to play a very important part.

### **5.2.3.2 Current theory of emotion**

Definitions on emotion are divergent and as we've seen, ultimately derived from the specific view or focal point of different perspectives or different authors. The researcher found Plutchik's (2001:344) comprehensive definition of emotion to be most applicable to this study for it incorporates the different suggestions of several other authors on the topic. He defines emotion as "not simply a feeling state, but a complex chain of loosely connected events, a chain beginning with a stimulus and including feelings, psychological changes, impulses to action, and specific goal-directed behaviour". In other words, he says that feelings do not occur in isolation; they are the responses to significant situations in the life of an individual, and often the motivation for actions.

Robert Plutchik developed significant thoughts and theoretic viewpoints regarding emotions through his extensive research of the subject. He developed a model he named *the circumplex model on personality and emotion*. Plutchik and Conte (1997:7) elucidates how emotions are generally interpreted as aspects of interpersonal interactions. He revealed that the language of emotion and of personality traits are closely related and that both can be represented by a circular structure. This circular structure or phenomenon is termed by him as a "circumplex".

Drew (2004) reports the perception formed by Plutchik to be that there are only eight basic emotions arranged in opposing pairs. The basic eight emotions plus combinations yields 32 distinct emotional states, which Plutchik suggests will cover the spectrum of human emotion. These eight basic emotions, according to Plutchik, are listed by Sotto Morettini (2010:120) as anger, fear, sadness, joy, disgust, shame, anticipation and trust. It includes different emotional states, which evidently involves different emotions, linked to the basic emotion. Plutchik developed the “Wheel of emotion” to simplify this complexity of interlinked emotions, as displayed in Figure 5.2.



**Figure 5.2: Plutchik’s Wheel of Emotion (Drew, 2004)**

Turner (2000:75) points out that the idea with the “wheel of emotion” is to indicate how the basic emotions mix to produce more complex (or in his language ‘derived’) states. Sotto Morettini (2010:120) indicated that these emotions mix in various ways according to their proximity in the wheel above. The primary dyads (which are a mix of emotions above, and adjacent in the wheel) produces secondary emotions such as joy + acceptance = friendliness. Similarly secondary dyads

mix emotions once removed from each other on the wheel (sadness + anger = sullenness) and tertiary dyads are formed when emotions twice removed are mixed (anticipation + fear = anxiety) and produce secondary emotions.

The origin of emotions, its formation and the output it conveys, seem to be a complex multifaceted field. The scientific discussion, thought and reasoning regarding emotion take us back to the purpose of this study, namely the impact of emotion and emotional awareness on children in their middle childhood developmental phase.

An investigation into the emotional dimension with regard to the emotional development of individuals is evident in the explication of Goertzel's (2004) ideas regarding emotion. He states emotion to be a mental state marked by prominent internal temporal patterns that are not controllable to any reasonable extent and that emotions have the property that their state is far more easily interpretable by integration of past and future information. Such patterns will often, though not always, involve complex and broad physiological changes.

This observation of emotions along with previously discussed theories on emotions support the purpose of this study in the indication of the imperative part played by emotion in order to support children to develop and function optimally. Explanations for the origin, development and existence of emotion were investigated up to this point of this chapter. The aim of this study is development of emotional competency in children and the concept of emotional development and emotional awareness are thus of importance within the conceptualization of the emotional realm, especially regarding children.

The following section of this chapter will thus focus on specific aspects related to the emotions of children.

### **5.3 ASPECTS RELATED TO EMOTIONS IN CHILDREN**

The following part of this chapter will attempt to funnel the information on emotion from a broad informational base, down to content significant for the purpose of this study namely, the emotions,

and in particular emotional awareness, of children in their middle childhood developmental phase. We need to determine what the benefits of emotional development within this age group are and from there focus on emotional awareness as applicable to the study.

### **5.3.1 The Importance of Emotional Development for Children**

Macintyre (2001:33) emphasizes that meaningful emotional development is of huge importance as a part of the child's healthy development, for it allows children to:

- Approach new situations with confidence.
- Express feelings and emotions.
- Cope with anxieties and be more resilient.
- Enjoy open-ended problems.
- Appreciate works of art/music/dance.
- Cry if they want to.
- Understand the perceptions of other people.
- Develop altruism.
- Pretend to be someone else.
- Appreciate atmosphere, e.g. in church.
- Be innovative and imaginative.

This is confirmed by Mash and Wolfe (2010:44) who designate emotions and affective expressions to be core elements of the human psychological experience for emotions are a central feature of infant activity and regulation from birth. They indicate that children's emotional experience, expression and regulation affect the quality of their social interaction and relationships and thus are the foundation of early personality development.

Mosley (2005:1) notes the tendency that schools have for years 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.

Miller, Karsten, Denton, Orr and Kates (2005:37) also highlight that there is an increasing realization that the neglect of emotional aspects brings about irreparable damage to one of a child's most important sources of knowledge. Emotional awareness supplies children with knowledge to understand and process their own behaviour and the behaviour of others in relationships, class situations or in sport. It further develops self-confidence to venture out in perseverance in spite of failure, for children feel safer within a knowledgebase of the emotions that they are experiencing.

Borland et al. (1998:31) found children in their middle childhood developmental phase to engage enthusiastically in discussions about feelings, showing the ability to identify a wide range of emotions and to reflect on what circumstances might provoke them and how they might be experienced.

Researchers have discovered loads of information signifying the prominent role of emotional development in the lives of children. These important findings highlight the role and impact of emotion in children's existence and the reasons for their emotional performance. A few of these prominent studies focus on the following: emotional expressions, e.g. the ability to encode and/or decode facial expressions (De Sonnevile, Vershoor, Njiokiktjien, Veld, Toorenaar, & Vranken, 2002); explanations for emotional states (De Rosnay & Harris, 2002); explaining age- and gender-related patterns in emotion development and the understanding of emotion complexity (Rotenberg & Eisenberg, 1997); emotional dissemblance, when feelings are shown indirectly or deceptively (Denham, Mitchell-Copeland, Strandberg, Auerbach, & Blair, 1997; Rotenberg & Eisenberg, 1997; Saarni, 1999); affective labelling and affective perspective-taking tasks (Dunn, Cutting & Demetriou, 2000; McElwain & Volling, 2002); and assessment of the causes of emotions in self and others (Hughes & Dunn, 1998; Dunn et al., 2000).

Emotion not only serves as an internal monitoring and guidance system for the child, but it is also designed to appraise events as being beneficial or dangerous and thus provides motivation for action. Mash and Wolfe (2010:45) note that children have a natural tendency to attend to emotional cues from others which help them learn to interpret and to regulate their own emotions.

The important role of emotions and development of emotions in the child are thus evident. The enormous amount of facets involved in emotions and its effect on human existence is too broad for thorough inclusion in a study of this nature. It is therefore essential to channel the topic to the aspects related to the aim of the study. This is then where the matter of emotional intelligence and emotional awareness fit into the discussion.

### **5.3.2 Emotional Awareness and Emotional Intelligence during Middle Childhood**

One needs to take note of different facets of emotions when emotion is discussed within its relevance to children's emotional health. Emotional awareness and emotional intelligence are the two aspects underlying emotional education and, although closely related, they are also at variance with each other.

Emotional intelligence is a term widely utilized and well acknowledged while emotional awareness is a less familiar term and its dimensions less common to the broader community. It is therefore necessary to take note of these two terms and their significance within emotional research regarding children.

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. It is important to differentiate between these terms in order to incorporate each of them appropriately, within the study of the emotional development of children.

The term emotion was extensively discussed in the beginning of this chapter. When one needs to differentiate between the concepts, *emotions*, *emotional awareness* and *emotional intelligence* in terms of this study with an emphasis on them concerning children, we need to go back to basics. A fundamental, explanatory description of emotion will then be found in the indication of Kirk (2009) that "emotions have a reason to be. They prompt (the child) for action, they motivate (the child), help (the child) communicate with others, and give (the child) important information about what is going on in a given situation". This definition was found by the researcher to be a good

synopsis where children are the topic of our reasoning regarding emotions. However, like anything else in life, if misused or out of balance it can cause trouble. If that is the case, emotions can sometimes lead children to inappropriate behaviour. If emotions make them do things that they will regret later and are causing them trouble in different areas of their lives, they need to learn, understand and control them.

This is then where emotional awareness and emotional intelligence are relevant.

### **5.3.2.1 Emotional awareness**

Indicating the importance and worth, as well as possibility to enhance and develop emotional awareness within the educational system is the basis, purpose and ultimate aim of this study. If *emotion* in Kirk's (2009) opinion needs "a reason to be", emotional awareness would be an understanding of that reason and will include an understanding or ability to recognize, identify and act on the result of that "reason". Kagan (2007:42) cites Lawrence Weiskrantz's uncomplicated definition of emotional awareness as "an ability to make a commentary".

Kirk (2009) elaborates that "emotions are a full-system response comprising a variety of factors and experiences, and they include bodily sensations and the individual's thoughts". In order to control emotions one will need to get in touch with one's thoughts and body signals simultaneously. This will require knowledge and hence result in emotional awareness.

Venter (1998:14) describes emotional awareness as "the individual's level of emotional functioning". These levels differ from the lowest level (emotional numbness) to the highest level (interactivity). The higher the individual's level of emotional awareness the higher his/her level of functioning. An optimal level of emotional awareness results in emotional maturity, which entails the ability to monitor own emotions as well as the emotions of others. This ability has to be obtained or taught and Deutschendorf (2009:36) elaborates that to be aware of our emotions also depends on what we have been taught to do with them. If a person is raised to believe that emotions were bad and needed to be concealed at all times, he may have buried them so deeply that he will have trouble accessing them.

Therapeutic intervention is therefore often necessary to access these repressed emotions in order to understand some difficulties or emotional obstacle in one's life. 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". Mosley (2005:14) substantiates this with her indication that the ability to manage our emotions to our own benefit is a key skill which ensures that we sustain a sense of emotional well-being despite the difficulties that life throws at us. Self-mastery puts us in the driver's seat so that we can steer ourselves through life with a heightened degree of empowerment and control.

Emotional awareness in the context of this study refers to children's knowledge of specific emotions and its impact on their general emotional and psychological development. Optimal emotional awareness explains physical and psychological reactions to specific fears in children's lives and enables them to own these feelings and directs them to take control of it, rather than allowing it to take control of them.

### **5.3.2.2 Emotional intelligence**

Stein (2007:58) points out that two psychologists, namely Peter Salovey and John Mayer, had coined the term "emotional intelligence". Emotional intelligence is defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997:10) as "the degree to which children are able to understand their emotions accurately, to predict its worth and express it correctly, grounded on emotional knowledge, and to further regulate emotions to enhance emotional and intellectual growth". Salovey and Mayer add to their 1997 definition in Salovey, Brackett and Mayer (2004:5) in their description of emotional intelligence as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and the feelings and emotions of others, to discriminate amongst them and to use this information to guide one's feelings and actions".

Knoetze (2006:30) defines emotional intelligence as "obtained emotional knowledge and skills of an individual, fixed through application and emotional experience resulting from emotional awareness".



Emotional intelligence can therefore be understood as emotional knowledge and a set of skills, which facilitates our way in a multifaceted life – through the individual, societal and endurance aspects of overall intelligence. It is an indication of our ability to be perceptive, sensitive and in control of our emotions in everyday life. The ultimate goal concerning emotional health would thus be the achievement of emotional intelligence which will only be accomplished after a series of emotional growth has taken place as is indicated by Salovey et al. (2004:165) in their reference to the Four-Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence of Mayer and Salovey, namely:

- Perceiving emotion: *to accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others*
- Emotional facilitation: *using emotions to facilitate thinking*
- Understanding and analyzing emotions: *understand emotional meanings*
- Managing emotions: *emotional regulation to enhance personal growth and relations.*

These “four branches” thus refer to the developmental phases in which emotional intelligence is obtained. The following table elaborates on the different abilities present in each of these branches/phases.

**Table 5.1: The four-branch model of emotional intelligence**

<b>Perception, Appraisal and Expression of Emotion</b>			
Ability to identify emotion in one's physical states, feelings, and thoughts.	Ability to identify emotions in other people, designs, artwork, etc. through language, sound, appearance, and behaviour.	Ability to express emotions accurately and to express needs related to those feelings.	Ability to discriminate between accurate and inaccurate, or honest vs. dishonest expressions of feeling.
<b>Emotional Facilitation of Thinking</b>			
Emotions prioritize thinking by directing attention to important information.	Emotions are sufficiently vivid and available that they can be generated as aids to judgment and memory concerning feelings	Emotional mood swings change the individual's perspective from optimistic to pessimistic, encouraging	Emotional states differentially encourage specific problem-solving approaches such as when happiness facilitates inductive reasoning and

		consideration of multiple points of view.	creativity.
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<b>Understanding and Analyzing Emotions; Employing Emotional Knowledge</b>			
Ability to label emotions and recognize relations among the words and the emotions themselves, such as the relation between liking and loving.	Ability to interpret the meanings that emotions convey regarding relationships, such as that sadness often accompanies a loss.	Ability to understand complex feelings: simultaneous feelings of love and hate or blends such as awe as a combination of fear and surprise.	Ability to recognize likely transitions among emotions, such as the transition from anger to satisfaction or from anger to shame.

<b>Reflective Regulation of Emotion to Promote Emotional and Intellectual Growth</b>			
Ability to stay open to feelings, both those that are pleasant and those that are unpleasant.	Ability to reflectively engage or detach from an emotion depending upon its judged informativeness or utility.	Ability to reflectively monitor emotions in relation to oneself and others, such as recognizing how clear, typical, influential or reasonable they are.	Ability to manage emotion in oneself and others by moderating negative emotions and enhancing pleasant ones, without repressing or exaggerating information they may convey.

**Source: (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997:10, 11)**

The abilities indicated in Table 5.1 need to be mastered in order to be emotionally intelligent. Once it has been successfully incorporated into the day to day existence of an individual, it develops into certain competencies. In this regard Goleman in Boverie and Kroth (2001:141) divides emotional intelligence into five emotional competencies, namely:

- **Self-awareness:** to identify and name one's emotional states and to understand the link between emotions, thought and action.
- **Self-regulation:** to manage one's emotional states - to control emotions or to shift undesirable emotional states to more adequate ones.

- **Motivation:** to enter into emotional states associated with a drive to achieve and be successful.
- **Empathy:** to read, be sensitive to and influence other people's emotions.
- **Social skills:** to enter and sustain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.

Pahl (2009:6) points to Goleman's view on these emotional competencies which is that they build on each other in a hierarchy. He indicates that emotions first need to be identified in order to manage them. This is thus where the distinction between emotional awareness and emotional intelligence lies. Identification and knowledge of an emotion and its effect proceeds before it can be managed due to the emotional intelligence gained through this awareness. Becoming emotionally aware evidently takes time and is achieved through mastering certain levels of awareness until it results in optimal emotional intelligence. The level of emotional awareness will thus result in an inferior or superior emotional intelligence.

To better understand the concept of emotional awareness we need to take a closer look into the emotional awareness model regarding levels of emotional awareness and discuss emotional awareness as a cognitive ability.

### **5.3.3 Levels of Emotional Awareness**

According to Lane (2000:171) emotional awareness may be the skill most fundamental to emotional intelligence. As previously noted, Lane and Schwartz (1987) defined emotional awareness as “the ability to identify and describe one’s own emotions, and those of other people”. The construct is derived from the developmental levels of the emotional awareness model, as illustrated in Table 5.2, which focuses on the structure and complexity of emotion representations. That is, the capacity to differentiate emotions from one another and the levels of the emotion complexity inherent in the description of emotional experiences.

Emotional awareness, in terms of levels of emotional awareness, was first placed into context by Lane and Schwartz in the 1980s (1987:135). These levels can be described as representative of the abilities achieved through a developmental process in close comparison to Piaget’s developmental theory. Since then several scientists elucidated on these levels and a clearer concept, from different points of view, became available to us.

Carblis (2008:107) highlights Lane and Swartz' indication that individuals develop and differ from one another in and through the way that they structurally organize and experience emotional arousal. He adds that development through emotional levels of awareness is thus seen as a consequence of progressive and hierarchical transformation within the structural organization of emotion related cognition (Carblis, 2008:107).

Different levels of experiencing emotions are identified by Blom (2004:95), Hein (2003), Tileston (2004:30) and Lane and Schwartz (1987:142) and the specific attributes of these levels are discussed by them. Seven levels in the process of achieving emotional awareness are identified by the researcher from a comparison of these authors' opinions, and are summarized in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2: Levels of emotional awareness**

Levels of emotional awareness	Characteristics	Perception/Sensation	Emotional Skills/abilities
Level 1	<b>Emotional numbness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to identify and experience emotions correctly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No emotional skills which results in emotional numbness.</li> </ul>
Level 2	<b>Physical sensation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical sensation</li> <li>• Tummy aches or headache</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of specific feelings accompanying specific experiences</li> </ul>
Level 3	<b>Primary experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaction prone</li> <li>• Self conscious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of emotion</li> </ul>
Level 4	<b>Verbal blockage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive labeling for future reference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying the emotion</li> <li>• Determining the emotional need</li> <li>• Appropriate corrective action</li> <li>• More logic reaction to emotion</li> </ul>
Level 5	<b>Differentiation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single emotions out</li> <li>• Comprehension of the natural worth of emotions e.g. fear vs. protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing and identifying emotions</li> <li>• Emotional self-control</li> <li>• Achievement of positive goals</li> <li>• Stronger ability to complete tasks</li> </ul>
Level 6	<b>Causality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of amalgamation of emotions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflecting on emotion:</li> <li>• <b>Low awareness:</b> Reflecting after emotion was experienced (sleeplessness)</li> <li>• <b>High awareness:</b> Experience and identification happens fast enough for reflection to take place.</li> </ul>
Level 7	<b>Empathy and interactivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of combinations of combined emotions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of intensity differences within different emotions</li> <li>• Conception of complex emotional combinations</li> </ul>
Level 8	<b>Prediction of emotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimal awareness of emotional content and its effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidance of similar situations e.g. where anxiety or fear was experienced</li> <li>• Motivated into directions where positive emotions was experienced</li> <li>• Consideration for others – <i>what doesn't feel good to me most probably doesn't feel good for another</i></li> <li>• Better decision making skills</li> </ul>

It should be evident from Table 5.2 how emotional awareness develops through a process as is designated by the different levels of emotional awareness. This serves as an indication of how far an individual has developed in being emotionally aware. Any given individual is thus at some level of being emotionally aware at any given time. The researcher therefore finds it important to highlight the fact that individuals are able to develop their emotional skills *up the ranks of emotional awareness levels*. This emphasizes that emotional awareness is thus an ability that can be taught in the same way that cognitive abilities are. It is hence of interest to conclude this chapter with a swift focus on emotional awareness as a cognitive ability.

### **5.3.4 Emotional Awareness as a Cognitive Ability**

Webster Stratton [sa] labels regulation of emotional responses as a developmental achievement just like walking, talking and toilet training, which is not present at birth – i.e. it must be learned. Infants express their distress with a soiled nappy or hunger in the only way they can – through crying. The transition period from infancy to toddlerhood is accompanied by maturation in the child’s emotional regulatory system. As children develop language and communication skills, they become increasingly able to label their emotions, thoughts and intentions.

Bajgar, Ciarrochi, Lane and Deane (2005:572) value emotional awareness to be a cognitive ability, which develops through a process similar to Piaget’s theory of cognition. They are of the opinion that the ability to be emotionally aware can thus be taught to children in the same manner than cognitive abilities are, and can be learned by them through the same process cognitive abilities are mastered, according to Piaget.

Thomas (2005:192) summarizes Piaget’s cognitive development theory as an indication that knowledge is a process of acting – physically and/or mentally – on objects and symbols that the child’s perceptual lens has cast into patterns that are somewhat familiar. The objects are found in the world or direct experience, while the images and symbols can be derived not only from the “real world” but from memory as well. Bronson (2000:22) points out that according to Piaget’s model of cognitive adaptation, development occurs by means of two complementary processes. These “equilibration” processes allow information from the environment to enter and sometimes

change existing cognitive structures. If incoming information matches or is similar enough to existing mental structures or “schemas,” it is incorporated or “assimilated” into them. If incoming information is relevant to existing schemas but is inconsistent or conflicts with them, the structures are revised or alternate structures are constructed to “accommodate” the new information.

It seems thus as if it can be concluded that the development of emotional awareness (as a knowledge base of emotional intelligence) of children in their middle childhood developmental phase is an imperative developmental achievement. Educating children in this ability seems to be a task which they can master in the same way they obtain cognitive abilities and knowledge and hence move nearer to achieving wholeness or the concept of “holism” as discussed in chapter 2. It is thus evident why and how the educational system can be utilized in order to develop emotional awareness in generations of the future.

## **5.4 SUMMARY**

Damasio in Bronson (2000:148) differentiates between “primary” reactions and “secondary” emotions. He suggests that primary emotional reactions such as startle or responses to loud noises or falling are innate and are likely to be triggered automatically. Secondary emotions, such as fear of doing badly on tests or pleasure at seeing a friend, are learned and easier to control.

This chapter indicated that a person’s experiences, perceptions and opinions in a situation do not only originate from a situation itself, but from the emotion that situation conveys based on previous occurrence, experience or knowledge of the emotional content derived by the situation.

It was therefore significant to examine the term emotion and its importance within the existence of human beings as well as the different branches in emotions, namely emotional awareness and emotional intelligence from different perspectives. The role of emotional awareness within the emotional development and emotional health of children was analysed and it was determined that sound emotional health and optimal emotional intelligence seem to be linked to emotional awareness. Being emotionally aware seems to be a factor that supports a person’s emotional

knowledge base and ability to maintain emotional balance and therefore plays an important role in the manner in which one is able to stand his ground.

The emotions that we develop through our experiences in life directly shape and affect all our subsequent interactions, experiences, relationships, and setbacks.

The ability of emotional awareness can be taught to children in the same manner as cognitive abilities are taught and therefore is a facet that needs to be developed in order to achieve the full benefit of being emotionally intelligent. Barnes (1995:139) agrees in this regard that emotions are embedded in social relations but are mediated by cognition. The concept of emotion and emotional awareness was extensively discussed in this chapter underlining the perspective that emotional awareness is a facet that can be educated. The following chapter will focus on the educational system and broaden the view of how emotional development in middle childhood and the educational system can become partners in achieving development of the “whole” learner.



# CHAPTER 6

## Emotional Development within the Educational System

*Children hold their teachers in high regard and have strong emotional ties to them, for the teacher is an authority figure that cares for, protects, and loves them. ~ Seefeldt*

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The educational system has a profound role to play in the character and success of a community through their input into the development and enrichment of future generations. The politicians, psychologists, educators, church leaders, doctors, social workers, day care mothers and business men of the future are currently on the school benches and who or what they will become are to a large extent in the hands of the educating system. Eleanor Roosevelt (1930:94) stated many years ago that: "the true purpose of education is to produce citizens". In the 1930s the message behind this statement was aimed in the direction of education in general, but it is still valid in modern day. It is important to realize that with new knowledge the content of education need to be revised and supplemented but still for the same purpose as some 80 years ago, namely "to produce citizens".

With this in mind we need to take a closer look at the current situation in our educational system and focus on the educational scope available to learners. We need to determine whether or not our schools are creating building blocks that will be steadfast and one day be part of impressive buildings in their communities.

Many children have their first experience of engagement with adults and other children who are not members of the primary family system when they start with their education in the school context. More than just academic achievement is thus required of children to be successful in this arena. They must also acquire the ability to interact with others in a socially acceptable and

effective manner (Fapiano, Norris & Haynes, 2001:47). Seefeldt (2005:134-135) highlights other factors affecting children's social development once they entered the school setting. Educators and a principal now set rules, limits and standards for behaviour and other children become models, setting new or different standards for social behaviour.

Rutter, in Cowie, Boardman, Dawkins and Jennifer (2004:25), indicates that children spend almost as much of their waking life during their formative years at school as they do at home. Altogether, this works out at some 15 000 hours during which schools and educators have an impact on the development of learners in their care.

Karpov (2005:201) states that the neo-Vygotskians have characterized learning in school as the leading activity of children in industrialized societies, during the period of middle childhood. Although interaction between emotion and acquisition of social competence starts in early infancy through the mother/infant relationship, according to Ellis and Newton (2000:266) this is later influenced by the relationship between child and educator.

This consequently implies that the educating system's stake in the development of children is not much less than those of the parent or caretaker, and thus needs to be viewed in light of the important role it has to play in this regard. EAUDE (2006:63) elucidates on this responsibility in his indication that the role of both educators and parents is to help, support and guide children in actively creating their own identity and character by providing a framework of values. He adds that "early experiences, responses and relationships affect how young children regulate their emotions and behaviour. Uncertainty provokes powerful emotional reactions, especially anxiety, which inhibit their ability to learn".

Cohen (2001:56) points to the fact that academic and social emotional learning are implacably intertwined. Learning for all children is in large part as much a social and emotional experience as it is a cognitive one. He emphasizes that we cannot and do not turn off children's emotions when trying to teach them to read or write or to solve math problems. Diekstra [sa] agrees that "education is not just a matter of fostering cognitive-academic, but should be directed at the overall, i.e. physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral development of the child". Consequently educational systems or institutions, such as schools, that exclusively or

predominantly focus on academic or cognitive development violate children's rights, for everyone has the right to share in the benefits of scientific progress and its application. In other words, if scientific research has validly identified approaches and methods that enhance the overall development of children in and by the educational system, the child has the right to be educated through such approaches and methods.

Seefeldt (2005:134-135) postulates very clearly that:

Children in school settings need to retain their individuality, yet they must give it up by putting the welfare and interest of the group before their own. In school they must share not only materials and time but also the attention of the educator. They learn to cooperate, see the viewpoint of others and work together for common welfare.

According to Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg and Walberg in Zins, Weissberg, Wang and Walberg (2004:3) schools will be most successful in their educational mission if they integrate efforts to promote children's academic, social and emotional learning. They further accentuate the general agreement that it is important for schools to foster children's emotional development.

"Spending time in and around a school provides ample opportunity to observe learners who are having difficulty coping with stresses of their daily lives". Macklem (2008:1) made this statement as an introduction to the following description of scenes which may play out on the playground and in the classroom:

On the playground you might see a student with an angry expression pushing another student out of the way. You might hear one yelling at his playmates about whether or not he is "in" or "out" of the game. You might spot yet another student sulking long after being reprimanded by a playground monitor or one isolating herself on the edge of the playground avoiding interaction or even eye contact with any other child on the playground.

Inside the school building, you might find a parent or educator trying to calm a student or a frustrated educator trying to interact reasonably with one who has shut down completely and cannot hear anything that is being said to him. You might find an older student in the rest room, trying to calm down after he "escaped" (temporarily) from teasing he has been subjected to. You might observe a student who is always "scapegoated" by peers, or one who scribbles over an almost finished paper, or crumple it up for he has made an error. You might see a student taking a test who is dealing with so much emotion that she cannot even begin to write.

We can carry on with this list for several pages and add numerous incidents of this nature. Although not always visible to the casual observer, the proficiency and skill of the educators and staff of the school will determine whether these situations will pass without any acknowledgment and effort to assist these learners or whether they will indeed receive support and solutions.

The ideal situation is to have a school where the climate is of such a nature that children will not have to endure these kinds of circumstances or where situations like the ones depicted will not have the opportunity to develop into emotional destruction for the victim. Coetzee and Jansen (2007:1) concur that “unless the emotional needs of children are met, they cannot function effectively and do not derive the intellectual benefit of their education”.

Moynihan (2005) indicates that *Time* magazine reported on a survey of 39 child-care centres and elementary schools in 2003. The survey found that 93% of the schools said kindergartners had more emotional and behavioural problems compared with five years earlier, and over half the day-care centres said “incidents of rage and anger” had also increased. The example was given of a three-year-old “who will take a fork and stab another child in the forehead”. One answer to these problems has been to medicate them. Spending on drugs to treat children and adolescents for behaviour-related disorders rose 77% from 2000 to the end of 2003 in the United States. Sales of such drugs are growing faster than any type of medicine taken by children.

This is an undesirable way out of an unacceptable problem and we therefore need to find an adequate solution for this issue.

The goal of this chapter is to examine opinions concerning the possibilities within and the role of the educational system to develop the “whole” child in order to be most beneficial to learners. The discrepancy between the current situation where the education system primarily focuses on cognitive development and what can be achieved through the incorporation of emotional content need to be determined.

## **6.2 RATIONALE FOR INCORPORATING EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

The researcher found through professional work with children in cooperation with their schools and educators that there is a lack of comprehension on the essential part that emotions, or deficiency thereof, play with relation to the child's behaviour, ability to perform and future healthy development. Knoetze (2006:105-109) determined that educators agree that emotional awareness, as part of a child's development, is of utmost importance and that they have insufficient knowledge on this topic. Out of the total number of respondents, 89% indicated that they would be prepared to adjust their current education methods to incorporate emotional education, and 77% indicated that they had no knowledge of any programs or courses on emotional awareness available to educators. On the question whether respondents would be interested to be trained on the subject, the researcher had a 100% positive response. It was therefore concluded that it would be of value to develop a program to address emotional awareness, provide training on the topic to educators and support the educational system on this subject which the respondents regarded as important due to their limited knowledge in this field. This formed the rationale for the initiative to utilize the South African educational system in this manner for emotional development of the child in middle childhood. The following part of this discussion will provide a broader clarification on the rationale behind the inclusion of emotional development in the educational curriculum.

Brunskill (2006:x) states that:

“research is bringing home the wide extent of various types of child neglect and abuse. The opinion is that departments of education can no longer assume that all parents are doing an efficient job in raising their children. This is further exacerbated by the breakdown of extended families and communities, which reduces support for the nuclear family, and the higher rates of divorce and subsequent one-parent families”.

There is thus a pressing need for the educational system to take co-responsibility for the emotional health of learners and to include emotional content into the daily educational curriculum.

The educational system carries the responsibility of laying the foundation of a nation and therefore needs to fulfil this task adequately. Dr. Martin Luther King made a valuable summary of his view on the purpose of education, which also serves as a motivation for the rationale of this study (Luther King, 1947). He described his view on this subject as follows:

- Education must enable a man to become more efficient, so he can achieve with increasing competence the legitimate goals of his life.
- Education must train one for quick and effective thinking.
- Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction.
- The purpose of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and critically. Intelligence is not enough, intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.
- Comprehensive education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate.
- Broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only accumulated knowledge but also accumulated experience of social living.

Mosley (2005:2) indicates that social, emotional, and behavioural skills are not something that we can teach in a lesson and then forget about. They are personality traits, ways of interacting and a sense of self-worth that grow with us and are nurtured through the ongoing interactions that children have every day with their peers and the adults who surround them.

Children are in school for several hours per day and Wright (2006:42) states that this is a significant amount of time to modify any inappropriate behaviour. Cowie et al. (2004:24) note in this regard that “successful schools tend to have pupils who behave well, achieve their potential, and are able to develop rewarding relationships with a variety of people”.

Cohen (2001:4) urges that it is abundantly clear to those who work with young children that how children feel about themselves and others colours and shapes their ability to learn. Their social emotional capacities powerfully affect, and even determine, their ability to listen and communicate, to concentrate, to recognize, understand, and solve problems.

Whilst experiences at school can affect emotional well-being, young people also bring to school things that are troubling them which arise outside the school. Cowie et al. (2004:25) substantiate the development and enhancement of emotional awareness through the utilization of the educational system in eight reasons why schools should be involved with the emotional well-being of their pupils, namely:

- *Rates of psychosocial problems have increased and become common.*

Visible in conduct disorder, substance use, depressive disorder, eating disorders and suicidal behaviour of learners.

- *Associated negative labels may make coping with emotional issues harder.*

One in four people are affected by a mental health problem at some point in their life. Unfortunately, social and personal views may delay the seeking of appropriate help and may compound the isolation and difficulties experienced.

- *Educational stressors are an increasingly important contributory factor particularly for middle-class girls.*

Schools run a balance between motivation and stress. Individuals perform best in an atmosphere with a low or moderate level of anxiety. However, level of achievement drops rapidly when a certain point of anxiety is reached. As this point varies between individuals, applying academic pressure will only benefit a proportion of students. Some will remain under-motivated whereas others will perform less well because stress levels have become too high. Conscientious girls are more at risk of the latter than 'laid back' boys.

- *Peer relationships are important indicators of a person's psychological health and predict their future functioning.*

Acceptance in the peer group is an extremely important determinant of indicators of psychopathology. Relationships with peers are crucial to a person's emotional well-being and form an important part of daily life in school. Schools should be encouraged to do what they can to promote healthy positive peer relations and to assist those who are withdrawn and rejected by their peers or who misuse their power by bullying others.

- *Young people say they would approach an educator for help.*

The most important aspects of this support is confidentiality and for the children to feel understood. They need to experience the feeling of being listened to and being able to trust the educator as a helper.

- *The role of the educator is multifaceted and changing.*

Schools have always had some role in health education. Although the emphasis tends to be on physical health, and specific topics such as drugs, nutrition and exercise, there is a growing realization that mental, emotional and social health need to be more prominent.

- *Academic success will be enhanced if schools promote the emotional health and well-being of their pupils.*

Children learn more effectively if they are happy in their work, believe in themselves, like their educators and feel the school is supporting them. The importance of satisfying physical, emotional and social needs, before people can concentrate on intellectual matters, has long been recognized. Maslow, in Wright (2006:10), described a hierarchy of needs that need to be satisfied at the lower level before they can deal with the tasks of a higher level.

- *It is intrinsically a worthwhile thing to do.*

Educating learners to achieve or strive to achieve happiness, emotional health and good relationships is positive in itself.

Cohen (2001:124) corroborates that children preoccupied with interpersonal conflict or consumed with other emotional tensions are unable to make friends, engage in maladaptive behaviour and are less able to focus on the academic demands of the classroom. He is of the opinion that children who are failing at math most probably do not need more math; they might rather need to relieve whatever tension prevents them from focusing on the math they are getting. He further found that children who desperately want friends gained more from learning skills to make friends than from focus on their academic skills, for they became more interested in the task-oriented demands of the classroom once they had been able to make friends. The importance of social skills development is thus clear. In this regard Seefeldt (2005:136) mentions that the focus on social skill development is threefold and should revolve around the development of the following:



- **Self-concept.** Children’s feelings about themselves are the foundation from which they learn to relate to and communicate with others.
- **Pro-social skills.** Being able to cooperate and share is necessary for forming solid relationships with others.
- **Making and keeping friends.** Children who relate to and communicate with others, sharing and cooperating, are those who are accepted by their peers and can make and keep friends.

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”.

A school is a place of social activity: a community, which has a personality in its own right. They are inevitably involved in the mental and emotional health of their pupils.

Prever (2006:13) refers to figures of the organisation Minds on the website Young Minds (2012) which indicates that any school of 1,000 pupils there is likely to be:

- 50 pupils with a depressive illness;
- 100 who are suffering significant distress;
- 10-20 pupils with obsessive-compulsive disorder; and
- 5-10 girls with an eating disorder

Their conclusion is that the majority of the school is made up of children with only reasonable mental health and resilience. These children may have experienced emotional distress, which though not significant enough to present as a syndrome makes their life less fulfilling and enjoyable. Life events, such as prolonged bullying or parental separation, can tip their mental health into distress or illness. Only a small number of children will have very good mental health and a high level of resilience (Young Minds, 2012).

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.

Webster-Stratton (sa) suggests that, as with good mental health, a high level of emotional intelligence is a desirable outcome of growing older. Previous chapters discussed the matter of becoming emotionally intelligent through the acquisition of emotional awareness. Interventions encouraging emotional intelligence will benefit everyone in the school. According to Webster-Stratton (sa) emotional intelligence acquired through emotional education will aid the learner in the following aspects:

- Self-awareness – knowing one’s internal states, preferences resources and intuitions.
- Self-regulation – managing ones’ internal states, impulses and resources.
- Motivation – emotional tendencies that facilitate reaching goals.
- Empathy – awareness of other’s needs, feelings and concerns.
- Social skills – adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others.

From the above discussion it is thus clear that there are several opinions advocating the benefits of the “whole school approach” in order to reach many more learners than only addressing the problems indicated by certain individuals. The aim would be for a school in its entirety to reach the point where they display an encouraging atmosphere and optimistic behavioural style. Along this way all learners will reap the benefits of the constructive input and positive character of the school. Emotional awareness and the benefits of being emotionally aware as discussed in chapter 5 will most probably serve this purpose to a large extent and direct learners, educators and the whole of the school’s system to reach a healthier level of emotional health.

It is thus of further importance to explore the ideal educational environment for optimal emotional development and growth. The following section of this chapter will therefore focus on the educational environment and how it is well positioned for emotional education along with cognitive education.

### **6.3 AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT THAT WOULD ENHANCE THE EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD**

According to Coetzee and Jansen (2007:31) the three primary reasons why children acquire knowledge, are the love of learning, the desire for social relationships and the desire for practical information to use in solving immediate problems. Coetzee and Jansen (2007:1) acknowledge that “without compromising academic integrity, the school environment is challenged to develop social skills in learners that enable them to deal with their emotional needs for security and a sense of belonging”.

This study’s focal point is the fact that emotional awareness is of paramount importance to the learner in middle childhood and human beings in general, as was discussed in previous chapters. It is therefore important to take note of education as a whole to establish where the educational system and emotional awareness will be able to meet up with each other. This study aims to determine whether emotional awareness can be taught as an inclusion to the daily schooling activities of learners in an attempt to achieve optimal emotional health, social skills and belonging.

In order to determine the educational system’s structure, operation, compilation and aim, we need to investigate the present educational arrangement and viewpoints within this system. The researcher aspire to designate in this manner why and how education and emotional awareness can become a composition of optimal development.

In order to effectively incorporate the component of emotional development in the educational system, it is important to adhere to certain educational requirements. Such requirements/factors playing a role in this regard are the following:

- conditions of learning
- educator
- effective learning
- effective school settings

The following section will focus on each of these factors individually in order to shed light on what it entails and to indicate its relevance within this study.

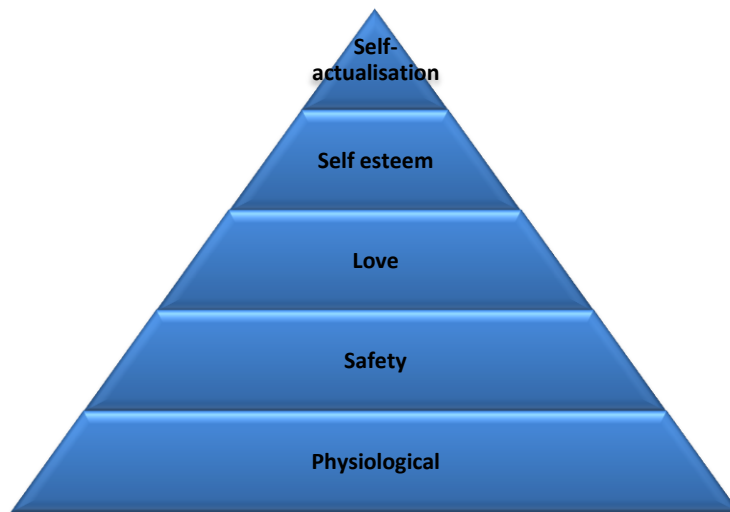
### **6.3.1 Conditions for Learning**

Positive conditions for effective learning are an essential factor, when the matter of optimal development of learners is raised. This is also a matter that needs to be taken into consideration when the ideal learning environment is to be established in order to fulfil in the obligation of the educational system. Bahman and Maffini (2008:19) indicate that creating and maintaining a positive, safe and healthy learning environment must be a top priority for educators. If the environment is not a positive one, a great deal of educator effort is wasted. Wright (2006:10) notes that it is a challenge to acquire learning conditions where every child will learn, but it can be done.

Ming-Tak and Wai-Shing (2008:46) postulate that educators need to gain learners' respect and confidence by showing concern for their needs. They should further know how to use praise to encourage good behaviour. Wright (2006:10) confirms this with the opinion that children will not learn if they are upset, anxious or nervous, so the approach within the classroom is important. Stress forms a barrier by causing the body to produce hormones that prepare it to either fight or run. This is a primitive defence mechanism that served human beings well when they were hunter-gatherers. These hormones block the brain's capacity for thought and the parts responsible for personal safety are in readiness, which in turn results in an inability to learn.

Kachmar and Blair (2007:152) refer to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is based on the notion that the drive to respond to individual needs motivates behaviour.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs as depicted in Figure 6.1, indicates that self-actualization will only be within one's reach once certain needs have been fulfilled. This hierarchy forms an upright pyramid indicating that physiological needs fill the base of the pyramid and is a large need to fulfil. Building on one another, we find the need for safety, the need for love, the need to feel esteemed and only then would one reach self-actualization. Once physiological needs are met we find emotional content in all the other steps to the top of this hierarchy. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is renowned and utilized in many fields to establish healthy practices surrounding human basic needs, and is also applicable to this study.



**Figure 6.1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Wright, 2006:10)**

Wright (2012:15) recapitulates Maslow's hierarchy of needs from a perspective of modernized living, incorporating how these levels apply to the lives of children:

- **Physiological needs:** These are the most primitive needs a human organism has, which need to be fulfilled in order to survive. This includes oxygen, water, appropriate food, salt, minerals, vitamins, regulated temperature, sleep and so on.

- **Safety:** The need to feel secure, to have shelter with protection against malevolent factors in the environment. In advanced societies this can be seen in the need for good homes, insurance and retirement funds. Children's need for safety is evident in their need for some kind of undisrupted routine at home as well as early education. Children need a predictable and orderly world. When children perceive their parents' actions as being unfair and inconsistent, they are likely to feel anxious and unsafe. Parents who quarrel loudly or abuse their children promote unhealthy levels of anxiety and fear in their children. Anxiety has the power to confuse the child's development at this point preventing them from reaching stage three.
- **Love:** The need for love extends to a need to experience a sense of belonging. These needs can only emerge once the physiological and safety needs have been fairly well gratified. Human beings will feel saddened by the absence of family members or friends. This need for belonging and affection of others extend to the need to be part of a group and to feel that one is among others that need and trust him or her. Children do sport or join other organizations for this purpose.
- **Esteem:** This need can be thought of as the need that most people, including children, have to be respected by others. The self-esteem level of children is a reflection of how they interpret the beliefs of others in the environment about them, their capabilities or talents. If esteem needs are not met a strong feeling of inferiority or discouragement develops and a loss of self-confidence is evident.
- **Self-actualization:** This is the need on the highest level of the hierarchy of needs. Maslow theorized that not all people reach the point at which this step is part of their life story. Self-actualization refers to self-fulfilment and can take many forms, for example an award for the educator of the year, contentment with being a good mother and wife, acquiring a scholarship or coaching a team to a championship.

The hierarchy of Maslow captures the dimensions of what needs to be taken into consideration to provide a constructive learning environment and to lead learners to productive learning.

The learning environment should firstly ensure that learner's physiological needs are met, for example children should feel nourished and hydrated, temperature should be controlled in class, a balance between work and time to take a break should be ensured, etc. Efforts to uphold these physical and associated psychological aspects form the foundation of the establishment of an encouraging learning environment. If these needs are met the learner needs to feel secure and safe within the class environment in order to be able to learn, which will entail not being bullied, teased or shouted at by an educator. The need to have friends and feel loved is then on the foreground and the children who lack companionship, belonging and acceptance by friends or educators will have difficulty performing at their best. Actions and events within the learning environment, like praise, merit and awards, which result in developing and increasing a positive esteem are further necessary to ensure optimal learning and will result in self-actualization or most advantageous learning.

Ming-Tak and Wai-Shing (2008:47) also explored the ideal learning environment. Their comments correlate with Maslow's hierarchy and they also indicate *management of the physical environment* as the basis in creating a favourable learning atmosphere. Learners should experience their classroom as pleasant and stimulating. *Management of learning* is to them the second step in this process, and this refers to the educator's responsibility to prepare the learning material and activities in a way that will meet the diverse needs of learners. It further requires the classroom to be enjoyable and challenging while also being responsive to learners' needs and goals. The third feature they highlight is *classroom procedures* and rules, which entails the smooth and efficient running of the classroom and serves to convey the educator's message of norms and behaviour towards others. This entails that learners feel safe and secure within an environment of which they know and understand the boundaries and can act and react within a knowledge base of what is permitted and what not. In the last instance, they add *managing discipline*, with the indication that this is necessary in order to deal with difficult and bad behaviour. This is also the aspect where the educator's insight of learner behaviour and emotional health as well as the method of discipline play a very important role and where learners are constructed or demolished.

Coetzee and Jansen (2007:30) validate that the emotional climate in the classroom has a significant impact on the learners' attitude and willingness to learn. Learners feel accepted for their

uniqueness in an emotionally warm classroom atmosphere and their self-esteem will consequently enhance.

It is hence important to take note that the role of the educator and how his/her input and ability to teach, with emotional growth in mind, can make the difference in the educational experience of learners.

### **6.3.2 Role of the Educator**

La Malfa, Lassi, Bertelli, Albertini and Dosen (2009:1406) indicate that the relationship between acquisition of social competence and emotion starts in early infancy through the mother/infant relationship, but is later influenced by the relationship between children and their educators.

An educator is the one adult, apart from members of their family, with whom children have regular and prolonged contact. Children spend most of their life (during middle childhood) in the presence of their educator's way of thinking and method of handling his/her learners. Consequently, the educator may be a significant person with the power to be a loved and respected or feared and despised adult, and even more important, the power to construct or demolish a learner's emotional well-being.

Tew (2007:11) states that children learn to imitate from the time they are born. This mimetic learning means that learners respond most strongly to and are most likely to learn the qualities that adults model rather than the ones they overtly teach. Albert Schweitzer, in Tew (2007:11), said: "*Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing*". This is illustrated in Coetzee and Jansen's (2007:30) indication that the educator who shouts and rages at learners sends out the message that it is socially acceptable to treat others in a hostile and disrespectful manner.

Collay (2012:29) states that an equitable educator finds what each learner needs and provides it for them, so that each of them has an opportunity for success. A one-size-fits-all prescription is not the answer. Coetzee and Jansen (2007:1) affirm that the emotional state of educators and learners affects the children's attention, focus, perception, time spent on tasks and their academic



performance. They further add that educators who demonstrate emotionally intelligent behaviour in the classroom are more effective in:

- achieving academic goals;
- conveying a sense of caring towards learners;
- creating an emotional climate that enhances the learning environment;
- reducing peer conflict; and
- facilitating a desirable teaching context.

Tew (2007:11) elaborates that if educators are to help learners develop their emotional literacy, it helps if they develop their own emotional literacy first. The more aware the educators can become of own flow of emotional states as they continue throughout the day, the better they will be placed to understand and manage feelings and recognize those feelings in others. If educators thus find useful ways to examine and manage their own moods and ascertain the way in which some feeling-circumstances improve judgment and motivation they will be better positioned to develop and promote these same abilities in their learners.

Educators find themselves in the position to provide a type of listening that children may not experience elsewhere in their lives and educators possess great power with this role of listener. Milner and Carolin (1999:97) observed in 1999 trends in the U.S.A. that in education there are many voices and it seems at times that they are all shouting very loudly in contrast to the educating system of the past, when the prime voices were the voices of the learner and the educator. They elaborate further by stating:

However, in the last decade, in particular, many more voices have joined the chorus and some are being heard more publicly than they previously were. The voices now belong to politicians, parents, the media, economists, moralists and educationalists, in addition to the child and the educator. All of them have very clear views on the role of the school and the educator and they are often in conflict. The languages they speak are different. Some talk the language of money, some of management, of standards, of accountability and some of the rights of children. This can be a confusing cacophony and schools are now the topic of much debate about which

values and whose values are important and where efforts should be focused. Such debate and confusion can sometimes make it hard for educators to listen to their learners and to focus on the aspects that are supposed to be clear and evident regarding the development of the learner.

The educational system is most probably in need of leaders with educational change at heart and the researcher is of the opinion that this educational change can only be brought about through the inclusion of emotional content in order to educate the holistic child and create citizens with inclusive wellbeing, security, broadened interests and comfort within themselves. To achieve this goal we will need educators with a passion for children and insight in children and their extended needs. Mendez Morse, in Collay (2012:36), states that educators who can become leaders of educational change exhibit the following six characteristics:

- They have vision
- They believe that school is for “learning”
- They value resource
- They are skilled communicators and listeners
- They act pro-actively
- They take risks

It is thus clear that the role of the educator is unquestionably a very important part of successful emotional intervention. Emotional content in the school curriculum will not have a result worth mentioning if taught by educators without the emotional awareness and ability to successfully develop this skill in their learners, based on their own emotional maturity. If the role of the educator and the most beneficial learning climate is established, we need to divert our focus to learning in itself to determine what is required to ensure effective learning.

### **6.3.3 Effective Learning**

Tokuhama-Espinosa (2011:45) indicates that formal education was getting underway around the world in the late 1800s. It was at that stage that Francis Galton sparked the original debate on the

nature versus nurture influence on learning and intelligence. The question connected hereto is; are you intelligent due to the genes you received from your parents, or is intelligence based on how you were raised? This question evolved through many stages to where we currently are and now emotional education is also added into this discussion. Although both nature and nurture receive support from different viewpoints, Kozulin (2003:162) indicates that it was already determined by Vygotsky that developing emotion through cognition has merit which emphasized the “nature vs. nurture” viewpoint and is supported by La Malfa et al. (2009:1407), in their referral to the importance of emotion in developing cognitive and social abilities according to Vygotsky’s theory of social cognition.

According to Mahn and John-Steiner (2002:48) the major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Classroom interactions between learners and educators, on the one hand, and intense creative collaborations among accomplished artists and scientists, on the other, might seem far removed from one another. However, an examination of their underlying commonalities provides insight into the role played by affect in learning and creativity. Vygotsky (1978:57) states:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter psychological) and then inside the child (intra psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

Fisher (2005:1) explain that:

“to understand the world, the child must first perceive, attend to, or take in the visual and auditory stimuli around him. He must hold these in his mind while he decides what they are and how to respond. The fact that he can recognize a bird means that he has previously stored memories and has developed the concept of a ‘bird’ and developed the tools of language to communicate this experience. This process of perception, memory, concept formation, language and symbolization are the basic cognitive skills that underlie the ability to reason, to learn and to solve problems”.

It is thus evident that effective learning needs to include both cognitive and emotional education to bring effusive development about.

## 6.4 EFFECTIVE SCHOOL SETTING

It is observed by Long and Fogell (1999:27) that there are many ways in which schools can seek to enhance and support their learner's emotional health. These range from developing coping strategies such as the development of social and problem solving skills, the setting up of peer support and contact with a selected adult role model. They further refer to research done by Barber in 1996, which lists the characteristics of effective schools as follows:

- strong positive leadership by head and senior staff;
- a good atmosphere or spirit, generated both by shared aims and values and a stimulating and attractive physical environment;
- high consistent expectations of pupils;
- high academic standards;
- a clear and continuous focus on teaching and learning;
- well-developed procedures of assessing how pupils are progressing;
- responsibility for learning shared by the pupils themselves;
- participation by pupils in the life of the school;
- rewards and incentives to encourage pupils to succeed;
- parental involvement in children's education and in supporting the aims of the school; and
- extra-curricular activities which broaden pupils' interests and experiences, expand their opportunities to succeed and help to build good relationships.

Successful schools ensure that all learners master reading, writing, math, and science. They also foster a good understanding of history, literature, arts, foreign languages, and diverse cultures but they need to have a broader educational agenda that also involves enhancing learners' social-emotional competence, character, health, and civic engagement, within the USA context. (Metlife, 2002).

The school's role, according to Seefeldt (2005:136), during these early school years is twofold:

- The school-experience must be focused on strengthening the child's self-concept and feelings of individuality. Children who feel good about themselves can make the difficult, complex adjustments necessary for group living.
- Having aided the child's development of self-esteem, the school can then use this strong sense of self as the basis for guiding children into positive group experiences where they can learn the life-skills necessary for living in a society.

It is thus evident that the school has an important part to play in the guidance of children not only to fulfil their cognitive needs, but especially in the fulfilment of their emotional needs. If schools strive to provide their learners with the opportunities that are incorporated in emotional awareness, it is the researchers opinion that they will be then in a better position to meet Maslow's highest level of needs, namely self-actualization.

## **6.5 SUMMARY**

Aggression and inadequate impulse control are perhaps the most potent obstacles to effective problem-solving and forming successful friendships in childhood. Without help, young children who are angry and aggressive are more likely to experience peer rejection and continued social problems for years afterwards according to Webster-Stratton (1999:184). The educating system is in a beneficial position to fulfil the task of education in emotional awareness and needs to take this opportunity to accomplish optimal learner development through development of the whole child by including emotional education not only as added learning material but also as a medium of education.

There are certain aspects of school life that need to be considered when thinking about how children are educated and aspects that can block or facilitate such learning. School is an activity children have to attend by law and they therefore come in large numbers. This is thus the ideal opportunity for emotional education and enhancing general learning through emotional awareness of both educator and learner.

Greenberg, Weissman, Utne O' Brien, Zins, Frederick, Resnik and Elias (2003:466) indicate that high quality education should not only produce students who are culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and committed to lifelong learning, but it should also teach young people to:

- interact in socially skilled and respectful ways;
- practice positive, safe, and healthy behaviours;
- contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community;  
and
- possess basic competencies, work habits and values as a foundation for meaningful employment and engaged citizenship.

The viewpoint of these authors confirms that the educational system has the task of developing the “whole” of their learners. This stands in correlation with the basis of the Gestalt approach, as discussed in chapter 2, and supports the goal of this study namely to incorporate emotional education in the current educational process. Education that includes obtaining knowledge in different learning areas along with the development of emotional and associated social competencies would therefore possibly be the ideal method of optimal holistic development. In this manner it would be possible to achieve Luther King's indication that: *“intelligence is not enough, intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education”* (Luther King, 1947).

## CHAPTER 7

### Emotional awareness program

*It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad. ~ C. S. Lewis*

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In previous chapters the researcher focussed on the theory regarding emotional awareness, neurological development influencing emotional aspects, the learner in the middle childhood developmental phase and the role of the educational system on the subject of emotional development. The researcher will subsequently focus on the the program developed to aid in enhancing and developing the emotional awareness of learners in their middle childhood developmental phase within the educational system.

The emotional awareness program, utilized in this study, was developed by the researcher for this purpose and developed from a Gestalt play therapy background. The aim of the research is to determine whether emotional awareness skills could successfully be developed during class activities through the utilization of this emotional awareness program.

The program was developed for learners in their middle childhood developmental phase, and consequently applicable to all primary school grades, with adjustments for higher and lower grades. The program was tested on grade three learners in an Afrikaans primary school and therefore in its current state applicable to that age group.

The complete program was written in Afrikaans due to it being presented to Afrikaans learners in an Afrikaans school. A summary of the program is translated to English to reflect its content and intent in this English thesis.

The program was presented by the educator to her class during class time and as part of their daily class activities. The program is divided into seven modules each containing three to four activities relating to the topic of the module. Each module is the “theme” of the week and no more than one activity is to be covered per day. The activities are developed to be utilized on their own or as part of the curriculum, as stories could also be utilized as listening tests and words from activities as spelling tests, to write sentences or paragraphs or to serve as topics for speeches, etc. The educator took own initiative in when, where and how the activities of the week were presented to efficiently incorporate it into her weekly planning, as long as all activities in a module were covered and thoroughly conversed.

The educator involved in presenting the Emotional Awareness Program received training, which was based on the literature review of this study, by the researcher. The themes which form part of the training were the following:

- emotions, emotional awareness and emotional intelligence;
- the child in middle childhood;
- the classroom as a resilience enhancing context;
- the intention behind emotional development within the classroom; and
- brain development or underdevelopment due to emotional input.

Each module and activity was also explained and discussed to ensure that it is properly understood and thus correctly implemented. The researcher was available to the educator while the program was administered but it was never necessary to intervene or give additional explanations as the program is developed to be self-explanatory and user friendly.

The following section will focus on the seven modules included in the program and endeavour to give a summarized but thorough indication of the content of these modules, their aim, activities utilized to achieve the planned outcome and the material required to administer it. Although the program is developed to be presented by an educator, it is necessary to keep in mind that it is in many ways still a therapeutical intervention. The educator therefore needs to be trained by a



professional specifically equipped in child development and emotional aspects in this regard. It is furthermore essential that a professional also oversee the program and its presentation.

In order to understand the goal, objectives and activities of the developed Emotional Awareness Program it is relevant to briefly revisit the contextual background of Gestalt in terms of its applicability to this study. Blom (2006:215) states that to her:

“the goal of Gestalt is to help children become aware of their process, which is what they do, how they do it and how they satisfy their needs. Heightened awareness is created when children are able to identify who they are, what they feel, what they like and dislike, their choices and how their needs are met”.

The researcher’s amended version of Blom’s (2006:215) portrayal of the content necessary for heightened awareness provides the rationale for utilization of the Gestalt approach in the development of the EA program, namely:

Heightened awareness is created when children are able to identify who they are (identify and own their emotions), what they feel (be aware of the emotions’ effect on themselves and others), what they like and dislike (determine if the emotion is a positive or negative one), their choices and how their needs are met (decide on the appropriate action to take in order to regulate their emotional state).

This abridged version of what emotional awareness, within the Gestalt approach, entails and how the EA program fits within each of these constructs clarifies the motivation for utilization of the Gestalt approach as the theoretical frame of this study.

Although the Gestalt approach was comprehensively discussed in chapter two, Gestalt Play Therapy as a method is the “tool” that was utilized for the development of the EA Program and the following section will converse on Gestalt play therapy and its relevance within this study.

## 7.2 GESTALT PLAY THERAPY

Thompson, Rudolph and Henderson (2004:196) quotes Oaklander in describing the process of Gestalt play therapy as “a dance that is sometimes led by the counsellor and other times by the child, meeting the child where he or she is at that moment, suggesting but not pushing”.

Gestalt play therapy is described by Blom (2004:5) as:

“a psychotherapeutic technique making use of the principles and techniques of the Gestalt approach during play therapy with children, by developing a therapeutic relationship and contact with the child according to a specific process. Children are given the opportunity to confirm their sense of self verbally and nonverbally, express their thoughts and nurture themselves”.

Geldard and Geldard (2002:65) add that “raised awareness through Gestalt play therapy enables the child to clearly identify issues, get in touch with and release strong emotions”. Furthermore, Thompson et al. (2004:195) also evaluates that “the child’s capacity to represent experiences in symbolic fashion allows a self-reflective manner that helps the child develop a greater sense of self”. Blom (2006:51) summarizes that the aim of Gestalt play therapy with children is to “make them aware of their own process”, in terms of this study the aim is thus to make them aware of their own *emotional* process.

Thompson et al. (2004:195) notes that the concern of Gestalt play therapy is the integrated functioning of all aspects of the person so that senses, body, emotions and intellect are well coordinated in a creative adjustment. Thompson et al. (2004:196) continues this reasoning with his reference to Oaklander’s view on the importance of *contact* in Gestalt play therapy. Contact is “having the ability to be completely present in a situation by using one’s senses, being aware of feelings and using the intellect to become in contact with the environment”. Recognizing what is happening and how it is happening is an important part of the contacting process. When children are anxious or troubled, they are not able to make optimal use of their senses and they block emotions and inhibit contact. Gestalt play therapy includes exercises and experiences that involve the senses and the expression of feelings.

Blom (2004:137) discusses emotional expression as a phase in the Gestalt play therapy process and indicates that the initial focus will be on aspects such as what emotions are, the kinds of emotions

and the body's reaction to various emotions. Fontana and Slack, in Oaklander (1997:310), suggest that the more children are allowed to acknowledge and experience their emotions, and gain insight into the fact that emotions are a natural part of human nature, the easier it will be for them to learn skills to express their emotions in a healthy and socially acceptable manner. Ray (2011:59) agrees that the Gestalt approach emphasizes the need for children's expression of awareness of their worlds. Blom (2004:138) confirms this perception in her indication that "if children succeed in identifying their body's response to specific emotions, they can use it as guideline to become aware of their emotions".

Many different Gestalt play therapy techniques are available to utilize in therapeutic interventions with children (Blom, 2004; Oaklander, 1997). Some of these techniques were utilized and adapted to serve the objective of this program. The activities included in the program were developed by the researcher, utilizing Gestalt basics in order to raise the emotional awareness and emotional knowledge of the respondents.

The following section of this chapter will describe the content, goals, activities and presentation of the developed Emotional Awareness Program as utilized in this study.

### **7.3 EMOTIONAL AWARENESS PROGRAM**

The Emotional Awareness Program is developed to address different emotional aspects that are essential for the expansion of emotional knowledge in order to grow to be emotionally aware. The researcher identified aspects most applicable for developing insight regarding emotion and its effect on the daily life of the learner in the middle childhood phase. These aspects aim to achieve six main goals, namely to:

#### **Build and strengthen the relationship between the educator and the learners**

An environment where the learners feel that they are in a safe and secure connection within their relationship with their educator is beneficial for the learners to develop emotional awareness.

## **Supply knowledge of different emotions**

Emotional awareness is achieved when a learner is able to distinguish between different emotions and possesses the ability to associate different experiences with the specific emotion that would accompany it. Knowledge of different emotions and their consequences is thus the first step in acquiring emotional awareness.

## **Obtain emotional language**

Emotional language enables learners to express the feelings that they feel inside but are not able to describe due to a lack of emotional vocabulary. Emotions of emotional trauma need to be expressed in some way and if not through the correct means, it would be expressed through deviant behaviour, aggressiveness, overreacting in emotional situations.

## **Develop and show empathy**

When learners are acquainted with different emotions and their effect on their lives, they are also able to recognize and understand these emotions in others. It is therefore important to have them understand what empathy is and how it is a useful asset in one's relation with others.

## **Develop emotional regulation**

The mere knowledge of emotion and the ability to become aware of certain emotions in one's daily life would not benefit much without the ability to regulate these emotions to one's best interest. This entails the ability to assess a situation and anticipate the emotion which it might bring about. The emotional knowledge that one already has will serve as a guide to the manner in which the emotion is to be handled, but emotional regulation will determine whether the learners would be able to use this knowledge to their advantage and to the best interest of the situation.

## Acquire and expand problem solving and decision making skills

Emotions usually occur along with certain decisions or problems. Problem solving or decision-making techniques are hence hand in hand with emotional growth and the expansion of emotional knowledge. The program therefore focuses on this skill and attempts to teach the learners how to address problems, make decisions and acquire solutions to their problems.

These goals were integrated into seven different modules with different activities aiming to achieve the goal of the module, namely:

- Build and strengthen relationship with learners.
- Knowledge of different emotions.
- Emotional language.
- Empathy.
- Emotional regulation.
- Problem solving.
- Summarizing and termination.

The remaining part of this chapter focuses thus on the seven modules, their activities and content as a translated summary of the actual program.

### 7.3.1 Module 1: Build and Strengthen Relationship with Learners

<b>Activity 1.1:</b>	<b>“Who am I?”</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	<p>Learners can internalise much more and much quicker if it is presented within a relationship and atmosphere where they feel secure and safe. In order to achieve this it is therefore necessary that learners come to the understanding that they are recognized as worthy and hold a significant and special place within their class.</p> <p>This module thus fertilizes the soil for the seeds that are to be sown during</p>

	<p>the course of the program. Learners are directed to discover their own uniqueness and they experience that others take note of them and are interested in them in their effort to get to know each other better.</p>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Each learner has a turn to be “friend of the day”. This entails a series of activities, which introduces the learner to the class, focussing on deeper aspects than the basic name, age, address or academic achievement.</p> <p>A form with questions on interests and other relevant matters is to be completed by each learner. A photo of “friend of the day” is then attached to the form and displayed on a bulletin board for that day.</p> <p>The rest of the class also has the task of gathering information from the “friend of the day” with the result that the learner is the main attraction for that day and experiences that he/she is important and special to the rest of the class.</p>
<b>Material needed</b>	<p>“Who am I?” checklist.</p> <p>Photo of each learner.</p> <p>Instructions to the educator to conduct the discussion on “friend of the day”.</p>
<b>Activity 1.2:</b>	<b>Class Compliments</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	<p>Solidarity and a sense of belonging are of utmost importance to learners in this developmental phase. If learners experience themselves to be part of a successful group (class), the positive feeling of being successful and worthy will spill over to the individual’s mindset regarding his/her behaviour, involvement and input. The goal of this activity is thus to promote group cohesion through highlighting the class’ collective successes and achievements. This joint recognition thus aims at the underlying goal, namely individual self-confidence and contentment with oneself.</p>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>The educator and other personnel make an effort to compliment the class</p>

	on different aspects conveying their good behaviour, exemplary work in class, academic achievement, manners, obedience. A chart for this purpose is affixed in the class and learners are encouraged to write the compliments they get on the chart. This activity is to be preceded with an explanation by the educator that he/she wanted them to share in the pride that he/she experiences when her class is complimented by the headmaster.
<b>Material needed</b>	“Class Compliment Chart”. Instructions to the educator.
<b>Activity 1.3:</b>	<b>My rights in class</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	To strengthen relationships in class through highlighting the concept of personal rights and that everyone is allowed to expect respect, but also carries the responsibility to respect the rights of others.
<b>Activity</b>	A story about an animal classroom, where everything went wrong due to monkey’s doing, is read to the class. The story hints to specific rights and responsibilities, which the educator will utilize afterwards to direct the class in compiling a set of “rights” for the learners in the class.
<b>Material needed</b>	“My rights in class” chart. “Chaos in animal land” story. Instructions to the educator.

### 7.3.2 Module 2: Knowledge of Different Emotions

<b>Activity 2.1</b>	<b>Emotion Bingo</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	In order to develop emotional awareness one needs to be able to distinguish between different emotions. It is further necessary to acquire the ability to associate different experiences with the emotion it would bring about. This activity focuses thus on acquiring the correct word for

	different emotions and utilizing it in the correct context.
<b>Activity</b>	Each learner receives an Emotion Bingo Card and ten individual Emotion Labels, which they pick out of a bag without peeping at the pictures. The educator calls one emotion at a time if a learner has that emotion, it is placed on the Bingo Card. The first learner who has four in a row (horizontally, vertically or across) calls “BINGO”. That learner then gets to answer a question on the emotion that completed his “BINGO”. The educator asks the questions from the “Bingo question card” supplied to her.
<b>Material needed</b>	Bingo play set. Instructions to the educator.
<b>Activity 2.2</b>	<b>Memory match</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	To recognize emotions and group them together. This activity causes the learners to recap on the new emotion words that were taught to them and the acquired knowledge is then reinforced through a fun game.
<b>Activity</b>	Learners play this game in pairs. Each pair receives a Memory Match play set and the rules. The educator explains the objective of the game to the learners.
<b>Material needed</b>	Memory match play set. Instructions to the educator.
<b>Activity 2.3</b>	<b>Speech</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Emotions were identified, recognized, reinforced and inculcated. It is now expected that learners should be able to expand on emotions and appropriately discuss an emotion, as it would occur in daily life. Learners are thus guided to own the knowledge that they have obtained and to apply that knowledge according to their comprehension of the situation that is chosen for the speech. Parents usually assist in the preparation for speeches and discussions regarding emotions and obtained knowledge between learner and parent are also aroused through this activity.
<b>Activity</b>	Each learner draws a card from a bag with 30 cards, each with a different



	emotion on it. The learner prepares a speech on the topic, “The day when I was _____”. E.g., the day when I was sad / the day when I was ashamed / the day when I was confused.
<b>Material needed</b>	Topic cards. Instruction to the educator.

### 7.3.3 Module 3: Emotional Language

<b>Activity 3.1</b>	<b>“Zaki’s balloon full of mixed up feelings”</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Developing the learner’s emotional language with a broadened emotional vocabulary. This is achieved through the identification of emotions (that they had already learned) in a story. The aim is to develop the ability to identify these emotions in the context of a practical example and weigh the positive and negative traits of the emotion. This promotes the learners’ comfort with the emotional language being taught to them.
<b>Activity</b>	Read the story of “Zaki’s balloon full of mixed up feelings” and discuss the learner’s feelings regarding the story (the educator helps organize their thoughts and puts them on the right track).  Read the story again and this time the learners have to write all the emotions they can identify down. A competition can determine who gets the most with a small prize (toffee) for the winner.  The educator conducts a listening test afterwards and incorporates more questions on the emotions involved and the context in which they were experienced. This serves as the normal listening test for the week but also reinforces the knowledge regarding emotions.
<b>Material needed</b>	Story.

	<p>List of questions.</p> <p>Instructions to the educator.</p>
<b>Activity 3.2</b>	<b>Emotional vocabulary</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	<p>Bruce (2010:6) defines emotional literacy, as “a developed awareness and understanding of one’s own and the emotions of others. This information guides our thinking and is expressed in our communication and thinking”. Developing emotional language has benefits at school and at home. Acquiring emotional vocabulary enables learners to efficiently express themselves and therefore aids their overall perception of themselves, their friends, the world around them and their position within this environment in which they have a part to play.</p>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Flashcards containing different emotions portrayed in different situations where the emotion might be experienced are used to guide the learners in identifying the emotion involved. The aim is to find emotion words to replace words like sad, glad, good, bad. E.g., glad to ecstatic, bad to dreadful, good to fabulous and sad to gloomy. Each learner chooses one positive and one negative emotion with the assignment to search for situations where these emotions occur, during the day. A paragraph is then written on the next day on the emotion and the situation where it occurred.</p>
<b>Material needed</b>	<p>Flashcards on emotional situations.</p> <p>Instructions to the educator.</p>
<b>Activity 3.3</b>	<b>Charades</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Expand emotional vocabulary.
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Emotion picture cards are drawn from a bag and the learners are expected to determine the emotion depicted according to the knowledge attained with the flashcard activity. The emotion is then demonstrated with a game of charades. They are thus not allowed to demonstrate elementary emotions like sad, glad or bad – they need to utilize higher-level vocabulary. The person who correctly determines the emotion has the next turn.</p>

<b>Material needed</b>	Emotion picture cards. Instructions to the educator.
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### 7.3.4 Module 4: Empathy

This module is introduced with additional information to the educator on empathy and its value and essence in the lives of children. It further furnishes indicators on the empathic mindset of the educator in teaching this ability to learners.

<b>Activity 4.1</b>	<b>Understanding emotions of others.</b> <b>Facial expression and body language</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Introduce the concept of empathy and lay the foundation for the notion of how empathic reactions have value for oneself and others.
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Explanation of what empathy entails with specific reference to four aspects, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the meaning of the word empathy;</li> <li>• the ability to put oneself in the shoes of another;</li> <li>• the capacity to attempt to understand what another person is feeling; and</li> <li>• the correct reaction to another person's feelings according to the ability to understand what he/she is feeling.</li> </ul> <p>This is followed by a discussion where the learners get to brainstorm their ideas on how to know what another person is feeling without that person telling what he/she is feeling.</p> <p>When the learners had enough time to deliberate on this aspect they each receive a picture in which a situation is depicted where a person is comforted by another in an empathic manner. Each learner has to write a story of what happens in the picture and concludes the story by stating the best empathic reaction for the situation.</p>

<b>Material needed</b>	Discussion material for the educator. Empathy pictures.
<b>Activity 4.2</b>	<b>Development of empathic feelings</b> <i>“Bessie must stay dry”</i>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	To illustrate a practical example of empathy in a manner easily comprehensible to kids of this age. The goal of this activity is for the learners to develop an understanding of empathy and recognition thereof, should they experience it in their lives.
<b>Activity</b>	The story is read to the class. This story is about a family dog that became old and frail and the attempts of a boy to ensure that she stays dry when she has to go out. His planning regarding this originates from his own discomfort in when he finds himself in wet weather. This story thus illustrates the concept of attempting to feel what another is feeling and reacting accordingly to assist them.  A list of questions is discussed afterwards and the educator ensures that the class comprehends and buys into the idea of being empathetic to others.
<b>Material needed</b>	Story. Instructions to the educator.
<b>Activity 4.3</b>	<b>Reinforcement – Construct sentences</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Learners in this developmental phase require sufficient repetition of a concept before owning it and incorporating it into their daily lives. This activity’s goal is to furnish the learners with the opportunity to put the information they received concerning empathy to practice from their own viewpoint and disposition regarding it. This activity also serves as a measuring instrument for the educator to determine whether the learners mastered the concept of empathy and to evaluate their ability to feel and show empathy.
<b>Activity</b>	Learners construct sentences on five themes provided to them on a

	<p>sentence sheet. These themes are compiled to encourage reactions where learners place themselves in another person's shoes. It will therefore evidently elicit empathic sentences from learners who understood empathetic feelings and reactions from earlier activities.</p>
<b>Material needed</b>	<p>Sentence sheet with themes. Instructions to the educator.</p>
<b>Activity 4.4</b>	<b>Empathy modeling and speech</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	<p>Bodily awareness guides learners to self-knowledge and moves them to inner control and a better grasp on assertiveness and insight. This activity combines two aspects, namely further development of empathic abilities and bodily awareness techniques namely further development of empathetic abilities <u>through</u> bodily awareness techniques. Different skills are thus utilized and a stronger sense of mastering is obtained.</p>
<b>Pre -activity</b>	<p>Learners choose an emotion card from a bag and demonstrate it to the class by only making use of facial expressions and body language (e.g. not only a depressed face but also hanging shoulders and an arched back).</p> <p>The educator instructs learners to demonstrate with their face and body how they feel. The rest of the class guess what is being demonstrated.</p> <p>When all the basic emotions were covered, the educator encourages learners to expand the emotions to higher-level feeling words, e.g. unhappy to miserable, gloomy, despondent or hopeless.</p> <p>When this is mastered the rest of the class stop guessing what the emotion is, but provide a reaction which will help, support or acknowledge the problem situation or troubled person.</p> <p>Learners divide into five groups and each group receives a situation to portray. The situation is to be played out and the group is to react</p>

	<p>empathetically towards the person experiencing the problem.</p> <p>It is explained to the learners that they showed empathy in this activity and they are encouraged to keep on practicing this ability in situations around them.</p>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Learners prepare a speech on one of three provided topics. Example: You were best friends with Diana/David since you were both in pre-school. From the beginning of this year, you also became friends with Anne/Aaron. Yesterday Diana/David told you that she does not like Annie/Aaron and that you should not be friends with him/her either. Annie/Aaron sits alone on the playground during breaks and looks very sad due to this decision. What are you going to do?</p>
<b>Material needed</b>	<p>Emotions in bag.</p> <p>Emotion situations for group activity.</p> <p>Speech topics.</p> <p>Instructions to the educator.</p>

### 7.3.5 Module 5: Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is the ability to express a variety of emotions in the correct context and to react in the correct manner on each emotion. Learners who have emotional regulation abilities easily adapt to new situations or to people unknown to them. They consist of high frustration tolerance, are able to control their negative emotions and take the needs and preferences of others into consideration. Learners without emotional regulation abilities display limited emotion, signs of depression, excessive tearfulness, an inability to cope, excessive worrying and behaviour resulting from intense emotions (Wittmer, Doll & Strain in Charlesworth, 2010:327).

Identifying verbal expressions of emotions is the first step in acquiring emotional regulation. Learners may fail to express their emotions verbally because of their incorrect notion that other

people obviously know what they are thinking. They further do not possess the emotional vocabulary in which to express themselves or are too unsure of themselves to make use of the emotional vocabulary they do have (Kostelnik, Whiren, Soderman, Stein & Gregory, 2002:234).

Educators can motivate learners to express emotions in an acceptable manner by reminding them to make use of words that explain their feelings and needs. Phrases which can be utilized in emotional situations can be suggested by the use of examples from their frame of reference.

Regulating negative emotions, especially the potentially destructive and aggressive ones, is important in different facets of functioning. It should also be noted that the mere suppression of a negative emotion is not the desirable way to handle emotions as it usually brings about additional, negative repercussions. Emotional regulation is hence important to equip the individual with the capacity for prolonged healthy emotional discharge. It also aids in determining when emotional discharge is heading in a direction that will have negative consequences for themselves or others. It has been found that a well-adapted person should be able to experience an emotion like anger and express it efficiently. The skill that needs to be mastered is thus to be able to determine when and under which circumstances anger can be expressed and which form of expression is acceptable. This important concept of emotional regulation is thus to develop the ability to regulate unacceptable, impulsive behaviour when a strong emotion is experienced in an effort to control that emotion and the consequences thereof.

<b>Activity 5.1</b>	<b>Visualisation</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Emotional regulation is a complicated concept for learners of this age but it is necessary and possible for them to take note of it. This activity thus aims to introduce learners to the idea behind emotional regulation and to explain it in a practical manner.
<b>Activity</b>	This activity should be performed in a place where it will not be interrupted, for example by someone entering the classroom or the intercom going off. The rugby field, gym class or tennis court away from the normal school activities would be a sensible choice.

	<p>There must be enough space for everyone to lie down without touching each other. They close their eyes and listen while the provided text is read to them in a very calm, collected and tone-measured voice. This text commences with instructions aiming to relax the body and focus the learners’ attention on the voice they hear and the content of the text. They are then systematically led into visualising the text that is read. The aim is that they experience this narrative as if they are experiencing it in real life.</p> <p>After the visualisation exercise is through, the activity is concluded with a discussion with prescribed questions, which aims to reinforce the concept of being in charge of emotions if one chooses to be. An uncomplicated explanation is given. This is then linked to the visualisation where the learner experienced the uneasy effect of being out of control when hit by a wave in the ocean. This is then compared to the follow-up in the visualisation and the feeling of mastering when the knowledge of the wave’s strength was utilized to stand firm and strong against it. Because the wave’s capability was known, the learner was not caught off guard, thrown down and hurt.</p> <p>The above is then compared to the way an emotional situation is handled and how this visualisation experience can serve as an example of preparing oneself to have emotional regulation abilities.</p> <p>The learners receive an activity where they have to sort nine pictures in the correct order to indicate the process of gaining control over a situation which was previously unknown – in other words acquiring control over the wave and control over emotional situations: “emotional regulation”.</p>
<p><b>Material needed</b></p>	<p>Visualisation text.</p> <p>Clarification to draw the link between visualisation and emotional regulation.</p> <p>Pictures to reinforce the activity’s message.</p>



<b>Activity 5.2</b>	<b>Reinforcement of concept</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	A practical experience of uncontrolled emotion. This activity aims to reinforce the content of the previous activity.
<b>Activity</b>	<p>The educator negotiates with one learner to act out a prescribed event, where the learner overreacts to a bottle of water that is accidentally spilled. What to do and say and how to handle the situation is prescribed and planned in such a manner that the rest of the class would experience feelings of disbelief, dismay and maybe even panic as a result of this behaviour. The designated learner runs out of the class as if he/she cannot handle the situation any further. When the learner returns later on, a similar incident occurs and the learner then handles the situation with assertiveness, emotional control and awareness, in total contrast to the previous behaviour.</p> <p>The educator then informs the class that this was a performance and not the learners' true reaction. A link is drawn to the visualisation exercise and the content that was taught regarding the ability to control and regulate emotions. The whole incident is analysed through specific questions to the learners and the two different reactions of the "actor" are discussed. Their feelings and experiences during the enactment are examined to illustrate the value of emotional regulation for oneself and with regard to one's relationships.</p> <p>The learners are divided into groups of three to four pupils. Flashcards that illustrate emotional incidents are then given to each group with the instruction to construct a role-play. The role-play should have two parts:</p> <p>Enact the incident on the flashcard by playing out an unmitigated reaction to the event.</p>

	Enact the incident on the flashcard by playing out a reaction to the event as if one knows and understands the emotion, and is prepared to handle it.
<b>Material needed</b>	Instructions to the educator and learner regarding the water bottle activity. Flashcards.
<b>Activity 5.3</b>	<b>Rehearsing emotional regulation in practice</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Emotional regulation was illustrated on the learners' level and they were also involved in a situation that depicted the advantage of regulating emotions. They were further personally included when they role-played emotional regulation within certain prescribed situations. This activity thus aims to put the learners to the challenge of implementing the whole process of emotional awareness by recognising emotions, analysing them and reacting with emotional regulation (to it).
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Distribute the “Win the Wave” worksheet. The learners are instructed to identify incidents where they or someone else was knocked over by the “wave” and they have to come up with a better reaction or solution to that problem. The other side of the worksheet is for incidents or situations where they or someone else was able to see the “wave” that was approaching and reacted with a plan (emotional regulation) and therefore “won the wave”.</p> <p>This activity is to be done over two school days or during a weekend at home. The learners can be encouraged to educate the rest of the family on how to see the wave of emotions when it approaches and how to keep standing through it. This provides the opportunity for the educator to recap the steps with them when giving the assignment. Explaining this at home is a further method of repetition for the learners and will aid their perception and insight regarding it.</p>
<b>Material needed</b>	Win the wave worksheet. Instructions to the educator.

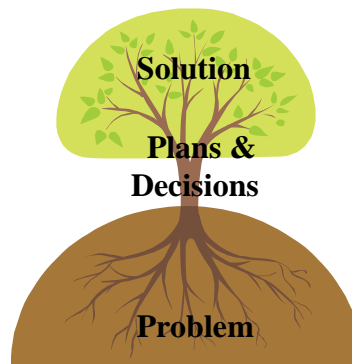
### 7.3.6 Module 6: Problem Solving and Decision Making

Activity 6.1	Generate a problem
<p><b>Goal of activity</b></p>	<p>This simple activity aims to highlight that potential problems should be dismantled logically and systematically to understand it better before attempting to solve it. The idea is that a systematic approach to a problem promotes solving the problem. If there is no plan or method in the way a problem is approached, the probability of solving it successfully is limited. Emotions play an important role in problem solving. One finds that learners with weak emotional associations find it hard to make even undemanding decisions, for they are uncertain about how their choice would make them feel.</p> <p>This activity is a practical introduction to the systematic approach to a problem in order to highlight the process of problem solving.</p>
<p><b>Activity</b></p>	<p>Learners divide into groups of five or six learners. Each group receives a pre-built figurine with the instruction to observe it and then take it apart. They most probably will not pay much attention to the way it was constructed and where each part fits. When they are finished, they are instructed to rebuild it to the exact figurine that they received.</p> <p>The learners will attempt to rebuild it correctly but will most likely be unsuccessful. If they realize that they cannot succeed or that it has pieces left over, they are introduced to the correct process of approaching a problem or decision in contrast to just jumping in and taking unmitigated steps. The correct process is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the problem</li> <li>• Generate solutions</li> <li>• Evaluate possible solutions and decide on the best plan of action</li> </ul>

and apply it.

- Evaluate the outcome/solution and if unsuccessful go back to step two.

These steps are then also reformulated in child-friendly language (in the program) with descriptions of what it entails and with a graphic presentation in the form of “The decision making tree”. It is further also linked to the figure building activity – for thorough comprehension by the learners.



The educator draws a rough sketch of the decision-making tree on the black board and explains that this is an easy way to remember the steps to problem solving. The idea is that a problem, which occurs in the roots of the tree, will have an effect on the branches and leaves of the tree when the problem is transported to them via the trunk. A problem (roots) should thus be addressed through plans and decisions (trunk) to provide solutions (healthy branches and leaves).

The educator works on two or three examples of problem solving with the learners in the form of a class discussion.

- Example in child-friendly language  
What is the problem?: My dog is lost
- Plans that may solve this problem:

	<p>Go search all the dog’s hiding places.</p> <p>Ask the neighbours if they saw the dog.</p> <p>Put notices of your lost dog in the neighbourhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide on the best plan for your problem and implement your decision:</li> </ul> <p>You realize that the dog has only been gone for a very short time and may therefore not be too far away. You look under the bed, in the cupboard, in the dirty washing and behind the T.V., but still cannot find him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think about this solution, if it did not solve your problem – go back to step 2:</li> </ul> <p>You thought the dog was in the house but did not find him there, so you need to try another plan. The learner goes back to his/her plans and go on to his/her second plan, “go ask the neighbours”. The neighbours did see him being hit by a car. He was not hurt badly, but it seemed like his leg was broken. The driver stopped and drove away with the dog, so they advise him/her to check with the vet. The learner contacts the animal clinic and they indicate that a dog with a broken leg was delivered to them. The learner’s parents take him/her to the vet and he/she finds the dog.</p> <p><b>PROBLEM SOLVED!</b></p>
<b>Material needed</b>	<p>Figurine to take apart and rebuild.</p> <p>Poster of decision making tree.</p> <p>Instructions to the educator.</p>
<b>Activity 6.2</b>	<b>Problem solving skills</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	<p>Learners are guided to make decisions in the correct manner to emphasize the steps in problem solving.</p>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>The story of Maraai Maroela tree is read to the learners and the concept of problem solving is discussed according to the content of the story. The</p>

	<p>idea is to put the steps in problem solving in figurative description and reiterate the “problem solving tree”.</p> <p>Step 1: Identify the problem (roots)</p> <p>Step 2: Devise plans (trunk) Decide on the best plan and implement it (trunk transport plan to branches and leaves)</p> <p>Step 3: Solution (branches and leaves grow, and the tree is happy and healthy, but if not go back to step 2)</p>
<b>Material needed</b>	<p>The story of Maraai Maroela tree.</p> <p>Poster of “The decision making tree.”</p> <p>Instructions to the educator.</p>
<b>Activity 6.3</b>	<b>Assess problem solving skills</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Assess the learners’ problem-solving skills and their ability to apply it.
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Each learner receives a worksheet with the problem solving steps. They will be solving three problems with this:</p> <p>1st: A fictional problem – guided by the educator.</p> <p>2nd: A problem that they have personally experienced previously maybe with friends, bad test results, friction at home.</p> <p>3rd: An example problem they go search for at home, in break time or amongst their friends.</p>
<b>Material needed</b>	<p>Worksheets.</p> <p>Instructions to the educator.</p>

### 7.3.7 Module 7: Summarizing and termination

<b>Activity 7.1</b>	<b>Revision of different emotions</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Revision of the emotions that were learned and reinforcing the different meanings and experiences that are linked to each of them.
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Guide the learners in their attempt to name as many emotions as possible and thereafter provide short explanations of what each emotion entails. The learners are guided past the elementary emotions like angry, scared, sad, glad and happy. The aim is to broaden their focus to more complicated and complex emotional experiences, like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disappointed - I got bad marks in a test</li> <li>• anxious - there is a noise outside my window</li> <li>• betrayed - my brother told my mom that I broke a glass</li> <li>• surprise - grandma came to visit unexpectedly</li> <li>• humiliated - I fell in front of the other kids and they laughed at me</li> <li>• concerned - my dog is ill</li> <li>• tolerant - I listen patiently to my friends' daily complaint about her sandwiches</li> <li>• inferior - a educator said to me that I am the naughtiest kid in her class</li> <li>• affectionate - I think how much I love my grandma</li> <li>• excited - we're going on holiday</li> <li>• envious - my friend invites another girl to play with us and I am scared that she would push me aside</li> </ul> <p>The activity further aims to enhance the comprehension of learners regarding the vast difference between the ways your body experience different emotions.</p>

	<p>The learners write the emotions that they can recall on the worksheet “Emotions for smart kids” and add a situation which would evoke the emotion in the column provided for it.</p> <p>In the next activity the learners receive the worksheet “Emotions in colour”. The learners are guided to allow themselves to experience the bodily sensation each of these situations brings about. They are led to feel as if they are really giving a loving hug to mom and therefore experience the warm loving feeling it brings about. The “emotions in colour” worksheet has different emotions written in different fonts. After the learners experienced the emotion according to the instructions provided in the program they choose the emotion in the font that best fits the experience that the emotion brought about. The word is then coloured in the colour that the learner feels goes well with the emotion. In this manner the right brain is incorporated in settling this emotion and its bodily effect for the learner. This will further prepare them not to feel overwhelmed when specific emotions are experienced in future. Each emotion is dealt with separately as prescribed in the program.</p>
<b>Material needed</b>	<p>“Emotions for smart kids” worksheet. “Emotions in colour” worksheet. Instructions from program.</p>
<b>Activity 7.2</b>	<b>Revision of different emotions</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Emphasize higher level emotions.
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Learners divide into pairs and play “Your face – my face” with the aids and instructions provided in the program. This game analyses the learners’ knowledge of different emotions and their ability to demonstrate and describe it correctly. This is done through a fun game, which actively involves every learner and serves as a measuring instrument for the educator to determine if the emotions are correctly understood and incorporated by the learners.</p>



<b>Material needed</b>	“Your face – my face” game. Instructions in program.
<b>Activity 7.3</b>	<b>Revision</b>
<b>Goal of activity</b>	Evaluate the learners’ ability to match higher-level emotions correctly.
<b>Activity</b>	Each learner receives a form with different emotion words to cut out. The form also contains a list of different emotional events. The learners need to match the emotion that would be the result of the event in the list, correctly. Another activity in the same manner is also included in this session. A discussion of the correct answers follows; there will be instances where different emotions will be applicable to the same situation – depending on the learners own experience of it. The aim is that learners should display a thorough comprehension of the emotional effect of these practical situations and the specific emotions accompanying it.
<b>Material needed</b>	Emotional awareness checklist A and B. Instructions to the educator.

## 7.4 SUMMARY

The emotional awareness program is developed in language and with activities that can be utilized for learners from grade one to grade seven. Younger learners will only spend more time on every activity and handle it at a slower pace where older learners will be able to grasp the concepts much faster. The educator involved will also present the program to older learners in a different manner than it is presented to younger learners.

The Emotional Awareness Program covers six aspects which promote emotional growth and abilities and which aim to guide the learners to enhanced emotional awareness. The program was developed in its current form with features to enable the researcher to measure the learners’ progress and to fit into a given time frame. It was therefore limited to a seven-week programme,

but will ideally be extended to be implemented throughout the whole of the school year in a much more extended form.

If implementation of a seven-week program indicates positive emotional development in learners it will be safe to say that a program with a longer term or even daily input in the emotional development of learners will benefit them even more.

The respondents in this study were tested with a standardised questionnaire for measuring the levels of emotional awareness in children, before and after they were exposed to the program. A further comparison through the results of the questionnaires would be the amount of emotional words the learners were able to use before and after the program, as well as the level of emotional words that they possess after they were exposed to the program. A comparison group who did not work through the program was also tested on the same dates as the experimental group in order to measure the effectiveness of the Emotional Awareness Program.

The following chapter focuses on the results obtained from an experimental and comparison group's pre-test and post-test results after the experimental group had been exposed to the Emotional Awareness Program prior to the post-test. The analysed data will be empirically presented and interpreted in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 8

## Research Methodology

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Emotional awareness and education as discussed in previous chapters present the potential to be successfully incorporated with each other. Emotional awareness, being the ability to recognize and communicate what you are feeling and to have empathy for what others are feeling, is evidently a significant component in an individual's overall existence. Stanton, Parsa and Austenfeld (2002:278) indicate emotional awareness to be of importance in different facets of functioning, for it:

- contributes to resilience;
- is critical in forming healthy relationships;
- is critical in goal attainment; and
- is necessary for overall mental health.

It is therefore important to take note of the importance of meaningful emotional development in order to enhance the quality of life for children who successfully develop this ability.

Children in the middle childhood developmental phase are spending the most part of their daily lives in school and subsequently in the presence of their educators and friends. The researcher is of the opinion that this system is therefore best suited to be utilized in teaching indispensable emotional knowledge within the educational system in the same way and at the same time as cognitive abilities. This viewpoint is supported by the findings of Tew (2007:34) when she suggests that learning can be enhanced by supportive learning relationships and a healthy level of challenges as it has emotional as well as cognitive components. Integrating social and emotional learning into school curriculums is vital in the preparation of children for life in the twenty first century. Bahman and Maffini (2008:2) agree with this statement in their indication

that many schools hold educators accountable only for the academic achievement of their students. They place little or no emphasis on the social and emotional growth of these children, while these are the very skills they will need to manage themselves effectively to go forward in life.

The need to enhance the emotional awareness of children in middle childhood will thus not only fill a research and educational gap, but also improve the academic, social and emotional performance of primary school learners in the South African context. In order to fulfil this need, the focus of the study was to develop, implement and evaluate an emotional awareness program for children in middle childhood meant for utilization within the educational system.

The goal and objectives of this study are listed below.

### **8.1.1 Goal**

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

### **8.1.2 Objectives**

- To conceptualize emotional awareness theoretically with specific emphasis on children in middle childhood, in the context of the educational system.
- To develop an EA program for children in middle childhood for utilization in classroom context.
- To train an educator in implementing the EA program for children in middle childhood within the classroom context.
- To implement the EA program in a classroom context, by the trained educator.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the EA program through measuring the responses of the learners (respondents).

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

Against this background the following hypotheses were guiding the study.

### 8.1.3 Hypotheses

The following main and sub-hypotheses were applicable in the context of this study:

#### **Main hypothesis:**

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:**

- 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 be enhanced.
- If an EA program is implemented for children in middle childhood within the educational system, their ability to **discriminate between different emotions** will increase.
- 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.

## 8.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The researcher utilized a quantitative research approach in the execution of this study, because a structured approach to inquiry is usually classified as quantitative research, and an unstructured approach as qualitative research, according to Kumar (2005:12).

He indicates further that:

“everything that forms the research process – objectives, design, sample and the questions that the respondents will be asked – is predetermined

when making use of the structured or quantitative approach and is more appropriate to determine the extent of a problem, issue or phenomenon”.

This study lends itself to predetermination of the objectives, design and sample, which thus correlates with the above description of Kumar. A standardised questionnaire was further utilized as measuring instrument contributing to the structured nature of the research, which distinguishes it as a quantitative approach to research.

Fortune and Reid in Fouché and Delport (2005:73) elaborate on the description of the quantitative approach in adding the following aspects which correlated with the execution of this study:

- The study was focused on specific hypotheses that remained constant throughout the investigation.
- Planning about research procedures, design, data collection methods and types of measurement were developed before the study began.
- Data collection procedures were applied in a standardised manner, as all participants answered the same questionnaire.
- Measurement was focused on specific variables.

The researcher objectively measured the effectiveness of the EA program on the emotional functioning of children in middle childhood within an educational context, thus in a primary school class. The research, more specifically, measured the effectiveness of the program on specific variables namely, the learners’ ability to:

- be in contact with their emotions;
- discriminate between different emotions;
- verbalize and “own” their emotions.

The measurement of the above-mentioned variables was done by utilizing a standardised questionnaire, developed by Lane and Bajgar (2003) namely LEAS-C, “*Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale for Children*”. See Appendix A.

### 8.3 TYPE OF RESEARCH

This study resorted within the description of applied research. Applied research is defined by Unrau (2008:25) as studies aiming to: “...develop solutions to problems and applications in practice”.

The South Australian Community Health Research Unit’s Glossary of definitions [Sa] elaborates further on the definition by stating that “applied research is research aiming to apply the results of the research to a specific problem”. Kumar (2005:4) adds that “it is through the application of applied research methodology that a profession is strengthened and advanced”.

This study was applied in nature because it focused on a problem in practice namely a need for an emotional awareness program for children in middle childhood which is scientifically tested to be suitable in the South African education system. Such a program will enable educators to enhance the emotional awareness of their learners and will consequently add new knowledge to the existing knowledge base of emotional awareness.

In the context of applied research, intervention research was applicable to this study. Technology in this context consists of all the technical means by which such a profession achieves its objectives”. Intervention research aims to address the application of research in practice. Rothman and Thomas, in Fouché and de Vos (2005:394), further indicate that different kinds of studies may be subsumed under intervention, namely:

- intervention knowledge development,
- knowledge utilization, and
- design and development.

In the context of this study, the sub-type of intervention research namely design and development was applicable 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 implementation within the educational system. In accordance

to De Vos' (2005:394-407) description of the process of intervention research, the research process followed in this study can briefly be described as follows:

### **8.3.1 Phase 1: Problem analysis and project planning**

Hastings, in De Vos (2005:395), defines a social problem as “a condition affecting a significant number of people” and “about which is felt something could be done through collective action”. A Lack of emotional awareness amongst children in middle childhood as a social problem and the analysis of this problem, rooted from a master's degree study conducted by the researcher in 2006 (Knoetze, 2006). This study's findings indicated that educators found emotional awareness to be a valuable developmental area which was, in their opinion, underdeveloped in their learners. They further expressed that they did not have sufficient knowledge on the subject and were eager to address the development of emotional awareness within their classroom context.

Children in the middle childhood phase spend most of their time at school and the educational system is therefore an ideal system to utilize for the enhancement of emotional awareness. Children are also among their peers as well as among authority figures at school where academic and other developmental achievements are measured, which sets the scene to implement gained emotional knowledge practically.

The project planning that resulted from the above-mentioned study (Knoetze, 2006) was thus to develop a program on emotional awareness for utilization by educators in their classroom context. The aim was to fulfil a need to optimize children's functioning as a whole and contribute to a positive atmosphere within the classroom context, which can then in turn expand to the whole school's system. The Department of Education in the Limpopo Province approved the study. Grade three, Afrikaans-speaking learners were the respondents in the study. Written consent of parents (Appendix E) and the educator involved (Appendix F) as well as assent of respondents (Appendix G) were obtained.



### **8.3.2 Phase 2: Information gathering and synthesis**

Fawcett, Suarez-Balcazar, Balcazar, White, Paine, Blanchard and Embree, in De Vos (2005:398), indicate that information gathering and synthesis are essential to discover what others have done to understand and address the problem. Knowledge acquisition involves using existing information sources, studying natural examples and identifying functional elements of successful models and programs.

The researcher acquired information regarding children in middle childhood and their emotional awareness through a thorough literature study. Interviews with experts in the field of psychology and education further broadened the researcher's knowledge on the existing need as well as most suitable ways of addressing the identified need. The researcher also studied examples of international successful models of emotional awareness learning programs.

A synthesis of the gathered information resulted in the compilation of an EA program for children in middle childhood for utilization in the South African educational system.

### **8.3.3 Phase 3: Design**

De Vos (2005: 400-401) describes the design phase of the intervention process as designing a way of observing events related to the phenomenon, as well specifying procedural elements of the intervention.

The researcher designed a program for the development of emotional awareness from the Gestalt Approach and utilized Gestalt play therapy techniques to do so. Knowledge gained from the literature study concerning the child in the middle childhood phase and the educational system was combined for the development of the program. The researcher utilized the standardized questionnaire developed by Dr. Richard Lane and Jane Bajgar (2003) (Appendix A), for measuring of the levels of emotional awareness in children. The questionnaire is constructed to be user friendly, taking into consideration that the respondents are young and thus need to have a clear understanding of the questions asked in order to obtain valid and reliable responses. The

questionnaire consists of twelve scenarios on which the respondents were to respond and was thus not too extended which could result in them losing interest to the end of the questionnaire.

#### **8.3.4 Phase 4: Early development and pilot testing**

Thomas, in De Vos (2005:401), defines development as the process by which an innovative intervention is implemented and used on a trial basis, developmentally tested for its adequacy, and refined and redesigned as necessary. According to Fawcette et al., in De Vos (2005:402), this phase includes the important operations of developing a prototype or preliminary intervention, conducting a pilot test and applying design criteria to the preliminary intervention concept.

The utilization of a standardized questionnaire eliminated the need for pilot testing the measuring instrument. However, the educator involved was trained; the EA program was thoroughly discussed with her and her input was gained. Problems identified in the content of the preliminary program, training of the educator and input from the educator, were isolated for revision and adaption before conducting the main study.

#### **8.3.5 Phase 5: Evaluation and advanced development**

According to De Vos (2005:403), this phase comprises the following steps of operations: selecting an experimental design, collecting and analyzing data, replicating the intervention under field conditions and refining the intervention. She indicates that this phase helps to demonstrate causal relationships between the intervention and the behaviours and related conditions targeted for change.

In the context of this study, the most applicable design for this study was the comparison group pre-test – post-test design. Fouché and de Vos (2005:139-140) explain that the comparison group pre-test – post-test design elaborates on the one-group pre-test – post-test design, by adding a comparison group. The dependent variable (emotional awareness) was measured (pre-test) before implementing the independent variable (EA program) with the experimental group. The independent variable was subsequently introduced (EA program), followed by a repeated

measurement (post-test) of the dependent variable (emotional awareness) after the EA program was completed. The comparison group received both the pre-test and the post-test but did not participate in the EA program/independent variable. Measurements of the pre- and post-tests of both the experimental and comparison group regarding the dependent variable (emotional awareness) were compared in order to evaluate the impact of the independent variable (EA program).

The researcher collected and analyzed data by comparing the pre- and post-test data of both groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the developed EA program.

### **8.3.6 Phase 6: Dissemination**

This phase did not form part of this study.

## **8.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

As mentioned and described in phase 5 of the process of intervention research in the previous section the researcher made use of the comparison-group pre-test – post-test design for this study. Due to the nature of the study, namely the implementation of an educational program and measuring its effectiveness, two factors needed to be present:

- Comparison between the emotional awareness levels of respondents before and after exposure to the EA program.
- Comparison between respondents who were exposed to the EA program and respondents who were not exposed to the EA program.

The comparison group pre-test – post-test design was thus best suited as research design for this study.

## 8.5 POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHODS

### 8.5.1 Population

Arkava and Lane, as quoted by Strydom and Venter (2002:198), refer to a universe as “all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is interested”. The universe in this study was all learners in the middle childhood developmental phase, namely grade three learners, eight years of age, involved in primary education in South Africa.

Bickman and Rog (1998:164) note that a population is the group about which the researcher would like to speak. Arkava and Lane (in Strydom, 2005a:193) define the term population as: “A term that sets boundaries on the study units. Population refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics relevant to the study”. The population in this research study was learners in the middle childhood developmental phase, namely grade three learners, eight years old and involved in primary education in the Waterberg district of the Limpopo Province.

### 8.5.2 Sample

Hendricks (2006:2) indicates that samples allow the researcher to generalize results to the larger population from which the sample was drawn.

Reid and Smith (in Strydom, 2005a:194) are of the opinion that feasibility is the main reason for sampling. It is almost impossible to include a total population in a specific study, mostly because all of them are simply not reachable. For the purpose of this study, it would imply that every child in middle childhood (grade three, eight year old learners), in the Waterberg District of the Limpopo Province should have completed questionnaires and needed to be included in the program for emotional awareness. This was simply not feasible.

A sample of 49 learners in the middle childhood developmental phase of a specific primary school in the Waterberg District of the Limpopo Province was selected for the study according to the following criteria:

- **Location:** A primary school in the Waterberg District of the Limpopo Province.

- **Level of education:** Grade three learners
- **Manner of education:** Learners who spent the most of their school day in the presence of the same educator.
- **Age:** Eight year old learners.
- **Language:** Afrikaans-speaking learners.

The sample for this study was drawn regarding three aspects namely:

- A school to include.
- The grade to include.
- The classes to include.

### 8.5.3 Sampling Method

The *school* included in the study was selected through utilization of availability sampling/convenience sampling, based on the headmaster and personnel's motivation for involvement in this study and their (a) accessibility; (b) appropriate age of learners in the school; and (c) their willingness to participate. This is a public school and the approval of the Department of Education in Limpopo (Appendix C) was thus obtained as well as approval from the governing body of the school involved (Appendix D).

The sampling method best suited for sampling of the *grade* to involve was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is described by Babbie (2004:183) as a type of non-probability sampling where the respondents are 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. This study needed to be conducted with learners in a specific developmental phase, namely the middle childhood phase and more specifically grade three learners, about eight years of age. It was also aimed at the educational system and in a classroom context to determine the effect of the EA program on the respondents. Grade three was thus the grade purposively sampled for inclusion in this study.

Random sampling was used to select the two grade three *classes* to involve in the study. Bernard (2006:146) indicates that random sampling entails that every unit of analysis has an equal chance of being chosen for study. In the context of this study, two grade three classes needed to be selected, namely one class to serve as the experimental group and one class to serve as the comparison group. The selected primary school had four grade three classes consisting of three Afrikaans classes and one English class. In order to achieve optimal comparison it was beneficial to utilize groups of the same language. Two grade three Afrikaans-speaking classes were thus available and a random selection, according to the simple random sampling method (Strydom, 2005a:200), was done to determine which class was to be the experimental group and which one the comparison group for the main study. The experimental group consisted of 25 respondents and the comparison group of 24 respondents. Absent learners during the pre- or post-test resulted in 21 useable questionnaires from the experimental group and 19 from the comparison group, thus 40 respondents.

Informed consent was signed by the educator involved (Appendix F) as well as the parents/guardians of the respondents involved (Appendix E) and assent was given by learners in both the experimental and comparison group (Appendix G) for their involvement in completion of the questionnaires as well as the experimental group's participation in a **seven** module program for the development of emotional awareness.

## **8.6 DATA-COLLECTION METHOD**

The collection of data for this study was done by utilizing the standardised questionnaire "*Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale for Children (LEAS-C)*" developed by Dr. Richard Lane and Dr. Jane Bajgar (2003) (Appendix A). This questionnaire was obtained from the Department Psychiatry of the University of Arizona, U.S.A. and used for this study with their approval (Appendix B).

### **8.6.1 Measuring Instrument**

The LEAS-C consists of the questionnaire, a scoring manual and a glossary of words. The emotional vocabulary in this glossary of words is divided into four levels (level zero, level one,

level two and level three) according to the emotional weight of a word, as determined by the developers of the LEAS-C. The questionnaire depicts twelve emotional scenarios where the respondent's response is scored based on the complexity of emotional experiences described for himself/herself as well as another person depicted in the situation. Each scenario thus obtains two scores, one for "self" and one for "other". A total is then also calculated from these two scores.

The glossary of words that accompanies the scoring manual aids the scoring of emotion words according to the emotional value attached to it. Complexity of emotional awareness is therefore ultimately assessed on five levels. Bajgar and Lane's scoring manual is available from the University of Wollongong and explains scoring of the questionnaire as follows:

A low awareness level 1 response may stress somatic features, e.g. "I would feel sick", or may directly state a lack of emotional response, e.g., "I would feel nothing". A level 2 response may reflect action e.g., "I would feel like smashing the wall" or a more global generalised response e.g. "I would feel good". Level 3 responses reflect undimensional emotions e.g., "I would feel sad". Level 4 and 5 responses reflect greater complexity in awareness with emotion blends evident e.g., "I would feel angry but maybe a little bit sad as well". Where there is no response or the response reflects cognition e.g. "I would feel like she did it deliberately", a score of 0 is given.

Three scores are allocated for each scenario: Self-Awareness, Other awareness and Total Awareness. The Total Awareness score is the higher of the Self and Other Awareness scores. Each scenario is rated on a 5 point scale. Ratings for each scenario are summed to give a score out of 60.

The questionnaire tested respondents' level of emotional awareness with specific emphasis on their ability to be in contact with their emotions, their ability to discriminate between different emotions, their ability to verbalize and "own" emotions and their ability to strengthen social relationships. The questionnaire with twelve open-ended questions (scenarios), arranged in an intricate and differentiated manner, was utilized as a pre- and post-test.

The respondents in this study were eight years of age and the questionnaire was developed for children of this age group. The questionnaire's content was thus comprehensible for eight year old learners. It is further constructed in language applicable to the age and developmental level of respondents and in a manner that enabled respondents to easily indicate their answers. The questionnaire and its scoring measurements were translated from English to Afrikaans (due to the fact that the respondents are Afrikaans-speaking), with the permission of its developers (Appendix B). Dr. Lane indicated that translated questionnaires were already successfully utilized in other languages (French, German, Portuguese and Japanese) as well. In the event of this being a standardized questionnaire it was consequently ensured that it is an age appropriate and user friendly measuring instrument. The fact that a standardised questionnaire was used also annulled the purpose of a pilot test as the validity and reliability of the questionnaire was already tested.

### **8.6.2 Validity and Reliability of the Measuring Instrument**

Babbie (2005:148) explains that the conventional usage of validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning or the concept under consideration and accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure. The following techniques were utilised to assess the validity of the measuring instrument in this study.

**Face validity:** Delport (2005:161) indicates that a measuring instrument should be structured not only to accurately measure the attributes under consideration, but should also appear to be a relevant measure of those attributes. The questionnaire utilized in this study is a standardised measuring instrument and was thus proved to have validity. Its general purpose is to question issues regarding emotional experiences and the reaction to and effect of emotions on the respondent. The questionnaire furthermore did measure the three variables of the study, namely:

- Being in contact with emotions
- Discriminating between different emotions
- Verbalizing of emotions

The questionnaire's face validity therefore adequately appeared to be a relevant measure of the variables in question.



**Criterion validity:** Babbie (2005:148) states that criterion validity can also be called predictive validity and is an indication of the degree to which a measure relates to some external criterion. The criterion against which the scores on the instrument could be compared was the different variables mentioned and their individual features.

**Construct validity:** Delpont (2005:162) indicates construct validity to be concerned with determining the degree to which an instrument successfully measures a theoretical construct. It further involves not only validation of the instrument itself, but also of the theory underlying it. The questionnaire utilized in this study is standardised and therefore constructed from theory and literature on the subject and thus of high construct validity.

**Reliability:** According to Rubin and Babbie (2010:91) reliability refers to the likelihood that a given measurement will yield the same description of a given phenomenon if that same measurement is repeated. Bajgar and Lane (2003), developers of the LEAS-C, provide preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of the LEAS-C. They state the following: “Total scores have acceptable internal consistency (coefficient alpha = .66) and good inter-rater reliability ( $r = .89$ )”.

### 8.6.3 Pilot Study

According to Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001:1) the term pilot study refers to a mini version of a full-scale study (also called 'feasibility' study), as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular research instrument such as a questionnaire. The pilot study is a crucial element of a good study design. Conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success in the main study, but it does increase the likelihood.

De Vos (2005:402) states that pilot testing is designed to determine whether the intervention will work. Fawcett et al. (in De Vos, 2005:402) elaborate on this statement in their opinion that the pilot test helps to determine the effectiveness of the intervention and identifies which elements of the prototype may need to be revised.

During the execution of this study the pilot testing of the measuring instrument seem to be unnecessary due to the utilization of a standardised measuring instrument. However, the educator involved within the study was trained to implement the program before conducting the main study. The training and input of the educator served thus as ‘pilot testing’ of the content and application of the developed program. Discussion of the different modules of the program led to amendments where necessary for incorporation in the normal curriculum and daily activities of a grade three class.

#### **8.6.4 Administration of the Measuring Instrument**

The questionnaire was administered as a group-administered questionnaire. Delport (2005:169) indicates that:

“in using group administered questionnaires the respondents who are present in a group should each complete a questionnaire on their own. Preferably, each respondent should receive the same stimulus and complete his own questionnaire without discussion with the other members of the group”.

The researcher explained the purpose and way of completing the questionnaire to all the respondents in both the experimental and comparison group. Each question was read to all the respondents in similar manner, which ensured a similar interpretation of questions. By implementing such a procedure the researcher ensured that respondents had the same understanding, considering their young age. The researcher was present during the completion of the questionnaire, in order to be available to clarify and assist respondents if needed. This method of questionnaire completion also rendered the benefit that the researcher was in control of the completion of questionnaires and a 100% completion and retrieval ratio was achieved for those present. Some learners were absent during the completion of questionnaires, and only the questionnaires of respondents present for pre- and post testing could be used. A total of 40 respondents was present for both tests and their questionnaires were thus utilized for data analysis.

## **8.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Kruger, de Vos, Fouché and Venter (2005:218) note that data analysis is the categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data, in order 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 through the use of computerized data analysis to configure the collected data into comprehensible 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. Research results, namely the influence of the EA program, developed by the researcher on variables as measured in a pre- and post-test of the experimental group and the comparison group, were statistically analysed and presented through graphical presentations in graphs, diagrams and tables to give order, structure and meaning to the collected data.

## **8.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Balnaves and Caputi (2001:239) state that the purpose of ethics is to make researchers aware of the issues that may arise in their work, and to encourage them to educate themselves and colleagues to behave ethically.

Robertson and Dearling (2004:33) highlight that ethics is about the moral position adopted by the researcher and those funding that piece of research. Each of these groups has a moral obligation to protect people from any mistreatment that could result from taking part in the research itself.

The following ethical concerns were relevant in the context of this study:

### **8.8.1 Avoidance of harm**

Strydom (2005b:58) indicates physical or emotional harm may be done to respondents during a research study. Harm to respondents during a study in social science may be more emotional. Darlington and Scott (2002:22) indicate that it is the responsibility of the researcher to see to it that respondents involved in the study will not be harmed and to take the necessary measures in this regard.

Aronstam in Blom (2004:52) urges that awareness brings clients into contact with their own needs and emotions and they thus learn to accept responsibility. Emotion is an unavoidable part of children's daily life (Maritz 2005), they are inevitably confronted with positive and negative emotions whether involved in the study or not. The development of emotional awareness provided the learners involved in the study with insight, skills and understanding of the emotions they are experiencing and they learned constructive reactions to it.

The researcher is thus of the opinion that the risk of emotional or physical harm to respondents in this study was limited. The study focused on a positive addition to a child's development and therefore benefitted the learners involved. It furthermore added knowledge to the educational skills of the educators involved in the study. The study was an enriching experience, for learners and educator. The researcher was however alert to detect any form of emotional harm, due to exposure to the Emotional Awareness Program and was prepared to take measures if necessary or to refer those respondents to the psychologist involved at the Help Centre of the involved school.

### **8.8.2 Informed consent**

Informed consent, according to Kumar (2005:212), implies that subjects are made adequately aware of the type of information you want from them, why the information is being sought, what purpose it will be put to, how they are expected to participate in the study and how it will directly or indirectly affect them.

The retrieval of informed consent implies, according to Strydom (2005b:59), that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures which will be followed during the investigation, the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to potential subjects. Letherby and Bywaters (2007:78) indicate that informed consent ensures on the one hand that participants know their rights and it protects the researcher from later accusations made by study participants. On the other hand, informed consent might have the effect that people may be discouraged to participate.

An informed consent letter was formulated for the parents (Appendix E) as well as an assent letter (Appendix G) for the children to explain the goal, methods and risks involved in the study. These letters were formulated in a respondent friendly manner using language and explanations regarding the subject that clarified the study and its aim, to the learners and their parents. Special effort was taken to ensure that the learners understood, according to their age level, the goal of the investigation and procedures which was to be followed during the investigation. Emotional awareness and what it entails needed to be thoroughly explained to parents to ensure that they have a clear understanding of how inclusion in the study would affect their children. Both parents and learners were requested to sign the informed consent and assent letter.

Parents were furnished with the motivation that emotions inevitably influences their children on a daily basis but that awareness thereof has the potential to transform the experience to a skill that can serve as edification to the child, as was stated above. This statement is supported by Thomson, Rudolph and Henderson (2004:196) in their comprehension of Gestalt methods when they indicate that enhancement of the self increases a person's ability to be *in contact*, with the goal being to restore the child's natural functioning and self regulatory processes. Parents might have been uncertain whether or not emotional manipulation was a positive venture and was therefore enlightened with this information to indicate through literature and previous studies that the anticipated outcome of the study had the potential of positive enhancement. This enabled parents to come to an informed decision regarding their children's involvement in the study. The process of pretesting, training of the educator, implementing of the program, post-testing and the

motivations thereof was also explained to parents. They were also informed that they will be given the opportunity to discuss their children's test results if they felt the need to.

Voluntary participation was emphasized. The confidentiality of respondents' identities was highlighted to ease the fear of misuse of information gained through the research intervention.

Educators already indicated their willingness to be included in the study but were also made aware that their participation was voluntary, and signed consent was obtained for their participation in the study.

### **8.8.3 Deception of respondents**

Neuman (2000:229) notes that misleading or deception of respondents occurs when the researcher intentionally misleads subjects by way of written or verbal instruction, the actions of other people, or certain aspects of the settings.

The educators' training and daily involvement with children furnished them with a reasonable understanding of the term "emotional awareness" where an explanation of the researcher's intent in this matter was given. The goal and objectives of the study was clearly stated in a cover letter to educators, learners and parents. Respondents were thoroughly informed of the value the study will add to the educational system and individual learners. Parents, educators and learners thus took an informed decision regarding their willingness to take part in the study.

### **8.8.4 Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality**

Babbie (2005:64) states that the clearest concern in the protection of the subjects' interests and well-being is the protection of their identity. If revealing their survey responses could harm them in any way, the adherence to this norm becomes all the more important. He indicates that a response may be considered anonymous when the researcher cannot identify a given response with

a given respondent. Confidentiality becomes applicable where the researcher can identify a given person's responses, but essentially promises not to do so publicly (Babbie, 2005:65).

No information on identity or other identifying particulars is required to meet the goals of this study, if parents are comfortable with this arrangement. A coding system was used to compare pre- and post-test results. The researcher assigned a specific number to each respondent for differentiation between respondents and to adhere to confidentiality of identities. This proved useful in the processing of information without violating the anonymity of respondents. Referral to specific respondents or classes in publications on the study will also adhere to the anonymity of respondents and confidentiality of information.

Information gained by the researcher through the respondents' involvement in the study was handled with the utmost confidentiality. The fact that social workers operate within the realm of confidential information on a daily basis will assure respondents that the study will not in any way reflect on their competence or abilities.

### **8.8.5 Actions and competence of researcher**

Balnaves and Caputi (2001:239) state that a researcher should not accept work that he/she is not qualified to carry out and should not claim expertise in areas outside those that would be recognized academically as their true field of expertise.

The researcher is a registered social worker with 20 years of field experience in family care. The researcher has sufficient experience in social work with children, especially children that have been traumatized because of maltreatment resulting in problem behaviour and emotional numbness.

The researcher attained a master's degree in play therapy from the University of Pretoria. Educators' knowledge and viewpoints regarding emotional awareness were researched as part of the above mentioned degree and added to the theoretical foundation of this study. The researcher had thus already investigated educators' knowledge of emotional awareness and their opinion on

the necessity of implementing a program, as was researched in this study. The researcher already had substantial experience in the field of research and as such, competent and adequately skilled to undertake this investigation.

### **8.8.6 Release of publication and findings**

Information acquired from the research study ought to be objectively formulated and unambiguously conveyed to avoid or minimize misappropriation by subjects, the public or colleagues (Strydom, 2005b:65).

A written report under supervision of a study leader was compiled after the investigation was completed. The acquired information is in this manner made available to the broader public and recommendations, based on the findings, was made.

The researcher is obliged to furnish an accurate version of findings, as well as the shortcomings of the study. The school involved in the study received specific feedback regarding findings and recommendations.

This study was conducted as intervention research with the aim being to address the application of the research in practice. The Emotional Awareness Program proved to be effective and useful within the educational context it will be further developed, introduced and marketed for further implementation after completion of this study.

### **8.8.7 Debriefing of respondents**

Strydom (2005b:66) clarifies the debriefing of respondents after completion of the investigation as follows: “the researcher has to rectify any misconceptions that may have arisen in the minds of participants. They will get the opportunity to work through their experience and its aftermath and handle the termination and withdrawal of therapy or involvements that stemmed from the study”.



The aim of an emotional awareness program is mostly empowerment of the respondent through heightened emotional awareness. The effect of emotional awareness assists the children to understand their actions according to the emotion involved. The anticipated outcome of the study was that learners will gain an understanding of their emotions and obtain skills for positive channelling of their emotional experiences. This study's risk of harm to respondents was thus foreseen as limited and a debriefing of traumatic experiences was indeed not necessary. If the need for therapy of child respondents, involved in the study does arise at a later stage, it will be addressed through play therapy by another therapist or referred to the psychologist of the school's Help Centre.

## **8.9 SUMMARY**

This quantitative study was carried out according to research methodology best suited to supply the most reliable results. This chapter focused on the research methodology, which formed the basis of this research study. The practical implementation of the different facets that formed part of the process in its entirety was discussed according to the methods in which it was implemented, how it progressed and concluded.

The following chapter provides discussions and graphical representation of the empirical findings from the study. A reflection on the results obtained and an analysis of this information forms part of the content of this chapter, and serves as an indication of the outcome of the study.

# 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.

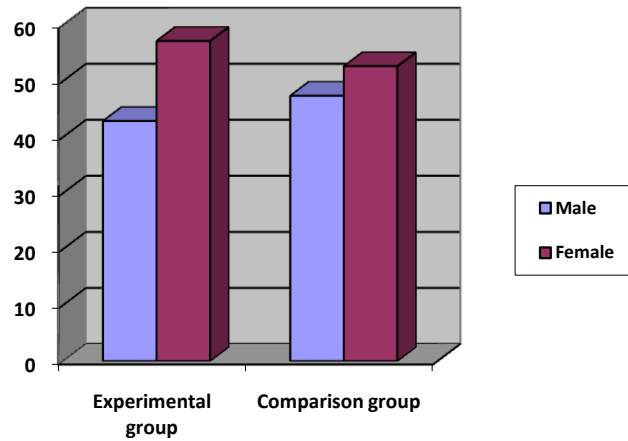
### 9.2.3 Gender of Respondents

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.

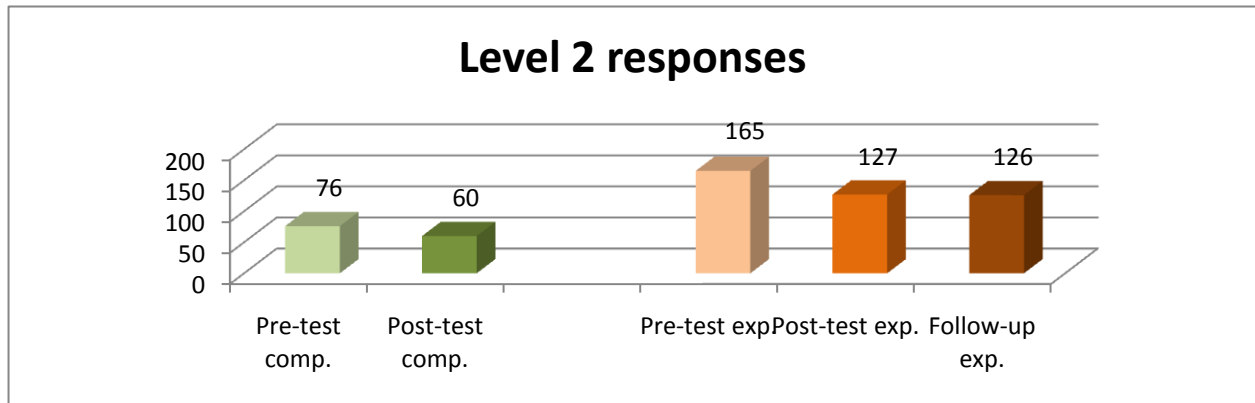
- **Level one**

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**

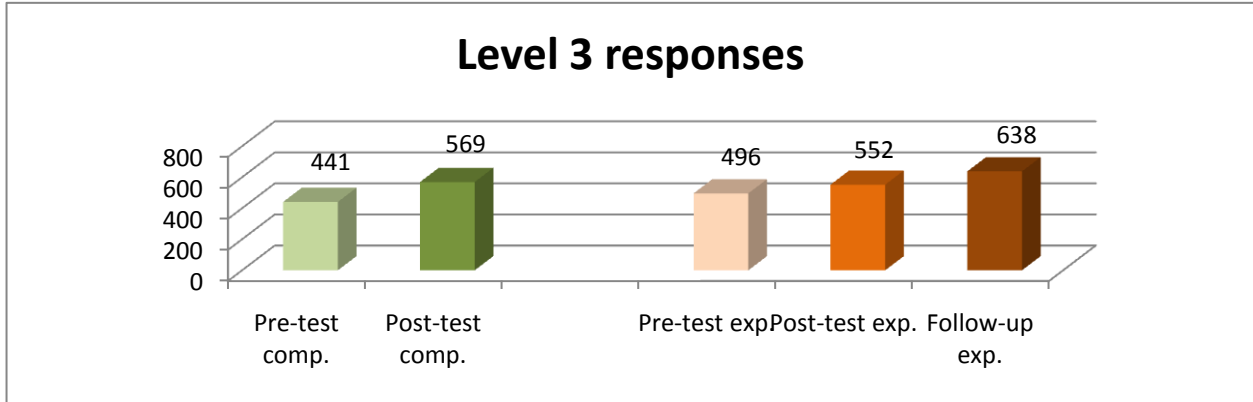
An inconsequential number of level two responses (emotion words) occurred in the pre-test, namely 76 from the comparison group and 165 from the experimental group. The post-test indicated a decrease in level two responses for both groups. The comparison group responded with 60 level two responses, the 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 higher 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.



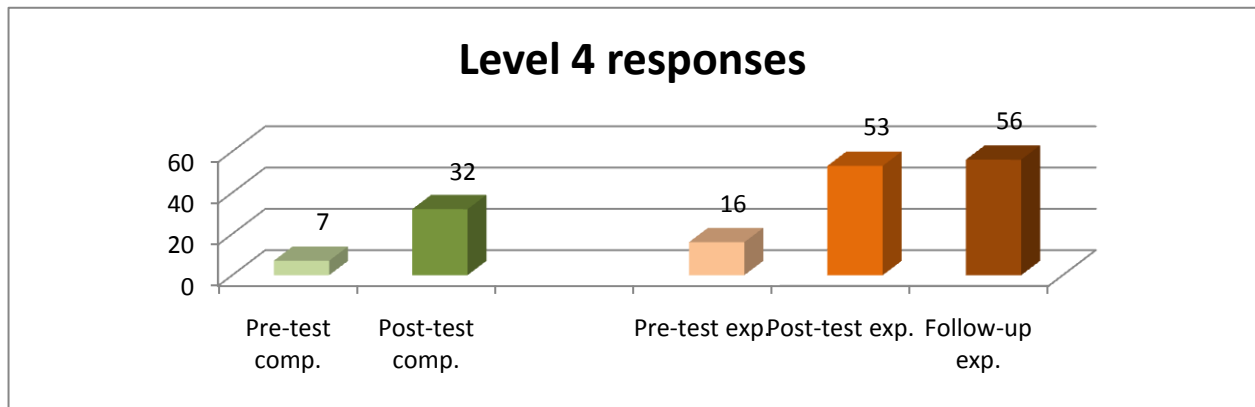
**Figure 9.3: Frequency of level three responses**

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 experimental 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.

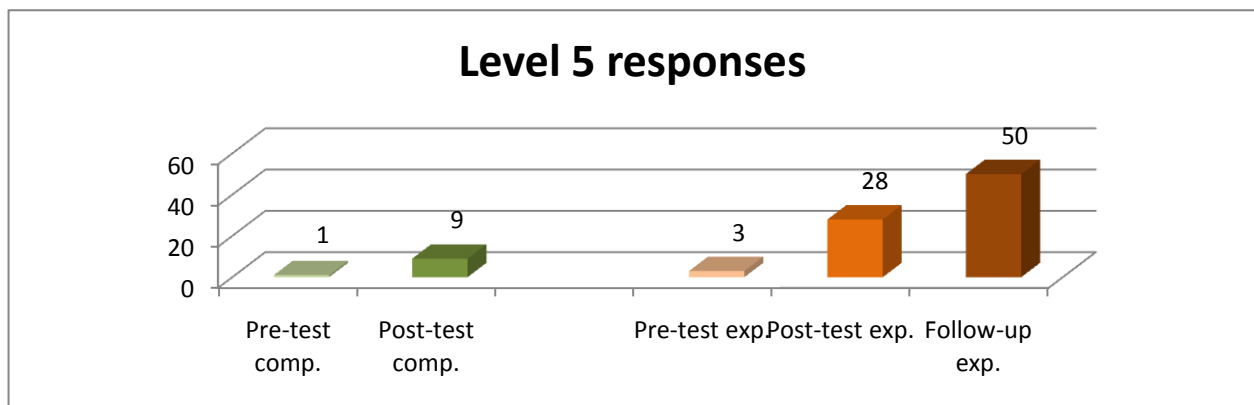
If these results are evaluated with the scoring method for level four and five responses in mind, it stands to reason that the results of the experimental group in this instance are significant. Combinations, compilations and blends of emotions from the other three levels resulted in

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 heightened 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**

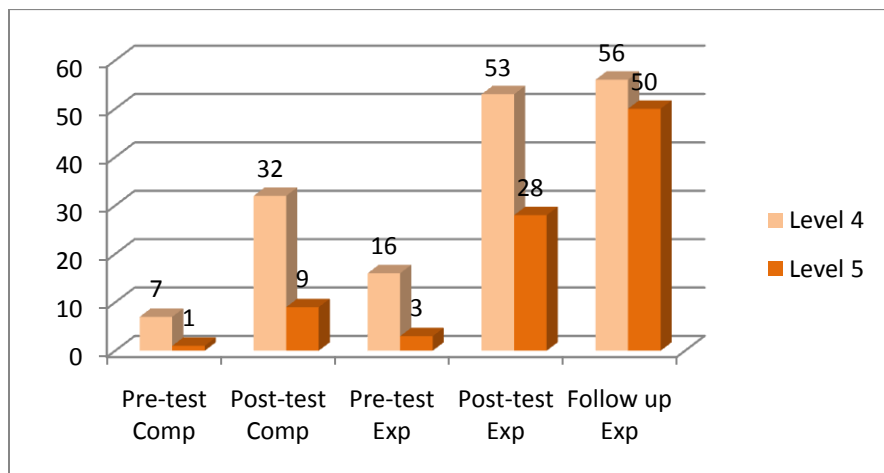
Figure 9.5 shows that it was almost impossible for respondents from both groups to acquire a level five score in the pre-test with merely a single level five response from the comparison group and only three responses from the experimental group. The comparison group was able to obtain nine level five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



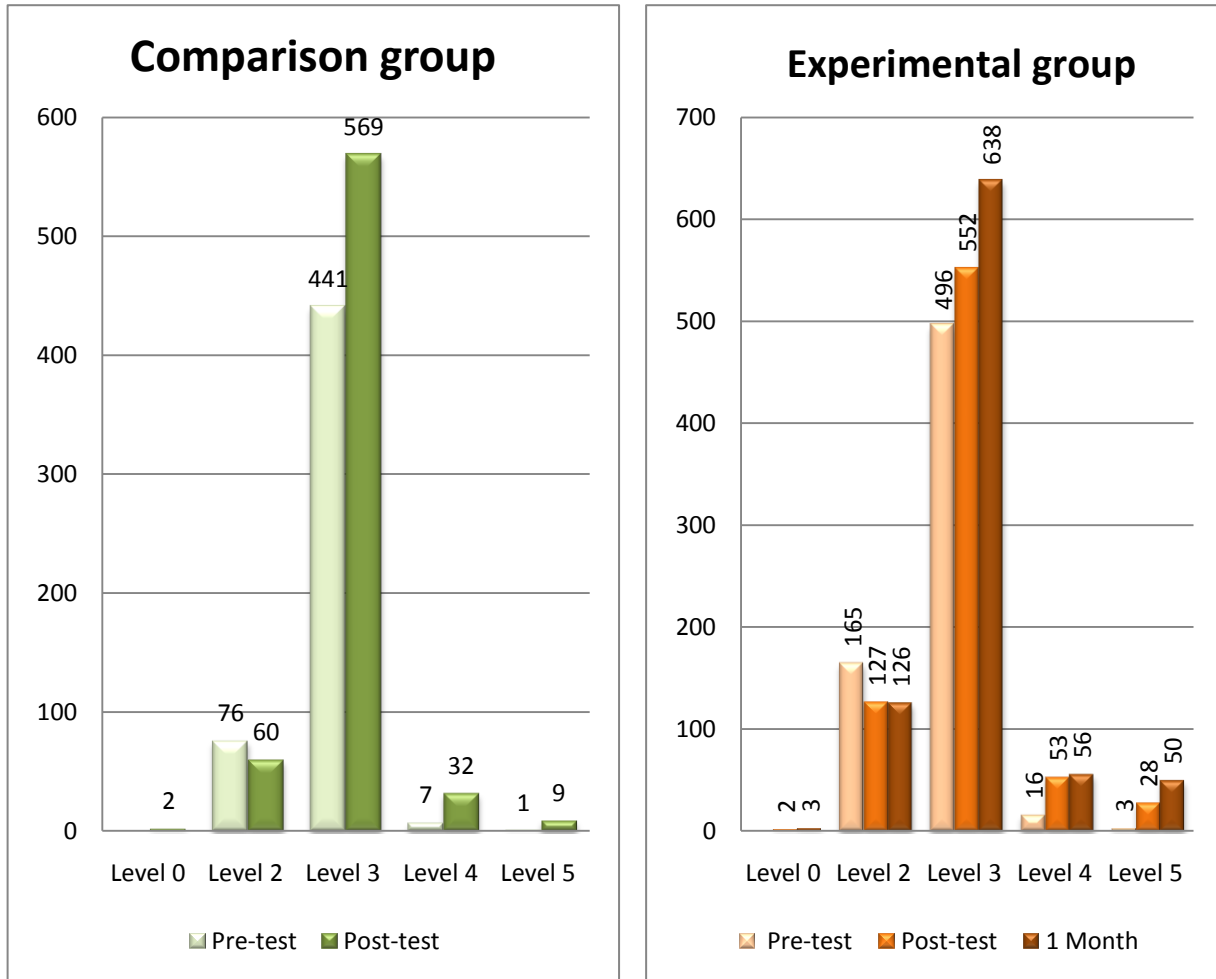
**Figure 9.6: Comparison of level four and five responses between the comparison and experimental group.**

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.

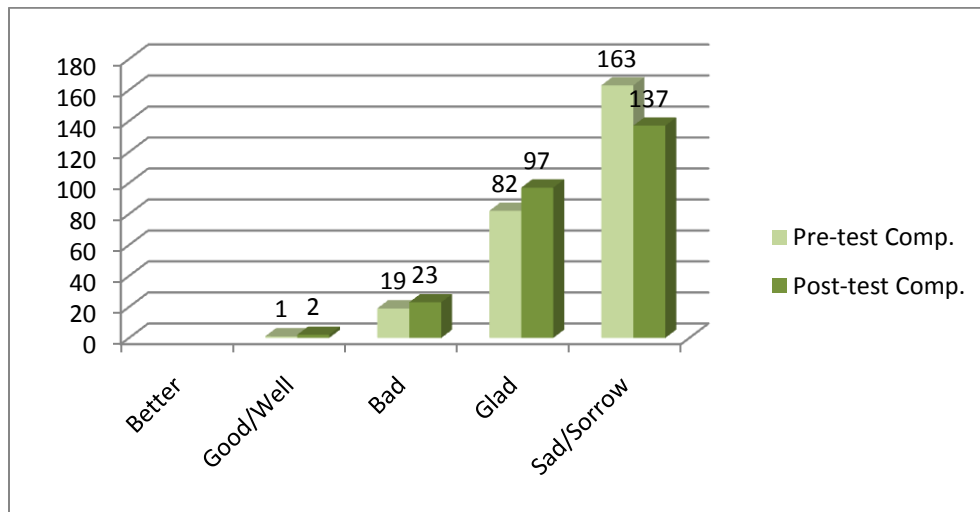
It is therefore of significance to explore the actual responses or specific emotional language, previously only measured on the levels in the LEAS-C it is associated with. The following section will thus analyse the actual language utilized and further assess to what extent the emotional vocabulary of 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 acquired 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 heightened 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.



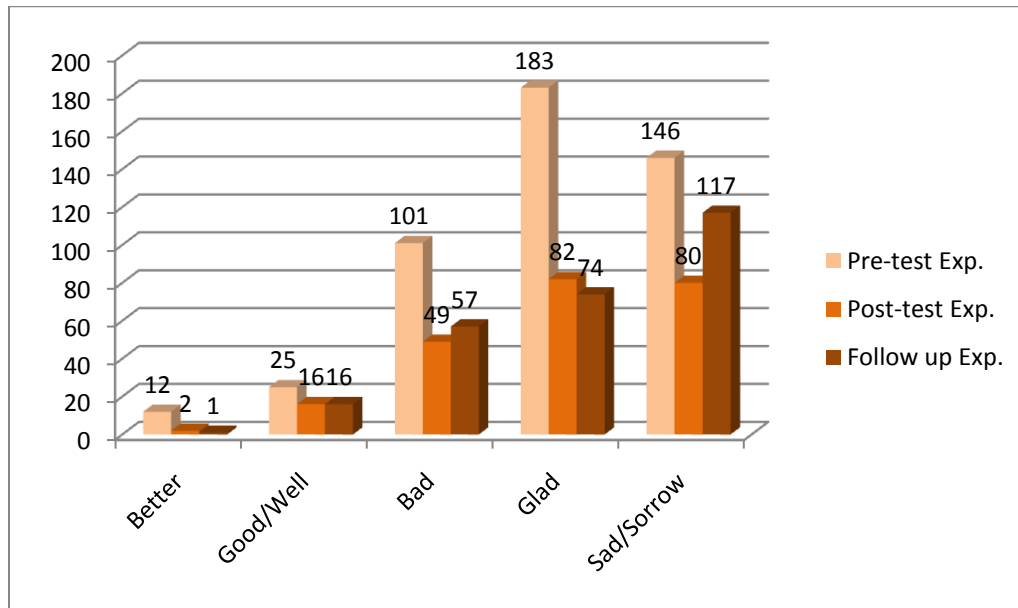
**Figure 9.8: Weak emotion words utilized by the comparison group**

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.

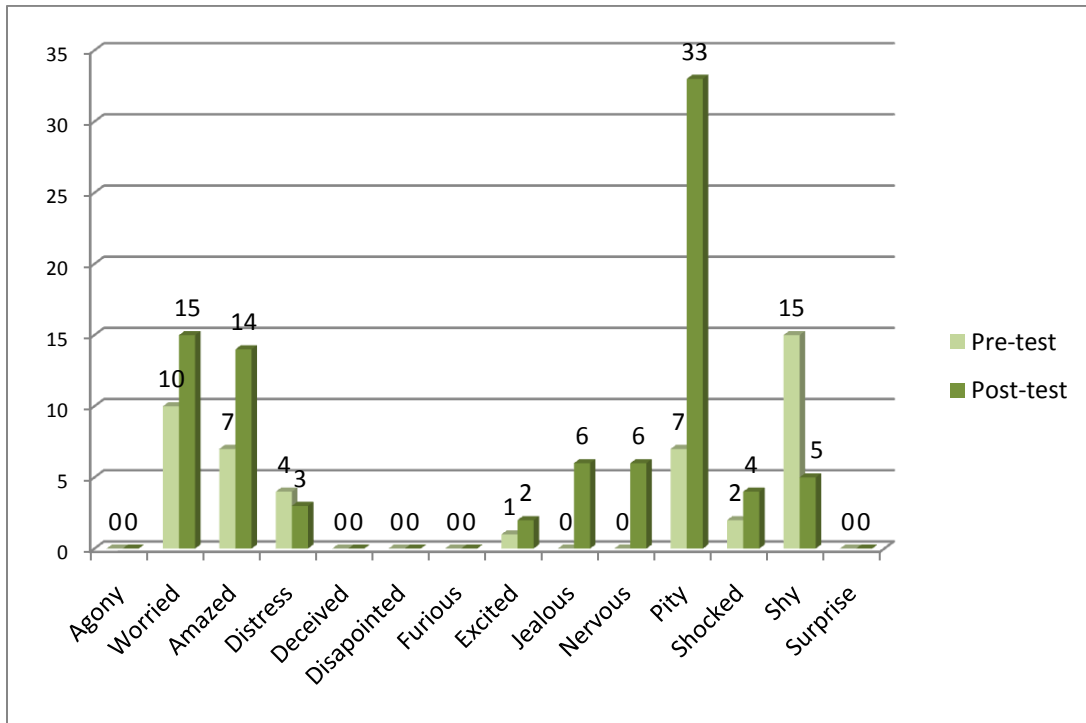
The following interpretation of *weak word* responses from the respondents of the experimental group puts this comparison in context as it is evident how the experimental group’s utilization of weak words declined in the post-test after they acquired higher level emotion vocabulary possibly due to the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

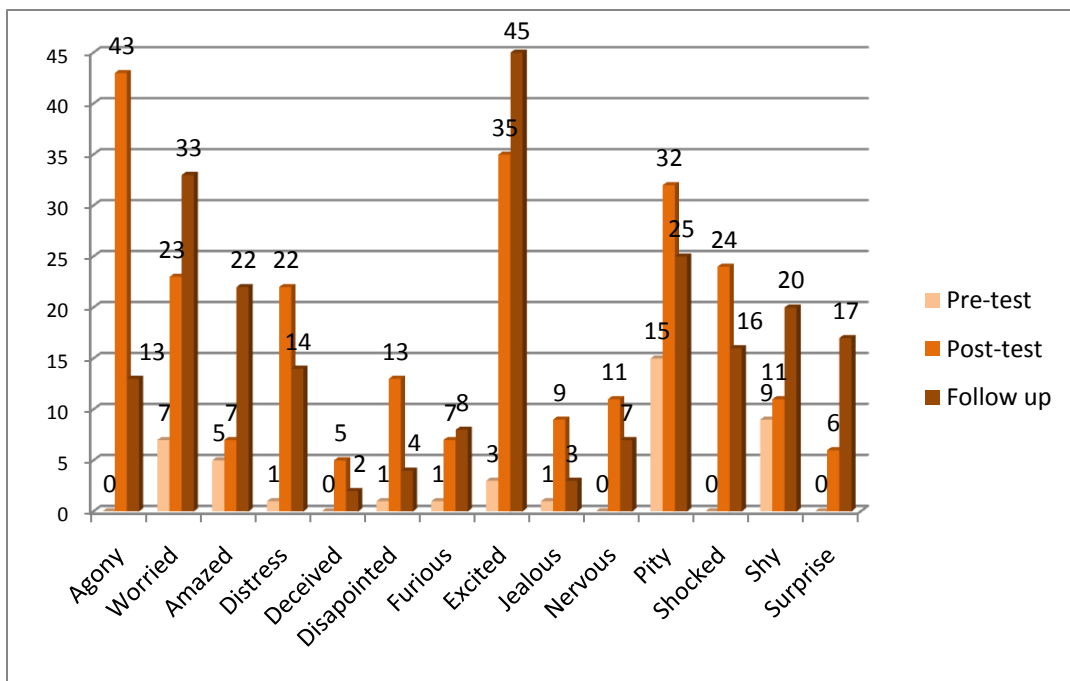
The following Figures compared the results of the comparison and experimental group’s utilization of *strong* emotion words, which confirmed the assumptions drawn from the comparison of respondents’ utilization of *weak* emotion words as indicated in Figures 9.8 and 9.9 above.



**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

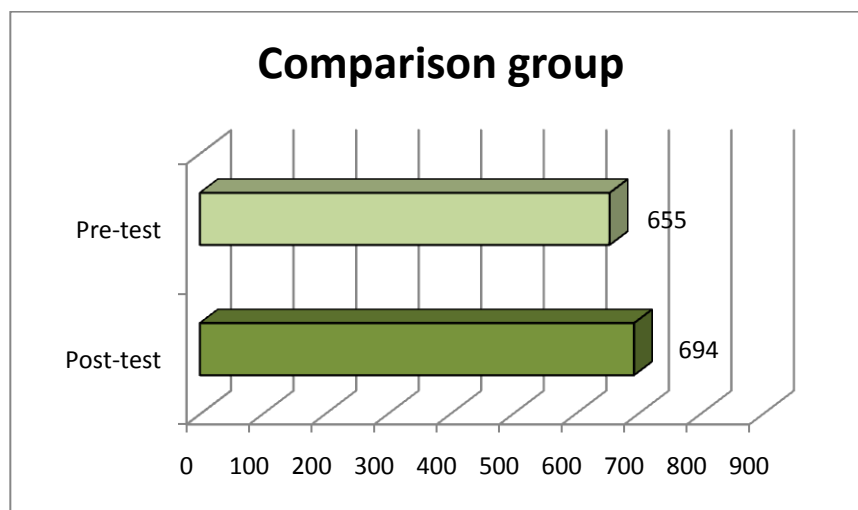
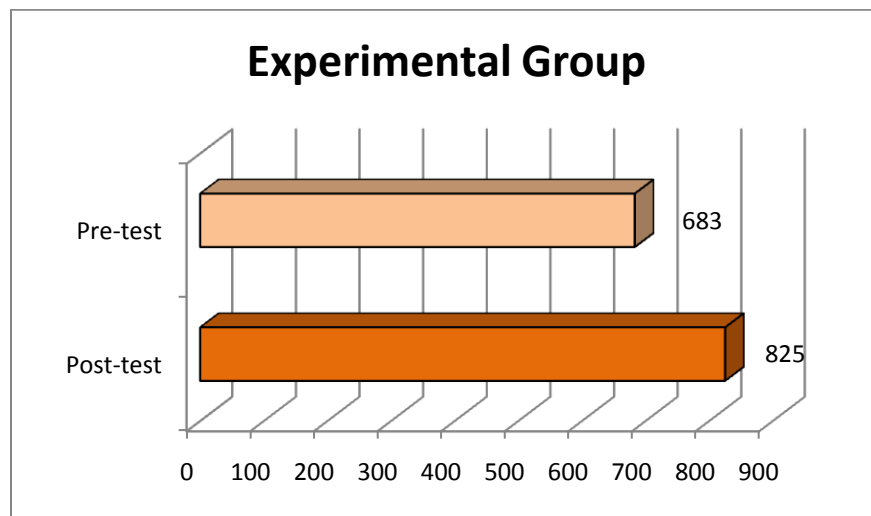


Figure 9.12: Emotional awareness level of comparison group

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.

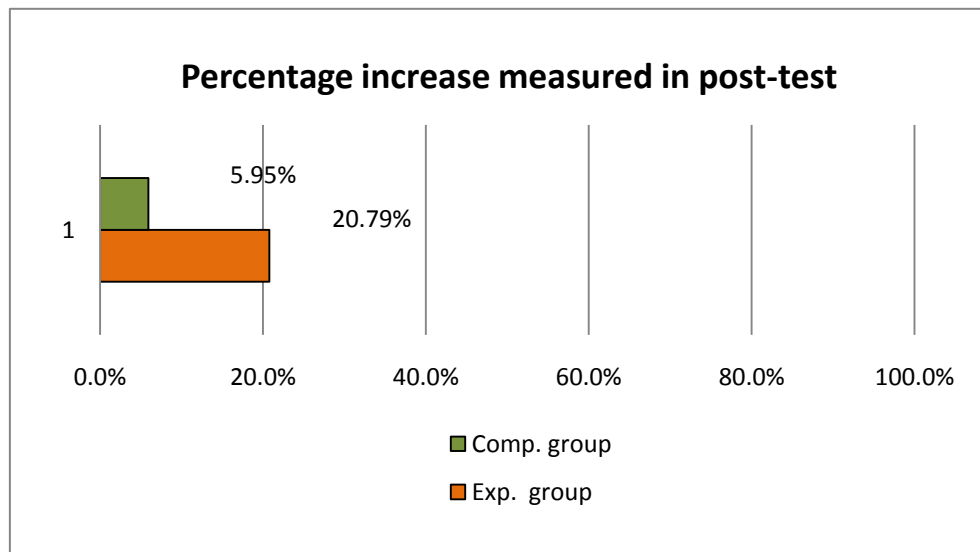
Figure 9.13 gives an indication of the emotional awareness level of the experimental group as measured by the pre- and post-test.



**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

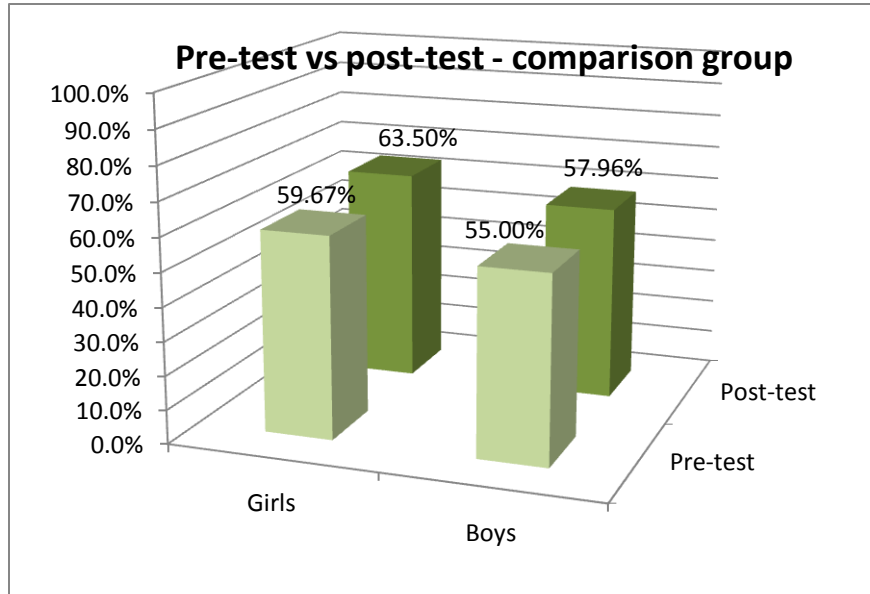
to normal day-to-day emotional influences, but only the experimental group received a seven week exposure to formal emotional education through the EA program. It thus stands to reason that a long term exposure to these kinds of emotional content may benefit the emotional development of learners to an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

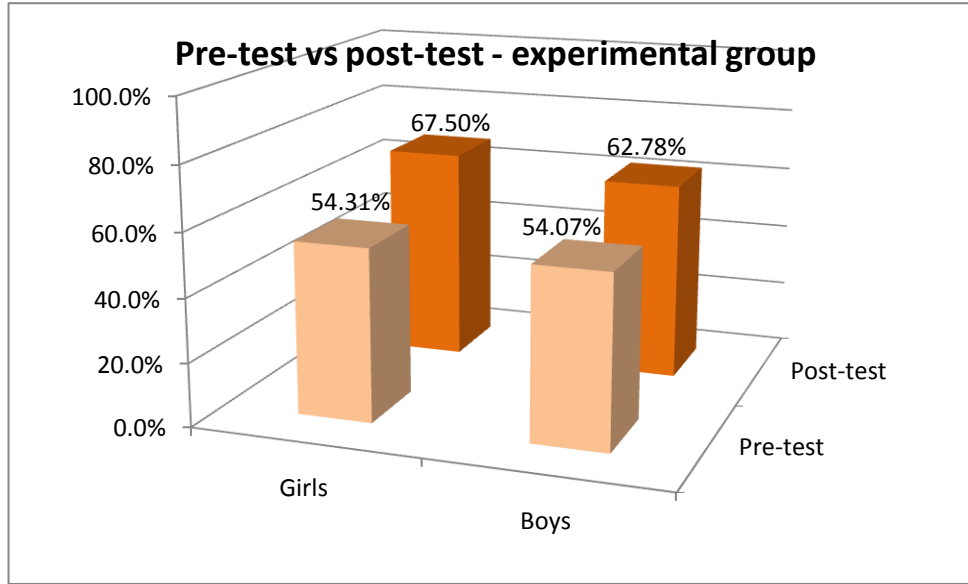


**Figure 9.15: Comparison of the results measured from the responses obtained by the different genders in the comparison group**

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.

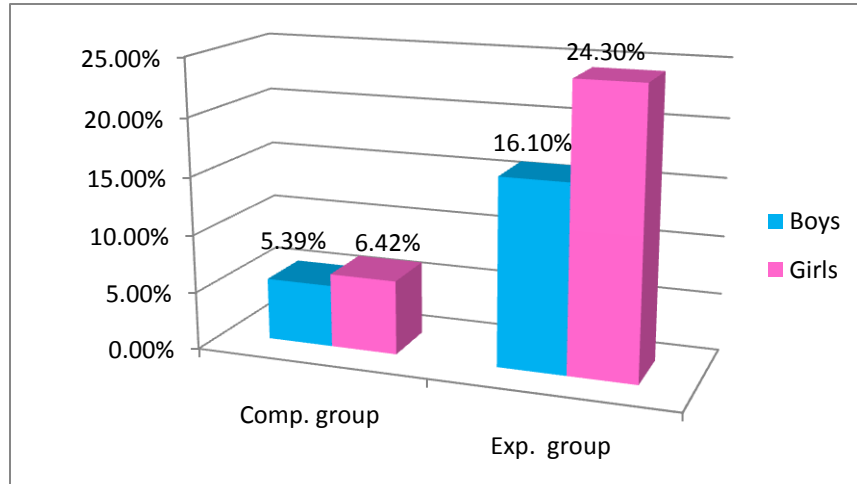




**Figure 9.16: Comparison of the results measured from the responses obtained by the different genders in the experimental group**

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 extent 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 comprehensible meaning to the results that were obtained.

The data analysis was presented in three parts, namely *development 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. Barrett (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 comprehensible 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 638 words;
  - 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 comprehensible 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.

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