

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CRITIQUE AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The final chapter covers critique on the research study and recommendations for future development of the current study and / or new research in this field. The areas, which need more research, are also indicated.

This chapter and the previous chapter are part of the “Dissemination” grouping of steps in the research procedure (Chapter 1, Figure 1.6 Research procedure) namely, “Finalise findings and conclusions from intervention”. The last step of the research procedure, namely “Finalise research report” is the last part of “Dissemination” and includes the final compilation of all the different parts of the research study in one report, editing of all chapters, finalising the intervention programme as an addendum to the research report, and editing the intervention programme etcetera. Finalising and editing of the current chapter will thus form part of this last step of the research procedure.

The following is a diagrammatic representation of this chapter, acting as a one-glance overview:

- User friendliness
- Too many exercises in one session
- No culture specific techniques
- Small variety of techniques
- Group life dynamics neglected
- Content neglected
- No session for self-esteem
- Not experiential enough
- Programme only applicable for primary school children
- The programme was focused on creative, holistic learning processes

## Critique



- User friendliness of programme
- More culture specific techniques
- Gestalt therapy techniques more varied
- Group life dynamics used as indicator of growth
- Content of programme should be covered in full plus added exercises on self-esteem
- Add ideas to adapt the programme for use in other developmental phases too
- Accommodate children who are less creative as well

## Recommendations



- Culture specific techniques and emotional intelligence
- Emotional intelligence in African and Western cultures differ
- Influence of specific cultures on emotional intelligence
- Frontal lobe functioning and emotional intelligence
- Emotional intelligence and processes of the right hemisphere
- Open or structured programme best?
- The influence of all three levels of group life considered
- Emotional intelligence intervention programme for early school age
- Assessment procedures
- Techniques to use for children who prefer successive processes (left-hemisphere skills)
- Applying this programme structure to help children with chronic diseases to cope more effectively.

## Indications for further research

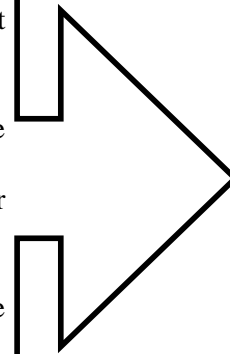


Figure 8.1: Chapter overview

## **2. CRITIQUE**

In this section the researcher identifies and discusses the factors, which had a negative impact on the success of the intervention programme.

### **2.1 User friendliness of the intervention programme**

It is the researcher's intention that the intervention programme of this research study be used by a variety of Gestalt play therapists to fulfil in their therapeutic needs. Factors, which inhibit the applicability of this programme for people other than the researcher as therapist, are therefore discussed in the following paragraphs:

#### **2.1.1 Assessment instruments**

The researcher used two assessment instruments, one for the assessment of emotional intelligence and one for the assessment of the processes of the group members. Both of these instruments rely on restrictions of training. The restrictions of each instrument are discussed in the following paragraphs.

##### ***2.1.1.1 DISC behaviour style instrument***

The DISC instrument was used to assess the children's processes. It provides valuable and reliable information, which is valuable for the feedback reports to the group members' caretakers. It is also valuable for self-awareness of the children themselves and for the therapist to understand the group members' communication and preferences concerning behaviour in the group. The most important positive attribute of the DISC assessment is the amount of information gained from only one contact session. It usually does not take more than one session to complete the questionnaire and between 10 and 20 minutes per questionnaire to score. It might take much more time to gain the same amount of information per group member if play therapy techniques only were used. Determining the processes of the children effectively in a short time limit thus restrict this programme to trained users of the DISC assessment instrument.

### *2.1.1.2 Cognitive Assessment System*

This assessment instrument is mostly used by: psychologists, psychometrists and people working in the field of educational problems. It is available from Riverside Publishing, Illinois, United States of America. Test users should have at least an honours degree in psychology and be a psychometrist to qualify as a test user. Naglieri & Das (1997a) requires training for the application and interpretation of this test and its results.

The Cognitive Assessment System (Naglieri & Das, 1997a) is valuable as an assessment instrument in this intervention. It provides information about the functioning of the frontal lobes (related to emotional intelligence skills in the current research study) as well as other cognitive processes apart from those of the frontal lobes. This relates to the following holistic view of the human being by the researcher: Emotional intelligence does not operate in isolation. The other areas of the brain and the frontal lobes, which are used as representing emotional intelligence related skills in the current research study, have an interrelated influence on each other.

The other advantage of this instrument is the fact that it is not a questionnaire that can be manipulated. The respondents are not really aware that the exercises they are completing will be related to emotional intelligence. This increases the reliability of the results.

These positive attributes of the Cognitive Assessment System are only available to a small group of test users who fulfil in the requirements discussed above.

### *2.1.1.3 Conclusion on assessment instruments*

Although the assessment instruments proved valuable in the current research study, it is not possible for the researcher to make the instruments available to all possible users of the intervention programme. The researcher can at most provide the user with addresses of where to purchase the tests and gain more information about training to use the test. The user can therefore purchase the tests if he is qualified to do so. Copies of the applicable ordering and training information is available in Addendum D, INFORMATION CONCERNING TRAINING AND PURCHASING OF TESTS USED IN THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME, attached to this research report.

### 2.1.2 Preparation of exercises

The intervention programme provides a lot of information to assist the user in applying the techniques. This includes an overview of the Gestalt theory requirements and general advice on therapy for most of the sessions, the goal of each session, the type of techniques to use, the material needed for each exercise and a full description of the content of each exercise and instructions on the use of the material for that exercise. All extra information like recipes and templates for letters and forms to use in the programme are available in appendixes after each session. Although this is the case, the user still needs to spend preparation time for most of the exercises. This preparation includes for example baking of cookies and preparing icing and cake decorations. In other sessions the user needs to cut out paper dolls, laminate white A4 papers to use as white boards and purchase white board markers. The preparation of each session can thus be time consuming and requires some financial input to purchase items. This type of preparation is needed to make the programme activity based, interesting and enjoyable for primary school children. The programme is based on experiential learning and the material needed provide the opportunity for experiments with concrete objects, because the primary school child's logical reasoning is based on concrete objects.

Although there is a reason for the need of preparation, it is still time and cost intensive at times. The user of the intervention programme can be creative and can adapt some of the exercises to more cost effective procedures and material. The latter is not always advisable, because the user might sacrifice some of the enjoyment of the group members when using less interesting material, like paper and crayons instead of white boards and white board markers.

### 2.1.3 Time span of full programme

The intervention programme is designed to cover emotional intelligence themes that also relate with Gestalt theory themes. The themes build on each other in its order in the programme. It is thus necessary to cover all the themes in order to have effective outcomes. The first four sessions are spent on self-awareness and group cohesion. This takes up a lot of time, but is crucial for successful emotional growth. Goleman (1996:43) states that, "Self-awareness...is the keystone of emotional intelligence". According to Gestalt theory's paradoxical theory of change (compare Beisser, 1970:1; Ivens, [sa]:4; Jarosewitsch, 1995:2), growth and change takes place as a result of self-

awareness. The programme also relies on the experiences and needs of the group members. If a group needs more work on a specific theme, it is very important to repeat the theme to reach closure and fulfil in the needs of the group members. This might therefore add one or more sessions to the planned 12 sessions of the full programme. It means that this programme extend over 12 to 15 sessions, which is three to four months if sessions take place once a week. This can be quite an extended time. Some therapists might find this a little unpractical especially because the group members are in primary school. School terms are rarely longer than two to three months and usually include two or three weeks of examination time when sessions might be impossible to attend. It means that the programme might be interrupted by a holiday, which might interfere with group cohesion. A holiday break might lead to an extra session to refresh group members' memory about the themes of the sessions before the break. The application of such an extended programme therefore needs extra planning on the therapist's side to cut the programme at a reasonable place, for example after the first four sessions when the focused self-awareness theme is covered.

Such an extended programme also has a financial impact on the caretakers of the group members as well as on the therapist. Some caretakers might not be able to pay for the last few sessions if they planned for 12 sessions and, because of the need to repeat sessions, the programme is extended to 15 sessions. It is thus very important that the therapist should inform the caretakers of the flexibility of the time span to extend to 15 or 16 sessions. The researcher is of the opinion that the programme should not be extended to more than 16 sessions, because closure should be reached and the group members and their caretakers might need to get some feedback on the results of the programme.

This section covered issues concerning the user friendliness of the intervention programme. The following sections will focus on the researcher as therapist's character and way of conduct and the application of the intervention programme.

## **2.2 Too many exercises in one session**

The researcher as programme developer did not always work realistically within the time frame of one session. In the attempt to keep the session as interesting and active as possible, the researcher included in general more than one activity related to the theme of the session. This increased the tendency not to focus on the group members' foreground experiences. The group members and therapist were thus missing out on opportunities to use situations as experiments and to learn from experience because there was no time for focused discussions on a group member's specific needs during an activity. This led to a programme rather focused on exercises than experiments and thus experiences. It caused the programme to be a learning programme rather than an experimental and experiential programme in many cases. The exercises were initially planned to provide learning through experience and to provide the opportunity to experiment. The focus shifted to make the completion of all the planned exercises more important than experimenting with the children's foreground issues.

## **2.3 Techniques are not culture specific**

The intervention programme was developed as a multicultural approach to Gestalt play therapy techniques and emotional intelligence. The title of the research study may create an expectation of culture specific techniques or a more definite focus on culture, which is not the case. Culture is an approach, attitude or orientation rather than specific techniques to use.

The researcher did a literature study on the fundamentals of culture, and different theories and definitions concerning culture. Out of this she compiled a working definition for the current study. With this knowledge in mind and some discussion on the influence of culture on the primary school child, the researcher realised the following:

- The children in the research groups, were from different cultural groups, family cultures and school cultures, which all had an influence on their behaviour, thinking and the way they expressed their emotions.

- A cultural sensitive intervention programme is not a programme based on the needs of specific cultures, it is a programme, which can be applied to a multi-cultural group – making the programme accessible to users outside Namibia.
- Knowledge of the typical ways of doing and thinking about different cultures are important to understand the processes of group members. It should not be used to change the Gestalt therapy techniques applied in the programme to fit specific cultures.
- Cultural sensitivity is rather an awareness and change of attitude of the therapist and an accepting emotional climate created by the therapist in the therapy groups.
- This awareness and acceptance of people who are different from oneself was carried over from the therapist to the children by the therapist's attitude and conduct. It was also conveyed through the sessions especially focused on self-awareness, awareness of the processes of other group members and the session focused on exploring family cultures.

The researcher therefore did not apply knowledge of specific cultures in specific types of techniques. The intervention programme is developed in such a way that different cultural backgrounds are used as part of the processes of the group members. The therapist using this intervention programme should also be using his cultural background as part of his process. The most important influence of culture here is about creating an atmosphere of acceptance of different cultures. It is also about creating an opportunity for self-discovery and emotional growth of children from different cultures in the therapy sessions.

#### **2.4 Not a wide variety of Gestalt therapy techniques applied**

The researcher chose techniques, which seemed effective for the developmental phase of the group members (middle school age) and which could create opportunities for experiments and active learning. In this process the researcher did not use a wide variety of Gestalt play therapy techniques. Those used were mostly focused on creative exercises, biblio play, imaginary and sensory exercises, as well as dialogue.



Should the researcher have experimented with more techniques, a wider variety of techniques could be proven effective or not.

## **2.5 Group life dynamics were neglected in the findings of this study**

Harris (1998b:1-17) discusses group life on three levels, namely: the individual level, the interpersonal level and the group-as-a-whole level. The researcher observed that the groups started to gel after the first part of the programme. They were more open and relaxed in their relationships after the first four exercises which focused on self-awareness and sharing their processes in the group. Special friendships started to form in the groups and the children were more open and relaxed in their relationships with each other. The therapist was not the only person they trusted anymore, they started to share with each other and enjoyed doing activities together. Although these dynamics were observed, the researcher as therapist did not focus on all three natural levels of group life (Harris, 1998b:6). Group-life-as-a-whole and interpersonal relationships was observed, but was not a focus point in assessing the emotional growth that took place. The researcher mainly focused on the individuals in the group and assessed and observed their emotional growth and experiences with the techniques used. The researcher is of the opinion that this study could be enriched if emotional growth was more overtly recorded on interpersonal and group levels too. The latter fits in with the holistic approach of this research study. Such a holistic approach to emotional growth focuses on many different interrelated levels of group life and growth. Harris (1998b:5) explains the value of understanding the influence which all the interrelated parts have on one another in the following: “The principle states that if we want to understand ('find and make' the meaning of) a particular part of the world, we need to place it in the context of a wider whole of which it is itself a part. The more comprehensive this wider picture, the more fully and in depth we understand the fragment we are studying”. The different levels influence each other and one needs to have an understanding of the other levels to have a proper understanding of the individual level. Harris (1998b:6) states: “Each level is 'nested in' the one above it”. In this cultural sensitive study the researcher took into account the bigger picture of the group members' cultural contexts, as well as that of their being in the group and the influence of this on their own growth. The researcher could enrich the study further

by making a more intensive study of the emotional growth on more than one level of group life. Harris (1998b:4) states that “a different context (field perspective) offers us an altered meaning for the experiences or events, however slight the change is...The more contexts, the richer (deeper or broader) is our 'interpretation' or understanding. The principle offers, in effect, a theory of the meaning of group behaviour and group process”. The researcher used the group members' cultural context for a better understanding of their processes and functioning in the group, but did not emphasise the influence of all the contexts in the group itself enough. The researcher might have had more insight in certain individuals and their levels of emotional growth if the influence of interpersonal and group-as-a-whole development was more carefully considered.

## **2.6 Important content of the programme neglected**

This point of critique on the research study was already discussed in Chapter 7 as part of the factors with a negative impact (Chapter 7, 3.1 Factors with a negative impact) as intentions that did not come to life (Chapter 7, 3.1.6 Not all intentions came to life). It will therefore only be mentioned again as a point of critique on the research study. The researcher is of the opinion that the potential impact of the intervention study was not reached, because certain exercises (which were good opportunities for experiments) were neglected. The life book, which was a self-awareness exercise and also a possibility for interpersonal contact in the group – the second level of group life (Harris, 1998b:6) – was one of the neglected exercises. As self-awareness and interpersonal skills were very important emotional intelligence skills to develop in this intervention programme, the negligence of this type of exercise can be a valuable point of critique. Discussions of the life books could also provide valuable opportunities for contact with foreground issues of group members and thus experiments.

The researcher as therapist also neglected attention to language, which leads to avoidance of responsibility. Little attention was given to phrases like “I have to go now” instead of “I want to go now”. Making group members aware of their use of

language could increase their sense of responsibility in their own lives. This is important to keep in mind for future use of this intervention programme.

## **2.7 No specific sessions on self-esteem**

The researcher as therapist focused on building the self-esteem of the group members throughout the course of the intervention programme. It was done by positive regard, true interest in what they want to share in the group sessions, honest compliments and a few individual exercises. These exercises included a self-nurturing exercise when the group members had to write something positive about another member of the group on a card. The researcher as therapist then handed the cards to the persons to whom it was directed (Intervention programme, Session 12, MAKING A CHOICE FOR HAPPINESS). The researcher did not include many self-esteem specific exercises in the intervention programme. Building the group members' self-esteem was planned for each session and was part of the positive climate of acceptance in the group sessions. One or two sessions focused specifically on self-esteem, could enhance the group members insight on the importance of a good self-esteem.

## **2.8 Not experiential enough**

The researcher stated in Chapter 4, 3.1.1 Experiments and 3.1.2 The researcher's view that it is very important to be aware of any polarities, unfinished business or contact boundary disturbances presented by the children in the groups. Although the researcher as therapist attempted this, it was not utilised to its full. The only planned experiment used was internal dialogues in the ABC technique of session 7, Being in control of our feelings. The intervention programme therefore was too much focused on the Gestalt play therapy techniques as learning exercises. A situation in session 7 of the English group was used as an experiment, to help the group members to control their emotions. A copy of the process notes made by the researcher about session 7 of the English group is copied in Figure 8.2, to show the effect of this experiment.



## **OBSERVATIONS**

### **SESSION 7 – CONTROLLING EMOTIONS**

Handling emotions in an effective way was applied to their own circumstances from the beginning of the session. It seemed very effective to work on their emotions and emotional experiences of anger / temper or test anxiety. It seems though as if KA (terminated programme after session 8, thus profile not discussed in chapter 6) is still a little young for the group and does not really understand the meaning of the discussions. K was again a little hyperactive – this time I was stricter with her as she needs to learn to work within certain rules and norms. She misbehaved and irritated KA to such an extent that he spilled water on the table. I then reprimanded K and we handled what she could do to help her control her feelings. Going in confluence with the children was great – it is good to take a situation in the group and handle it as an experiment. The group members all have learning difficulties. They tend to find it difficult to understand the real meaning of the lesson. Learning from experience is much more effective for them. The robot technique was shown, but it might be that they will only remember to breath – they need an action as guide to handle feelings.

Although K felt very sad and upset after the incident above, she joined in again after we handled her emotions and actions.

### **Figure 8.2: Experiment used in session 7, English group**

The researcher is of the opinion that the children would have experienced better growth if the researcher as therapist used the techniques in a more experiential way. This means to be more sensitive for polarities, unfinished business and contact boundary disturbances and to handle these as they came up. The researcher as therapist was aware of these at times, but did not always use it as an experiment.

## **2.9 Programme only applicable to primary school children**

The intervention programme was designed with the needs of the primary school child in mind. The user of this intervention programme can only adapt the programme to use it for children in other developmental phases if he has good knowledge of Gestalt play therapy techniques and the characteristics of other developmental phases.

The intervention programme's applicability might therefore be very narrow – only possible for primary school children.

## **2.10 Too much focus on creative, holistic learning processes**

This intervention programme utilised techniques, which are focused on creativity and gaining insight in oneself. These techniques and the researcher as therapist's approach to the group sessions were all focused on children with stronger simultaneous processes (right-hemisphere skills). The intervention programme could be more effective also for children with stronger successive processes (left-hemisphere skills), if a more logical, detail oriented, systematic and structured approach was also incorporated. In such a way the programme could be more successful, because it would then have focused on a bigger number of the group members' learning styles and mental preferences.

The next section provides some recommendations to make the intervention programme more user-friendly and successful to reach its goal of enhancing emotional intelligence of primary school children in a cultural sensitive environment.

## **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Most of the following paragraphs resemble the headings of those discussed above, because these are mostly a recommendation/s of how to resolve the issues discussed. The researcher also listed recommendations, which are not related to points of critique listed above.

### **3.1 User friendliness of the intervention programme**

#### 3.1.1 Assessment instruments

The researcher as developer of the intervention programme can compile other possibilities for assessment of the group members' emotional intelligence and processes.

The researcher communicated to the distributors of the DISC programme about the possibility to include the assessment instrument and instructions for use and interpretation in the programme. This did not seem possible, but the researcher included information about training opportunities to use and purchase the instrument. The researcher found the DISC assessment instrument for pre-teens very useful, because of the story-like way of assessing. The test items are also presented in such a way that awareness is already increased while they are completing the assessment stories. The DISC instrument also has a questionnaire available to use for teenagers and adults. The use of this instrument to determine processes and raise awareness can be applied over a wide range of developmental phases. The researcher therefore recommends training in the use of this assessment instrument. If the use of the DISC instrument is not possible, the researcher recommends that the programme user explore other techniques to determine the processes of the group members as accurately as possible.

The Das-Naglieri Cognitive Assessment System (Naglieri & Das, 1997) is less user-friendly in its availability to use. This instrument can be replaced by more commercially available emotional intelligence questionnaires. The researcher can extend the intervention programme by adding possible questionnaires to assess emotional intelligence of primary school children.

#### 3.1.2 Preparation of exercises

The researcher is of the opinion that preparation time for exercises can be minimised only by adapting the programme's activities to activities where the group members prepare their own material during the group session. In the latter case, the length of sessions will be influenced. Sessions should be longer than 90 minutes to provide enough time for the preparation of material to use.

### 3.1.3 Time span of the programme

Although this is a point of critique, the researcher finds it difficult to shorten the intervention programme. For the sake of increased emotional intelligence, the researcher is not prepared to cut any session on the skills included in this intervention programme. If the time span of the intervention programme as a whole has to be shortened, it can be presented in two sessions per week. Another possibility is to combine sessions with similar or following themes in one session. This might unfortunately sacrifice some of the depth of comprehension of the theme and it might also sacrifice time available to experiment and experience the application of the theme.

The researcher will therefore only recommend a shortened time span if it is really of the utmost importance. The preferred way of shortening the time span would be to fit two sessions per week. Le Doux (1998:19) states that, “nonemotional events (like thoughts) do not so easily displace emotions from the mental spotlight – wishing that anxiety or depression would go away is usually not enough”. The researcher therefore reasons that it might take longer than what was anticipated to teach cognitive control skills over emotions. The latter are stronger in their occupation of consciousness than any other event or thought (Le Doux, 1998:19). This means that the time span of the current emotional intelligence programme should rather be longer than shorter to be more effective. It might take longer to learn cognitive control skills over emotions, because emotions are so strong when taking up space in consciousness.

## 3.2 Use more culture specific techniques

The researcher as programme developer can extend the programme to include the following techniques focused directly on cultural knowledge:

- A more comprehensive parent (primary caretaker) questionnaire can be compiled
- The questionnaire above needs to be completed by the caretakers of the group members before the intervention programme commence to enhance the therapist’s knowledge of the cultures of the children in the group

- The intervention programme can be extended to add regular activities focused on a discussion on how to apply a specific skill in the different cultures present in a group
- This is only possible if the programme's number of activities per session is cut (1.2 Too many exercises in one session)
- Adding more than one culture specific sessions to the intervention programme might be an option. It is important though not to extend the programme for too many sessions as discussed in 1.1.3 Time span of full programme above
- The literature study can be extended to gain more knowledge about activities to explore different cultures and the need for such awareness

The researcher needs to explore the applicability of such adaptations to the intervention programme and literature study. This might increase the cultural focus of the current study. It is important to keep the aim of the research study in mind. This is a cultural sensitive intervention programme, with the aim to identify Gestalt play therapy techniques to enhance emotional intelligence of primary school children. The intervention programme should therefore focus on the techniques used for emotional intelligence and primarily to gain cultural knowledge and to increase cultural sensitivity. The adaptations are possibilities and it is therefore not suggested to apply all the suggestions listed above. It can be applied to fulfil in the possible expectation of the user to have a programme, which is focused on cultural exploration too.

### **3.3 Use more varied Gestalt therapy techniques**

As discussed above (1.4 Not a wide variety of Gestalt therapy techniques applied), the variety of types of Gestalt play therapy techniques can be extended.

Ivens ([sa]:4) states that although some of the most famous techniques, like psychodrama, fantasy, empty chair, tasks and dream work are listed in literature, the therapist is still encouraged to be creative and develop techniques that will suit his clients' needs. The current research study attempted to use techniques found in literature, but the researcher also applied her own creative contributions. The researcher mainly focused on using techniques to fit the primary school children's developmental phase and techniques to enhance the emotional intelligence theme of a



specific session. The techniques used were found to fit in most of the categories listed in literature. The creative researcher as therapist should thus extend her creativity more to include a wider variety of categories, techniques within the listed categories, and also techniques, which do not fit in one of the listed categories.

The following is a list of possible categories of techniques, which were included in the intervention programme and proofed to be effective. These can be extended to include more examples of techniques within the categories:

(Referrals to chapter four of the literature study are added in brackets to assist the reader in finding more information about the techniques.)

- Creative play – where children create something new, which is representative of one's own process or perception, but which can also stretch beyond one's current boundaries (Chapter 4, 3.2.8 Creative play)
- Biblio play – the therapist makes use of written and audio-visual material (Chapter 4, 3.2.6 Biblio play)
- Fantasy and imagination techniques – to solve problems, to think creatively and to deal with their fears in a non-threatening way (Chapter 4, 3.2.5 Fantasy and imagination techniques)
- Relaxation techniques – the therapist use techniques to help the children to relax to gain better contact with themselves and others, to have better awareness of themselves and also clearer cognitive processes, thus helping the child to find the helping process worthwhile (Chapter 4, 3.2.4 Relaxation techniques)
- Sensory awareness techniques – this include bodywork or using the senses to touch the mind or emotions (Chapter 4, 3.2.2 Sensory awareness techniques)
- Projection techniques – the child projects his own feelings onto another object where the latter serves as a screen on which he can project the things he cannot handle in reality or is a little unsure of. (Chapter 4, 3.2.3 Projection techniques)
- Techniques to determine processes – this can include any of the techniques above and also other types of techniques including incomplete sentences and personality assessment instruments and questionnaires (Chapter 4, 3.2.3 Techniques to determine the child's process)

The reader's creativity can be used to find interesting ways to use these categories of techniques to create fun filled opportunities of growth. The techniques used should be applied in a way, which relates to the children's developmental phase.

The following are techniques, which were not utilised to its full potential and are recommended for an intervention programme such as the one used in the current study:

- Dramatic play – techniques where children can experiment with situations. Examples of dramatic play include: role-playing, talking-feeling-doing game, dramatising, therapeutic communication, dolls, puppets and paper dolls, telephone play and masks (Chapter 4, 3.2.7 Dramatic play).
- Experiments – these are techniques that are not always planned for, but which encourage the children to test experiences in a safe environment. These include the following: enactment, re-enactment, around-the-world, empty chair, experiments with internal dialogues, fantasy approaches, rehearsal, reversal, exaggeration, and dream work (Chapter 4, 3.1.1 Experiments).

### **3.4 Use Group life dynamics as indicator of growth**

Harris (1998b:3-4) states that everything that happens in a group is part of the group process and has an influence on the whole. All levels of group life therefore have an influence on the whole. It is thus recommended that the researcher not only use individual changes in emotional intelligence as indicator of growth. It is important to also consider growth and development in relationships between group members. The quality of the group as a whole should also be considered. Considering all these dynamics will increase the value of the impact of the intervention programme.

### **3.5 Content of programme should be covered in full plus added exercises on self-esteem**

The significance of using all the techniques included in the final development of the programme was indicated in the discussion on possible explanations for the outcomes of the intervention programme (Chapter 7, 3.1.6 Not all intentions came to life). The utilisation of especially the techniques discussed in Chapter 7 as well as in 2.6 Important content of the programme neglected, in this chapter are thus highly recommended.

An improved self-esteem usually goes together with increased awareness, according to Vermeulen (1999:181). She also states that a good self-esteem is the basis of success in emotional intelligence. (Chapter 2, 3.2.1 Increased awareness and self-knowledge, a good self-image) It might thus be valuable to follow the sessions focused on self-awareness with a session on self-image. Increased awareness of the value of a good self-esteem and experiences where self-esteems are built might have a positive effect on increased emotional intelligence. Techniques focused on building a positive self-esteem might still be included throughout the intervention programme. The latter is important because it seems unrealistic to the researcher to expect that only one session about self-esteem will make the same difference than when the effect is continued throughout the intervention programme.

### **3.6 Add ideas to adapt the programme for use in other developmental phases too**

This intervention programme was developed specifically for the needs of primary school children. The emotional intelligence skills are not applicable to this developmental phase only. The intervention programme might need small adaptations in emphasis and types of techniques to fit other developmental phases. Children in adolescence might need more emphasis on self-awareness, self-image and a goal-oriented life, because adolescence is a phase of increased emphasis on identification of the self (compare Kiura, *et al.*, 1999:44; Le Roux & De Klerk, 2003:23). Adolescents are also more abstract in their thinking, has a need for independence, feel lonely at times and experience feelings of uncertainty of themselves and insecurity (compare Kiura, *et al.*, 1999:44; Neethling & Schoeman, 1999:35). The techniques can thus be adapted from more active and concrete to more abstract and based on dialogue if used for adolescents.

### **3.7 Accommodate children who are less creative as well**

The intervention programme should be adapted to be more structured, systematic and detail oriented to accommodate the needs of children who prefer successive processes

(left-hemisphere skills) above simultaneous processes (right-hemisphere skills). The researcher or other programme users need to make a study of the needs of children who prefer successive (left-hemisphere skills) processes. In this way they can include effective techniques to also fulfil in the needs of these children.

### 3.8 Other recommendations

The following copy of the researcher's process notes on the observations of the research groups of the current study indicate difficulty with the abstract concept of the value of emotions:

#### **SESSION 6 (AFRIKAANS GROUP)**

##### **EMOTIONS: IDENTIFYING FEELINGS**

The children still prefer active participation. It is thus difficult for the researcher to focus on one child's experience and create an experiment. The rest of the group might not participate well enough here, they will start to entertain themselves with other things, rather to focus on the experiment, which only focuses on one child's needs. The researcher therefore communicated the meaning or value of feelings and when the children experience these feelings while they were busy drawing these on white boards – which they like a lot. In such a way they communicate their experiences more spontaneously while busy and in such a way they might be more true to themselves and even enjoy the session more. Otherwise they experience the session as boring and if it is a teaching situation like in the classroom where they are more reserved.

#### **SESSION 6 (ENGLISH GROUP)**

##### **EMOTIONS: IDENTIFYING FEELINGS**

Understanding the meaning of the value of feelings was also difficult for this group. The researcher therefore explained it a little more concrete. Instead of finding a need that is not fulfilled, the researcher explained that the feeling gives us a message to either keep us happy or to keep us safe.

**Figure 8.3: Abstract technique to teach the value of emotions**

The researcher recommends a more concrete way to make the group members aware of the value of emotions. The group members can for example listen to a story where characters are experiencing the value of emotions. The group members can then identify the emotions and the value of these. The Afrikaans group enjoyed making drawings on the white boards a lot. A game like Pictionary (Arlenco Games:1985) can be designed where the therapist gives an incident where a character experiences an emotion. The children needs to draw the value or message of that emotion, for example feeling afraid of heights and therefore not lean to far forward over a high cliff. The feeling thus saved the person from falling off the cliff. One person in a group makes the drawing and the other person guesses the value. Each group receives the same story card. This game can consume some time, so the therapist should be prepared to spend an extra session on this theme or use this game as main technique. If the limited time is a restriction on the value of the Pictionary (Arlenco Games:1985) game, then the group members can make a drawing of the value of a feeling that could have a specific value to them. The group members then give feedback on their drawings and explain the incident and value of the emotion. The therapist can also add a different technique like dramatic play. The group members can make a puppet show or little drama to show the value of a specific feeling. This can be used as an experiment with emotions, especially if they dramatise an incident, which really occurred in one of the group members' lives.

#### **4. INDICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH IN THE SAME FIELD**

The following areas that can still be researched followed from the outcomes and critique on the current research study:

- Culture specific techniques and its relation to emotional intelligence
- Finding whether the emotional intelligence of primary school children from African and Western cultures differ
- The influence of specific cultures on an acceptable level of emotional intelligence as defined by Western cultures

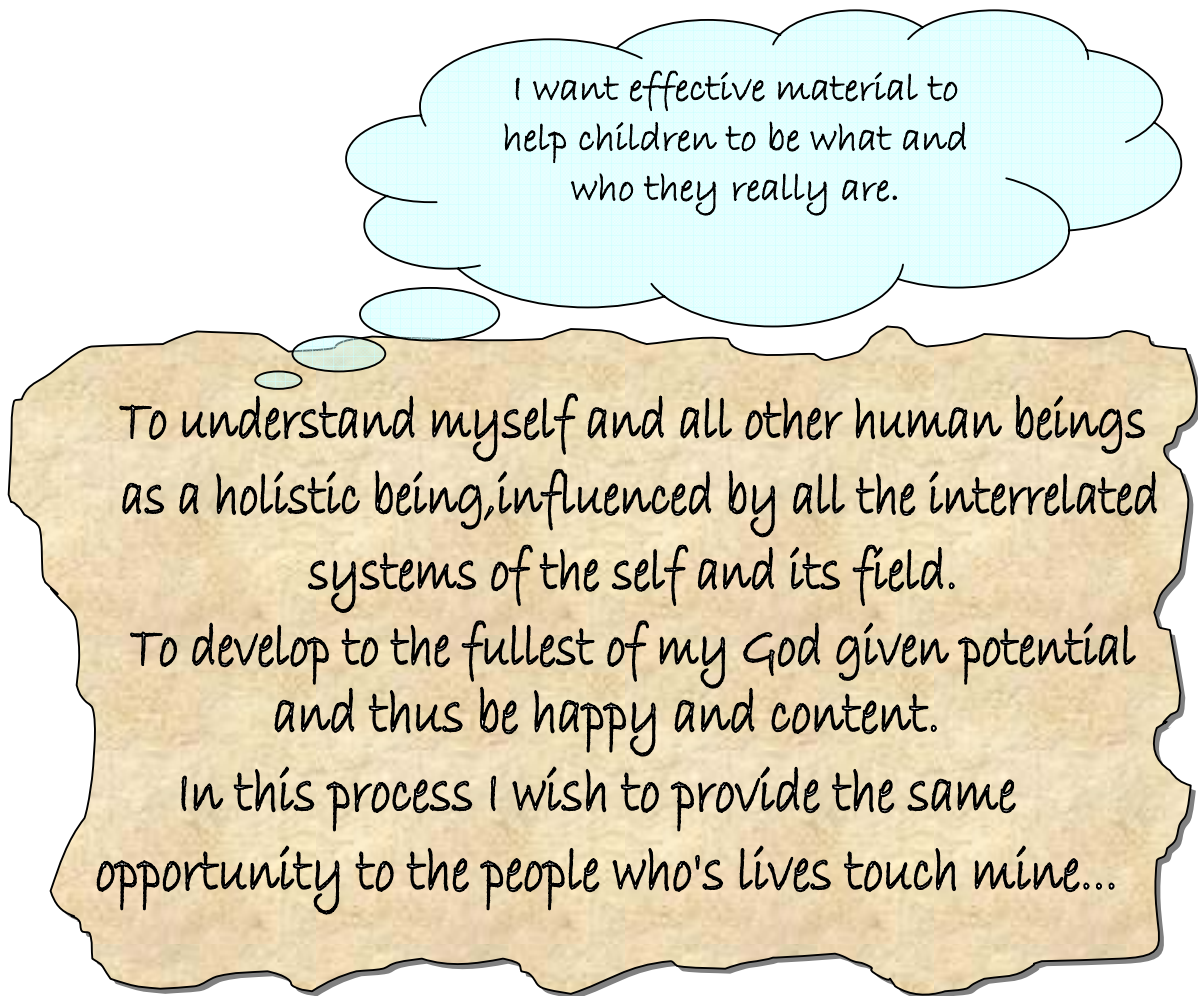
- The relationship between effective frontal lobe functioning and emotional intelligence
- The relationship between enhancement of emotional intelligence and strength of the processes of the right hemisphere
- Which type of focus is needed to cause most growth on the level of emotional intelligence: a more structured and planned intervention programme such as in the current study or a more experiential intervention programme, which is completely focused on the group members' experience during that session
- The influence of interpersonal relationships and focus on the processes of the group as a whole on the emotional intelligence of the individual group members
- Identifying a good level of emotional intelligence for early school age (4-6 years) (compare Kiura, *et al.*, 1999:35; Newman & Newman, 1987:235) and compiling Gestalt play therapy techniques to increase their level of emotional intelligence
- Assessment procedures (to assess levels of emotional intelligence and the processes of the group members effectively) designed to use in a programme to increase emotional intelligence of primary school children, using Gestalt Play therapy techniques in a culturally sensitive way
- Using this intervention programme as a structure to help children with chronic diseases (Diabetes Mellitus, serious food allergies, asthma, HIV+ etcetera), which require lifestyle related measures. The relationship between improved emotional intelligence and improved control of the disease can be studied. This intervention programme focuses on a proper understanding of the influence of physical, cognitive and emotional processes on each other
- Do a research study to compile techniques to use for children who prefer successive processes (left-hemisphere skills)

## 5. CONCLUSION

This chapter included factors, which still need attention to improve the current intervention programme and needs that still need to be addressed. Blaxter, *et al.* (1997:123) stated that, “In a sense, of course, all social research is a pilot exercise”. The researcher therefore regards even the final product of this intervention study, which is also social research (Chapter 1, Figure 1.5 Basic and applied research), still as a pilot study. The results of the research study can be used to develop the intervention to a more effective and / or user-friendly programme. This intervention programme can be applied again, using the application of the intervention programme on the research groups of this research study as a pilot study. The researcher found many valuable indicators to adapt the programme to a more effective intervention. This intervention study is thus not in its final form yet, but is the first step to an ongoing process of application and adaptation of the intervention programme on the base of the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the study. The researcher’s vision for this study will thus be an ongoing driving force for further improvement and development of the intervention programme.

The researcher already stated her vision in Chapter 6, Figure 6.7: The researcher’s vision, which strengthened the need to explore a research problem, to state a research question to be answered and to develop the aim of this study. The vision for the need of this research study followed from the researcher’s mission statement.

The researcher therefore concludes this study with her mission statement and vision for the need of an intervention programme such as the one in this research study. This was the driving force behind the research process and will be the power behind further development of this intervention study.



**Figure 8.4: Mission statement and vision of the researcher for the research study**