THE EFFECT OF A GESTALT INTERVENTION PROGRAMME ON THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

by

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DECLARATION

"I declare that *The Effect of a Gestalt Intervention Programme on the Emotional Intelligence of Preschool Children* is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

This is a dissertation of limited scope and must be viewed accordingly.

_____ _____

SIGNATURE DATE

(Vicky Walsingham)

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I gratefully acknowledge:

My supervisor, **Dr Munita Dunn**, for her patience and continued support, her leadership and strength was inspirational to me.

Desire is the key to motivation, but its determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal - a commitment to excellence - that will enable you to attain the success you seek

(Mario Andretti)

Esta, You had the ability to keep me motivated, your attitude always positive and strong, even when times were tough, and for that I thank you.

It is very important to generate a good attitude, a good heart, as much as possible. From this, happiness in both the short term and the long term for both yourself and others will come.

(Dalai Lama)

Children and Parents, you gave me the opportunity to make a change, to share what I am learning and to help your children grow and develop, thank you.

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

(Barak Obama)

Friends and Family, I thank you for your strength and support**,** for believing in me, making me believe in myself and for all your unconditional love. I could not have done it without you.

I am blessed to have so many great things in my life - family and friends. All will be in my thoughts daily.

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Finally, my son **Keaton,** for allowing me to work until early hours of the morning, I am sure he knew that is was something that I had to complete, for all your patience and love my son, thank you.

By raising your children to feel that they can accomplish any goal or task they decide upon, you will have succeeded as a parent and you will have given your children the greatest of all blessings.

(Brian Tracy)

SUMMARY

The goal of the study was to determine whether there would be a significant improvement in preschool children's emotional intelligence when a Gestalt intervention programme was implemented.

The research was conducted according to the quantitative approach with a pre-test/post-test design. The Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales (2nd edition) was completed and returned by a sample of 30 parents (N=30) from a crèche in the Gauteng area. The Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale was used to test a sample of 30 preschool children (N=30) from the same crèche. The representative sample of preschoolers aged 3 to 5 years was divided into an experimental (n=15) and control (n=15) group. A Gestalt play therapy intervention programme, the Wise child programme, was conducted with the experimental group.

The results indicated that there was a significant improvement of the preschool children's emotional intelligence in terms of intra- and interpersonal skills after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme.

KEY WORDS

emotional intelligence, preschool child, Gestalt intervention programme, Gestalt principles, preschool curriculum

OPSOMMING

Die doel van die studie was om te bepaal of daar 'n beduidende verbetering in voorskoolse kinders se emosionele intelligensie voorkom wanneer 'n Gestalt intervensieprogram uitgevoer word.

Die navorsing is volgens die kwantitatiewe benadering met 'n voortoets/natoets-ontwerp uitgevoer. Die *Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales* (2e weergawe) is deur 'n steekproef van 30 ouers (N=30) van 'n Crèche in Gauteng voltooi. Die *Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale* is gebruik om 'n steekproef van 30 voorskoolse kinders (N=30) van dieselfde crèche te assesseer. Die verteenwoordigende steekproef voorskoolse kinders, vanaf 3- tot 5-jarige ouderdom, is verdeel in 'n eksperimentele (n=15) en kontrole- (n=15) groep. 'n Gestalt spelterapie-intervensieprogram, die *Wise child program*, is op die eksperimentele groep toegepas.

Die resultate dui op 'n beduidende verbetering van die voorskoolse kinders se emosionele intelligensie – met spesifieke verwysing na die intra- en interpersoonlike vaardighede – ná die implementering van die Gestalt intervensieprogram.

DECLARATION OF TERMS

In order to avoid confusion the masculine form of the pronoun will be used in the study to refer to the children in the study and the feminine form of the pronoun will be used for the researcher and all therapists in the study. This is not meant to be discriminatory in any way.

The researcher used the concepts “Wise child programme” and “Gestalt intervention programme” interchangeably throughout the study.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term *emotional intelligence* was popularised by the father of emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman in his 1995 publication: Emotional intelligence, why it can matter more than IQ. According to Mayer and Cobb (2004:271) it was Goleman who provided the link between emotional intelligence and education as he was of the opinion that emotional intelligence needs to be developed from a young age and therefore be included in the school curriculum. By including the development of emotional intelligence skills, the skills become a preventative measure to help children cope with the daily stressors of modern life (Goleman 1995:231, Schiller 2009:9, Vermeulen 1999:184).

In addition to this, Goleman (1995:193) states that the first opportunity for shaping the ingredients of emotional intelligence is in the earliest years, though these capacities continue to form throughout the school years. The emotional abilities children acquire in later life build on those of the earliest years. According to Schiller (2009:9), all children need social and emotional skills to learn and be successful in school and life. The author states that in order to develop cognitive skills and be academically astute, children must first and foremost have developed these emotional and social skills.

To prepare children of all ages for the challenges they are likely to face in a fast-changing society, educators need to broaden the range of competencies addressed in schools, including emotional intelligence skills (Lopes & Salovey 2004:300). According to Boyd, Barnett, Bondrova, Leong and Gomby (2005), children need a combination of intellectual skills and socio-emotional skills to succeed in the formal schooling environment. The researcher is of the opinion that socio-emotional skills described by Boyd *et al* (2005) may also be defined as

emotional intelligence skills. Pieterse (2002:95) states “Most parents’ and teachers’ attention is directed mainly at the development of children’s physical and intellectual skills. The importance of social and emotional development is easily forgotten. However, social and emotional development can in fact be regarded as the foundation and purpose of every other kind of development.” The researcher agrees with this statement and is of the opinion that emotional intelligence skills should be developed for and implemented in preschool curricula.

For this reason, the researcher submits that children should start developing their emotional intelligence skills at a preschool level and that the inclusion of a specifically designed intervention programme in the preschool curricula might improve emotional intelligence. This intervention programme is the Wise child programme (Blom 2002) which was developed from the Gestalt play therapy perspective. The researcher uses the concepts “Wise child programme” and “Gestalt intervention programme” interchangeably throughout the study. According to Yontef (1993) the only goal in Gestalt is awareness as this translates into the Gestalt play therapy perspective. Blom (2004:51) states that awareness of needs, self-knowledge, self-acceptance and the ability to exercise choices, as well as to take responsibility for choices made are also regarded as important skills which children should master. These skills, according to Blom (2004:51) form part of emotional intelligence.

Blom (2002) developed the Wise child programme to improve emotional intelligence skills in children. The programme was developed for children older than six years old and its aim was to improve awareness, manage and control of emotions, empathy, identification of emotions in others and social skills. The researcher submits that the Wise child programme can be adapted for preschool children and therefore the study aims to assess the impact of the Wise child programme on the preschool child in terms of emotional intelligence skills.

The following section of this chapter will cover the motivation for the research, including the definition of the research problem as well as the goal and objectives. The hypotheses of the study have been extrapolated from the latter and are detailed in this section. The chapter furthermore describes the research methodology as well as the preliminary inquiry with regards to potential problems and challenges. The chapter concludes with the key concepts being defined.

1.2 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM FOR STUDY

1.2.1 Motivation for research

Fouché (2005:115) describes that motivation for the research as the section where the researcher must convince the reader that the study is significant and adds value. The following section aims to spell out the reasons for the researcher participating in the study.

According to Welman and Kruger, (2001:16) research topics are identified through various sources:

- practical problems,
- previous research, and
- theories.

According to Fouché and De Vos (2005a:91) professional practitioners often discover research topics during their daily practice. This is supported by Mouton (2001:27) who states that people who are more aware of their surroundings come up with interesting topics for their research. The researcher works with preschool children on a daily basis. The researcher is of the opinion that emotional intelligence comprises a range of skills that children of all ages can develop and improve. The researcher acknowledges that these skills are critical for emotional well-being and life success and therefore the earlier these skills are

introduced and developed, the better the positive impact on the child's development. The researcher proposes that should a Gestalt intervention programme be used it would increase the emotional intelligence skills of the preschool children. The Wise child programme makes use of Gestalt play therapy activities in aiming to increase children's emotional intelligence. The researcher acknowledges, based on the literature study in Chapter two, that there is a correlation between Gestalt outcomes and the emotional intelligence skills of children. (Blom 2008, Goleman 1995 & Schiller 2009) However, the research draws together three concepts namely, Gestalt play therapy in terms of the Wise child programme, emotional intelligence and the preschool child.

Schiller (2009:9) explains whilst society may tend towards a focus on cognitive capabilities, consideration needs to be taken as to the best methods that can be deployed in developing these skills. In this respect, children need to develop their emotional intelligence in order to be equipped appropriately to learn to pay attention, listen and consequently develop the cognitive skills required to progress successfully as learners. This will require children to control impulses, delay gratification and focus on the task at hand. This is integral when understanding the value of emotional intelligence. Schiller (2009:20) further states that over the past two decades, brain research has highlighted the preschool years as a critical transitional point in childhood development and it has also highlighted the importance of early experiences to promote optimum correlation in all areas of development. Researchers (Goleman 2006; Sousa 2005) suggest that cognitive and physical potential is optimised only when an individual's brain is adequately developed in areas of social and emotional intelligence.

According to Boyd *et al* (2005), children need a combination of intellectual skills and socio-emotional skills to succeed in the formal schooling environment. The researcher is of the opinion that socio-emotional skills described by Boyd *et al* (2005) may also be defined as emotional intelligence skills. Boyd *et al* (2005)

further adds that many children's preschool experiences do not fully support their social and emotional development. This is due to the fact that emotional development is not regarded as the most important skill and preschools primarily focus on the development of cognitive skills. Boyd *et al* (2005) also states that children's ability to learn and to function as contributing members of society rests heavily on their emotional intelligence skills that begin at birth and are greatly influenced during the preschool years. According to Boyd *et al* (2005) to value children and their future, it would be wise to make every effort to provide emotional intelligence skills as an integral part of preschool curricula.

Mayer and Cobb (2004:278) discuss the fact that it is worth acknowledging that emotional intelligence is only beginning to be considered an important focus area. This does not mean that emotional intelligence is unimportant or that emotional intelligence programmes should not be included in the curricula. It means that more information needs to be discovered. If the concept of emotional intelligence becomes better established and understood, as is expected, it could be integrated into school curricula. Lopes and Salovey (2004:293) conclude that it would be useful to have more guidance on how to promote emotional intelligence and future research will clarify the importance of emotional intelligence programmes.

According to Fouché and De Vos (2005a:94) and Kaniki (1999:17), a research project does not exist in isolation and there should be a review of previous research on this topic when choosing what to research. Blom (2008) conducted a study on emotional intelligence. She developed a programme to improve emotional intelligence in children. The rationale for the development of this programme was the overall notable increase in the stress levels experienced by children globally. Nationally there is an increase in stress levels and 20% to 30% of South African children are considered traumatised. There is a significant increase in family disintegration due to divorce, poverty, violence, abuse, stressful lifestyles and HIV/AIDS. Goleman (1995:233) and Schiller (2009:16)

state that these are problems all over the world and a price of the modern life children are exposed to. The development of emotional intelligence will help children that are behaviourally at risk (Goleman 1995:233). Blom (2008) indicates in her research that if children had an elevated emotional intelligence it would help them to achieve success in all areas of life, and the development of emotional intelligence skills could act as a preventative tool. Semrud-Clikeman (2007:14) acknowledges that preschool children need to commence the development of emotional intelligence skills because the tasks a preschooler needs to master involve the beginnings of emotional intelligence with others, particularly peer groups and to meet social expectations of society at large. Prior to this point, the most important people in a preschooler's life have been his parents, extended family and possibly some or limited peer involvement. Once the child becomes a preschooler, additional demands are placed on the child to adapt to the preschool and his peer group requirements. Semrud-Clikeman (2007:15) strongly believes that preschool children need to have emotional intelligence skills added to their competencies in order to better cope with the demands of this environment.

Taking cognisance of the above, the researcher recognises the importance of developing emotional intelligence as an important skill in preschool children. The researcher also notes that according to Goleman (2006) a child may not be able to use his full cognitive potential without a well-developed emotional intelligence. Added to this, recent research in the United States indicates that the level of emotional intelligence is declining with each new generation (Vermeulen 1999:47).

The World Health Organisation report (2001) states that by the year 2020 problems in children's mental health will increase by a staggering 50% compared to other health related issues. McCluskey (2000) discusses in an article that there is reason to believe that with the advent of an electronically networked society, the clear distinction between childhood and adulthood is fast

disappearing. Whether influenced by the media or directly in their lives, children are increasingly subjected to a whole range of emotions known only to adults, not to mention a wide variety of relationships which could be destructive. The researcher is of the opinion that if children were exposed to developing their emotional intelligence skills at a younger age, they would be able to cope better with these problems. Lopes and Salovey (2004:287) conclude by saying that times have changed, young people are now exposed to many more problems, and that children need to build emotional resources to cope with these risks.

Vermeulen (1999:1-16) discusses the paradox of change in terms of technological progress and the ever-increasing pace of change. However, like it or not, the world is demanding change and survival is dependent upon it. Children need tools to cope with this technological explosion. The researcher is of the opinion that if preschool children are appropriately equipped with emotional intelligence skills, the result should be an improvement in their ability to cope with their environmental stressors.

The Education White Paper on Early Childhood Education (2001) states that there is an absence of a national curriculum framework for children under the age of five and there is a proposal to implement a national curriculum framework in 2010. It is therefore understood that emotional intelligence skills are not included in any formal curriculum in South Africa for preschool children at this stage.

According to Raver (2003) the current emphasis on children's academic preparedness continues to overshadow the importance of children's social and emotional development. He states that research done by Wentzel and Asher (in Raver 2003) indicates that young children's emotional adjustment matter: children who are emotionally well- adjusted have a significantly greater chance of early school success, while children who experience emotional difficulty risk early school difficulties. Raver (2003) further states that children who have difficulty in

getting along with others, controlling their emotions and lack empathy seem to have less chance of doing well academically.

The following section will cover the definition of the research problem.

1.2.2 Definition of research problem

Welman and Kruger (2001:12) state that a research problem refers to some difficulty that the researcher experiences in the context of either a theoretical or a practical situation and to which the researcher wants to obtain a solution.

Identification of the problem can be viewed as the first effort by the researcher to mould the problem into a formulated form. The problem should be clearly defined (Fouché & De Vos 2005a:89-99).

The following research problem was formulated for the study:

Emotional Intelligence influences children's overall development. Limited research has been done in the South African context to use an intervention programme to develop emotional intelligence in preschool children. More knowledge and research is needed with regards to the implementation of an intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence in South African preschools. Currently there is no programme implemented in the curricula of preschools to develop emotional intelligence skills. This means that children attending preschool are not formally introduced to emotional intelligence skills and that may have severe implications for the overall development of these children. The study therefore aimed to investigate whether a Gestalt intervention programme may have an impact on the emotional intelligence of preschool children.

The following section describes the goals and objectives of the study and therefore provides an indication of the intended outcome.

1.3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

According to Fouché and De Vos (2005b:104) there is some confusion about the exact meaning of goals and objectives:

Webster's third international dictionary (1961, s.v. 'goal' and 'objective') describes both goal and objective as the end toward which effort or ambition is directed. The Cambridge advanced learners dictionary (2008, s.v. 'goal' and 'objective') defines "goal" as an aim or purpose and objective as purpose or desired result. Fouché and De Vos (2005b:104) explain that the terms "goal," "purpose" and "aim" are thus often used interchangeably. Their meaning implies the broader, more abstract conception of "the end toward which effort or ambition is directed", while "objective" denotes the more concrete, measurable and more speedily attainable conception of such an "end toward which effort or ambition is directed." The one (goal, purpose or aim) is the "dream"; the other (objective) is the steps one has to take, one by one, realistically at grass-roots level, within a certain time span, in order to attain the dream. Based on the above information, the researcher would like to include alternative views obtained from different authors in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the two concepts.

1.3.1 Goals

According to Creswell (2008:121) goals are the overall direction or focus of the study while De Vos (2005:398) refers to goals as the outcome of the research.

The goal of the study was to determine whether there is an improvement in the emotional intelligence of preschool children after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme.

1.3.2 Objectives

Objectives are statements of intent used in quantitative research that specifies goals that the researcher plans to use to achieve in the study (Creswell 2008:122). Objectives for the purpose of the study referred to the steps taken to reach the goals (Fouché & De Vos 2005b:104).

In order to reach the goal of the study, the following objectives have been identified:

a) To conduct a literature study on emotional intelligence and Gestalt theory with the emphasis on preschool children and to establish a link between emotional intelligence and Gestalt theory.
b) To provide the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales II, as a pre-test, to preschool children's parents to obtain a level of emotional intelligence in their children.
c) To conduct the Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale, as a pre-test on preschool children to obtain their level of emotional intelligence.
d) To implement the Wise child programme.
e) To ascertain whether there are statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales II and the Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale.
f) To draw conclusions and provide recommendations for teachers working with preschool children.

The next section will focus on the hypotheses for the study.

1.3.3 Hypotheses for the study

Leedy (1997:60) defines hypotheses as tentative intelligent guesses posited to direct one's thinking towards a solution of the problem. These guesses are helpful because the researcher needs some point around which to orient the research in searching for the relevant data and in establishing a tentative goal against which to project the data.

Welman and Kruger (2001:11) explain that a hypothesis is a tentative assumption or preliminary statement about the relationship between two or more things that need to be examined. In other words, a hypothesis is a tentative solution or explanation of a research problem and the task of research is to investigate it. Welman and Kruger (2001:46) conclude that when researchers conduct research to investigate a research hypothesis they collect data from the objects of our enquiry in order to solve the problem concerned.

The following hypotheses guided the study:
Hypothesis (H_0): A Gestalt intervention programme will not improve the emotional intelligence of the preschool child.

Hypothesis (H_1): A Gestalt intervention programme will improve the emotional intelligence of the preschool child.

1.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

1.4.1 Quantitative Approach

Research can be approached in two ways namely through a quantitative study or a qualitative study, depending on the type of problem the researcher needs to research. The following explains the two approaches to research.

Creswell (2008:46) defines quantitative research as a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions, collects quantifiable data from participants, analyses these numbers using statistics and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner. To understand the differences and similarities in the two approaches, Creswell (2008:46) then defines qualitative research as a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyses these words for themes and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.

Durrheim (1999b:96) has indicated that statistical procedures are used to analyse quantitative data. Durrheim explained that once the researcher has measured the relevant variables, these variables are usually transformed statistically to help the researcher describe the data more succinctly and make inferences about the characteristics of populations based on the data samples. Statistical analysis has been maligned as 'positivist' in recent years. The author added that statistics allow us to represent our observations of the real world in a manner that is easily interpretable (Durrheim 1999b:116).

The researcher has applied a quantitative approach for the study to assess whether there is was an increase in emotional intelligence in preschool children subsequent to the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme. The researcher has elected to apply a quantitative approach based on the substantial literature study conducted at the beginning of the study. The research problem and hypotheses are specific in order to obtain measurable data. The researcher has been collecting data using instruments with preset questions and responses and has been gathering quantifiable data and information from a large number of individuals. The data has been analysed by means of a statistical analysis and interpretation consists of comparing the results with the pre-test and post-test.

The researcher's intention was to make the study objective and unbiased (Creswell 2008).

1.4.2 Type of Research

There are two types of research, namely applied and basic. Basic research according to Fouché and De Vos (2005b:105) provides a foundation for knowledge and understanding whereas applied research can be seen as a practical problem-solving endeavour (Delport & De Vos 2005:45) and can further be defined as the scientific planning of induced change in a troublesome situation (Fouché & De Vos 2005:105). Neuman (2000:24) states that the findings derived from applied research have a practical application. Durrheim (1999a:41) adds that applied research aims to contribute towards practical issues of problem solving, decision making, policy analysis and community development.

The researcher conducted an applied type of research as she was addressing a problem in practice, ultimately wanted to apply this information in her daily work and sought to help other practitioners accomplish tasks. The researcher is currently employed in the preschool environment and has identified that children lack skills in emotional intelligence. The researcher therefore intended to gain a more comprehensive understanding of emotional intelligence in preschool children by implementing a Gestalt intervention programme on emotional intelligence.

In addition to above, correlational designs provide an opportunity for the researcher to predict scores and explain the relationship among variables (Creswell 2008:356). A type of correlational design is an explanatory research design in which the researcher is interested in the extent to which two variables co-vary, in other words, where changes in one variable are reflected in changes in the other (Creswell 2008:358). According to Fouché and De Vos (2005b:106) a study of this nature will normally be conducted when a researcher encounters

an issue that is already known and has a description to it, but is prompted to ask why things are the way they are. In this study emotional intelligence is a known concept and emotional intelligence has a definition, but the researcher wanted to understand more about the effects of a Gestalt intervention programme on preschool children. The study aimed to provide insight into developing emotional intelligence in preschool children.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

Strydom (2005a:148) refers to a research design as the researcher's plan for collecting and analysing data. The design stage in research has a direct parallel in practice. Durrheim (1999a:29) adds that a research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. In addition, Mouton (2001:55) defines a research design as a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research. According to his explanation, a research design focuses on the product, formulates a research problem as a point of departure, and focuses on the logic of research. Leedy (1997: 93) describes a research design as the planning; it is the common sense and the clear thinking necessary for the management of the entire research endeavour. Welman and Kruger (2001:46) conclude that a research design is the plan according to which we obtain research participants and collect information from them.

The structure of the study follows a single system design. The research design is discussed next:

1.5.1 Single System Design

Strydom (2005a:145) defines the term “single system design” as the genus term denoting the study of a single subject on a repetitive basis. Using this design is

therefore also one way of enhancing a linkage between research and practice. This singular term thus indicates a certain type of experimental design, which can be implemented in various forms and ways.

Welman and Kruger (2001:69) describe the single system design to be about participants of the research being exposed to something which they otherwise would not have been subjected to, such as an intervention programme. For the purpose of the study it was a Gestalt intervention programme called the Wise child programme. The intervention, which is the independent variable, hopefully changes the emotional intelligence, which is the dependent variable, considerably. Measuring the dependent variable before the intervention is called the pre-test and measuring it after the intervention, is called the post-test. A research design where only one group is involved is referred to as a pre-test and post-test in the single group design. If only one group receives the intervention, there is no way of knowing whether any considerable changes would have occurred without the intervention. What is required, therefore, is a control group that is not exposed to the experimental intervention. The research had a control and experimental group, which where both pre-tested and post-tested.

Creswell (2008:60) defines the single system design as an experimental design. He explains that this design is to test whether an educational practice or idea makes a difference for individuals. The researcher assessed the impact of the Gestalt intervention programme by providing the intervention to one group and withholding the intervention from another group, as suggested by Creswell (2008:60). The results were compared after the intervention was conducted.

The single system design was used for the study as the participants have been pre-tested and post-tested with the Wise child programme as intervention. The results were compared and discussed accordingly.

1.6 RESEARCH AND WORK PROCEDURES

1.6.1 Participants

The researcher identified all the children at the crèche between three years and five years old. There is a group of thirty children, thirteen of these are girls and seventeen are boys. A consent form (Addendum A) was sent out to all thirty parents and all thirty parents consented for their children to participate in the study.

The participants were randomly divided into two groups. Fifteen of the children were used as a control group and fifteen of the children were used in the experimental group. Welman and Kruger (2001:69) define a control group as a group that does not receive intervention.

1.6.2 Data-Gathering Mechanisms

Delport (2005:159) explains that quantitative data-collection methods make use of measuring, to obtain valid and reliable data. The following describes the instruments used in the study:

1.6.2.1 The Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale

The Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale was developed by Joseph (2004) and allows clinicians to measure self-concept in children as young as three years old. The Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale will be referred to as the Joseph Scale throughout the study. The test quickly identifies children whose negative self-appraisals put them at risk for academic and behavioural difficulties. The Joseph Scale employs a unique administration format that lets children respond using pictures rather than words. The children are shown pairs of illustrations

representing common self-appraisal situations and are asked to choose between a picture representing positive self-concept and another representing negative self-concept. This interview and picture response format is particularly useful with preschoolers who may have developmental problems or language difficulties. The Joseph Scale can be used with virtually any child (Joseph 2004:3).

The Joseph Scale is used in psychological and educational interventions to evaluate the relationship between self-concept and other traits and behaviours and to monitor changes in self-concept over time. It is designed for research applications that require quantitative assessment of self-concept in children and particularly well-suited to preschool screening of programmes. The only limitation on the use of the Joseph Scale stems from the fact that it is an individually administered interview measure (Joseph 2004:4). Since the development of the original Joseph Scale in the 1970s, numerous reviews have presented evidence that it is reliable and a valid measure of self-concept in young children. (Joseph 2004:65). Bracken (1996), Byrne (1996), and Wylie (1989) (in Joseph 2004:65) have reviewed and presented evidence that the Joseph Scale is reliable and valid.

For the purpose of the study the Joseph Scale was administered to thirty preschool children to measure their self-concept, which according to the researcher is the intrapersonal skill of emotional intelligence. This instrument was used to pre-test and post-test the sampled preschool children.

1.6.2.2 Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales Second Edition

The Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales Second Edition (or Vineland II as it will be referred to in the study) was developed by Sparrow, Cicchetti and Balla (2005). It is a leading measure of personal and social skills needed for everyday living. Not only does Vineland II aid in diagnosis, but also provides valuable

information for developing educational and treatment plans. The Vineland II can be used on children as young as three years old. The scales of the Vineland II were organised within a four-domain structure: communication, daily living, motor skills, and socialisation. The Vineland II will give a good description of the child's social and emotional development. The Vineland II has a multipurpose function in that it helps the clinician perform a variety of tasks, namely plan rehabilitation or intervention programmes, track and report progress, and support diagnosis of intellectual and developmental delays (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:2).

Someone who is familiar to the child, such as a parent or caregiver, is asked to describe his activities in a questionnaire. The administration time is 15-25 minutes. Those activities are then compared to those of other children of the same age to determine which areas is average, above average or in need of special help. There is much evidence to support the validity and reliability of the use of the Vineland II to assess the adaptive behaviour skills of individuals from birth to ninety (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:3).

For the purpose of the study, the questionnaire was completed by thirty preschool parents, to test their children's interpersonal skills in emotional intelligence. This test is used in the pre-test and post-test of the sampled preschool children.

More details on administering the Joseph Scale and the Vineland II will be discussed in Chapter three.

1.6.2.3 The Wise Child Programme

The Wise child programme was developed as part of Blom's (2000) doctoral study. It is a Gestalt intervention programme focusing on children's personal and interpersonal skills in emotional intelligence. The aim of the programme is to

improve emotional intelligence. Blom (2008) defines emotional intelligence as a child's potential to manage his emotional life in a certain way. Emotional intelligence according to Blom (2002) consists of four components, namely self-awareness, emotional management, empathy and management of emotions in others. Each component includes specific skills and these skills are addressed in the twelve-week programme. The techniques and activities used in the Wise child programme come from a Gestalt play therapy framework. The programme is developmentally age appropriate and utilised in groups. Blom (2002) explains this programme as easily adaptable, effective, and practical. According to Blom (2008) the programme has been used widely in South Africa by professional people such as occupational therapists, teacher and social workers. The professionals who use the programme find that the activities improve emotional intelligence skills in the children they are working with.

The researcher submits that this programme can be used at a preschool level as building blocks for the development of children's emotional intelligence. Moreover, it could be used at a preschool level as a preventative measure in helping young children with the control and management of their emotions, self-awareness and social skills.

The following section defines the procedures that have been employed throughout the study.

1.6.3 Procedures

The following procedures have been followed throughout the study:

1. All children at a crèche in the Gauteng area between three and five years old were identified.

2. The parents of the preschool children at the crèche were contacted and the research was explained to them in detail. A consent letter (Addendum A) was given to each of them to complete.

3. The researcher randomly divided the group of preschool children into two groups, an experimental and a control group.

4. The Vineland II was sent to each of the parents and the Joseph Scale was administered to each preschool child. This is defined as the pre-test.

5. The Wise child programme was implemented to the experimental group of children. This took place over a twelve-week period.

6. Weekly newsletters were sent to the experimental group of preschool children explaining what their children had done during the week's programme.

7. The experimental and control groups were again assessed after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme. The post-testing was done using the same instruments as the pre-testing. Refer to Table 1.1 for a visual representation of the data collection phase.

Table 1.1: Preschool children exposed to Wise child programme

	Experimental (n=15)	Control (n=15)
Pre-test	√	√
Wise child programme	√	
Post-test	√	√

1.6.4 Feasibility of the Study

According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:275) when choosing a research topic there are certain practical considerations that need to be taken into account. They discuss time, costs, ethical considerations, personal factors and value of the research.

The feasibility of the study was affected by the time and money (Welman *et al* 2005:276) necessary to conduct the study. The information gathered by the researcher was, where possible integrated into the researcher's crèche. Some of the time spent on the study was spent productively with the children and parents at the crèche. The results of the study highlighted the need for a Gestalt intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence.

After an in-depth literature study it became clear that the research was viable. The researcher could not find any evidence that a Gestalt intervention programme was implemented and included in the curricula in South Africa to improve emotional intelligence skills in preschool children.

1.6.4.1 Literature Study

The review of literature is aimed at contributing towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem (Fouché & Delport 2005:123). The researcher has consulted books, journal articles, and electronic sources, such as subject data bases that UNISA offer, on emotional intelligence, ways to improve your child's self-esteem, early childhood education, Gestalt play therapy and Gestalt principles as well as school curricula. The main literature referred to was Blom (2008), Goleman (1995) and Schiller (2009). These authors discussed emotional intelligence and Gestalt principles in play therapy. The primary sources used with regard to research were Creswell (2008) and De Vos *et al* (2005). The conclusion was that emotional intelligence programmes should begin at an

early age, they need to be age appropriate and run at preschool level. The researcher was unable to locate literature on Gestalt intervention programmes to increase emotional intelligence in preschool children. Literature on play therapy and Gestalt certainly formed the cornerstone of the researcher's reading.

The researcher conducted the theory and literature study before participating in the data collection. Delport and Fouché (2005:264) say "theory could be used to guide the study in an explanatory way before data collection." The reason being that the researcher needs clarification on the Gestalt process linking to emotional intelligence. During the process of data collection, the researcher will be referring back to the literature study for exploration of the subject.

1.6.4.2 Consultation with experts

The following specialists were consulted:

- **Teachers at the IDC (Industrial Development Corporation) crèche** were consulted with regard to preschool children's emotional intelligence skills and whether there was a need for an intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence in preschool children. They identified a need for such a programme and the researcher had ongoing discussions with them during the implementation of the Wise child programme.
- **Teachers at the Gardens preschool** were consulted as to children's emotional intelligence skills and if there was a need for an intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence in preschool children. They discussed a need for a programme to improve emotional intelligence in preschool children.
- **Dr. Rinda Blom** was consulted to provide consent to utilise The Wise child programme. Dr. Blom also advised on the most appropriate tools to utilise in order to measure emotional intelligence in preschool children. She submitted to using the programme on preschool children.

- **Jopie van Rooyen and Partners SA (Pty) Ltd** provided advice on the tools for effective measurement of emotional intelligence. The discussion was on the two subsections of emotional intelligence namely interpersonal and intrapersonal development.
- **Mrs. Anne Newman** is a clinical psychologist in private practice working with children and families and seeing children who are unable to cope with daily stressors. She acknowledges the need to develop emotional intelligence skills in preschool children.

1.6.4.3 Description of Universe, Sample and Sampling Techniques

a) Universe and Population

Arkava and Lane (in Strydom 2005b:193) draw a distinction between the terms "universe" and "population". They state that "universe" refers to all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is interested. "Population", on the other hand, is a term that sets boundaries on the study units. It refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics. Creswell (2008:151) adds that a population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristics.

In the study the universe was all the preschool children between the ages of three and five years old in Gauteng.

In the study the population was all preschool children at a crèche in Gauteng.

b) Sample and Criteria

According to Arkava and Lane (in Strydom 2005b:194) a sample thus comprises elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or it can be viewed as a subset of measurements drawn from a population in which the

researcher is interested. Creswell (2008:152) defines a sample as a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalising about the target population.

Every child in the preschool group was included in the study. The sample was thirty children and of the thirty children, thirteen were girls and seventeen were boys. All the parents consented to having their children participate in the study.

c) Non-Probability Sampling Method

Gravetter and Forzano (as cited in Strydom 2005b:201) state that in non-probability sampling the odds of selecting a particular individual are not known because the researcher does not know the population size or members of the population. Non-probability sampling was used in the study, because the preschool children were available and they represented the characteristics that the researcher was seeking to study.

Welman and Kruger (2001:62) describe an accidental sample to be the most convenient collection that is close and readily available for research purposes. The researcher has used accidental sampling (Strydom 2005b:202) of thirty preschool children due to the fact that the researcher worked with these children on a daily basis.

d) Problems Foreseen

The following problems have been foreseen during the research process:

- Children might not be willing to participate in the Joseph Scale. Fortunately during the research process all children were willing to participate in the Joseph Scale.

- Parents might be subjective when answering the Vineland II. This is a variable that was taken into consideration during the data analysis.
- Children might be absent on the day that the Wise child programme would be implemented. Unfortunately there were children absent during the implementation of the Wise child programme.

1.7 ETHICAL ASPECTS

According to Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999:65) research designs should always reflect careful attention to the ethical issues embodied in research projects. The essential purpose of ethical research planning is to protect the welfare and the rights of the research participants, although there are many additional ethical considerations that should be addressed in the planning and implementation of research work. They say that autonomy, nonmaleficence and beneficence are the three ethical principles that should guide all research.

According to Welman and Kruger (2001:171) ethical considerations come into play at three stages of a research project, namely:

a) When participants are recruited,
b) During the intervention and/or the measurement procedure to which they are subjected, and
c) When releasing the results obtained.

The researcher considers these stages when following the ethical aspects that guided the research. The following ethical aspects guided the research:

1.7.1 The Professional Code of Ethics

Strydom (2005c:67) and Leedy (1997:116) emphasise that when doing research on human subjects, the researcher should use a code of ethics. They further

state that there should be guidelines that resolve into simple considerations. These would cover fairness, honesty, openness of intent, disclosure of methods, the ends for which the research is executed, and respect for the integrity of the individual. It is also the obligation of the researcher to guarantee unequivocally individual privacy and an informed willingness on the part of the subject to participate voluntarily in the research activity.

The researcher utilised the Council for Counsellors' Code of Ethics (2009) to protect the children and their parents throughout the study. A key part of this code is to be respectful of the children and their parents. The code mentions that research should be undertaken with the protection and consideration of the welfare, respect and dignity of the particular client.

1.7.2 Avoidance of Harm

According to Strydom (2005c:59) subjects can be harmed in a physical and/or emotional manner. It is a given that harm to respondents in the social sciences will be mainly of an emotional nature, although physical injury cannot be ruled out completely. The researcher took note of the potential for harm and confirms that no respondents were harmed in any way. A referral strategy was in place in case the need arose.

1.7.3 Confidentiality and Privacy

Mouton (2001:243) indicates that in an increasingly public and transparent world scientists have to be extremely watchful in respecting subject's rights to privacy. Mouton also believes that informants have the right to remain anonymous, which refers to the principle that the identity of an individual is kept secret. He states that the conditions of anonymity apply to the collection of data by means of video camera, face-to-face interviews and in participant observation. Creswell

(2008:179) further states that protecting the anonymity by assigning numbers to returned instruments and keeping the identity of individual's confidential offers privacy to participants. During data collection, the researcher viewed data as confidential and did not share it with other participants or individuals outside of the research.

The researcher is of the opinion that confidentiality and privacy is of the utmost importance in the study and therefore the researcher signed a letter for each parent stating as such. The real names of the children and their family names were kept confidential.

1.7.4 Informed Consent

According to Creswell (2008:179) data collection should be ethical and it should respect individuals. Obtaining permission before starting to collect data is not only part of the informed consent process but is also an ethical practice. Neuman (in Strydom 2005c:59) agree that a fundamental ethical principle of social research is to never coerce anyone into participating. Participation must be voluntary. Subjects should become aware of their rights and what they are getting involved in when they read and sign a statement giving informed consent, a written agreement to participate should be given by subjects after they learn something about the research procedure. Finally Mouton (2001:244) states that human subjects must be informed as to what will happen and their signed consent should be obtained.

The researcher gained consent (Addendum A) from each parent whose child was participating in the study. Feedback was given each week on how their children were developing through the process and the process remained totally transparent throughout the study.

1.7.5 Accountability

According to Mouton (2001:241) another aspect of research ethics is accountability. He mentions that it is the most important principle that guides the relationship between science and the rest of society. This implies that the researcher is to some degree accountable to society for what they are doing and refers to a general obligation to conduct their craft in a socially responsive and responsible manner. The researcher intended to be accountable to the children, parents and ethics committee by not conducting any secret or clandestine research and by fully reporting the research findings in an open and timely manner.

The researcher aimed to present a study that complies with the above-mentioned ethical aspects and meets the ethical requirements set by the Ethics Committee of Huguenot College and the Council for Counsellors' code of ethics.

To create a uniform understanding of the concepts and the terminology used in the research, key elements will be explained in the following paragraph.

1.8 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND KEY CONCEPTS

The following terms and key concepts were used in the study:

1.8.1 Emotional Intelligence

Blom (2008) defines emotional intelligence as the child's potential to manage their emotional life in a certain way. This consists of four components, namely self-awareness, emotional management, empathy, and management of emotions in others. Each component includes specific skills.

De Klerk and Le Roux (2003) defines emotional intelligence as the ability to identify, understand and control your own thoughts and feelings, communicate them appropriately to others and have empathy with the emotions of others which enables them to interact with them on an emotional level.

According to Mayer and Salovey (2004:35) emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

For the purpose of the study, the researcher has used the above definitions of emotional intelligence to formulate her definition of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence can be viewed as skills that can be developed by preschool children and can be divided into two development areas, namely intrapersonal and interpersonal. Intrapersonal skills consist of self-awareness and emotional management and control while interpersonal skills consist of empathy, identification of emotions in others and social skills.

1.8.2 Preschool Children

The preschool child, as defined by Lifter (1992:23), is a child ranging from three to five years of age. Brassard and Boehm (2007:1) add to this definition by saying preschool children are from three years old to the traditional first grade entry to school. For the purpose of this study, a preschool child is a child between the ages of three and five years of age.

1.8.3 Gestalt Intervention Programme

The researcher firstly defined Gestalt where after the concepts “intervention” and “programme” will be explained.

Clarkson (1999:1) defines Gestalt as a German word which is not easily translated into a single English term. It embraces such a wide variety of concepts: the shape, the pattern, the whole form, the configuration. It connotes the structural entity which are both different from and much more than the sum of its parts.

Yontef (1993:178) explains that the word Gestalt (plural: Gestalten) refers to the shape, configuration or whole, the structural entity, that which makes the whole a meaningful unity different from a mere sum of parts.

According to the Cambridge advanced learners dictionary (2008 s.v. 'intervention') intervention is defined as intentionally becoming involved in a situation in order to improve it or prevent it from getting worse. Programme is defined in the Cambridge advanced learners dictionary (2008 s.v. 'programme') as a plan of activities to be done or things to be achieved.

For the purpose of the study the researcher defines Gestalt as the totality of the child. A Gestalt intervention programme is aimed at working with children as a whole within their environment. The programme is based on Gestalt play therapy activities to improve the emotional intelligence of primary school children.

1.9 RESEARCH LAYOUT

The study comprises the following chapters:

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Chapter one details the introduction to and motivation for the study, the goals and objectives and research methodology. The chapter also discusses ethical aspects and definition of main concepts.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE STUDY

In this chapter the researcher provides information on the preschool child, emotional intelligence and the Gestalt perspective gained from the literature study. The concepts of gestalt are discussed and integrated into the context of the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the empirical study.

CHAPTER FOUR: AN INTEGRATED SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the final chapter and it contains the conclusions and recommendations for teachers to implement a Gestalt intervention programme. Practical implications and limitations offer some recommendations for future research.

1.10 CONCLUSION

The first chapter provided the introduction and overview of the study. The chapter identified a reasonable research problem which defined the direction of the research that followed. The need for the research and the aim and objectives it wished to achieve were discussed. The chapter outlined the ethical guidelines

that had to be adhered to and also defined the most important key concepts applicable to the study.

In the next chapter a description of the preschool child, including the appropriate developmental stages, will be provided. The main focus of the chapter is to highlight and define the importance of emotional intelligence and to integrate the Gestalt principles.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises of the literature study and discusses the development of the preschool child, emotional intelligence, Gestalt theory and a Gestalt intervention programme. The researcher also discusses the Gestalt intervention programme relating to the theory of Gestalt. The section on development of the preschool child focuses on the broad spectrum of development, including emotional development, and is segmented further into intrapersonal and interpersonal, physical, social, cognitive, language and moral development.

Given that the researcher has elected to focus this study on emotional intelligence, an extensive and in-depth review of this subject is discussed in this chapter. Comparisons are drawn between the various definitions and skills, with a review of emotional intelligence in the classroom and emotional intelligent parenting. The chapter concludes with discussions on Gestalt play therapy with relevance to the intervention programme used in the study.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

This section provides a brief overview of the development of the preschool child and proceeds to discuss in more detail the various areas of development that pertain to the emotional intelligence in the preschool child. These developmental tasks provide guidelines for the teacher when implementing the Wise child programme.

According to Schaffer (2004:80) a child's life begins at conception and growing up is a process that can be explained as a series of developmental tasks which appear in a particular sequence at various ages. Whilst Schaffer has identified a series of developmental tasks which appear at various ages, it is important to explore alternatives with regards to development. The following

section highlights Smidt's (2006) theory of development. Smidt (2006:2) describes child development as a discipline that indicates the development of children from birth to the end of childhood. This discipline aims to identify, describe and predict patterns in children's growth where growth includes cognitive, language, physical, moral, social and emotional development. Development is seen as holistic, as all aspects of development are conceived of as interrelated. It is thought to be continuous and cumulative and the early years are almost always described as vital to later development.

The following sections will focus on the preschool child with respect to the different areas of his development. Specifically physical, emotional, social, cognitive, language and moral development will be discussed. General characteristics of development are discussed but more detail is provided on the area of interpersonal and intrapersonal development as it pertains to emotional development. The detail discussed for the latter is important to gaining an understanding of its relevance to emotional intelligence.

2.2.1 Emotional Development of the Preschool Child

Landy (2002:4) defines emotional development as the child's affective display, regulation and control of emotions. Robinson (2008:104) describes emotions as not only an aspect of development but central to every part of development. Nussbaum (in Robinson 2008:104) states "emotions shape the landscape of our mental and social lives and if emotions are the shapers of our own personal mental and social lives then it follows that emotions permeate how we behave to one another, how we understand such behaviour and what meaning or significance we ascribe to both our own and others' actions".

The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004) states the core features of emotional development include the ability to identify and understand one's own feelings, to accurately read and comprehend emotional states in others, to manage strong emotions and their expression in a constructive manner, to regulate one's own behaviour, to develop empathy for

others and to establish and sustain relationships. Emotional development is built into the architecture of young children's brains in response to their individual personal experiences and the influences of the environments in which they live.

According to Schaffer (2004:131) in the course of development, emotions change as a result of both maturation and socialisation. One other noteworthy developmental change is that emotions come to be expressed in increasingly more subtle ways as a child gains control over behaviour and learns to react in socially approved ways.

Given that emotions are recognised to be increasingly important in development, it follows that constructive management of emotions leads to self-satisfaction and joy as described by Schiller (2009:10): Healthy emotions allow children to express and constructively manage the full range of human feelings, to postpone gratification, to find constructive outlets for negative emotions and to understand and appreciate how others feel. Healthy emotions lead to self-satisfaction and joy.

Rathus (2006:351) indicates that as preschool children continue to develop a separate sense of themselves they increasingly move out into the world and take the initiative in learning new skills. Children in this stage strive to achieve independence from their parents and master adult behaviours. They are curious, try new things and test themselves.

Campbell (2006:34-35) explains that throughout the preschool period, children continue to demonstrate advances in cognitive and social development that are reflected in more complex reasoning and language skills, an emerging self-awareness and understanding of the feelings and thoughts of others, improved ability to balance one's own needs with the needs of their peers during social interaction and increased knowledge of the physical world. Overall, children's development, across domains, moves from a focus on the concrete and physical to an appreciation of the more abstract and symbolic representations of experience. All normal preschoolers show major advances in social-cognitive processing that reflect awareness of social conventions and the fact that others

can have feelings and experiences that are different from their own. Preschoolers demonstrate major advances in self-control, including the regulation of emotion, and they develop the ability to play cooperatively with other children.

The researcher notes from the above that advancement in cognitive and social development increasingly relies on the appreciation of more abstract and symbolic representations and a greater awareness of self and others. It is therefore important to highlight the importance and value that emotional development will contribute to this stage in a child's overall development.

The researcher has elected to focus on emotional development in order to provide a deeper insight into the constructs of emotional development. Therefore the following sub-sections discuss intrapersonal and interpersonal development. Empathy, recognising emotions in others, emotional language, self-esteem, self-regulation and self-control will be discussed as part of the emotional development of the preschool child.

The following section provides a more detailed link to the researcher's definition of emotional intelligence. The study's core aim is the development of emotional intelligence in preschool children therefore the section below divides emotional development into interpersonal and intrapersonal development as it pertains to emotional intelligence.

2.2.1.1 Intrapersonal Development

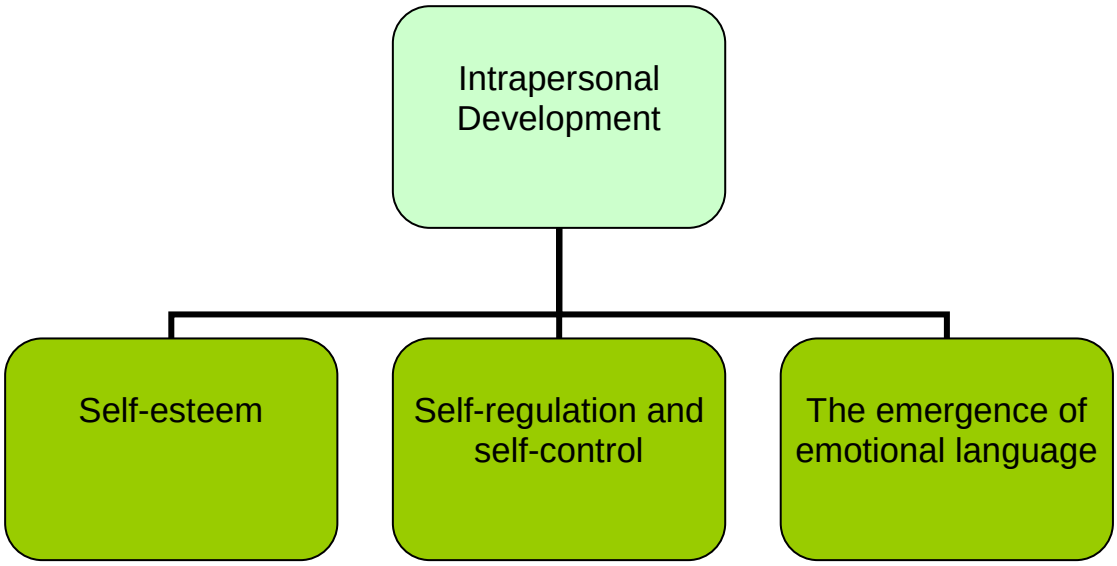

Figure 2.1: Intrapersonal Development in Emotional Development

The figure above illustrates intrapersonal development and the paragraphs below discuss the illustration. According to De Guevara (2008) intrapersonal skills refers to the capacity to develop the knowledge of oneself, of one's emotions, feelings, of the ability to act in accordance with one's own way of thinking, according to one's own scale of values. Intrapersonal skills can be defined as being conscious of one's possibilities and limitations.

Intrapersonal development is now discussed according to the segments as identified in Figure 2.1.

- *Self-esteem*

As children develop they not only come to understand more and more about themselves and to construct more intricate self-portraits, they also begin to evaluate the qualities that they perceive themselves as having (Dweck &Elliot, Hammen & Jaenicke, Zupan in Shaffer 1994:220-222). This aspect of self is called self-esteem. Children with high self-esteem are fundamentally satisfied with the type of person they are, they recognise their strong points, can acknowledge their weaknesses and generally feel quite positive about the characteristics and competencies they display. By contrast, children with low

self-esteem view the self in a less favourable light, often choosing to dwell on perceived inadequacies rather than on any strength they may happen to display. Parents play a crucial role in how well developed the child's self-esteem is. Goode (2007) indicates that preschool children are beginning to develop a sense of self-esteem.

The researcher is of the opinion that preschool children are developing significantly in the area of self-esteem. Given that the Wise child programme provides opportunities to develop self-esteem, it is imperative for teachers to develop a thorough understanding of this segment of intrapersonal development. Added to this, the teacher must also develop an understanding that self-esteem develops with self-awareness.

- *Self-Regulation and Self-Control*

Boyd *et al* (2005) defines self-regulation as the ability to manage one's behaviour so as to withstand impulses, maintain focus and undertake tasks even if there are other more enticing alternatives available. This ability to inhibit one response and to enact another on demand is a skill used in thinking as well as social interactions. Vasta, Miller and Ellis (2004:573) describe the emergence of self-control as one of the hallmark achievements of the preschool period. Children with self-control are able to inhibit impulsive and aggressive behaviour and delay immediate gratification. Having gained insight from the above the researcher is of the opinion that self-regulation and self-control are interrelated.

Emotional intelligence includes the capacity to regulate our own behaviour, that is to adapt our behaviour to circumstances rather that simply reacting, and, in its true sense, is the ability to modify behaviour according to an internalised 'set of rules' (Robinson 2008:120).

Brassard and Boehm (2007:514) explain that children at preschool age can regulate emotional arousal in themselves. A preschooler who is anxious and timid in highly competitive games may choose to play alone or with quieter, less competitive peers for example. Emotionally regulated children can move

fluidly and smoothly from one emotional state to another, in a way that is flexible and coherent.

Shaffer (1994:228-229) poses the question “When do children first display any evidence of self-regulation and self-control?” He says most theorists assume that the milestones occur at some point during the second year, after infants realise that they are separate, autonomous beings and that their actions have consequences that they have produced. He further states that young children’s emerging ability to control their impulses becomes much more apparent by the middle of the third year. This is linked to self-control and delay of gratification.

Schiller (2009:53) reaffirms that children with self-control understand their emotional reactions and are able to calm their emotions before acting. They are able to control their impulses, listen attentively and wait patiently. Children with self-control are able to accept and stay within boundaries.

According to Robinson (2008:118) during the early years children’s strategies for dealing with their day to day lives are built up by what they have experienced. Panksepp and Smith-Pasqualini (2005) say that what emerges during development “is the higher capacity to regulate emotional states and to construct more complex behavioural strategies to cope with emotionally challenging events.” In general, feelings and greater awareness of another’s feelings and ability to empathise with them appear to arise in conjunction with the recognition of the self in the mirror and the capacity to correctly identify body parts and point to them appropriately.

Robinson (2009:119) emphasises that preschool children’s emotions are very strong and sometimes frightening and it is the adults’ ability to tolerate and understand the behaviour which helps the child understand that feelings are acceptable and that they can modify how they behave. It is vital that adults acknowledge the reality of the child’s feelings first before helping the child deal with them. Adults should help the child understand that feelings are neither good nor bad but what is important is how we deal with them.

From the above it can be argued that self-control and self-regulation are the beginnings of emotional control in preschool children. It is recognised that this will be expressed in the preschool child through the emergence of emotional language.

- *The emergence of emotional language*

Between the ages of two and three comes a great growth of language, including emotional terms and the ability to communicate with others about emotions, in other words the emergence of emotional language (Oatley, Keltner & Jenkins 2006:213-217). The proportion of time children spend talking about emotions gradually increases with age. Brassard and Boehm (2007:513) agree with this statement. They state that by learning to talk about emotions and their causes, children move well beyond the simple communication system that facial expression and voice tone allow. They believe that a new degree of relatedness is possible. By three to four years old children give plausible reasons for experiencing emotions in which they make reference to goal states or desires of other people. Bukatko and Daehler (2004:418) state that preschoolers begin to understand many of the situations that give rise to specific emotions and the consequences of displaying them.

Schaffer (2004:132-134) contributes by stating that once children become able to talk, emotional development assumes a whole new dimension. Emotions can now become a subject for reflection, by being able to label the feelings they experience, children can stand apart from them, think about them and in this way objectify whatever is going on inside them. Having emotions, children can also enter into discussion about them, emotions can thus be shared. During the preschool period emotion talk rapidly gains in accuracy, clarity and complexity and most significantly in reference to the possible causes of people's feelings.

Brassard and Boehm (2007:513-514) further state that preschoolers who understand emotions react more appropriately to others, are better liked by peers and are rated as more socially competent by teachers. Emotional

knowledge makes it easier for children to be socially competent because it increases their ability to perceive social cues accurately to respond appropriately to what's going on and to regulate their own emotional reactions. They also mention that preschoolers become aware of the fact that they can feel two emotions at the same time, they develop awareness that mixed emotions are accepted and common.

The researcher is of the opinion that for a preschooler, learning to identify emotions is the first step towards learning how to manage them. The researcher believes that children will be able to express themselves better, once they can correctly label feelings. The researcher is further of the opinion that parents should be talking about their emotions and the emotional experience of the child from infancy. This provides for the development and improvement of emotional communication between child and parent. In order for emotional communication to progress it is important to have insight into interpersonal development in the preschool child. Interpersonal development will enable them to understand and interact with others, including the parents.

2.2.1.2 Interpersonal Development

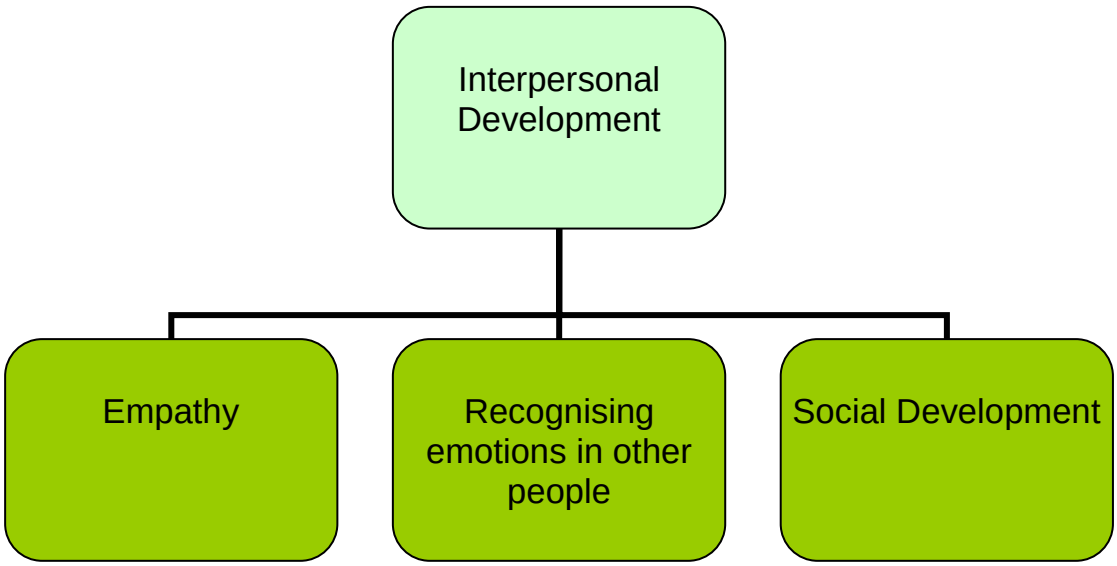

Figure 2.2: Interpersonal development in Emotional development

The figure above is a diagrammatical representation of the information below.

De Guevara (2008) explains that interpersonal skills is the ability to understand and to interact effectively with others, the ability to perceive and to understand other people's feelings, to be sensitive to the verbal and non-verbal language representing emotions and to respond effectively to them.

Having highlighted the definition of interpersonal skills, the researcher will now discuss empathy and recognising emotions in others as it pertains to interpersonal skills.

- *Empathy*

According to Schiller (2009:66) empathy is a critical social skill that is necessary for getting along with others. Empathy allows children to view a situation from someone else's point of view.

According to Oatley, Keltner and Jenkins (2006:211) differentiation between the self and other becomes more established during the second year. At this point there is an emergence of emotions, such as empathy and embarrassment. Hoffman (in Oatley, Keltner & Jenkins 2006:211) argues that although empathy has limitations it is essential to prosocial behaviour, kindness, caring and justice. When children can see that another person is sad or angry in response to other's actions, they usually feel some motivation to modify their behaviour and reassess their own actions. And, from early in life, experiencing emotions that are similar to those of someone else provides us with a stepping stone to other people's internal world. Smith, Cowie and Blades (1998:149) contribute by stating that there is considerable evidence that children can understand other people's emotions, desires and beliefs by three or four years of age and there is the emergence of truly empathic understanding. Smith, Cowie and Blades (1998:207) explain that preschool children display prosocial behaviour as they are happy to share, help and comfort other children in their classroom.

From the literature it is clear that preschool children do understand, even if on a basic level, what causes certain feelings. They will therefore offer simple

help and comfort to other children in distress. It is this ability that demonstrates the beginnings of empathic behaviour.

The following section explores the preschool child's ability to recognise emotions in others.

- *Recognising emotions in other people*

According to Schaffer (2004:124) the ability to read other's inner feelings from their outer behaviour is an essential part of social relationships. Smith, Cowie and Blades (1998:143) mention that there is one basic step the infant must take to understand others and that is to realise that they are distinct from other people, who have a separate continuing existence. Children need to acquire a sense of self separate from others.

Campbell (2006:61) states that awareness of one's own emotional experiences and their causes appears to be a prerequisite for the ability to recognise emotions in others. Of particular importance to cooperative interactions with others, both adult and peers, is the ability to read social cues, interpret facial expressions and infer what others are thinking and feeling. During the preschool years children are starting to recognise emotions in others and are not as egocentric as was once thought. (Campbell 2006:61)

The researcher is of the opinion that preschool children are able to identify emotions in others but may not be able to manage emotions in others as yet. The researcher notes that emotional development of the preschool child is very closely linked to the social development of the preschool child and it is important to note that the one cannot develop without the other. This link is further illuminated in the discussion on social development in the following section.

2.2.2 Social Development of the Preschool Child

Feldman (1999:5) defines social development as the way in which individuals interact with others and how their social relationships grow, change and remain stable over the course of their lives. According to Vasta, Miller and Ellis (2004:436) humans are a very social species and organise themselves into groups ranging in size from families to communities to nations and they spend a great deal of time interacting with one another. From early on, children have many social relationships.

Smith, Cowie and Blades (1998:114-125) explain that the period between two and four years of age sees a significant increase in the skills children have acquired in order to interact with their peers. They start to play together and there is less parallel play. Most group activity involves just two or three children and the number of participants increases with age. Parallel play falls away as children get older. Preschool children start to develop friendships and they are important to that child.

Shaffer (1994:372) describes sharing, cooperating and helping other children as part of the development of a preschool child's social development. He disagrees with the idea that children of this age are too egocentric. The preschooler starts to show comfort to their distressed companions. He says once children begin to associate their own distress with that of their victims, the foundation for compassionate behaviour has been laid.

According to Semrud-Clikeman (2007:11) social skills develop over time, tasks that are crucial for mastery of social skills emerge at various points on the developmental continuum and build on previously learned skills and knowledge. As the child learns appropriate social skills, emotional maturation also occurs. Semrud-Clikeman (2007:14) posits that the tasks a preschooler needs to master involve the ability to manage their emotions with others, particularly peer groups, and to meet social expectations of society at large. Prior to this point, the most important people in the preschooler's life have been their parents and extended family and possibly some peer involvement. The preschooler needs to learn how to play with others and this requires the

skills of conflict management, assertiveness, sharing and emotional regulation. In the preschool years management of these skills is an important aspect of socialisation.

The above illustrates that preschool children develop some of their social skills between the ages of three and four years old. The preschool child starts to interact with two and three peers at a time and forms relationships in this stage. Parallel play begins to fall away as more social development skills are acquired. The researcher believes that preschool children are not only developing emotionally and socially but they are also growing physically. The researcher will now discuss physical development in the preschool child in order to give an overview of the entire development of a preschool child.

2.2.3 Physical Development of the Preschool Child

Feldman (1999:5) defines physical development as the development involving the body's physical makeup, including the brain, nervous system, muscles and senses. Physical development consists of mainly two areas, gross motor skill and fine motor skills. According to Wolfson (2008) gross motor skills usually involve using the entire body or several parts of the body at one time and fine motor skills require smaller movements and more intricate capabilities.

According to Rathus (2006:262-268) physical growth in preschool children is slower than in infancy. Preschool children become taller and leaner as they gain in height and lose some of their "baby fat". He adds that the brain develops more quickly than any other organ in the preschool years and that the brain has reached 90% of its adult weight by age five. He says preschool children make great strides in developing gross motor skills but that their fine motor skills develop gradually and lag behind.

The next section discusses cognitive development in preschool children.

2.2.4 Cognitive Development of the Preschool Child

Schaffer (2004:160) states that “cognition” refers to knowing and cognitive development to the acquisition of knowledge in childhood. Included here are such processes as understanding, reasoning, thinking, problem solving, learning, conceptualising, classifying and remembering. Vasta, Miller and Ellis (2004:210) explains ”cognition” as all higher-order mental processes by which humans attempt to understand and adapt their world. These are labelled thinking, reasoning, learning and problem solving.

According to Campbell (2006:45) it is generally agreed that memory improves with development, probably as a function of cognitive and language development and the use of strategies to facilitate the organisation and recall of information. Children also have an easier time remembering things that fit into their existing knowledge base. Preschoolers are starting to utilise strategies to facilitate memory.

Patterson (2009:292) states that preschool children, in addition to honing their memory skills, begin to develop an awareness of their own mental activities, make assumptions about the world and about other people in it and demonstrate pre-literacy and rudimentary mathematical skills.

The following section provides a summary of language development in preschool children.

2.2.5 Language Development of the Preschool Child

According to McDevitt and Ormrod (2007:316) language development is the acquisition of understanding and using human language. Language development frequently makes a distinction between expressive and receptive language skills. Expressive language is the ability to communicate effectively through speaking and writing and receptive language is the ability to understand the language one hears and reads.

Rathus (2006:316) explains that children's language skills grow enormously during the preschool years and by the fourth year children are asking adults and each other questions, taking turns talking and engaging in lengthy conversations. The development of vocabulary proceeds at an extraordinary pace. Rice (in Rathus 2006:317) states that preschoolers learn an average of nine new words per day.

Campbell (2006:40) explains that by the child's third birthday, children are speaking in increasingly complex sentences that may include clauses and connectives, as well as statements of causality, descriptions of past events and planning for the future. In addition, children learn the basic rules of grammar and apply them diligently.

Flanagan (1996:72) believes that language and thought develop independently at first, which he called pre-intellectual language and pre-linguistic thought. Around the age of three this changes so that language and thought interact. Children move from a stage where language serves a largely social purpose to a stage where they use language to control their own behaviour and thought. This kind of "self talk" in young children is often spoken out loud. Cohen (2002:67) added that "self talk" helped preschool children sort though their problems.

Moral development in preschool children is discussed next.

2.2.6 Moral Development of the Preschool Child

Vasta, Miller and Ellis (2004:514) explain morality to involve issues of right and wrong, and good and evil. Children's moral development involves the ways in which they come to understand and follow the rules of their social world.

Oswalt (2007) explains morality to be the ability to learn the difference between right or wrong and understand how to make the right choices. As with other facets of development, morality does not form independently from

the previous areas of development. Children's experiences at home, the environment around them and their physical cognitive, emotional and social skills influence their developing sense of right versus wrong.

According to Smith, Cowie and Blades (1998:214) the development of moral reasoning refers to how we reason, or judge, whether an action is right or wrong and this helps us decide on our course of behaviour. They pose a key question concerning the age at which a child may be considered to be morally responsible. The moral development of children must be viewed in the context of the family and the community.

Shaffer (1994:414) explains that in preschool children rules are truly external to the self rather than internalised. And that the child conforms to rules imposed by authority figures to avoid punishment or obtain personal rewards. Crain (1985) explains that the child assumes that powerful authorities hand down a fixed set of rules which he must obey unquestioningly.

This section aimed at providing an overview of the various areas of development in the preschool child. The next section provides an in-depth review and discussion on emotional intelligence.

2.3 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

2.3.1 Introduction

The following section covers in some detail the area of emotional intelligence. To develop a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence, the researcher covers multiple intelligences, various models of emotional intelligence as well as theoretical perspective concepts on emotional intelligence in children and the value this has for the child. The section will also cover the importance of the involvement of both the parent and the school in the development of the preschool child's emotional intelligence. The researcher acknowledges that the skills acquired to develop emotional intelligence in the preschool child are the building blocks for a life-long lesson.

The following section explains the concept of multiple intelligences and how they are interrelated to emotional intelligence.

2.3.2 Multiple Intelligences

The researcher would like to start with a discussion on multiple intelligences as she is of the opinion that once these intelligences emerged, the identification of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence was key to defining and describing emotional intelligence as it is known today. Van Wagner (2009) explains and describes the theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner. Gardner first outlined his theory in his 1983 book *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences,* in which he suggests that all people have different kinds of "intelligences". Gardner (2004) proposes eight intelligences as well as the possible addition of a ninth, known as existentialist intelligence. In order to capture the full range of abilities and talents that people possess, Gardner (2004) suggests that people do not possess just one intellectual capacity, but have many different intelligences.

Gardner's theory has come under much criticism from both psychologists and educators. These critics argue that Gardner's definition of intelligence is too broad and that his eight different intelligences are simply talents, personality traits and abilities. According to some researchers Gardner's theory suffers from a lack of supporting empirical research (Van Wagner 2009).

Despite this, the theory of multiple intelligences enjoys considerable popularity with educators. Many teachers utilise multiple intelligence in their teaching, philosophy and work to integrate Gardner's theory into the classroom (Van Wagner 2009).

According to Gardner (2004) multiple intelligences can be categorised as follows:

- Visual Spatial Intelligence
- Linguistic Verbal Intelligence

- Logical Mathematical Intelligence
- Bodily Kinaesthetic Intelligence
- Musical Intelligence
- Interpersonal Intelligence
- Intrapersonal intelligence
- Naturalistic Intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (2004:5) contribute by stating that emotional intelligence is linked to the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences that Gardner suggested. Emotional intelligence can possibly be regarded as a combination of interpersonal and interpersonal intelligences. Gardner (2004) defined *interpersonal intelligence* as “the ability to understand people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them.” He defined *intrapersonal intelligence* as “the capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of one's self and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in life.” These are what we have come to understand as emotional intelligence.

Bar-On (2001:84) stress that the reoccurring theme in the emotional intelligence literature is that interpersonal competence, how well people understand others and relate with them, depends on intrapersonal intelligence, the ability to understand their emotions and have them work for them. Both of these important emotional intelligence components combine to help them deal with everyday life and adapt to a constantly changing environment. The more developed these two components are the better their chances are to succeed in life. The researcher is of the opinion that since the intelligences as described above are all interconnected, improving one's emotional intelligence will have a positive impact on one's other intelligences.

Based on the above conceptualisation, emotional intelligence can be regarded as comprising both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The next section provides a tabulated summary of various authors’ models and definitions on emotional intelligence.

2.3.3 Definitions of the Concept of Emotional Intelligence

The researcher tabulated a summary of the definitions of emotional intelligence and the skills associated with the different definitions to get a better understanding of and insight in what emotional intelligence is in Table 2.1. Having a better understanding of emotional intelligence will allow the teachers and parents to better comprehend the concept.

Table 2.1: Emotional intelligence: Comparison of Definitions and Skills

	Goleman (1995:34)	Mayer and Salovey (2004:35)	Bar-On (2004:88)	De Klerk and Le Roux (2003)	Blom (2008)	Schiller (2009:10)
Overall definition	"Abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations, to control impulse and delay gratification, to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathise and to hope" (Goleman 1995:34).	"The ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion, the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought, the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer & Salovey 2004:35).	" an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2004:88).	" the ability to identify, understand and control your own thoughts and feelings, communicate them appropriately to others and have empathy with the emotions of others which enables them to interact with them on an emotional level" (De Klerk & Le Roux 2003).	"the child's potential to manage their emotional life in a certain way. This consists of four components, namely self-awareness, emotional management, empathy and management of emotions in others." (Blom 2008)	"Healthy emotions allow people to express and constructively manage the full range of human feelings, to postpone gratification, to find constructive outlets for negative emotions, and to understand and appreciate how others feel. Healthy emotions lead to self-satisfaction and joy" (Schiller 2009:10).
Major areas of skills	• Knowing one's emotions • Managing emotions • Motivating oneself • Recognising emotions in others • Handling relationships	• Perception and expression of emotion • Assimilating emotion in thought • Understanding and analyzing emotion • Reflective regulation of emotion	• Intrapersonal skills • Interpersonal skills • Adaptability scales • Stress-management scales • General mood	• Intrapersonal skills • Interpersonal skills • Problem solving • Motivated to change	• Personal components • Interpersonal components	• Self-awareness • Self-management • Social awareness • Relationship management

The researcher believes that by developing an insight and understanding into all the constructs of emotional intelligence, as they have been discussed above, will provide the accessibility to place this into practice easier in the preschool environment. In order to further explore the role of emotional intelligence in the preschool child, the following section discusses the value of emotional intelligence.

2.3.4 The Value of Emotional Intelligence

As De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:23) have stated, there is significant value in developing emotional intelligence in children. Not only does it equip the child to deal with his present situation but more importantly he gains knowledge and skills that will accompany him on his way to adulthood.

According to De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:8) the importance of emotional intelligence came to light when Gardner identified the theory of multiple intelligences. They believe that the “personal intelligences” are incorporated in emotional intelligence as has been discussed above. They describe emotional intelligence as often being the result of learning that occurs throughout life. Maturity can improve emotional intelligence, but children can learn these skills at an early age and this can help them cope with life’s ups and downs much better.

Wilding (2007:24) contributes by stating that possessing emotional intelligence is an important skill. And while life tends to produce problems and traumas, emotional intelligence enables people to deal with these in the best possible way, to make good choices based on wise thinking and to enjoy good personal relationships with others.

The benefits of developing emotional intelligence according to De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:9) are that children achieve remarkable outcomes, they get to know themselves, think and feel positively about themselves and are willing to take risks. Accepting, controlling and verbalising their feelings become part of their everyday life. Negative thinking patterns are replaced with more

constructive ones. They are able to communicate meaningfully with others, have respect and empathy with the feelings of those around them. Setbacks are accepted as part of life and they learn from their experiences. Decisions are made carefully and conflict with others is resolved constructively. If there are changes in their lives it is seen as important and exciting challenges that make life more interesting. With this in mind they then motivate themselves, set realistic goals and enjoy life to the fullest.

Goleman (1995:193) strongly believed that the first opportunity for shaping the ingredients of emotional intelligence is in the earliest years, though these capabilities continue to form throughout the school years. The emotional abilities children acquire in later life build on those of the earliest years. Elias, Hunter and Kress (2001:146) state that it is better to begin as early as preschool and not to wait to develop emotional intelligence. The researcher thus reasons that this is the ultimate value of providing an emotional intelligence intervention programme for preschool children.

According to Goleman (1995:193) a report from the United States National Centre for Clinical Infant Programs states: “A schools’ success is not predicted by a child’s fund of facts or precocious ability to read, but rather by emotional and social measures.”

The following would be seen as emotional and social measures:

- Being self-assured.
- Knowing what kind of behaviour is expected and how to rein in the impulse to misbehave.
- Being able to wait their turn.
- Following directions and turning to teachers for help.
- Expressing needs while getting along with other children.

According to the report stated in Goleman (1995:193) almost all students who do poorly in school lack one or more of these elements of emotional intelligence. The magnitude of the problem has increased. In some states in the United States close to one in five children have to repeat first grade and then as the years go on, fall further behind their peers, becoming increasingly

discouraged, resentful and disruptive. A child's readiness for school depends on the most basic of all knowledge, how to learn. The report (in Goleman 1995:193) lists the seven key ingredients of this crucial capacity – all related to emotional intelligence:

1. Confidence: A sense of control and mastery of one's body, behaviour and world, the child's sense that he is more likely than not to succeed at what he undertakes and that adults will be helpful.
2. Curiosity: The sense that finding out about things is positive and leads to pleasure.
3. Intentionality: The wish and capacity to have an impact and to act upon that with persistence. This is related to a sense of competence of being effective.
4. Self-control: The ability to modulate and control one's own actions in age appropriate ways, a sense of inner control.
5. Relatedness: The ability to engage with others based on the sense of being understood by and understanding others.
6. Capacity to communicate: The wish and ability to verbally exchange ideas, feelings and concepts with others. This is related to a sense of trust in others and of pleasure in engaging with others, including adults.
7. Cooperativeness: The ability to balance one's own needs with those of others in group activity.

Schiller (2009:1) suggests that these seven skills are crucial for children to become academically successful. She has designed activities to develop these skills. Whether or not a child arrives at school on the first day of kindergarten with the above-mentioned capabilities depends greatly on how his parents and preschool teachers have facilitated emotional intelligence skills (Goleman 1995:194). The researcher therefore concludes that parents and preschool teachers are of the utmost importance in facilitating the learning of emotional intelligence. According to the researcher the parents and teachers play an important role to establish emotional intelligence in preschool children.

Goleman (1995:231) states that educators have long been disturbed by schoolchildren's lagging scores in math and reading, but are realising now that there is a different and more alarming deficiency: emotional illiteracy. While laudable efforts are being made to raise academic standards, this new deficiency is not being addressed in the standard school curriculum. Goleman (1995:231) quotes one teacher saying that, the present emphasis in schools suggests that "we care more about how well schoolchildren can read and write than whether they'll be alive next week". According to Goleman this is due to the increased incidents of violence.

Taylor (2001:67) agrees with Goleman by saying that today people believe that if you are emotionally intelligent then you can cope better with life's challenges and control your emotions more effectively. Taylor (2001:81) goes on to say that researchers are looking into the way children develop to see what contributes to the development of emotional intelligence. They have seen that the development of emotional awareness and the capacity to talk about and reflect on emotions has a lot to do with how parents respond to the emotional states of their infants and young children. He also says that programs that educate parents about emotional development and the types of interactions can potentially help children get the core components of emotional intelligence and in turn help them become more resilient to everyday stress.

It seems to the researcher that there must be further discussions among stakeholders on the need for schools and parents to be involved in the improvement of emotional intelligence in preschool children.

2.3.5 Emotional Intelligence in Schools

The following section discusses the importance of the role that school plays in a child's life. The role of schooling is not limited to just academic achievement as school plays a vital role in developing emotional and social intelligence early in a child's life.

Children spend a lot of their lives at school, and it is well documented and not surprising that schools can have a profound impact on many areas of a child's development besides academic attainment (Sylva as cited in Wells 2000:161).

Some researchers suggest that emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened, while others claim it is an inborn characteristic. Mayer and Salovey (2004) say emotional intelligence is made up of a set of skills and most skills can be improved through education. Thus it is not surprising that we should look at schools as the prime location for promoting emotional intelligence. Wilding (2007:20) says that emotional intelligence is both a developable skill and a personality trait and most literature comes to the same conclusion, emotional intelligence can be developed.

The following section explains emotional intelligence as it pertains to the school curriculum and in particular what is expected from the home environment versus the educational system. The section also discusses the importance of the teacher's role in being equipped with and being able to impart emotional intelligence to children.

2.3.5.1 The curriculum

Mayer and Salovey (2004:43-46) describe how one could improve emotional skills. Most skills can be improved through education and it is likely this would hold true to the emotional intelligence skills too. Emotional skills begin in the home with good parent-child interaction. Parents help children identify and label their emotions to respect their feelings and to begin to connect them to social situations. A child may learn incorrect lessons about emotions, parents may avoid feelings or a parent may deny anger even when behaving in a hostile manner. Skills must also be learnt at school for good overall development.

On the other hand Mayer and Salovey (2004: 43-46) have concerns about educational programs directly concerning emotional intelligence. They say that some of these programmes seem to adopt an "emotions are good"

philosophy untempered by the fact that emotions exist in the context of other personal characteristics and interpersonal relationships that are troubling to us. Another concern they have is that individuals from different subcultures approach emotions differently. The researcher believes these concerns need to be taken into account when implementing an emotional intelligence programme.

The educator's commentary by Defalco (in Mayer & Salovey 2004:58) backs the researcher's beliefs that young people need skills not usually considered part of a school's core curriculum, such as impulse control, stress management, empathy, dealing with accusations and problem solving. To get these children to their next academic levels educators must meet them where they are and give them skills and resources to cope with the stress so that they are better able to attend to their academics. So in addition to teaching emotional competencies for its own sake, we are also teaching it because of its impact on academics. Defalco talks of a programme that comes from a prevention point of view, one offered to all students, not just 'problem' children, one offered to all students so that when stresses of life confront them, they will be better able to cope. Defalco calls it "emotional competency programmes for all"

Allen and Cohen (2006:129-134) pose the following questions:

- Should skills related to emotional intelligence find their way into the school curriculum?
- Given the current educational paradigm, can such skills be effectively developed in schools?
- Would the introduction of such skills relate to emotional intelligence?

According to Allen and Cohen (2006), what and how teachers choose to teach is increasingly informed by the desire to integrate the social and emotional competencies with teaching practice. They discuss how a school is run, how people interact and treat one another, the manner in which decisions are made and communicated, how classrooms and the school as a whole are managed contributes significantly to its social and emotional ethos. Creating a community of learners where trust, openness, respect for diversity and

shared decision making are explicit goals is thought to be critical for the development of social and emotional skills. In schools with a positive school climate teachers not only address children's academic needs but also their emotional needs.

According to Elias, Hunter and Kress (2001:138-139) there is evidence that programs to promote social and emotional learning (or emotional intelligence) are effective. They say there needs to be a link between academics and emotional intelligence. This is needed for classroom success.

Salovey, Mayer and Caruso (2004:71) describe many programs to promote emotional intelligence in school children and in the United States many of these programs are being implemented. They say that an increasing number of these programs are being evaluated formally but still have not been subjected to empirical scrutiny. There is virtually no reported research on whether these programs are effective by enhancing the kinds of skills delineated in their model of emotional intelligence.

Elias, Hunter and Kress (2001:149) state that they believe emotional intelligence has an incredible place in education, but think integrating it into the curriculum seems to be taking too long. They believe that emotional intelligence should move into a more prominent role in education. They believe that the evidence so far suggests that emotional intelligence is necessary for our children to grow up into adults who are going to be effective in their families, workplaces and communities.

Mayer and Cobb (2004:278) believe it is worth acknowledging that we are only beginning to learn about emotional intelligence and we do not know the degree to which it would predict success either for individuals or for schools. This does not mean that emotional intelligence is unimportant, nor does it mean that socio-emotional curricula are not good or should be abandoned. All it means is that socio-emotional programs are implemented at present, with reasonable hopes that they will have beneficial effects. And educators have shown great interest in evaluating such programs and the findings about how socio-emotional learning programs improve schools are directly relevant

to their use and worth examining as they are reported. They believe that if emotional intelligence becomes better established, as they expect it will, it could be integrated into the existing curriculum.

2.3.5.2 The teacher

Hein (in De Klerk & Le Roux 2003:19) states that the teacher's level of emotional intelligence is by far the single most important variable in creating an emotionally intelligent classroom.

Based on the literature the researcher thus reasons that the teacher's level of emotional intelligence is of utmost importance in the classroom. If the teacher has a healthy emotional intelligence this will develop healthy emotional intelligence in the classroom. Teachers need to know how to handle their own emotions and handle negative emotions effectively. They must be able to identify their own feelings and take responsibility for them.

The researcher remains, based on her own experience, concerned about the level of empathy and insight that teachers currently demonstrate when dealing with the feelings of a child. The researcher suggests that a child displaying emotional upset represents an opportunity for the teacher to exercise understanding with a view to positively and constructively soothing the child's emotional state. Goleman (1995:199) explains that the development of key skills in emotional intelligence extends over several years and the teacher plays a significant role throughout. Each period in childhood opens up a "window" to instil certain emotional intelligence skills. He refers to developing emotional teaching in childhood as "sculpting and pruning of neural circuits". (Goleman 1995:199)

It follows that if you are responsible for assisting others to learn, then you need to recognise this emotional component of the teaching-learning exchange and be able to work with it. In short, teachers need to be emotionally intelligent. Mortiboys (2005) explains that when emotional intelligence is utilised it requires that the individual be able to recognise and

respond to their own emotions as well as those of the learners in the classroom. This will effectively make both the teacher and the learner more effective in their respective roles. Therefore the teacher should encourage an emotional state in the learners which is conducive to learning.

Mortiboys (2005) also states that teachers should have three competencies, namely:

- subject expertise, derived from their qualifications and/or teaching experience,
- expertise in how to teach and in how people learn, and
- emotional intelligence.

Mortiboys (2005) observes that learners are not getting the full benefit of the teacher's expertise in the subject and in learning and teaching methods because of the teacher's failure to use emotional intelligence. This leads to learners wasting energy on negative, unproductive emotions, less satisfaction for the teacher and missed opportunities for enhancing the teaching session.

Mortiboys (2005) states that a person cannot live a full life or be an effective teacher without emotional intelligence. And there is more to be done to develop emotionally intelligent skills. He mentions three things:

- Emotional intelligence should not only be seen as an extra quality, but rather be recognised as an essential component.
- The use of emotional intelligence is not just intuitive, but a deliberate usage.
- Teachers should use emotional intelligence as a method of day-to-day teaching.

The role of the teacher in developing emotional intelligence is indeed critical but little success can be expected if the parent is not involved in developing this skill from the earliest stages.

2.3.6 Emotional Intelligent Parenting

De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:13) state that the first place where children learn about themselves and their world is in their family. It is here that they are reacted to and get to feel accepted or not. Children learn about expressing or suppressing feelings in their family. The way parents react to them when they experience intense emotions will determine whether or not they are comfortable with feelings in general.

It is not only what parents do or say directly to their children that is important, but also what they say or do to other people and what happens between the father and the mother. To expect parents to always react or behave in the correct way is not realistic. It will be of no use at all if the information received and new skills learnt at school on how to be emotionally intelligent are not endorsed and practised at home. This is why it is important that parents try to enhance their own emotional intelligence at the same time. They can learn the new skills together and everyone can be empowered with important life skills (De Klerk & Le Roux 2003:13)

According to Goleman (1995:191-192) emotionally adept parents can do a lot to help their children with the basics of emotional intelligence, such as learning how to recognise, manage and harness their feelings and empathising and handling the feelings that arise in their relationships. Goleman (1995:191-192) quotes a team from the University of Washington who compared parents who are emotionally adept to those who handle feelings poorly. This was their findings:

- Their children got along better with, showed more affection toward, and had less tension around their parents.
- They were better at handling their own emotions, were more effective at soothing themselves when upset, and got upset less often.
- The children were more relaxed biologically with lower levels of stress hormones and other physiological indicators of emotional arousal.
- Other advantages were social, these children are more popular with and are better liked by their peers, and were seen by their teachers as more socially skilled.

- Their parents and teachers alike rated these children as having fewer behavioural problems such as rudeness or aggressiveness.
- Finally, the benefits were cognitive: these children were able to concentrate for longer and were therefore more effective learners.

Steward-Brown (2000:34) discusses the issue that if children are parented with respect, empathy and genuineness, they get to experience emotional well-being and develop ways of relating to others that enhance their emotional intelligence skills. They grow up to be people who feel good most of the time and have the emotional and social resources to respond to life events and unhelpful behaviour in others, in ways which make it likely that they will remain so. An adult's emotional well-being is determined by his/her childhood emotional well-being.

Wilding (2007:185) adds to this by saying that the first step in fostering emotional intelligence in one's children is to make a fundamental shift in the way parents view parenting. Many parents see their role as someone who attempts to mould their children according to their own preconceived ideas. Not only can this be ineffective, it can often cause a sense of rebellion. A more emotionally intelligent way of parenting would be to help your children to become more at ease with their own emotions and with their families. This type of parenting recognises that children will have emotional experiences every day of their lives, encourages them to learn how to manage these emotions and require parents to model this behaviour too.

The researcher reiterates that the school and teachers alone cannot facilitate emotional intelligence. Goleman (in Elias, Tobias & Friedlander 1999) says “family life is our first school for emotional learning”. The significant increase in global competitiveness means that today’s generation of parents have to work longer and harder to maintain a decent standard of living than before, it’s not that parents love their children less, but they have less free time to spend with them. Childhood has changed; children no longer have natural opportunities for this kind of learning as was true throughout history. Every parent should do the very best job they can in helping their children master these basic skills in life. It is in the small, everyday interactions that these

lessons can be learnt. It is about understanding and respecting the feelings of family members in these hectic times, reduce household stress and increase the time parents and children spend laughing together.

Elias, Hunter and Kress (2001:149) state that it is just as important for parents to support emotional intelligence as it is to support academic learning to improve progress. Parents and schools need to work together to build children's emotional intelligence skills. Allen and Cohen (2006:135) agree and say that good parent-teacher relations are able to improve emotional intelligence in children. These authors see the importance of parent involvement.

Elias, Tobias and Friedlander (1999:25) state that one of the most critical jobs of parenting is to help children grow up to be socially skilled and emotionally healthy. The researcher believes there are not a lot of things that are more powerful for young children than a chance to talk with a parent.

The next section of the literature study discusses the Gestalt theory and emphasised key principles which were then integrated into a discussion of a Gestalt intervention programme.

2.4 THE GESTALT THEORY AND A GESTALT INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

2.4.1 Introduction

The aim of the research is to improve emotional intelligence in the preschool child utilising a Gestalt intervention programme. This chapter has provided a significant discussion on the preschool child and emotional intelligence. This section of the literature study places an emphasis on understanding the Gestalt perspective, specifically defining Gestalt, Gestalt therapy and Gestalt Play Therapy. Important theoretical concepts of Gestalt theory are explored with key concepts defined as well as highlighting various aspects of Gestalt Play therapy.

The researcher is of the opinion that it is important to have a good knowledge of the framework of the theoretical base on which the Wise child programme is developed. The researcher also believes it is important for the teacher implementing a Gestalt intervention programme to have a thorough foundation and understanding of the Gestalt perspective since it will be implemented by the preschool teacher and not a therapist. This insight and understanding will provide the preschool teacher with the ability to operate from the same paradigm. The researcher notes that an intervention programme is not therapy but it is based on the Gestalt perspective.

2.4.2 The Definitions of Gestalt, Gestalt Therapy and Gestalt Play Therapy

The researcher explains the definitions of Gestalt, Gestalt therapy and Gestalt play therapy below. This gives the reader an overview of the definitions.

2.4.2.1 The Definition of "Gestalt"

Clarkson (1999:1) defines Gestalt as a German word which is not easily translated into a single English term. It embraces such a wide variety of concepts: the shape, the pattern, the whole form, the configuration. It connotes the structural entity which are both different from and much more than the sum of its parts. Yontef (1993:178) explains the word Gestalt (plural: Gestalten) refers to the shape, configuration or whole, the structural entity, that which makes the whole a meaningful unity different from a mere sum of parts.

For the purpose of this study, the Gestalt perspective views every person, including children in preschool years and their parents as whole entities with the ability to discover, explore and experience emotional intelligence.

2.4.2.2 The Definition of Gestalt Therapy

Yontef (1993:147) describes Gestalt therapy is an exploration rather than a direct modification of behaviour. The goal is growth and autonomy through an increased consciousness. Rather than maintaining distance and interpreting, a Gestalt therapist does active awareness work. Yontef (1993:124) further describes Gestalt therapy as a process and the emphasis is on what is being done, thought and felt at that moment rather than on what was, might be or should be.

According to Blom (2004:3) Gestalt therapy is considered a form of psychotherapy that focuses on that which is immediately present. She describes it as an existential, phenomenological and holistic approach, with the emphasis on awareness in the here and now and the interdependence between people and their environment. Blom (2004:4) adds that Gestalt therapy improves organismic self-regulation in that people become aware of choices they can make in respect of their behaviour and they can thus define the significance of their life.

2.4.2.3 Definition of Gestalt Play Therapy

Blom (2004:5) explains Gestalt play therapy can be considered a psychotherapeutic technique that uses the principles and techniques of Gestalt therapy during play therapy with children. By developing a therapeutic relationship and contact and by working according to a specific process children are given the opportunity to confirm their sense of self verbally or non-verbally, to express their thoughts and to nurture themselves. Various forms and techniques of play are used during the different stages.

According to Gouws *et al.* (in Blom 2004:5) Gestalt play therapy is a psychotherapeutic technique whereby the therapist attempts to give the child the opportunity to express his feelings verbally and non-verbally. It is assumed that the child will play out his problems in a symbolic manner, will learn to know and will channel his emotions more effectively, will learn to enter

into a relationship of trust with another person and that devious behaviour will consequently be normalised.

The Gestalt approach can only be fully understood if the underlying perspective of Gestalt is grasped. From the above it is evident that Gestalt therapy and Gestalt play therapy are rooted in a specific philosophy and belief in human nature. From this philosophy certain Gestalt perspectives can be derived that will now be discussed further.

2.4.3 The Gestalt Perspective

According to Yontef (1993:124) there are a number of perspectives underlying the Gestalt approach, namely the phenomenological perspective, field theory perspective and existential perspective. These perspectives will be discussed in detail in order to highlight the relevance to improving emotional intelligence in preschool children.

2.4.3.1 The Phenomenological Perspective

According to Yontef (1993:124) the goal of Gestalt phenomenological exploration is awareness or insight. The child is to learn how to become aware of awareness. Yontef (1993:202) explains that individuals regulate themselves either by habit or by conscious choice: Awareness is the means whereby the individual can regulate himself by choice. Phenomenology is the method Gestalt therapy utilises to learn about the awareness process. The goal is to learn enough so that awareness can develop as needed for organismic self-regulation. Phenomenology is a search for understanding based on what is obvious or revealed by the situation (which includes both the organism and the environment) rather than the interpretation of the observer. Phenomenologists refer to this as the “given”.

Joyce and Sills (2001:16) explain that the phenomenological approach means trying to stay as close to the child’s experience as possible, to stay in the here and now moment and rather than interpreting the child’s behaviour, helping him to explore and become aware of how he makes sense of the world. The

therapist needs to have an open mind and a genuine curiosity and discover together with the child their personal experiences. The Wise child programme aims at improving emotional intelligence in preschool children with a focus mainly on awareness and growth as in the phenomenological approach. In the phenomenological approach it is believed that children grow and develop through a process of awareness and staying in the present. Emotional intelligence skills are taught using the behaviour of the children in the classroom at that specific "present" time and not feelings, emotions and behaviour from the past. The teacher reacts to what the child experiences in the here and now without disapproval or judgements. (Blom 2004) The researcher submits that emotional intelligence is linked to Gestalt in that children grow and develop emotional intelligence through a process of awareness. The teacher stays with the child in his situation at that given time.

2.4.3.2 The Field Theory Perspective

Yontef (1993:125) explains that the scientific world view that underlies the Gestalt phenomenological perspective is field theory. Field theory is a method of exploring. The field is a whole in which the parts are in an immediate relationship and responsive to each other and no part is unaffected by what goes on elsewhere in the field. The field replaces the notion of discrete, isolated particles. The child in his life space constitutes a field. According to Yontef (1993:323) field theory "is an attitude that permeates Gestalt therapy and holds the Gestalt therapy system together. It is a framework for studying any event, experience, object, organism or system and the emphasis is on all the forces or influences that together form an integrated whole. Meaning to life is only achieved in relation to all aspects in our field. Everything is moving, becoming and changing to bring about integration and wholeness". Joyce and Sills (2001:24) view a person as never independent or isolated but always in contact and connected with everything else.

From these statements it is thus evident to the researcher that the field theory perspective looks at the child as a whole in his environment. The intervention programme cannot work in isolation from the environment that is constantly

changing and will therefore influence awareness and contact. The researcher concludes that the Gestalt intervention programme supports the child in exploring all forces which are active within his field and creates conditions in which he can see his life as his own responsibility. Based on the above, the researcher firmly believes that both the parent and the school play a vital role in developing the emotional intelligence of children and one cannot be in isolation from the other. Also, according to this perspective a child cannot be seen in isolation from his environment and both the teacher and the child have their own fields. Given this context the teacher tries to explore the child's field and in the process the teacher and child's fields will impact all the time.

2.4.3.3 The Existential Perspective

According to Yontef (1993:125-126) existentialism is based on the phenomenological method. The existential view holds that people are endlessly rediscovering or discovering themselves. There is no essence of human nature to be discovered "once and for all". There are always new horizons, new problems and new opportunities.

The researcher believes the phenomenon that people are always rediscovering or discovering themselves is even more applicable to children. The child has ample opportunity to work on his emotional intelligence skills as part of this constant rediscovery process. In this way the child will be enabled to discover new horizons and new opportunities.

The following section discusses the aims of Gestalt play therapy.

2.4.4 The Aim of Gestalt Play Therapy

Clarkson (1999:1) describes the aim of Gestalt therapy is for a person to discover, explore and experience his own shape, pattern and wholeness. Clarkson (1999:1) explains "in this way people can let themselves become totally what they already are, and what they potentially can become. This fullness of experience can then be available to them both in the course of their

life and in the experience of a single moment". Clarkson (1999:2) describes 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.

Joyce and Sills (2001:27-28) believe that the promotion and encouragement of full and free-flowing awareness is the cornerstone of Gestalt practice. At its best, awareness is a non-verbal sensing or knowing what is happening here and now. It is fundamentally positive and an essential quality of all healthy living. It is the energy for assimilation and growth at the contact boundary, for self-knowledge, choice and creativity. Awareness is both knowing and being. A Gestalt therapist's task is that of raising the awareness of the child.

Blom (2004:51) states that the Gestalt play therapist will establish how children support themselves in solving problems and will facilitate problem solving by means of self-regulation and self-support. According to Yontef (1993:26), self-support includes both self-knowledge and self-acceptance. Assistance-rendering must guide children towards knowing and accepting themselves. They thus learn to increasingly accept more responsibility for their own existence and are capable of more realistic choices for their behaviour.

Blom (2004:51) further states that self-support as an objective of Gestalt play therapy implies that children are guided to take more responsibility for themselves and for satisfying their own needs, as well as making relevant choices in respect of satisfying their needs. Although children must learn how to satisfy their own needs, younger children still depend to a great extent on the environment – such as their parents – for satisfying their needs. This objective in respect of preschool children does not imply that these children should be self-supporting on the same level as an adult person. During Gestalt play therapy, however, children should be guided to know, understand and accept themselves and their needs according to their age. Responsibility, awareness, freedom and choices are different aspects of the same process, since the extent to which individuals have awareness and responsibility is also

an indication of the extent to which they are free to choose their response, including actions, thoughts and attitudes.

Polster and Polster (1974:211) define awareness as a continuous means for keeping up to date with oneself. It is an ongoing process, readily available at all times. It is always there like an underground stream, ready to be tapped into when needed, a refreshing and revitalising experience. Furthermore, focussing on one's awareness keeps one absorbed in the present situation, heightening the impact of therapy experiences, as well as the more common experiences in life.

According to Thompson and Rudolph (2000:165), a state of organismic self-regulation develops with full awareness, and the total person takes control. Mentally healthy people can maintain their awareness without being distracted by the various environmental stimuli that constantly vie for our attention. Such people can fully and clearly identify their own needs and the environmental alternatives for meeting them. Healthy people still experience their share of inner conflicts and frustrations, but, with their higher levels of concentration and awareness, they can solve their problems without complicating them with fantasy elaborations. They, likewise, resolve conflicts with others when it is possible and otherwise dismiss them. People with high levels of awareness of their needs and their environment know which problems and conflicts are resolvable and which are not.

In this study a focus on developing awareness is present throughout the intervention programme. Although the programme is aimed at improving emotional intelligence, which implies the facilitating of emotional intelligence skills, focus was also given to leading the children to a greater awareness of themselves. Each lesson therefore commenced with a sensory awareness exercise to assist the children to become aware of themselves.

The teacher, in promoting children's awareness therefore allows the children to be placed in full contact with one another including on a sensory level. Through the process of developing awareness, the child is able to better develop their emotional intelligence skills. The researcher is of the opinion that

this core aim of Gestalt, creating awareness, is applicable to the aim of the Gestalt intervention programme as it provides preschool children with the opportunity to explore their own emotional intelligence. The researcher believes that the aims for Gestalt play therapy are very similar to the aims of the Gestalt intervention programme and the following section discusses this in more detail.

2.4.5 Theoretical Principles Underlying a Gestalt Intervention Programme

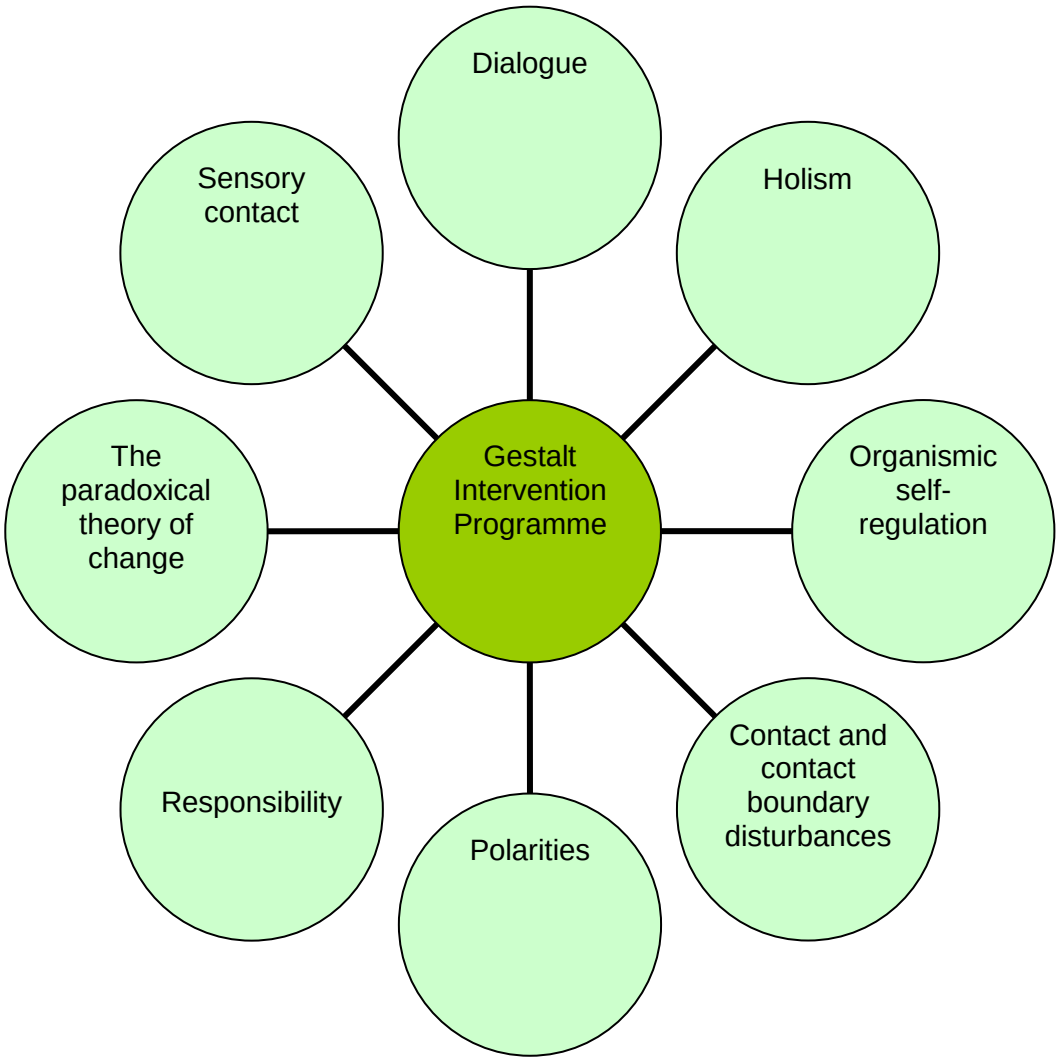

Figure 2.3: The principles underlying a Gestalt intervention programme

In the above illustration Gestalt play therapy comprises of different theoretical concepts. For the purpose of the study these include: dialogue, holism,

organismic self-regulation, contact boundary and contact boundary disturbances, polarities, responsibility, the paradoxical theory of change and sensory contact. The researcher is of the opinion that in order to have a thorough understanding of the Gestalt intervention programme, it is important to obtain a good understanding of these concepts. The following paragraphs provide an in-depth summary of the theoretical principles underlying the Gestalt intervention programme. The researcher provides insight into the relatedness and value of the principle as it relates to the intervention programme.

2.4.5.1 Dialogue

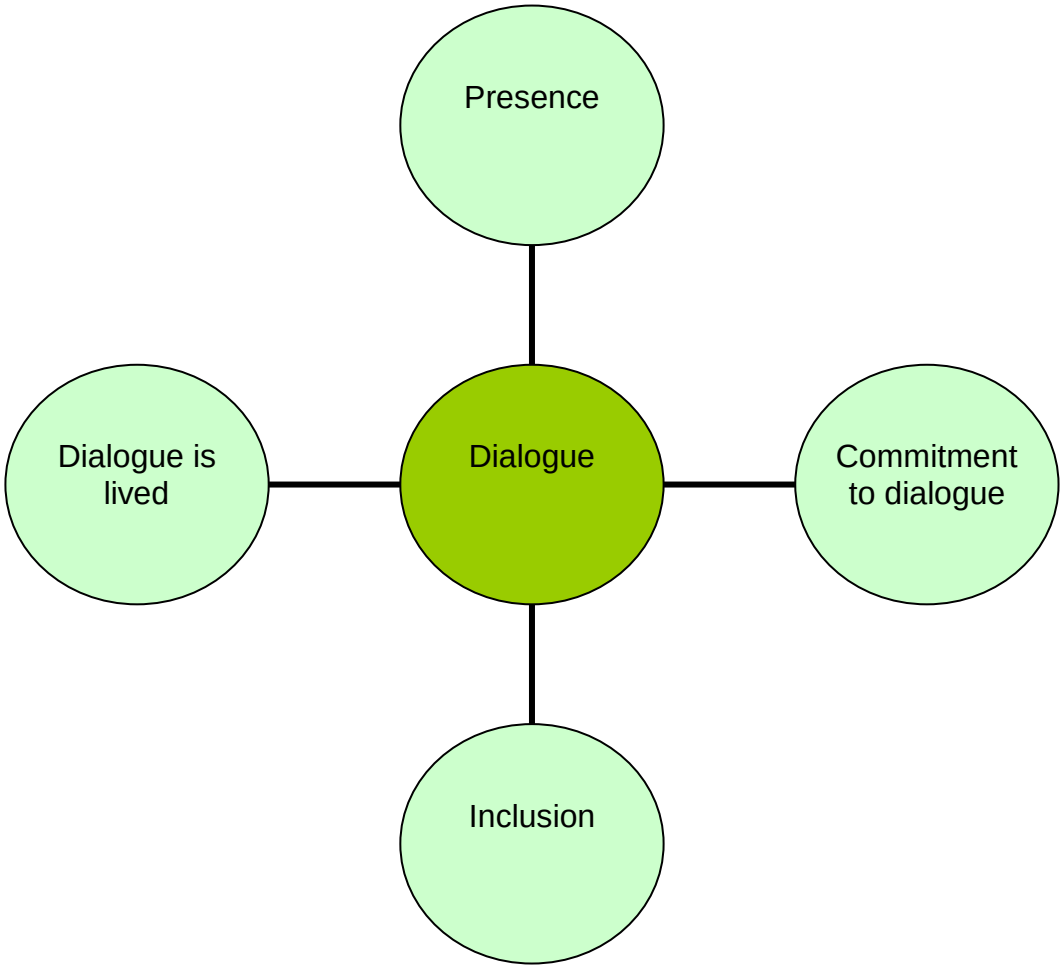

Figure 2.4: Concepts of the dialogue relationship between the child and therapist

The above diagram illustrates the concepts of dialogue in the Gestalt relationship. According to Yontef (1993:127) the relationship between the therapist and the child is the most important aspect of therapy. Existential dialogue is an essential part of Gestalt therapy's methodology and is a manifestation of the existential perspective on relationship. Relationship grows out of contact. Through contact people grow and form identities. Gestalt therapists prefer experiencing the child in dialogue to using therapeutic manipulation. The researcher is of the opinion that no kind of manipulation must be used in the intervention programme. Such contact is marked by straightforward caring, warmth, acceptance and self-responsibility. Dialogue is based on experiencing the other person as he really is and showing the true self, sharing phenomenological awareness. The Gestalt therapist says what she means and encourages the child to do the same. Gestalt dialogue embodies authenticity and responsibility.

Joyce and Sills (2001:53) further describe that when the therapist practices the four qualities of acceptance, presence, inclusion and open communication, she is said to be offering an I-Thou or dialogic relationship to the child. The therapist endeavours to meet the child as a full human being without analysing or attempting to manipulate, but by being open and available.

The therapeutic relationship in Gestalt therapy emphasises four characteristics or qualities. As such these must be integrated into the implementation of the intervention programme and are discussed in more detail in the following section.

- *Inclusion*

  According to Yontef (1993:127) inclusion is putting oneself as fully as possible into the experience of the other without judging, analysing or interpreting while simultaneously retaining a sense of one's separate, autonomous presence. Inclusion provides an environment of safety for the child's phenomenological work and, through communication and by understanding of the child's experience; helps sharpen the child's self-

awareness. Joyce and Sills (2001:46) describe inclusion as an extension or broader form of empathy, where there is no judgement or opinion.

- *Presence*

Yontef (1993:127) discusses that the therapist is in the present and shares her own experiences with the child. She expresses herself to the child, thereby modelling trust and encouraging the child to regulate themselves autonomously. Joyce and Sills (2001:44) agree that the therapist is fully present to the child; she needs to stay in the here and now as far as possible. She brings all of herself to the session. Yontef (1993:35) contributes by stating that in a lively involvement the therapist appropriately and regularly shows her feelings and experiences

- *Commitment to dialogue*

Contact is more than something two people do to each other. Contact is something that happens between two people - something that arises as a result of the interaction between them. The Gestalt therapist surrenders herself to this interpersonal process. This is allowing contact to happen rather than manipulating, making contact, and controlling the outcome (Yontef, 1993:127). The researcher believes that the therapist is committed to the dialogue between the child and herself.

- *Dialogue is lived*

Dialogue is something done rather than talked about. It is an action. “Lived” emphasises the excitement, immediacy of doing and the energy between or among the participants. An important contribution of Gestalt therapy is enlarging the parameters to include explication by nonverbal expressions. However the interaction is limited by ethics, appropriateness and therapeutic task (Yontef, 1993:127).

In the present study the teacher will thus attempt to create a safe environment in the classroom where feelings and behaviours can be expressed and where the teacher can provide examples of her own feelings and behaviours. The researcher, as the teacher, interacted with the children as a group where all engaged in dialogue, both verbal and non-verbal. Taking cognisance of what

was learned from Gestalt, the teacher led the class but never attempted to manipulate what the children said or did.

The above discussions on the Gestalt perspective highlight the interrelatedness of the principles underlying the Gestalt approach. The ultimate goal of the intervention programme is to improve emotional intelligence in preschool children and to have the children continue with the process of growth in emotional intelligence beyond the preschool years.

2.4.5.2 Holism

Blom (2004:9) explains that children need to be considered as a holistic entity, which means that the sum total of their physical, emotional and spiritual aspects, language, thought and behaviour is more than its components. The experience of emotion will thus also have an effect on the other components.

The researcher believes that children participating in the intervention programme must be viewed as a whole. Whilst the intervention programme on improving emotional intelligence focuses mainly on emotions, the importance of viewing the child as a whole cannot be ignored. Over and above the primary aim of working with emotions, the intervention programme also gave due attention to working with the children's sensory awareness, cognitive and physical aspects.

2.4.5.3 Organismic Self-Regulation

Clarkson (1999:21) describes a person as having a natural or organismic tendency to regulate the self. In order to grow and develop people strive to maintain a balance. The assumption is that whenever an imbalance occurs within a person, or in relation to the environment, this imbalance becomes the most important thing in the person's life until the balance is back. The healthy person can differentiate if this need is meaningful and respond to it appropriately, therefore restoring balance and completing the Gestalt. According to Blom (2004:13) younger children will only be able to gain awareness of their needs in a limited way and according to their level of

development in order to find resources within themselves and the environment to satisfy these needs and achieve organismic self-regulation. The needs which children may experience at a specific time will relate to their level of development and to their environmental influences. Blom (2004:14) continues to explain that children must at times suppress the need on their foreground in favour of another need, for instance, to act in a socially acceptable manner.

The researcher is of the opinion that children who participate in the intervention programme will gain the benefit of developing and strengthening their self-regulatory abilities.

2.4.5.4 Contact Boundary

Yontef (1993:136-137) explains that the boundary between self and environment must be kept permeable to allow exchanges, yet firm enough for autonomy. In good boundary functioning, people alternate between connecting and separating between being in contact with the current environment and withdrawal from attention from the environment.

According to Blom (2004:18) contact takes place as soon as the child uses the environment to satisfy his needs. The environmental field is differentiated by boundaries. The contact boundary has two purposes, it connects the child with the environment, which includes other people, but also maintains a separation between the child and the environment. Joyce and Sills (2001:112) are of the opinion that part of psychological health is having good contact with self and others. Blom (2004:20) further states that healthy functioning implies that children must be capable of distinguishing which aspects belong to them and which aspects are foreign to them. Children must be capable of relevant contact with and withdrawal from the environment in order to complete the Gestalt on their foreground and to effect self-regulation.

It is the opinion of the researcher that both teacher and parent can assist children to discover and develop their own boundaries by setting appropriate limits as a protective factor.

2.4.5.5 Contact Boundary Disturbances

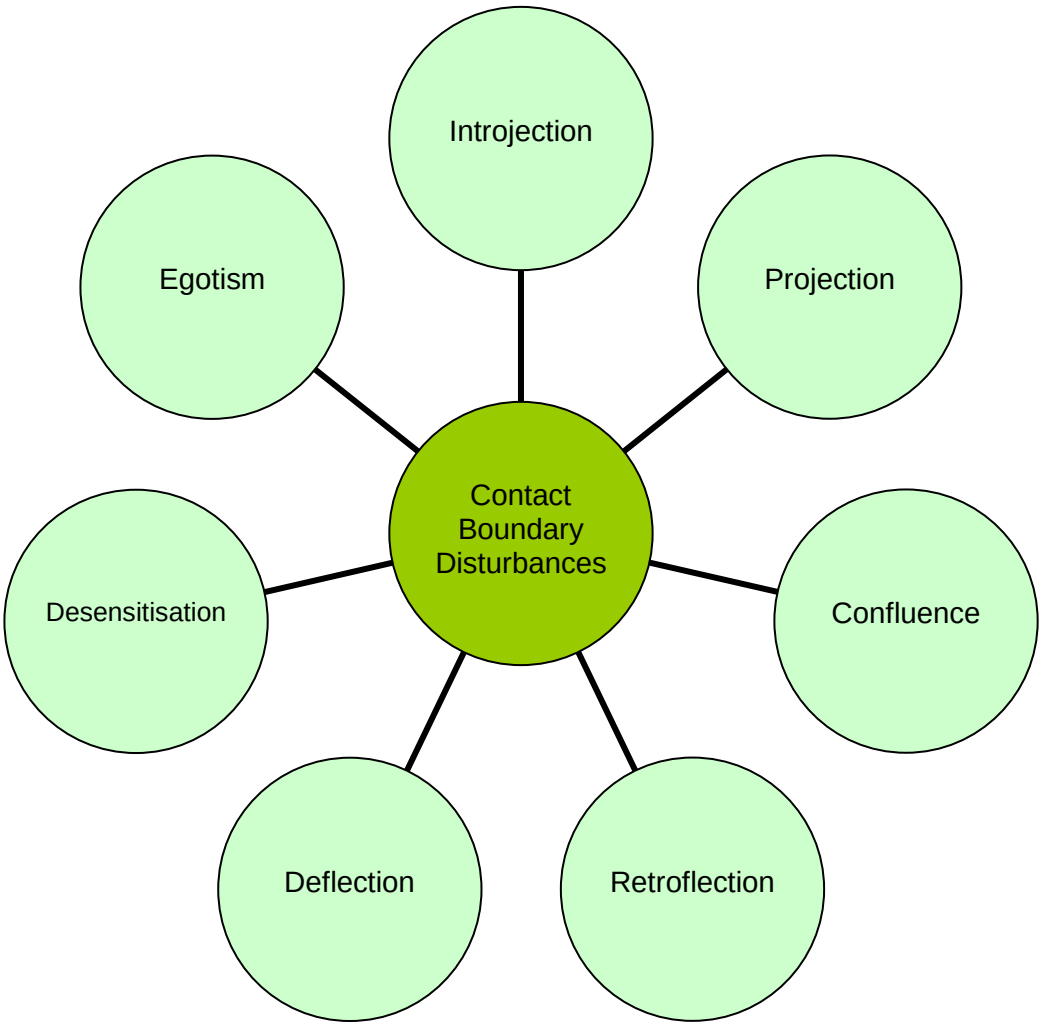

Figure 2.5: The Contact Boundary Disturbances

The above illustrates the contact boundary disturbances that will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

According to Blom (2004:21-22) a contact boundary disturbance occurs when children are no longer capable of forming a sound balance between themselves and the world. These children are not capable of suitable awareness and can no longer respond to their real needs. Children with contact boundary disturbances are incapable of being aware of their needs and healthy contact with the environment. These children's integrated holistic functioning of the senses, body, emotions and intellect is fragmented by using

contact boundary disturbances, which negatively affect the natural process of organismic self-regulation. Contact boundary disturbances refer to the process which children use to satisfy the need on their figure foreground, in other words their process of Gestalt completion and destruction.

The following section discusses contact boundary disturbances in more detail, namely introjection, projection, confluence, retroflection, deflection, desensitisation and egotism.

- *Introjection*

  Clarkson (1999:58) states introjection is "being ruled by internalised shoulds." Introjection implies that children take in aspects from their environment without considering the positive and negative aspects. Introjects never become part of the child but do affect their functioning. Young children take on aspects such as behaviour patterns, rules and manners as introjects even though they have no idea if these are positive or negative - they just take them in. Introjects can negatively influence children's self-awareness in that they get the message from a young age that certain emotions are negative and that these emotions may not be experienced or expressed. Joyce and Sills (2001:125) mention that introjection is a process whereby an opinion, an attitude or an instruction is unquestionably taken in from the environment as if it were true. An introject is not correctly analysed, digested or assimilated.

- *Projection*

  Clarkson (1999:59) describes projection as "seeing in others what I don't acknowledge in myself." Blom (2004:25) explains projection as children not accepting responsibility for their own emotions or behaviours but holding others responsible for them.

- *Confluence*

  Clarkson (1999:62) states that confluence is the condition where organism and environment are not differentiated and the boundaries are blurred. Two individuals merge with one another's beliefs, attitudes

or feelings without recognising the boundaries between them and the ways in which they are different. Between them they behave as if they are one person. Blom (2004:26) concludes children with confluence should be assisted to develop a strong sense of self.

- *Retroflection*

  Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951:146) define retroflection as follows:"When a person retroflects behaviour, he does to himself what originally he did or tried to do to other persons or objects". Clarkson (1999:60) explains retroflection as "doing to myself instead of to the other." Children may learn to retroflect their feelings and thoughts when they are not validated by their families or when they are punished for the expression of their natural impulses.

- *Deflection*

  Clarkson (1999:57) explains deflection to mean turning aside from direct contact with another person. It is a way of reducing one's awareness of environmental contact, making it vague, generalised or bland. Joyce and Sills (2001:116) further explain that deflection means ignoring or turning away either an internal stimulus or one from the environment in order to prevent full recognition or awareness. It is an active process of avoiding awareness.

- *Desensitisation*

  Clarkson (1999:57) defines desensitisation as minimising sensation, the child avoids experiencing himself or the environment - it is a feeling of being anaesthetised and deadened. Feelings are diluted, disregarded or even neglected. Joyce and Sills (2001:118) explain desensitisation as another way of avoiding contact with the stimulus, but it is a much more profound form of shutting down.

- *Egotism*

  Clarkson (1999:61) defines egotism as "blocking spontaneity by control". In Gestalt this is characterised by the individual stepping

outside of himself and becoming a spectator or a commentator on himself and his relationship with the environment.

The Wise child programme encourages children to discuss themselves, their feelings and behaviours. Through these discussions the teacher must be sensitive to these introjects that the children have taken on as part of themselves and can utilise these introjects and experiment with them.

The researcher believes that the child projects something from within himself, onto something or onto someone else. The researcher also notes that being responsible for one's emotions is part of the Gestalt perspective as well as being integral to developing emotional intelligence. It is therefore important that projections are dealt with appropriately in the intervention programme as part of the awareness.

The researcher further relates the above to self-awareness and the development of a positive self-esteem which forms an integral part of emotional intelligence and the Gestalt perspective.

It seems evident from the above that the Gestalt therapeutic goals support the belief that people have the innate ability to solve their own problems or to face difficulties. However, Gestalt therapy also realises that people sometimes get stuck and need assistance. The Gestalt therapist, therefore, needs to assist the child within the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship. To do so requires an understanding of his situation by finding out how he is part of the situation and experimenting with finding new solutions or ways to face difficulty.

2.4.5.6 Polarities

According to Joyce and Sills (2001:136) polarities are present in all qualities. Every aspect of a person is one side of a duality - the other side is out of awareness and forms the ground to that figure. Blom (2004:33) explains that the personality is seen as consisting of polarities, which may be considered as

opposites that complement or oppose each other. Polarities exist in respect of emotions, traits of the self or traits of others.

In the Wise child programme children discuss their different emotions and through this the presence of polarities are evident. It is therefore important for children to understand the different emotions in respect of these polarities. The programme will therefore utilise these polarities presented, in order to understand emotions and integrate them into emotional intelligence.

2.4.5.7 Responsibility

Clarkson (1999:27) explains the Gestalt approach as profoundly based on the notion that each person is responsible for the experience of his own life. Yontef (1993:141) adds that people are responsible and they determine their own behaviour. Schoeman (1996) views the essence of Gestalt theory as making choices, taking responsibility for one's actions and setting boundaries.

The researcher believes responsibility to be a continuous theme throughout the intervention programme. If children take responsibility for their emotions it is a positive step towards managing their emotions. The process of managing their own emotions integrates favourably with developing emotional intelligence.

2.4.5.8 The Paradoxical Theory of Change

The concept "paradoxical theory of change" refers to the theory that the more the child tries to be who he is not, the more he stays the same. Growth, including assimilation of love and help from others, requires self-supporting behaviour. Trying to be who he is not is not self-supporting behaviour. Being self-supporting, which includes self-knowledge and self-acceptance, the child needs to identify with his state of being. These states can change over time (Yontef, 1993:26).

The researcher believes that understanding and facilitating change is important to activate the development process of emotional intelligence skills in the preschool child.

2.4.5.9 Sensory Contact

Clarkson (1999:38) explains that dialogue occurs and contact is made through sensory and motor functions. She suggests that seeing and hearing alone are no guarantee of good contact, but that the quality of contact is also important. Clarkson (1999:66) further explains that certain pre-conditions need to exist in order for the therapy to start this sensory awareness of the child and therapist. It is about seeing, hearing and feeling rather than thinking and interpreting. The emphasis is on not over-intellectualising the therapy process.

The researcher wants to emphasise the importance and value of doing sensory awareness exercises before each activity takes place. Being aware of one's senses will assist a child to connect to his state of self in the immediate environment at that moment. Sensory awareness assists with contact with himself (Zinker 1977:79). In essence, if a child is aware of his sensory experience, he is aware of himself. As the researcher is working within a Gestalt perspective in this study, it is important to focus on the self at the present moment. Sensory awareness connects the child to his self at this present moment, so that he can explore his way of being now.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided insights gained after an extensive literature study and discussed the development of the preschool child and emotional intelligence. The chapter also covered the broad spectrum of development including physical, emotional social, cognitive, language and moral development in detail.

The researcher's study focuses on emotional intelligence and therefore this chapter provided an extensive and in-depth review of this subject. Emotional

intelligence was defined as well as multiple intelligences and the four skills of emotional intelligence were detailed. The section concluded with a review of emotional intelligence in the classroom and the role of both the teacher and the curriculum. The importance of emotional intelligent parenting, in parallel to the value of the educational system, was also discussed.

The researcher concluded that preschool children are at an age where significant strides are made developmentally where they show a keen interest in the world around them and seek new experiences. Children's language development is accelerated and they constantly seek to test their boundaries. It is thus the opinion of the researcher that this is an optimal age to introduce emotional intelligence.

In the discussion above it was evident that understanding Gestalt play therapy as a holistic approach provides an important foundation to linking this approach to emotional intelligence. The discussion further outlined how a Gestalt intervention programme is well suited to allow the child to deal with emotional intelligence in a supportive and non-threatening way.

The researcher is of the opinion that the above discussion demonstrates the potential for the use of Gestalt play therapy in an intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence. The basic philosophy of Gestalt therapy was briefly covered in this section. Although much more can be said regarding the Gestalt theory, the researcher attempted to keep the information relevant to the study. The following chapter will discuss the research methodology from an empirical perspective and integrate the findings.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: AN EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVE AND INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the empirical findings of the study, revisiting the goals, objectives and hypotheses guiding the study. The research approach and methodology will also be reviewed. The chapter provides detailed discussions on the two instruments utilised in the study, the Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale and the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales (2nd Edition) and the findings produced from the instruments' implementation. Visual representations of the findings will conclude the chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH PROCESS REVIEWED

In order to place the empirical results presented in this chapter into context, it is necessary to revisit the research process discussed in Chapter one. The research process was **explanatory** in nature.

The research was conducted according to the **quantitative approach** which underlies the natural-scientific method in human behavioural research and holds that research must be limited to what can be observed and measured objectively. The use of a quantitative approach explains the causes of observable and measurable behaviour. The term "objective", in this context, implies that people other than the researcher should agree on what is being observed, such as the score that the observation should register on a measuring instrument (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell 2005:6). According to the researcher a quantitative study therefore measures aspects of human behaviour. This human behaviour can be reviewed by an individual who exists independently of feelings and opinions of the study and only makes use of standardised measuring tools.

The goal of the study was to determine whether there is an improvement in the emotional intelligence of preschool children after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme.

To achieve the above-mentioned goal the following objectives were formulated:

a) To conduct a literature study on emotional intelligence and Gestalt theory with the emphasis on preschool children and to establish a link between emotional intelligence and Gestalt theory.
b) To provide the Vineland II as a pre-test to preschool children's parents to obtain a level of emotional intelligence in their children.
c) To conduct the Joseph Scale, as a pre-test on preschool children to obtain their level of emotional intelligence.
d) To implement the Wise child programme.
e) To ascertain whether there are statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Vineland II and the Joseph Scale.
f) To draw conclusions and provide recommendations for teachers working with preschool children.

It is necessary to confirm the following hypotheses in order to identify how it guided the study:

Hypothesis (H_0): A Gestalt intervention programme will not improve the emotional intelligence of the preschool child.

Hypothesis (H_1): A Gestalt intervention programme will improve the emotional intelligence of the preschool child.

The next section comprehensively discusses the two measuring instruments used in the study.

3.3 THE MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

It is necessary to discuss the measuring instruments used to collect the data prior to the researcher presenting the empirical results. The researcher made use of two measuring instruments:

- The Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale as developed by Joseph (2004);
- Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales (2nd Edition) as developed by Sparrow, Cicchetti and Balla (2005).

3.3.1 The Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale

3.3.1.1 Test Administration

The Joseph Scale uses an interview format in which questions related to self-concept are asked and pairs of pictures are shown to illustrate the concepts embodied in the questions used. The interview consists of 21 items. The child is asked to indicate which of the two illustrated situations happens to him more frequently in his life. The child may answer verbally or simply point at the picture that represents his choice. This interview format is particularly useful for preschool children as the verbal question is supported by a visual representation. (Joseph 2004:3). The Joseph Scale consists of two parts: the Young Child Interview, which is used for assessing children aged 3 to 7 and the Older Child Interview which is designed for children aged 7 to 13 (Joseph 2004:3).

The Joseph Scale used in the study was the *Young Child Interview Form* and consisted of a light and dark skin stimulus booklet and both male and female pictures. To record the responses the researcher used an interview auto score form, which is used to record the child's responses and makes the scoring much easier. The interview begins with a brief warm-up exercise, called the Identity Reference Drawing (IRD) where the child was asked to draw his own facial features on the blank outline of a human figure, this visual

reference reminds the child that he is describing himself when answering the interview questions (Joseph 2004:4).

For the purpose of the study, the researcher used this measuring instrument to measure the intrapersonal aspect of emotional intelligence in preschool children. The researcher acknowledges that self-concept is part of the intrapersonal aspect of emotional intelligence.

3.3.1.2 Test Scoring

The interpretation process of the Joseph Scale involves a synthesis of objective, data-driven results and qualitative clinical indicators that arise from the author's extensive experience with the measure. The objective results are provided by the numerical Total Self-Concept Score, which is a norm-referenced metric, supported by reliability and validity studies. Numerous reviews have presented evidence that it is reliable and a valid measure of self-concept in young children. (Joseph 2004:65). Bracken (1996), Byrne (1996), and Wylie (1989) in Joseph (2004:65) have reviewed and presented evidence that the Joseph Scale is reliable and valid. Standardisation is based on a sample of 934 children, from 3 to 13 years old, who were assessed with the Joseph Scale. (Joseph 2004:59)

The clinical indicators include the confusion score, the 1-point responses and the interpretive ranges for the total self-concept score and the item content analysis (Joseph 2004:16). The main index of self-concept is the total score. The raw total score ranges from 0 being the basal score to 42 which would be the ceiling score, and is obtained by summing up the numerical coding of 21 items (Joseph 2004:18). The Joseph Scale has been used in other research which will be mentioned briefly. Ravid and Sullivan-Temple (1992) used the Joseph Scale to evaluate a programme designed to enhance self-concept in preschool children in the San Francisco area in the United States of America. Cruise, Judge and Sheubrooks (2008) made use of the Joseph Scale to quantify changes in learning disabled students' self-esteem following special

school placement at Radcliff Creek School, Maryland in the United States of America. The Joseph Scale was considered particularly appropriate for the purpose of this study as it was administered individually and did not require questions to be read by the children. Measurement difficulties inherent in the use of a self-report scale were addressed through the use of a validity scale included in the Joseph Scale ensuring normal distribution of pre- and post-test difference scores (Cruise, Judge & Sheubrooks 2008).

3.3.2 Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales (2nd Edition)

3.3.2.1 Test Administration

The Vineland II is an individually administered measure of adaptive behaviour for ages from birth through to ninety years of age (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:1). The scales are available in three versions:

1. Version one consists of two survey forms - the Survey Interview Form and the Parent/Caregiver Rating Form;
2. Version two is the Expanded Interview Form;
3. Version three is the Teacher Rating Form (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:1).

The Vineland II is able to assess adaptive behaviour in four broad domains namely, communication, daily living skills, socialisation and motor skills. (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:1). For the purpose of this study the researcher used the Parent/Caregiver Rating Form and focused on the social domain which consists of interpersonal relationships, play and leisure time as well as coping skills.

The researcher provided the Parent/Caregiver Rating Form to the parents of the preschool children and expected the parents to take 30 to 60 minutes to complete the form (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:4). The Parent/Caregiver Rating Scale format provides another method of obtaining valid information about a child's usual behaviour. This "third" party method of administration

requires the parent/caregiver who has sufficient knowledge and knows the child best, to rate a checklist of the child's skills. This method, however, may result in biased ratings by the respondent, who may report very infrequent behaviours or embellish or minimise the child's performance. It may occur that that the respondent rates the individual's performance higher than the usual behaviour would warrant because the respondent confuses ability to perform the behaviour with usual performance. If the researcher is aware of these limitations and vigilantly guards against them, the rating scale method of administration can provide needed flexibility when a face-to-face interview is not practical. (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:10). To ensure the accuracy of information obtained and reduce response bias, the researcher played an active role in reviewing the form and the instructions before completing it with the respondent, and monitoring and reviewing the results. The researcher scrutinised the completed form and used probes to resolve any discrepancies as suggested by Sparrow, Cicchetti and Balla (2005:10).

The Parent/Caregiver Rating Form record booklet allows space for the parents or caregivers to fill in their own responses. The booklet contained understandable terms and descriptions in order to garner the best understanding and interpretations of the questions. (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:10). For the purpose of the study the parents and caregivers completed the rating form at home, with the researcher having provided detailed instructions beforehand to make sure the completion was valid. The researcher also verbally explained the instructions to all parents and gave contact details in case questions arose. They were given a date by which the form had to be completed.

A report was provided to parents and caregivers to communicate the results after the assessment. Each report allowed the researcher to summarise the child's derived scores and explain these in relation to the child's strengths and weaknesses (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:3). The researcher reviewed the completed rating forms and then scored the tests.

3.2.2.2 Test Scoring

After the parent or caregiver had completed the rating form, the researcher reviewed it. The researcher then computed and recorded the raw scores. The raw score for each domain must be calculated first and this must be done correctly because any deviation may result in invalid scores. In order to compute a raw score for a subdomain, the basal and ceiling items have to be identified (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:45). According to Sparrow, Cicchetti and Balla (2005:63) the raw scores are not directly interpretable and therefore need to be converted to normative or derived scores with uniform meaning from age to age and from subdomain to subdomain. There are five different normative scores available: standard scores, v-scale scores, percentile ranks adaptive levels, age equivalents and stanines. Children's level of adaptive functioning can be assessed by comparing their performances to that of others of the same age in the national standardisation sample. The scores were then interpreted and the child's overall performance as well as his performance in the domains and subdomains was established. (Sparrow, Cicchetti & Balla 2005:67).

The following section discusses the data collection procedure in relation to the study.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The following procedures have been followed throughout the study:

1. All children at a crèche in the Gauteng area between three years and five years old were identified.

2. The parents of the preschool children at the crèche were contacted and the research was explained to them in detail. A consent letter (Addendum A) was given to each of them to complete.

3. The Vineland II was sent to each of the parents and the Joseph Scale was given to each preschool child. This is defined as the pre-test.

4. The group of preschool children were randomly divided into two groups by the researcher, an experimental and control group.

5. The Wise child programme was implemented with the experimental group of children. This took place over a twelve-week period, implementing two lessons per week; the duration of each lesson lasted approximately one hour.

6. Weekly newsletters were sent to the experimental group of preschool children. These newsletters were part of the contract between the researcher and parents in terms of transparency and were only used to explain their child's progress in the Wise child programme.

7. The experimental and control groups were again assessed after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme. The post-testing was done using the same instruments as the pre-testing. Refer to Table 3.1 for a visual representation of the data collection phase.

Table 3.1 Preschool children exposed to Wise child programme

	Experimental (n=15)	Control (n=15)
Pre-test	√	√
Wise child programme	√	
Post-test	√	√

The following section discusses the statistical analysis of the data.

3.5 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

According to Durrheim (1999b:96) statistical analyses must be performed when a study is quantitative in nature. He explains that once the researcher

has measured the relevant variables, the scores on these variables are usually transformed statistically to help the researcher describe the data more succinctly and make inferences about the characteristics of populations on the basis of data from samples. The researcher used statistical analyses due to the quantitative nature of the study.

According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2007:6) researchers have developed a variety of different statistical procedures to organise and interpret data. These different procedures can be classified into two general categories. The first category, descriptive statistics, consists of statistical procedures that are used to simplify and summarise data. Descriptive statistics are techniques that take raw scores and organise or summarise them in a form that is more manageable. Howell (2007:4) further adds that descriptive statistics are merely used to describe a set of data on a very superficial level.

The second general category of statistical techniques is called inferential statistics. Inferential statistics are methods that use sample data to make general statements about a population. It is usually not possible to measure everyone in the population. Because populations are typically very large, a sample is selected to represent the population. By analysing the results from the sample, researchers are able to make general statements about the population. (Gravetter & Wallnau 2007:7). Howell (2007:5) explains that it is impossible to measure an entire population by drawing a sample from that population and making a general statement. The researcher made use of both kinds of statistics to provide a holistic description of the research results.

Durrheim (1999b:118) divides inferential tests into two categories: parametric and non-parametric tests. According to Greene and D'Oliveira (2006:13) non-parametric tests are based on ordinal data and ordinal data refers to scores that can be ranked in order from lowest score to highest score. Howitt and Cramer (2003:176) add that non-parametric tests make use of few or no assumptions about the distribution in the population. Greene and D'Oliveira (2006:13) describe parametric tests as those that are based on interval data. They define interval data as scores in which the intervals between scores are

equal, making it possible to carry out numerical calculations. Howitt and Cramer (2003:176) further add that statistical techniques that require that the details are known, or estimates can be made of the characteristics of the population, are parametric tests. The researcher made use of parametric tests, because she was testing the differences between two conditions. (Greene & D'Oliveira 2006:44).

Howitt and Cramer (2003:115) mention that many research projects involve comparisons between two groups of scores. Each group of scores is a sample from a population of scores. There is a test called the *t*-test which compares the means of samples of scores to see whether the means are significantly different. There are two types of *t*-tests, the independent samples *t*-test and the paired samples *t*-test (Howitt & Cramer, 2003:115). The independent (separate) samples *t*-test involves testing the difference between the means of two independent groups (Howell 2007:192). The paired (related) samples *t*-test involves testing the means of two paired samples of scores (Howitt & Cramer 2003:115).

In terms of the statistical analysis, in order to investigate the mean differences between the experimental and control groups, the researcher used an independent samples *t*-test where the experimental group's scores were compared to the control group's scores on all the scales. In order to investigate mean differences before and after the interventions, the researcher used the paired samples *t*-test where the scores on each scale before the intervention were compared to the scores obtained after the intervention. To obtain the compared scores a statistical package of the social sciences, known as SPSS (2008) was used. This is a computer programme that performs statistical calculations. The researcher used SPSS version 17.0 (2008) for all analyses and the findings of this research will be discussed in the next section.

3.6 FINDINGS

In order to illuminate the findings of the study, Kruger, De Vos, Fouché and Venter (2005:242) explain that tests of statistical significance ascertain whether the results obtained by the data analysis are statistically significant. These tests are usually performed on the 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is a 95% chance that the results are due to the intervention and not to chance. The researcher started by describing the overall pattern of variables using descriptive statistics and then performed different tests of significance, to identify whether any difference observed in the data, is also true in the population where the sample was drawn from. This is the object of inferential statistics.

The following section provides the results of the statistical analysis.

3.6.1 Descriptive Statistics

3.6.1.1 Biographical Variables of the Preschool Children

In order to describe the sample of preschool children used in the study, the following information is presented in the figures below:

1. Total Sample
2. Gender Distribution
3. Age
4. Language Distribution
5. Ethnicity

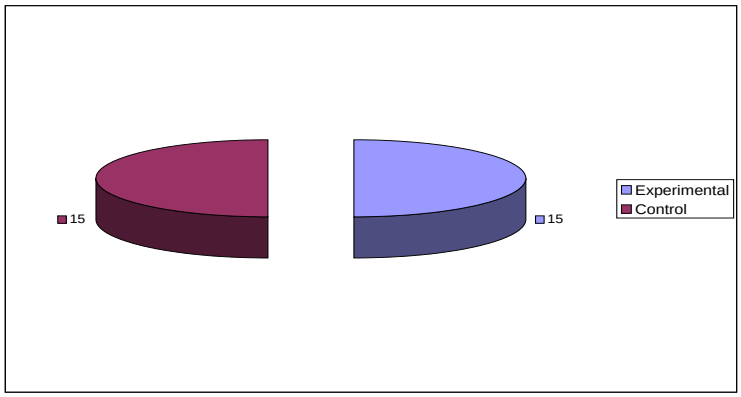

Figure 3.1: The Control and Experimental Group

Figure 3.1 demonstrates the total sample divided into a control and an experimental group. The total sample (N=30), was divided into a control group (n=15) and an experimental group (n=15). The control group accounts for 50% of the total population and the experimental group 50% of the total population.

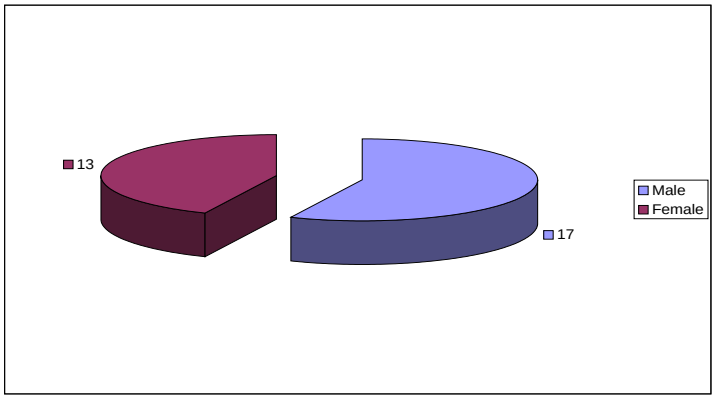

Figure 3.2: The Gender Distribution of the Total Sample

Figure 3.2 represents the gender distribution of the total sample (N=30) where males (n=17) were slightly more than the females (n=13). The percentage of males was 56.7 % and the females were 43.3%.

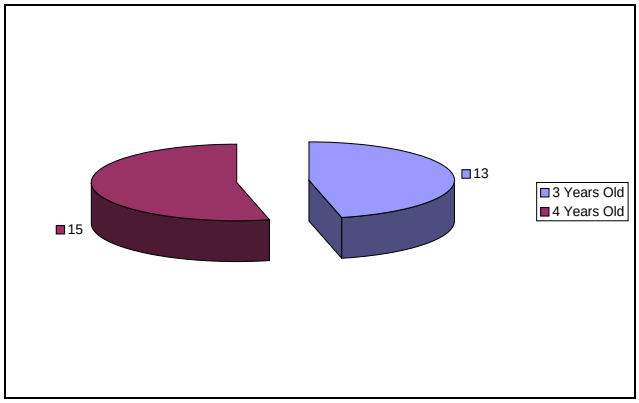

Figure 3.3: The Age Distribution of the Total Sample

Figure 3.3 demonstrates the age distribution of the total sample (N=30), 43.3% were 3 years of age (n=13) while 56.7% were 4 years of age (n=17).

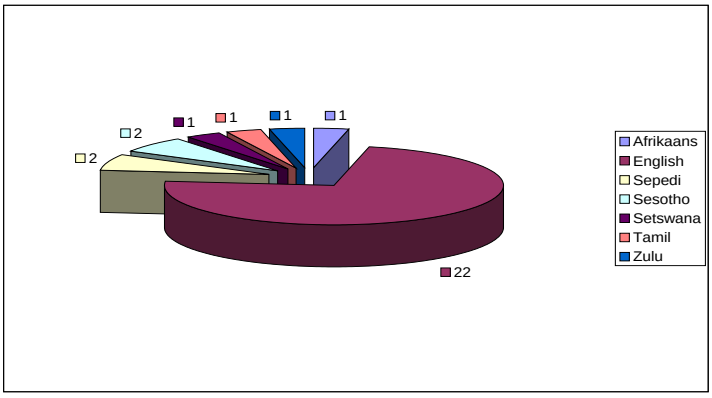

Figure 3.4: The Language Distribution of the Total Sample

Figure 3.4 demonstrates the language distribution of the total sample (N=30). The English language group make up the majority of the sample (n=22), which is 73.3% of the population. The rest of the population consisted of Afrikaans (n=1), Sepedi (n=2), Sesotho (n=2), Setswana (n=1), Tamil (n=1) and Zulu (n=1).

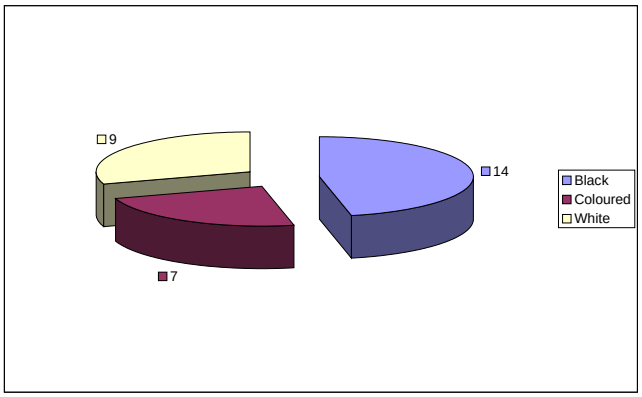

Figure 3.5: The Ethnicity of the Total Sample

Figure 3.5 demonstrates the ethnicity of the total sample (N=30) with 46.7% of the sample group being of the black population (n=14), 30% being of the white population (n=9) and 23.3% being of the coloured population (n=7).

The following tables and graphs demonstrate the mean differences in the samples. The *t*-tests in the tables will indicate whether these differences are due to chance only or whether they are the true reflection in the population from where the samples were collected.

3.6.2 Inferential Statistics

3.6.2.1 Mean differences on variables between the experimental and control groups before a Gestalt intervention programme

The results of an independent samples *t*-test, for investigating pre-existing mean differences on the Joseph Scale and Vineland II across the experimental and control groups before a Gestalt intervention programme are presented in the table below.

Table 3.3: Mean differences on variables between the experimental and control groups before a Gestalt intervention programme

Scale	Experimental group		Control group		Significance Tests		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	df	P
Joseph Scale	40.20	2.145	36.07	4.682	3.108	28	.004*
Vineland Communication	92.27	12.430	79.20	18.959	2.232	28	.034*
Daily living skills	97.27	11.991	93.87	14.466	.701	28	.489
Social skills	87.93	10.194	81.20	10.462	1.785	28	.085
Motor skills	77.00	14.702	75.60	6.311	.339	28	.737
Adaptive Behaviour Composite	87.00	11.320	80.00	13.049	1.569	28	.128
Maladaptive Behaviour Index	18.07	3.035	17.00	2.563	1.040	28	.307

*p<0.05

The results show that there was a statistical significant difference, at 5% level, between the experimental and control groups for the Joseph Scale ($p=0.004<0.05$) and Vineland Communication Scale ($p=0.034<0.05$) before a Gestalt intervention programme, as their respective p-values are less than 0.05. These results demonstrate that there is statistical evidence that preschool children in the experimental and control groups score significantly different with the Joseph Scale and Vineland Communication Scale. The experimental group scored more than the control group in both scales. It cannot be deducted, however, that the group is not as emotionally intelligent as the experimental subjects. There is no statistical evidence, at the 5% level, that both groups scored differently with the remaining Vineland scales as their respective significances levels are greater than 0.05.

3.6.2.2 Mean differences on variables between the experimental and control groups <u>after</u> a Gestalt intervention programme

The results of an independent samples *t*-test for investigating pre-existing mean differences on the Joseph Scale and Vineland II across the experimental and control groups <u>after</u> a Gestalt intervention programme are presented in the table below.

Table 3.4: Mean differences on variables between the experimental and control groups <u>after</u> a Gestalt intervention programme

Scale	Experimental group		Control group		Significance Tests		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	df	p
Joseph Scale	42.00	.000	39.07	3.390	3.351	28	.002*
Vineland Communication	93.67	8.989	86.40	16.203	1.519	28	.140
Daily living skills	101.87	10.309	95.47	14.466	1.395	28	.174
Social skills	92.73	9.392	81.93	11.708	2.787	28	.009*
Motor skills	80.40	17.533	78.53	7.846	.376	28	.709
Adaptive Behaviour Composite	90.47	11.313	79.93	8.293	2.908	28	.007*
Maladaptive Behaviour Index	15.73	2.463	16.73	1.831	-1.262	28	.217

*p<0.05

The results indicate that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups for the Joseph Scale (p=0.002<0.05), Vineland Social Skills Scale (p=0.009<0.05) and the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Composite (p=0.007<0.05) after a Gestalt intervention programme. It can be said that there is statistical evidence at the 5% level that the means of the two groups are different. It can be seen, by comparing the means of each scale in Tables 3.3 and 3.4, that the Gestalt intervention programme has improved the means knowledge of preschool children for all the scales except Vineland communication and Vineland Maladaptive Behaviour Index, as shown in Table 3.5 below.

The summaries of Tables 3.3 and 3.4 are presented in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: Mean comparison of experimental and control groups before and after Gestalt intervention programme

Scale		Experimental group $\bar{x}$	Control group $\bar{x}$
Joseph Scale	Before	40.20	36.07
	After	42.00	39.07
Vineland Communication	Before	92.27	79.20
	After	93.67	86.40
Daily living skills	Before	97.27	93.87
	After	101.87	95.47
Social skills	Before	87.93	81.20
	After	92.73	81.93
Motor skills	Before	77.00	75.60
	After	80.40	78.53
Adaptive Behaviour Composite	Before	87.00	80.00
	After	90.47	79.93
Maladaptive Behaviour Index	Before	18.07	17.00
	After	15.73	16.73

In most of the scales (except the Vineland Communication and Maladaptive Behaviour indexes), the means have improved after a Gestalt intervention programme. This suggests that the programme improved the children's interpersonal skills. This improvement is higher on the Daily Living Skills Subscale (4.60) in the experimental group and on the Joseph Scale (3) in the control group.

3.6.2.3 Mean Differences across Variables for the Control Group

The results of a paired samples *t*-test for investigating mean differences on the Joseph Scale and Vineland II across pre-test and post-test for the control group are presented in the table below. The null hypothesis that the researcher aimed to test is that the mean of the population of scores from which the pre-test results were drawn is equal to the mean of the population from which the post-test results were drawn.

The following table show the mean differences pre-test and post-test of the control group.

Table 3.6: Mean differences across variables for the control group

Scale	Pre-test		Post-test		Significance Tests		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	T	df	p
Joseph Scale	36.07	4.682	39.07	3.390	-3.044	14	.009*
Vineland Communication	79.20	18.959	86.40	16.203	-2.640	14	.019*
Daily living skills	93.87	14.466	95.47	14.466	-.831	14	.420
Social skills	81.20	10.462	81.93	11.708	-1.319	14	.208
Motor skills	75.60	6.311	78.53	7.846	-2.785	14	.015*
Adaptive Behaviour Composite	80.00	13.049	79.93	8.293	.030	14	.976
Maladaptive Behaviour Index	17.00	2.563	16.73	1.831	.695	14	.499

*p<0.05

The results show that there was a significant difference, at 5% level, in the control group in terms of the children's pre-test and post-test Vineland II: Communication Skills (p=0.019<0.05) and Motor Skills (p=0.015<0.05) and Joseph Scale (p=0.009<0.05). That is, the researcher rejected, at 5% level, the null hypothesis of no difference between pre- and post-tests. So, the alternative hypothesis – the hypothesis stating that there is a real difference - is accepted. The findings may be due to the control group imitating the experimental group's behaviour or the parents may have discussed emotional

intelligence between themselves and stimulated their children's emotional intelligence skills.

As seen in the visual presentation below, the statistics represent the mean differences between the pre-test and post-test children of the control group.

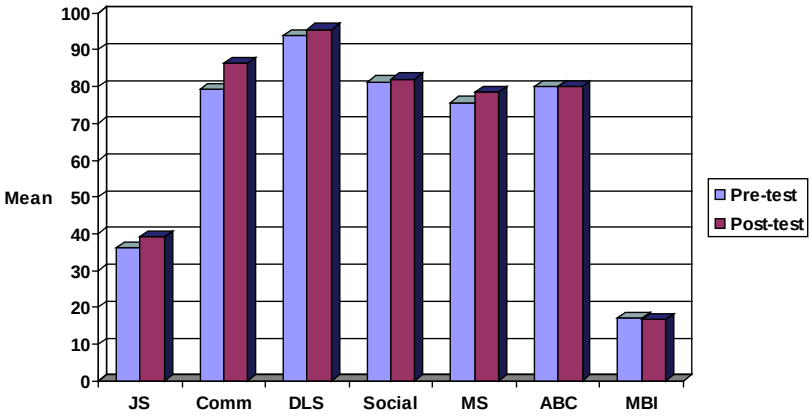

Figure 3.6: Mean differences across variables for the control group

Figure 3.6 shows the mean differences of the samples, and this is the true reflection in the populations from which they were drawn, with Joseph Scale ($p = 0.009 < 0.05$), Vineland Communication ($p = 0.019 < 0.05$) and Vineland Motor skills ($p = 0.015 < 0.05$).

The following table shows the mean differences pre-test and post-test of the experimental group.

3.6.2.4 Mean differences across variables for the experimental group

The results of a paired samples *t*-test for investigating mean differences on the Joseph Scale and Vineland II across pre-test and post-test for the experimental group are presented in the table below.

Table 3.7: Mean differences across variables for the <u>experimental group</u>

Scale	Pre-test		Post-test		Significance Tests		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	T	df	p
Joseph Scale	40.20	2.145	42.00	.000	-3.250	14	.006*
Vineland Communication	92.27	12.430	93.67	8.989	-.404	14	.692
Daily living skills	97.27	11.991	101.87	10.309	-2.240	14	.042*
Social skills	87.93	10.194	92.73	9.392	-2.766	14	.015*
Motor skills	77.00	14.702	80.40	17.533	-1.742	14	.103
Adaptive Behaviour Composite	87.00	11.320	90.47	11.313	-2.649	14	.019*
Maladaptive Behaviour Index	18.07	3.035	15.73	2.463	3.749	14	.002*

*p<0.05

The results show that there was a significant difference, at 5% level, in the experimental group in terms of the children's pre-test and post-test Vineland II: Daily Living Skills (p=0.042<0.05), Social Skills (p=0.015<0.05), Adaptive Behaviour Composite (p=0.019<0.05) and Maladaptive Behaviour Index, (p=0.002<0.05) and Joseph Scale (p=0.006<0.05). The researcher was particularly interested in the social skills domain (because that domain pertained to the interpersonal skills of emotional intelligence) and there was a significant difference in pre- and post-tests at 5% level (p = 0.015 < 0.05). It can be concluded that Gestalt intervention programme improved the preschool children's interpersonal skills.

The results also show a significant difference in the Joseph Scale pre-test and post-test. This means there was an improvement in the experimental group's intrapersonal skills after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme.

As seen in the visual presentation below, the statistics represents the mean differences between the pre-test and post-test children of the <u>experimental group.</u>

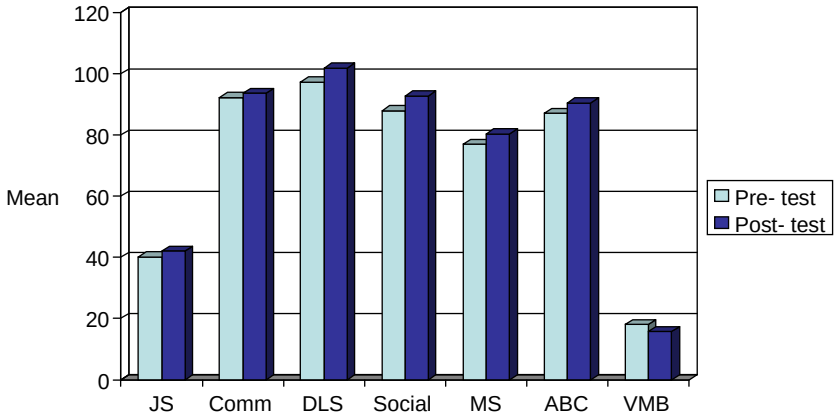

Figure 3.7: Mean differences across variables for the <u>experimental group</u>

The figure above represents the mean differences between the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group in all the scales. It can be seen that the Gestalt intervention programme has improved the emotional intelligence of preschool children, except in the Vineland Maladaptive Behaviour Index. This difference is real in the population for Joseph Scale ($p = 0.006 < 0.05$), Vineland II Daily Living Skills ($p = 0.042 < 0.05$), Social Skills ($p = 0.015 < 0.05$), Adaptive Behaviour Composite ($p = 0.019 < 0.05$) and Maladaptive Behaviour Index ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$).

In conclusion the results showed that a Gestalt intervention programme improved emotional intelligence with reference to intra- and interpersonal skills in preschool children.

It is for that reason that the null hypothesis, as stated at the beginning of the chapter, is rejected. The alternative hypothesis below is accepted:

A Gestalt intervention programme <u>will improve</u> the emotional intelligence of a preschool child.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the empirical findings of the study, revisiting the goals, objectives and hypothesis guiding the study, as stated in Chapter one as well as reviewing the research approach and methodology of the study.

The chapter also provided detail of the research process followed as well as the hypothesis identified prior to the commencement of the study. Significant discussion centred on the two measurement instruments utilised for the study, namely the Joseph Picture Self-Concept Scale and Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales (2nd Edition). This detail included the process of test administration, scoring and data collection and feedback.

Finally the chapter concludes with findings of the sample, tabulated and graphical representations of the overall findings. A more detailed discussion of the results as well as conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
AN INTEGRATED SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the guiding hypotheses, goals and objectives are revisited and the most important findings of the research are discussed. Limitations of the study are identified and some recommendations are made.

In **Chapter one,** the researcher defined emotional intelligence after comparing numerous definitions (Blom 2008, De Klerk & Le Roux 2003; Mayer & Salovey 2004). Salovey and Mayer (2004:5) contribute by stating that emotional intelligence is linked to intra- and interpersonal intelligences and emotional intelligence can possibly be regarded as a combination of both these intelligences. For the purpose of the study, emotional intelligence was defined as skills that can be developed by preschool children and can be divided into two development areas, namely intrapersonal and interpersonal. Intrapersonal skills consist of self-awareness, emotional management and control while interpersonal skills consist of empathy, identification of emotions in others and social skills.

In order to provide the theoretical framework for the study the researcher undertook a literature study in **Chapter two.** This study outlined the development of the preschool child, emotional intelligence and Gestalt play therapy. A preschool child is a child between the ages of three and five years of age (Brassard & Boehm 2007:1; Lifter 1992:23). In the literature study the development of the preschool child was discussed, with a primary focus on emotional and social development, which includes the intra- and interpersonal development of a preschool child. The concept of Gestalt was defined as a term encapsulating the totality of the child. The Wise child programme is based on Gestalt play therapy activities and claims to improve the emotional intelligence of preschool children. The literature study highlighted the link

between Gestalt theory and emotional intelligence. The researcher submits that the aim of improving emotional intelligence and the aim of Gestalt play therapy are similar. Blom (2004:51) discusses promoting self-supporting behaviour, promoting awareness of their own process and promoting integration as aims of Gestalt play therapy. Blom (2008) also defines emotional intelligence as the child's potential to manage his emotional life in a certain way. This consists of four components, namely self-awareness, emotional management, empathy and management of emotions in others which, according to the researcher, can be associated with the aims of Gestalt play therapy.

Chapter three detailed the empirical investigations of the study and discussions around the Joseph Scale measuring the intrapersonal development of the preschool child and the Vineland II: Social Skills Scale measuring the interpersonal development of the preschool child. The results concluded that there was an improvement in emotional intelligence in terms of the intra- and interpersonal skills of preschool children after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme.

In the following section the hypotheses, goals and objectives are revisited in an attempt to provide more clarity on what has been achieved in the study.

4.2 HYPOTHESES REVISITED

The following hypotheses guided the study:

Hypothesis (H_0): A Gestalt intervention programme <u>will not improve</u> the emotional intelligence of the preschool child.

Hypothesis (H_1): A Gestalt intervention programme <u>will improve</u> the emotional intelligence of the preschool child.

The following section reviews the goals and objectives of the study in attempt to indicate what has been achieved in the study.

4.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES REVISITED

This section aims to integrate the goals and objectives as described in Chapter one and explores whether the goals and objectives were achieved.

The main goal of the study was *to determine whether there is an improvement in the emotional intelligence of preschool children after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme.*

In order to reach the goal of the study, the following objectives were identified:

a) To conduct a literature study on emotional intelligence and Gestalt theory with the emphasis on preschool children. *The objective was achieved by the researcher conducting the literature study as reflected in Chapter two and re-emphasising the link between emotional intelligence and Gestalt theory.*

b) To provide the Vineland II, as a pre-test to preschool children's parents to obtain a level of emotional intelligence in their children. *The researcher distributed the Vineland II, as a pre-test to all parents whose children were part of the study. The parents completed the Parent/Caregiver Rating Form and returned them to the researcher.*

c) To conduct the Joseph Scale on the preschool children to obtain their level of emotional intelligence. *The Joseph Scale was conducted with the sampled children.*

All the above-mentioned objectives were achieved as the pre-test was conducted with the sampled children and their parents.

d) To implement the Wise child programme. *The objective was attained by implementing the programme and ensuring that all children in the experimental group understood and completed all twenty-four lessons.*

e) To ascertain whether there are statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Vineland II and the Joseph Scale. *This objective was achieved by collecting and analysing the empirical information. The data is presented in Chapter three.*

f) To draw up a conclusion and provide recommendations for teachers working with preschool children. *Conclusions and recommendations in terms of meeting this objective are discussed in paragraph 4.5.*

From this discussion, the researcher concludes that the above-mentioned objectives were achieved and that the goal of the study was met. The next section summarises the findings of the study.

4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

To achieve the goal of the study, the researcher explored the improvement of aspects of emotional intelligence in the sample of preschool children. The empirical findings demonstrated the following and will be discussed according to four subheadings:

4.4.1 Mean differences on variables between the experimental and control groups <u>before</u> a Gestalt intervention programme

According to Table 3.3 (Chapter three, page 99) there is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the Vineland II: Daily Living Skills, Social Skills, Motor Skills, Adaptive Behaviour Composite

and Maladaptive Behaviour Index. However, there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups on the Joseph Scale and Vineland II: Communication. This implies that the two groups were on different levels during the pre-testing, before the intervention programme was implemented. As the two groups were selected with non-probability, accidental sampling, no bias could have occurred that could have influenced the two groups' different levels of functioning. A possible contributing factor could be exposure to external or environmental factors in the preschoolers' lives. There could be different levels of stimulation regarding communication and emotional intelligence at home. The researcher also takes into consideration that the parents completed the Vineland II, which could be a possible factor in the results. Parents could have been biased when completing the form even though the researcher ensured the accuracy of the information obtained to reduce response bias. On the other hand Sparrow, Cicchetti and Balla (2005:11) mention that it has been their experience that most parents try to be as unbiased as possible. Even though an unbiased approach was followed for the completion of the Vineland II the researcher still believes that there might be discrepancies with the accuracy of the results.

4.4.2 Mean differences on variables between the experimental and control groups <u>after</u> a Gestalt intervention programme

According to Table 3.4 (Chapter three, page 100) there is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the Vineland II: Communication, Daily Living Skills, Motor Skills and Maladaptive Behaviour Index. A significant difference would not be relevant, as the researcher implemented no programme to develop these behaviours. The researcher, however, implemented the Wise child programme specifically to determine whether there would be a significant correlation between the experimental group and the control group, and a significant difference in the Joseph Scale and Vineland II: Social Skills and Adaptive Behaviour Composite was evident. These results indicate that the experimental group's intrapersonal and

interpersonal development increased as a result of the Wise child programme. Blom (2004) developed the Wise child programme with the intention to improve emotional intelligence in children. The researcher asserts that this programme can be used at a preschool level to assist in establishing a foundation for emotional intelligence development. The programme could also serve as a preventative measure against challenging behaviour as it could assist young children with the control and management of their emotions, self-awareness and social skills. Blom (2008) postulates that children with elevated emotional intelligence will be able to achieve success in all areas of life. Goleman (1995:193) states that the first opportunity for shaping the ingredients of emotional intelligence is in the earliest years. Semrud-Clikeman (2007:14) acknowledges that preschool children need to commence the development of emotional intelligence skills as soon as possible because of the tasks, a preschool child needs to master. Therefore the researcher is of the opinion that a Gestalt intervention programme can have a multi-faceted role within the preschool curriculum.

4.4.3 Mean differences across variables for the control group

Table 3.6 (Chapter three, page 102) illustrates the significance between the pre-test and post-test for the control group. The control group showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test for the Joseph Scale and the Vineland II: Communication and Motor Skills. There was no indication of a significant difference in the Vineland II: Daily Living Skills, Social Skills, Adaptive Behaviour Composite and Maladaptive Behaviour Index. Since the control group was not subjected to the intervention it was expected that their measurement would remain the same, but these results indicated an increase in intrapersonal development, communication and gross motor skills of the control group. It is the researcher's opinion that this could be due to other external or environmental factors that could influence the control group such as being positively influenced by discussions around emotional intelligence, and the teacher possibly being more aware of emotional intelligence within the class context. Another possible explanation

is that the parents at home were enticed by the Vineland II's questions and started to actively work on improving their children's milestones. The researcher is aware that it is impossible to regulate a control group, as there are multiple other variables influencing the control group.

4.4.4 Mean differences across variables for the experimental group

Table 3.7 (chapter three, page 104) illustrates the improvement of emotional intelligence between the pre-test and post-test for the experimental group. The experimental group showed significant difference pre-test and post-test for the Joseph Scale and the Vineland II: Social Skills, Adaptive Behaviour Composite and Maladaptive Behaviour Index. There was no indication of significant differences in the Vineland II: Communication, Daily Living Skills and Motor Skills. These results could possibly indicate the lesser role that the stimulation of emotional intelligence played within these areas of development within the sampled population. However, this could also possibly indicate that the preschoolers were saturated in terms of development within the limited time-span and that these areas could develop more significantly if exposed to a programme at a later stage.

The post-test results of the experimental group show an improvement in the children's Joseph Scale and Vineland II: Social Skills which indicated an improvement in the children's emotional intelligence in terms of inter- and intrapersonal skills. The results correlate with other research conducted by several researchers, as mentioned in Chapter two. Elias, Hunter and Kress (2001:138-139) state that there is evidence to show that programmes to promote social and emotional learning (emotional intelligence) are effective. Schiller (2009) supports the idea that children need social and emotional skills to learn and be successful in school and life. The benefits gained according to De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:9) are that children achieve remarkable outcomes, they get to know themselves, think and feel positively about themselves and are willing to take risks. These children will be able to accept,

control and verbalise their feelings and this would become part of their everyday life.

In conclusion, the results showed that a Gestalt intervention programme improved emotional intelligence with reference to intra- and interpersonal skills in preschool children. From the above summary of findings the following limitations and recommendations can be derived.

4.5 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher found certain limitations in the study and based on these limitations the researcher recommends the following:

- The sample group was small. The inclusion of more preschools would have allowed for a more comprehensive analysis. A larger sample is recommended for future studies.

- The research has not only contributed to the literature on emotional intelligence of preschool children but also highlighted the necessity to incorporate an emotional intelligence programme into the standard preschool curriculum. Further research should be done on developing a curriculum for preschool children that includes emotional intelligence. The development of emotional intelligence will help children that are behaviourally at risk. If children had an elevated emotional intelligence it would help them to achieve success in all areas of life, and the development of emotional intelligence skills could act as a preventative tool.

- Not only is there a significant lack of literature on the subject of Gestalt intervention programmes in South Africa to develop emotional intelligence, but also on any emotional Intelligence programmes. This is due to the fact that emotional development is not regarded as the most important skill and preschools primarily focus on the development

of cognitive skills. The researcher recommends that parents and teachers be made aware of the importance of emotional intelligence.

- The Wise child programme was an effective intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence. The researcher acknowledges that the Wise child programme should actually be administered to children over the age of four as children younger than four are not able to grasp the concept of emotional intelligence. The researcher experienced this limitation while implementing the intervention programme. The researcher recommends that an intervention programme only be implemented from the age of four within the preschool curriculum.

- In Chapter one the researcher discussed the possible problems that might occur in the study. Some of these problems did occur in the study and had an effect on the results obtained. There were absent children who missed lessons of the Wise child programme. The researcher recommends that the programme take place over a longer period of time so that the children that miss the activities are able to catch up.

- Teachers of preschool children need to recognise that the implementation of an intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence is critical. All preschool teachers should be exposed to an intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence in preschool children.

- Teacher training should help teachers to implement effective curricula and teaching practices are needed to support social and emotional development. Educators need to broaden the range of competencies addressed in schools, including emotional intelligence skills.

- With the return of the Vineland II Rating Form from the parents, it was evident that they were uncertain on where their children should be

developmentally within their age group. Therefore the researcher feels it is imperative for all preschool children's parents to receive a milestone list as part of the curriculum to have a better understanding of the level of development of a preschool child.

- Workshops should be organised to educate parents about emotional intelligence. If parents and teachers work together, they would be able to equip their children appropriately to learn, pay attention, listen and consequently develop the cognitive skills required to progress successfully as learners. Parents should be made aware that emotional intelligence needs to be taught at a preschool level.

The limitations of this study were discussed above. In addition to these the researcher makes some recommendations for future research. The study is concluded in the following section.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This study set out to prove that a gestalt intervention programme will improve the emotional intelligence of preschool children, and according to the empirical results this was accomplished. In the opinion of the researcher the conclusion, the goal and objectives of the study were also accomplished. The limitations of the study were discussed, which lead to the formation of the recommendations. These recommendations focused on the lack of literature about emotional intelligence and Gestalt intervention programmes in South Africa, the Wise child programme not being appropriate for use on children under the age of four years and how parents and teachers need to be involved in the process of implementing a Gestalt intervention programme for preschool children.

The researcher further recommends implementing intervention programmes to improve emotional intelligence into all preschools in South Africa. This would establish a key goal of preschool education programmes enhancing

social and emotional development, without de-emphasising cognitive development. Both domains are important and neither should be sacrificed for the other.

The study concludes that there is an improvement in preschool children's emotional intelligence after the implementation of a Gestalt intervention programme such as the Wise child programme. Therefore it is recommended that a Gestalt intervention programme to improve emotional intelligence in preschool children be implemented into a standardised curriculum.

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ADDENDUM A

Dear Parents

I am thrilled to announce that 2009 will be an extraordinary year for me, as I am completing my masters in Play Therapy. I would like to share my knowledge and expertise with all parents and children and create stronger skills in Emotional Intelligence.

My research will be focused on the value of Emotional Intelligence in Pre-school children. In order to fulfil the requirements of the research, I would sincerely value the opportunity for each parent at your convince to complete a questionnaire on your child's socialisation. The questionnaire is a psychometric test and my research supervisor will be supervising the implementation of the test. I would also much appreciate your consent to conduct a test on every child in terms of their self concept. The names of each participating child will be kept confidential at all times and the test results and any required feedback will be given to each parent on a regular basis.

On completion of all the questionnaires and tests, I intend implementing an Emotional Intelligence programme called " the Wise child programme" .

It is very important that Emotional Intelligence is put into practice at home on a daily basis therefore a News Letter will be sent home weekly.

Once we have completed the programme, the same questionnaire will be completed by you and your child will be tested again, so that we can establish whether or not there has been an improvement in the skills of Emotional intelligence.

Please complete the attached consent form allowing your child to participate in the research.

I would be very pleased to discuss in more detail with you personally. Your assistance and support in this regard would be greatly appreciated.

Warm regards

Vicky Walsingham.

I the undersigned, _____ in my capacity as the

guardian/parent of

_____ do hereby give my consent to participate in above

mentioned study.

_____

Parent's signature

_____

Vicky Walsingham