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EMPATHY AND THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF TRAINEES IN AN EMOTIONAL LITERACY PERSONA DOLL TRAINING PROGRAMME IN SOUTH AFRICA

Nikki Barnfather

A research report submitted to the Discipline of Psychology, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology)

Johannesburg, South Africa November 2011

Declaration

I hereby declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Nikki Barnfather

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Date

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Abstract

Many devastating problems face South Africa's young children that can hamper their emotional and social development. The Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll programme (Buchanan, 2007) attempts to intervene in the young child's emotional development. Persona Dolls are used to encourage emotional expression and management in young children. Previous research has indicated the positive effects of the Persona Dolls and Emotional Literacy programmes with children. However, the development in the trainees and practitioners who use these dolls has yet to be researched. This research study assessed the development of empathy, and the personal experiences of trainees who underwent the emotional literacy and Persona Doll training programme in South Africa. Participants included social workers, psychologists, and preschool and foundation phase teachers. Participants' empathy was assessed before the first training session, and at the end of the training through Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Index (1980). Participants also documented their feelings, experiences, and thoughts while undergoing the training, in a journal. Process notes of persona doll sessions and evaluation forms were also used in the study.

Although the quantitative results did not show any significant results in terms of an improvement in empathy for the trainees, the qualitative results demonstrated that the participants found that they were more able to think and talk about their own emotions, and the emotions of others. This is a crucial aspect of emotional literacy, where one is able to identify and think about one's own emotions. Furthermore, the group of participants learnt important reflection and containment skills, which they believe they can and are using in their work with others, and with their families. While there is no statistically grounded argument for the improvement of empathy, and in extension emotional literacy, the participants in the training seemed to have developed their own emotional literacy skills, and found that they are better able to work with children and adults in the realm of emotional work. Implications and suggestions for further research are discussed.

Key words: persona dolls, emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, empathy and Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Index

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Two evaluative research projects (Buchanan, 2007; Irish, 2009) have been conducted on a Persona Dolls Emotional Literacy Programme that takes place at a community psychotherapy centre in Alexandra Township. Both of these research projects have reported positive findings. The reports indicate that the programme elicited emotional material that could be used in developing emotional literacy in children (Buchanan, 2007) and that preschool children's ability to perceive and label emotions increased after the programme (Irish, 2009). Furthermore, the teachers involved with the Persona Doll programme perceived that there was an improvement in emotional expression with their children, and that the children appreciated working with the Persona Dolls, which helped to facilitate speaking about emotions and feelings (Irish, 2009). Further evaluative research is desired on this programme. This research aims to add to the body of research and evaluations for this programme.

This research focuses on the trainees in the Persona Dolls and Emotional Literacy Programme training. Trainees include foundation phase teachers, non-governmental organization workers and lay counsellors. The research's focus is two fold. The first focus is to determine what influence the Persona Dolls and Emotional Literacy Programme has on empathy in the trainees, which is a key construct in emotional literacy and working with Persona Dolls. The second focus is to investigate the trainee's perceptions, feelings and experiences throughout the training programme, and their opinions regarding how the programme affected them and how it could be improved. This research attempts to assist the community psychotherapy centre in gathering further evaluative information about their programme.

Children in South Africa are faced with difficult and stressful living conditions and environments. The country's history of Apartheid and its lingering effects, as well as many other problems – such as poverty, inadequate socioeconomic conditions, the HIV/Aids epidemic and other health care problems, high levels of crime and violence, disintegration of the family and communities, and poor access to resources such as education and employment – have led to environments in which it is difficult for children to thrive and develop optimally, on various levels. While there

are attempts in South Africa to overcome these problems, many children need intervention work directed towards them to help meet their developmental, emotional, social and personal needs.

The Persona Doll and Emotional Literacy Programme is one such intervention that attempts to intervene in children's lives and aims to develop children's emotional literacy skills (Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll Training Manual, 2010). The aim of this programme is to help develop the child's ability to navigate stressful life experiences and emotions, which could negatively influence their development and lives (Buchanan, 2007; Irish, 2009). Emotional Literacy can help children to better experience, manage, and regulate their emotions, which is needed in a society that is governed by many social problems (Buchanan, 2007; Irish, 2009). Emotional Literacy has numerous benefits and may assist children in managing emotional situations that could negatively impact them.

The focus of this research is to determine how teachers or the trainees in the programme develop and experience the process as adults, particularly parents and teachers, are important role models and figures in the emotional development of children (Kremenitzer, 2005). A focus on teachers or the individuals own emotional literacy is then warranted. Teachers need to have a certain level of their own emotional literacy in order for them to model or help develop it in their classrooms or with other children. Therefore, the teachers and other individuals in the training programme need to develop their own emotional literacy, in order to develop the children's emotional literacy. As the teachers and other individuals are the main instruments of the programmes and are the ones who deliver the programme to the children, it is vitally important to evaluate their development, and how they experience the programme. Even though previous evaluations and research have been conducted on this programme (Buchanan, 2007; Irish, 2009), the training programme itself has not been evaluated or researched before. This research is different in that it focuses on the evaluation of the programme by the trainees and their experiences, whereas previous research focused on the persona doll sessions in the classroom and with the children (Buchanan, 2007; Irish, 2009). This is to help gather more information, which can help the centre to develop or modify their programme where necessary. Further research on the programme is beneficial for the centre in this way.

1.2 Literature Review

There has been increasing awareness and demands for educators and education worldwide to encompass the emotional and social development of children within schools (Chang, 2006; Kremenitzer, 2005). These demands are made due to the growing awareness and research that emotional intelligence and emotional literacy is associated in different ways with academic achievement, emotional regulation, mental illnesses, behaviour problems, stress and general emotional and social adjustment (Izard et al., 2001; Parker et al., 2004a; Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi, 2000; Parker et al., 2004b; Liau, Liau, Teah & Liau, 2003; Goleman, 1995). As such Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Literacy have become popular topics of not only in the educational field, but also in psychology and business (Wong, Wong & Law, 2007). This field is still in its early years, and is characterized by different ideas on what constitutes emotional intelligence, its domain, and how it should be measured. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the concepts of emotional intelligence, emotional literacy and empathy, and discuss the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll programme.

1.2.1. Emotional Intelligence

Thorndike's (1920) Social Intelligence and Gardner's (1983) intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are considered to be the early origins of Emotional Intelligence (Shutte et al., 1998; Stone, 2005; Petrides, Furnham & Frederickson, 2004). Salovey and Mayer (1990) were the first to present a formal definition of emotional intelligence, although Goleman (1995) is credited with bringing the term into popular use (Stone, 2005; Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008; Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Liau et al., 2003). Mayer and Salovey (1997, p.10) argue that emotional intelligence is:

> "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".

The field of emotional intelligence and literacy is in its infancy (Kremintzer, 2005), and with Mayer and Salovey's definition of emotional intelligence, came many more alternative

conceptions and ideas surrounding the construct (Petrides et al., 2004). Petrides et al. (2004) argue that the type of measurement used in an emotional intelligence study has important implications for how the construct is operationalized. Petrides et al. (2004) distinguish between two main models of emotional intelligence: ability emotional intelligence and trait emotional intelligence. When emotional intelligence is measured through self-report items, the concept is considered to be more trait emotional intelligence, whereas when the measurement is one of maximum performance, then the construct is considered to be one of ability emotional intelligence (Petrides et al., 2004).

1.2.1.1 The Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence

Ability models of emotional intelligence conceptualize and operationalize emotional intelligence as a cognitive ability or construct (Stone, 2005; Petrides, Furnham & Fredrickson, 2004) that is related to emotions (Petrides, Furnham & Mavroveli, 2007). Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2002) are the main theorists of the ability model of emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey (1997) discuss four main skills involved in emotional intelligence under this model, and that the skills increase in psychological processing and integration as they progress into the next skill. Perceiving and evaluating emotions (in the self and others) is the most basic skill of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The second skill is the ability to incorporate the emotions or emotional experiences into thoughts or "mental life", which includes being able to compare emotions against each other, and against other information that may be present (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Being able to understand and reason about emotions is the third skill Mayer and Salovey (1997) discuss. The last skill and the highest skill is the ability to manage and regulate emotions in oneself and in others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

An example of a measurement that understands emotional intelligence as an ability emotional intelligence model is the MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test). Measures such as this one conceptualize emotional intelligence as ability, and are expected to have moderate to strong correlations of general intelligence (*g*) (Petrides et al., 2004). However, these tests, when available, are somewhat difficult to administer and score, and have weak psychometric properties, according to Petrides et al. (2004). They also have lower than expected correlations with other intelligence quotient (IQ) measures, and often have limited concurrent and predictive validity (Petrides et al., 2004). These kinds of tests and constructs require further research, as do the trait emotional intelligences measurements, discussed below.

1.2.1.2 Trait Model of Emotional Intelligence

Trait Emotional Intelligence refers to emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions, which are usually measured through the use of self-reports (Petrides, Furnham & Mavroveli, 2007). This is often seen as a personality trait or emotional self-efficacy (Petrides et al., 2004). Theories and measures of trait emotional intelligence include Bar-on's model of Emotional Social Intelligence (as measured by the Emotional Quotient Inventory - EQi) Schutte's Emotional Intelligence (measured with the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale - SEIS), Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence (which is located in an organizational framework) and Petrides and Furnham's model of trait emotional intelligence (measured with the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – TEIQue) (Petrides et al., 2004).

Bar-On (1997, p. 14) defines emotional intelligence as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures". Within this model, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills are included, as well as adaptability skills (such as problem solving) stress management skills, and general mood (Bar-On, 1997). Goleman (1995) listed five essential domains of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. He also argued that emotional intelligence could be taught and improved in children (Goleman, 1995). Shutte et al. (1998)'s model of emotional intelligence is based on that of Mayer and Salovey (1997) definitions of emotional intelligence. Shutte et al. (1998) developed the Shutte Emotional Intelligence Scale from the MSCEIT items. Petrides et al. (2004) appear to maintain a definition of emotional intelligence, which is closely related to the theory of trait emotional intelligence, and its measurement. The TEIQue covers fifteen aspects that are thought to be dimensions of emotional intelligence. These are: Adaptability, assertiveness, emotion perception of self and others, emotion expression, emotion management, emotion regulation, low impulsiveness, relationships, self-esteem, self-motivation, social awareness, stress management, trait empathy, trait happiness, and trait optimism.

Petrides et al. (2004) argue that while trait emotional intelligence measurements are easy to administer and score, and generally have good psychometric properties, they are susceptible to faking. Ability emotional intelligence theorists would argue that trait emotional intelligence models do not capture actual abilities, and describe personality factors. Because trait emotional

intelligence is more similar to personality or affective traits (and not actual abilities) it is questioned whether trait emotional intelligence can be taught or developed (Vaidya, Gray, Haig & Watson, 2002; Petrides et al., 2007).

It is clear that emotional intelligence is still a contentious field, in which there are a multitude of definitions, models, and theories underlying the construct. Amongst the literature itself, there are competing ideas over what theorists constitute the models, and whether these models are of any utility. Despite these theoretical circumstances, there is a growing call worldwide for education to recognize the holistic development of the child, to include social and emotional development within its curriculum (Chang, 2006; Goleman, 1995; Izard et al., 2001; Kremenitzer, 2005; Liau et al., 2003).

1.2.2. Emotional Literacy

The term "Emotional literacy" has developed out of a rejection of the idea that intelligences, and more specifically, emotional intelligence, are seen as fixed level abilities (Stone, 2005). Debate regarding the idea of emotional intelligence as an "intelligence" has led many researchers to refer to emotional literacy (Perry, Lennie & Humphrey, 2008). Perry, Lennie and Humphrey (2008) argue that while there is little evidence to suggest emotional literacy and emotional intelligence are entirely different constructs, emotional literacy is most often used to describe emotional intelligence in school settings. Emotional literacy therefore tends to focus on school-going or preschool children (Perry, Lennie & Humphrey, 2008) and is used to aid the development of the child socially and emotionally. This movement towards Emotional Literacy is to help assert the focus of emotional development within education (Coppock, 2007). The Mental Health Foundation (1995, p. 15) in the United Kingdom argues that "Emotionally literate children are less likely to experience mental health problems, and if they do develop them, they are less likely to suffer from them long term". The focus of emotional literacy is then that it is a skill or ability that can be developed and trained in individuals (Stone, 2005).

The community centre where this research study was conducted uses the concept of emotional literacy as outlined by Steiner (2002) for the emotional literacy training programme. Steiner (2002) argues that there are five basic principles of emotional literacy, and that individuals can be taught or trained in these abilities to better their emotional literacy and further impact their lives.

The first principle is for one to know one's feelings. This requires the individual to know what feelings or emotions he/she is experiencing, how these emotions were caused, the strength of the emotion(s) and how these emotions are affecting him/her and other people around them. The second principle is a sense of empathy. This requires the individual to sense feelings or emotions, his/her strengths and what caused them. The third principle is learning how to manage emotions. The individual is required to learn how to express his/her emotions in a harmless and productive way. The fourth principle involves repairing emotional damage that he/she has created or been involved in, for him/herself and where they may have caused it in others. The final principle is being able to work all these principles together effectively. Steiner (2002, p. 41) argues that when a person is emotionally literate they are able to use their emotions in an effective way, to "make their emotions work for them and others, instead of against" them and to be able to handle difficult emotional situations effectively.

Developing emotional literacy in children is key, but cannot occur without the hard work of educators, counselors, parents and other figures. Brenner and Salovey (1997) and Parke (1994) argue that parents and teachers influence children's emotional development and emotional regulation through socialization. They argue that teachers and parents influence children by giving them indirect exposure to social interaction (between parents and families), through teaching and coaching, and through regulating opportunities in the environment (Brenner & Salovey, 1997; Parke, 1994). Kremenitzer (2005) argues that teachers are key role models for the child in the classroom, and it is clear that they have an important role to play in the development of children's emotions and their emotional literacy.

1.2.3. The Effects of Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Literacy

Goleman (1995) argues for the life-long benefits of emotional intelligence in an individual's life. Despite Goleman's (1995) claims, there is still a limited amount of research that has been conducted on the effects of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy, particularly in terms of outcomes over long periods of time. However, studies exist that demonstrate preliminary evidence for the efficacy of emotional intelligence and literacy.

Izard et al. (2001) conducted a longitudinal study regarding emotional and social development with economically disadvantaged children. They gathered information from the child, parent and teacher at age 5 and later again at age 9. Temperament, school behaviour, receptive vocabulary as a component of verbal ability, and emotional knowledge were measured. Emotional knowledge was measured with an emotional recognition task and an emotional labeling task. After controlling for temperament and verbal ability, the authors found that the ability to identify and label emotions, a key feature in emotional intelligence/literacy, helped to facilitate positive social interactions. Conversely they found an inability or deficit in this skill contributed to behavioural and learning problems (Izard et al., 2001).

A study conducted by Parker et al. (2004) assessed the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic success. The Bar On Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version was administered to 667 high school students in the USA, and their scores were correlated with their academic records and final grade point average (GPA). Parker et al. (2004) concluded that individuals in high school who succeeded academically (in the 80^{th} percentile and above) were found to demonstrate dimensions of emotional intelligence more so than those in the middle and lower success groups. Students in the middle grouping (20^{th} - 80^{th} percentile) were also found to have higher levels of interpersonal, adaptability and stress management compared to the lower group (20^{th} percentile and less).

Ciarrochi, Chan and Caputi (2000) conducted a study that attempted to critically evaluate the construct of emotional intelligence – which is related to emotional literacy. They administered the Multi-factor Emotional Intelligence Scale to Australian undergraduate psychology students, along with a battery measuring IQ, personality, life satisfaction, and self-esteem criterions. After controlling for IQ and personality traits, Ciarrochi et al. (2000) found that emotional intelligence was positively related to specific personality traits such as empathy (key for emotional intelligence/literacy) and other measures such as life satisfaction and self-esteem. They also concluded that emotional intelligence was related to individual's ability to manage their moods, but not to prevent bias in their judgments.

In terms of lower emotional intelligence levels, Parker, Taylor and Bagby (2000) found it was associated with higher levels in alexithymia - a difficulty in describing, or recognizing, one's own emotions (Colman, 2001). Liau et al (2003) conducted a study in Malaysia, with 203 secondary school students from four urban schools. Schutte's Emotional Intelligence Scale was used to

measure emotional literacy, and measures of internalizing and externalizing problem behaviours were taken. Liau et al. (2003) found that low emotional literacy was associated with higher levels of stress, depression, aggression, delinquency and somatic complaints.

The field of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy is still relatively new, and is still fraught with conceptual differences and difficulties. While there are many programmes that focus on developing emotional literacy, there are few evaluations and limited research on the construct and programmes, particularly in the South African context. However, there has been evaluative research conducted on programmes in the United States and Europe. The Dinosaur School programme, conducted by the Incredible Years Series organization, aimed to develop and improve emotional literacy and emotional development (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). The programme aimed to improve emotional awareness, the ability to recognize others feelings and perspectives, to reduce defiance and aggression, and to increase self-esteem and confidence, amongst other goals (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). The study evaluated the success of the programme in children who were diagnosed with conduct disorder or oppositional defiance disorder. Generally, the children in the programme showed an improvement in pro social behaviour, self-regulation and a decrease in aggressive behaviour (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). Later research concluded that the involvement of parents and their improvement was key in assisting in a child's emotional development and growth (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010).

A study by Coppock (2007) evaluated an emotional literacy project in Northwest England. The research methodology was similar to that of the current study, in that it explored the views and perspectives of the children, parents, teachers and other professionals working within the project. The children felt that they experienced improved self-esteem, self-confidence, and better relationships and were better able to understand other people's feelings or points of view (Coppock, 2007). Parents, amongst other observations, felt they were better able to learn to express themselves and better understand or be aware of the impact of feelings and emotions (Coppock, 2007). Professionals in the study also observed an improvement in the children (Coppock, 2007).

There is a need for further research on emotional intelligence and emotional literacy, its different theoretical models, and its associations with different psychological concepts over time. For these reasons, this research study focuses on a concept of emotional literacy, as it is understood that emotional literacy, while linked to emotional intelligence, can be developed. It further focuses on

empathy, a particular aspect of emotional literacy that is seen to be important to both the development of emotional literacy, and the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll programme.

1.2.4. Empathy

Empathy is the focus of the programme evaluation in this study, as it is a key component of emotional literacy, as well as key for teachers in sessions with their children. There are numerous definitions and concepts of empathy that have been developed over the years, and much confusion and debate in the field as to what empathy entails (Moore, 1990; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1990). Different concepts of empathy describe different elements, for example at times empathy is considered as a cognitive ability that involves perspective taking and at other times, the ability to match another's emotional state (Moore, 1990; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1990). Over the years these two different viewpoints of empathy have increasingly become integrated, to an understanding of empathy that is more multidimensional and holistic (Davis, 1983).

Eisenberg and Strayer (1990, p. 5) argue that empathy is the ability to share in the "perceived emotion of another – feeling with another", and that is can occur from perceiving cues of another's emotional state, for example a person's facial expressions, or as a result of thinking about another's emotional state through other indirect cues, for example by thinking about the person's situation. This definition attempts to encompass both cognitive and emotional understandings of empathy. Davis (1983) has proposed a multidimensional understanding of empathy. Davis (1980, p. 113) describes empathy rather generally as a "reaction to the observed experiences of another" and does not describe empathy as either cognitive or emotional. Instead he argues that empathy is made up of different constructs, which are related to each other, but also different. Davis (1983) argues that empathy concerns the ability to take another's perspective or point of view and the ability to transpose one's self into the situation of others. In Davis empathy scale (the Interpersonal Reactivity Index) these elements of empathy are known as the perspective taking subscale and the fantasy subscale. Empathy also incorporates the ability to have "other-oriented feelings" and concern, as well as anxiety or distress in interpersonal situations (Davis, 1983, p. 114). Davis describes these elements as the empathic concern subscale and the personal distress subscale in his instrument. Davis (1983) notes that although these four elements are by no means exhaustive, they are important qualities for empathy. This allows for a

more multidimensional approach to empathy, and considers both emotional and cognitive understandings of empathy.

Empathy therefore includes the ability to take the perspective of another, which is crucial to the Persona doll programme. In order for the teacher or individual working with the dolls to reflect children's responses and encourage discussions around emotions, they need to have empathy. In these sessions they need to be able to take the perspective of the child, transpose themselves as much as possible into the child's situation, and experience other-oriented feelings. The persona doll allows the child to speak about their emotions because the doll is seen as someone who understands them, and has empathy for them. Empathy is therefore a crucial component in a persona doll trainee's development.

1.2.5. The Emotional Literacy and Persona Dolls Training Programme

The centre at which the training programme is based is located on the border of the Alexandra Township and was established in 1999 by clinical psychologists. The aim of this centre is to provide training, clinical services and research to the community, where there is a dire shortage of mental health workers in an area facing difficult conditions, such as limited access to resources, high levels of crime, violence and disease and family life disintegration. The centre focuses on early childhood and group therapy and its objectives are to develop, implement and disseminate interventions that help meet the mental health problems that occur from the effects of Apartheid, HIV/Aids pandemic, and the poor socioeconomic conditions.

One of the centre's projects is the Persona Doll project. Persona dolls are rag dolls that are made as part on an income generation project at the centre, and are used in the emotional literacy programmes. They were originally designed to be used to combat discrimination and develop empathy in school-going children (Brown, 2001). Each persona doll is given a name, personality and life history in training that is similar to the children the doll will be used with. Each doll has a family, lives in a particular area, has particular friends, likes, and dislikes (Buchanan, 2007). Brown (2001) indicates that the doll has to appeal to both the practitioner and the children that the doll will be used with. The chosen doll should have similar features and characteristics to the children they will be used with, such as socioeconomic class, physical features, cultural backgrounds and family structures for example, as well as different characteristics, so that the

children can also emphasize with the doll and its differences (Brown, 2001). In training, the practitioner develops the chosen doll's persona.

In sessions with the children, different themes are brought to the children, to help them explore both negative and positive experiences, events and emotions (Buchanan, 2007; Brown, 2001). The practitioner sits with the doll on his or her lap, and introduces the doll to the group of children. The practitioner then speaks to the group, by telling them about the doll's experience, and uses this as a way to facilitate discussion. The purpose of the dolls is to facilitate a process of identification and relation between the dolls and the children, so that, through the dolls, the children are able to express their emotions, particularly ones that may be difficult to talk about. By being able to talk about their emotions, their emotions are more easily managed than before.

The training programme takes place over eight weeks, with a four-hour session once a week. The purpose of the training programme is to assist in introducing individuals to working with groups, and specifically using the Persona Doll as a tool to work with young children in groups, in a setting that helps to develop emotional literacy. The training manual also indicates that part of its goal is to facilitate self-awareness, reflection and self-growth in the training sessions, through an experiential and interactive process.

The first session of the training programme involves an introduction to the programme and the concept of emotional literacy and group work. Discussions and exercises regarding emotional literacy take place and the concept of group work and its importance in emotional literacy is also discussed. In the second session, the persona dolls are introduced to the training, and practical matters, such as planning for a persona doll group session is focused on. The third session follows on from the second, where planning progress is discussed. It is also in this session that the trainees choose their doll and create a persona for it. The trainer helps the trainees make choices about their dolls and their personas and their first session with their children and the doll.

The fourth session of the training programme focuses on continuing work with the Persona doll. Trainees are asked to reflect upon their first sessions with their children, and are introduced to the model of LOFT. LOFT refers to L – listening, O – Observing, F – Feeling, and T – Thinking. The concepts of listening (L) and observing (O) are discussed and reflected upon, and a discussion regarding using themes in the persona doll sessions with the children will take place. In the fifth session, a discussion on the LOFT model is continued.

Session six involves an emotional meaning case study exercise, and also introduces the importance of working with a supervisor, and making use of referrals where needed. The seventh session includes working on the issues of containment vs. punitive discipline. Trainees are encouraged to discuss ideas on how to contain children's feelings and emotions, and maintain clear boundaries without punishing them. Ending persona dolls sessions with the children are also a focus of this session. The final session of the training programme includes the exploration of feelings, from the first to the final session. A graduation ceremony is also included in this final session, and each trainee is photographed with their doll and their certificate. Across all eight sessions, the trainer and trainees partake in a reflection exercise in the start of the session and at the end. Participants are also given homework for each session. In sessions four to eight there are persona doll work discussion groups that take place as well.

1.2.6. Previous Programme Evaluations

Programme evaluation research is essential as it assists in establishing whether particular social programmes are required, effective or useful (Potter, 2008). Potter (2008) argues that since the 1990's there has been increasing recognition given to the need for evaluative evidence of social programmes in South Africa, to demonstrate accountability, and to assist in development and improvement of these programmes. Evaluation research helps to track the efficacy of programmes, and assists in answering specific questions a programme may need answered (Potter, 2008). The Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll Programme has experienced two programme evaluations (Buchanan, 2007; Irish, 2009), each focusing on a particular aspect of the programme.

A qualitative evaluation by Buchanan (2007) assessed the effectiveness of the use of the Persona Dolls in developing the emotional literacy of preschool children in Alexandra. Specifically, the study looked at whether the programme elicited emotional material that could be used to assist in the development of emotional literacy, if the teachers used in the study could make use of this emotional material for the development of emotional literacy, and whether any emotional material had been overlooked in the process (Buchanan, 2007). The research made use of a case study approach with a Grade R nursery school class and teacher at the centre's nursery school. The class consisted of eighteen children, four boys and fourteen girls. The mean age of the class

was five years and seven months old. The teacher completed a five-week training course on emotional literacy and persona dolls before the study and had a certificate in Early Childhood Development.

The study made use of naturalistic observation through video recording. Six sessions with the persona doll and class were recoded, and transcribed. In cases where vernacular language was used (by the children and the teacher), the teacher involved translated for the researcher. The transcriptions were then subjected to content analysis at multiple levels. The data was analyzed for the use of emotional adjectives, and adjectives were then compared to a list by DeKlerk and LeRoux (2003). This assisted in identifying whether emotional content was elicited in the sessions. The teachers' responses were also analyzed and compared to the levels of empathetic responses discussed by Brems (2001). Furthermore, the data was analyzed to determine whether the goals discussed by Steiner (2002) were met (see above). Lastly the researcher also used thematic content analysis to analyze the data for broad themes.

Buchanan (2007) concluded that emotional material was present, and the transcripts collected also demonstrated the five goals that are discussed by Steiner (2002) to a certain extent. The themes that emerged from the study indicated the presence of emotional material for group therapy: physical discipline, abuse, neglect, broken families, and death and dying (Buchanan, 2007). However, the author argued that the study was limited by its small sample and by issues of language and translation (Buchanan, 2007). The sample was small, with only eighteen children and only one newly trained teacher. The researcher too could not speak the vernacular languages, and had to use the teacher involved as a translator. This may have led to some of the richness of the data being lost in the translation process, and the objectivity may be questioned as the teacher involved was used.

A second study was conducted by Irish (2009) on the effectiveness of the Persona Dolls programme in developing emotional literacy. This study used a mixed methods approach, and evaluated the effect of the programme on emotional literacy in preschool children, and whether the teachers of these children noticed changes in the children. This study made use of a control group and experimental pre-test, intervention, post-test design. The sample consisted of four teachers and thirty-five children from two preschools in Alexandra located close to the centre. This was a convenience sample. The teachers from the experimental group underwent the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll training programme, while the two teachers in the control

group underwent a cognitive skills programme. The control group consisted of eighteen children and the experimental group consisted of seventeen children. The mean age of the sample was five years and two months (experimental group mean age = four years seven months, control group mean age = five years seven months).

A control and experimental group were assessed at pre and post test level with the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal accuracy (DANVA2, Nowicki & Carten, 1993). The DANVA2 measures an individual's ability to read expressions of emotion. The teachers were also interviewed to determine whether they noticed any changes in the children. Irish (2009) argued that significant differences were found between the control and experimental groups, and emotional literacy was increased at the post-test suggesting that the Persona Dolls programme does assist in developing emotional literacy. Irish (2009) also reported that the teachers involved in the programme reported that the children had improved in emotional expression and empathy. They further reported that both teachers and children alike enjoyed the Persona Dolls, and that it assisted in facilitating openness and improvement in emotional expression in the classroom.

This study also had limitations (Irish, 2009). Firstly, there was a difference in ages of the control and experimental group, which may have impacted the results. Irish (2009) argues that future quantitative studies could benefit from matching control and experimental group participants to avoid this. Furthermore, the sample was small, and the DANVA2 is not a measure that has been standardized for the South African context or population. Lastly, the teachers' evaluations of the programme themselves may have been biased.

The studies by Buchanan (2007) and Irish (2009) both give preliminary support for the efficacy in the centre's Persona Doll Emotional Literacy Programme. They indicate that it does stimulate emotional material in persona dolls sessions and assists in developing a more open atmosphere for emotional expression (Buchanan, 2009). Steiner's (2002) five principles of emotional literacy were also demonstrated to a certain extent (Buchanan, 2007). It also indicates that there is an improvement in emotional literacy in the children as measured by Irish (2009). However, further research on the programme is required.

Research that focuses on long-term outcomes and effects on psychological functioning are encouraged although this programme still needs further research on bigger and more diverse samples, as well as the effects the programme has on its trainees. This research study has added to

the previous research by examining how the programme has affected the teachers' and other professionals' emotional literacy.

The programme evaluation primarily took the form of the objectives-based evaluation model, first formulated by Ralph W. Tyler (Stufflebeam, 2001). The primary objective of this evaluation model was to assess whether the goals or objectives of the programme were achieved (Stufflebeam, 2001). In an objectives-based evaluation model, this occurs by identifying and specifying operational goals and objectives, and then collecting and analyzing information in order to determine to what extent these goals and objectives were achieved (Stufflebeam, 2001). According to Stufflebeam (2001), Tyler encouraged the use of multiple objective and performance assessment procedures. This study identified the objectives of the programme as increasing emotional literacy in children, through teachers and other professionals working with persona dolls. In order to do this it is rationalized that teachers themselves must have developed emotional literacy. A quantitative focus in this study was to evaluate whether empathy, as a central construct in emotional literacy, was further developed in trainees in the programme.

This research ultimately involved a mixed methods approach, where the quantitative evaluation was supplemented by a qualitative approach, which also looked at the process and learning of the participants undergoing training. Rao and Woolcock (2004) argue that a mix of both qualitative and quantitative programme evaluations can provide a more comprehensive evaluation. A qualitative component was included because it is more effective than a quantitative approach in uncovering rich data regarding the process of a programme, how a particular programme stimulates events within individuals that contribute to the achievement of a particular goal - that is measured quantitatively (Rao & Woolcock, 2004). In this research, gathering more information regarding the experience of trainees throughout the training programme was key in understanding the processes they underwent. Therefore the evaluation was more holistic in that it determined whether specific goals are met, and also focused on the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of the trainees as they under went the emotional literacy and persona doll training programme. The following chapter will detail and discuss the research methodology used in this study.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter discusses how the research was conducted in this study. It indicates the aims and research questions of the study, the sample and sampling method, and how the research was conducted. It provides a discussion on the instruments used, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as how the data was analyzed. A discussion on ethics is also included.

2.1 The Aim of the Study and Research Questions

The aim of this study was to determine the influence of the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll programme on empathy in the trainees, as well as to gather an understanding of their experiences, opinions, feelings and perspectives on how the training influenced them, as well as how they felt the programme could be improved upon. It aimed to gather further information regarding the programme for the centre.

The following were research questions for the present study:

1) What is the effect of the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll training programme on the trainee's empathy?
2) What are the personal experiences and thoughts of the trainee's while participating in the training programme?
3) What are the personal experiences and thoughts of the trainee's while beginning and conducting their own Persona Doll sessions?
4) What are the trainee's opinions and attitudes of the training programme?
5) How do the trainee's feel the training programme has influenced them?

2.2 Sample and Sampling

The centre at which this study was conducted requested that research be conducted on their training programme, which meant that the research sample was a preselected sample of

individuals who participated in the training. This was a convenience-based sample, and trainees volunteered to take part in the research, and were in no way obliged to do so. The trainees were approached to take part in the training by marketing pamphlets created by the centre. It approached participants whom they deemed would be interested in the training, and some participants came on their own accord to apply for the training.

A total of 20 participants began the training and took part in the research, but only 14 participants concluded the training and participated in the research. The drop out of training was as a result of the participant's organizations being unable to provide the funds for training. A total of 14 participants then completed both the pre-test and post-test administration of Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). The participants who had dropped out of the training were removed from the sample.

The sample consisted of two newly trained psychologists, three teachers, a nursery school administrator, and auxiliary social workers from various non-governmental organizations (NGO's). There was only one male participant in the study. In terms of level of education, 50% of the sample's highest level of education was a high school education. 33.33% of the sample had received some form of higher education, such as a diploma and 16.67% of the sample had received a postgraduate degree, as their highest level of education. The following table indicates the mean age and years at current occupation of the participants, as well as the standard deviations.

Table 1 Sample Statistics

	Mean	**Std Dev**
Age	37.42	14.04
Years at Current Occupation	4.57	9.12

As indicated by the table, the mean age was 37.42 years. There was a wide range in years from 22 years to 72 years. This was likewise reflected in the years at current occupation, where the years ranged from 0 (first year working) to 35 years.

2.3 Procedure

Data collection occurred in May and July 2011, after the study received ethical approval from the Psychology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand. Data was collected in two ways, firstly through a quantitative pre-test, post-test measure (the Interpersonal Reactivity Index), and secondly, qualitatively, by collecting narrative journal recordings from the participants, process notes of their persona dolls sessions, and a programme evaluation sheet at the last training session.

Trainees were approached at the beginning of the first training session in May. They were informed that the research was completely voluntary; that they were under no obligation to take part, and that they could withdraw at any time of the study. The research process was briefly explained to them, in terms of the completion of the surveys and journals. The researcher was present at the pre-test and post-test sessions to answer any questions that the participants may have had.

Trainees completed the IRI at the beginning of the first training session, before any training began, as the pre-test measure of empathy. They were also given journals, in which to document or write about their experiences and feelings. Participants were informed at the start of the training session (after the pre-test measure was administered) about the diaries and how to complete them. They took these journals home. The training programme then began, and took place over a period of eight weeks, where a four-hour session occurred weekly. The trainees were expected to begin using their Persona dolls upon completion of the third session, however some had difficulties in organizing a site in which to conduct Persona Doll sessions. The training was conducted with a psychologist who has expertise in the field of emotional literacy and Persona Dolls. At the end of the final training session, the trainees completed the IRI again, as the post-test measure, and returned their journals. Not all journals were returned however. The facilitator also provided the researcher with process notes and homework exercises she had collected from the trainees, which was not part of the original planned data set. These are also used in the analysis.

2.4 Instruments

This study was conducted through a mixed methods approach, involving both quantitative and qualitative methods. Participants were asked to complete a demographic information sheet, Davis's Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), a post training evaluation form, and to write in a notebook/journal over the course of the training period.

The demographic questionnaire included information regarding age, gender, occupation, years at current occupation, the participants of education (as a socioeconomic indicator), previous training and experience working with children, and questions regarding expectations of the programme and working with the Persona Dolls (See Appendix C). In order to link the demographics, pre-test, post-test and journals, a code was given to each participant. In the first session, participants were provided with a pack, which included the demographic questionnaire, pre-test IRI, and a journal. Each was marked with their code. The journal was marked with the code, in order for the participant to recall it at the time of the post-test IRI.

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) is a self-report instrument used to measure empathy in this study over time (see Appendix D). Empathy is one of the key constructs in developing emotional literacy, and is fundamentally important in working with children with the Persona Dolls. The IRI was developed by Davis (1980, 1983), who defines empathy as an individual's reactions to the "observed experiences of another" (Davis, 1983, p. 113). Davis (1980, 1983) argues that empathy is a multidimensional construct, which includes a cognitive, intellectual and an emotional reaction.

The IRI consists of 28 items, with four seven-item sub scales, that each taps an aspect of empathy (Davis, 1980, 1983). The perspective taking (P) scale measures the reported tendency or ability to shift one's perspective so as to adopt the psychological point of view of others. Items making up this scale are items 3, 8, 11, 15, 21, 25, and 28. The empathic concern (EC) scale assesses the tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and compassion for other individuals. Items 2, 4, 9, 14, 18, 20, and 22 make up this subscale. The personal distress (PD) scale taps an individual's own feelings regarding fear; apprehension and discomfort when viewing others negative experiences. Items 6, 10, 13, 17, 19, 24 and 27 make up the PD scale. These two subscales make up the more emotional empathy Davis considers, whereas the Fantasy and Perspective taking subscales make up the cognitive and intellectual aspect of empathy (Davis, 1983). The fantasy

(FS) scale measures the tendency or ability to imaginatively transpose oneself into fictional situations, such as in books, movies or daydreams etcetera. The items that make up this subscale are 1, 5, 7, 12, 16, 23 and 26.

Participants answer each item on a five point Likert scale where 0 is "does not describe me well" and 4 is "describes me very well". Originally the scale only had these two anchor descriptions, so "not sure" was added to "2" option. Reverse-scored items are 3, 4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18 and 19. This scale cannot be scored through summative methods (i.e. scores from each subscale scored together for an overall empathy score) and so each subscale is scored for scores on each subscale measure (Frías-Navarro, 2009). A score can range from 0- 28. The scale has acceptable psychometric properties. The reliability scores range from .70 - .78 for men and women for each scale, and its temporal stability is satisfactory (.61-.81 across men and women, over 60-75 days) (Davis, 1980). The samples here were taken from introductory psychology classes at the University of Texas in the USA. The IRI has been used in the South African context before. Macritchie (2006) conducted a study on social support, empathy, level of exposure and secondary traumatic stress in trauma workers by using the IRI and other measures. The Cronbach alpha for the overall IRI was .84, .87 for the perspective taking subscale, .85 for the fantasy subscale, .86 for empathetic concern, and .85 for personal distress. Furthermore, a South African study on high school student volunteers' empathy after participation in a community service programme also used the IRI (Barclay, 2007), however reliability scores were not reported.

A journal or diary was given to the participants where they were asked to write about their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and opinions regarding the training, and using the dolls themselves with their classrooms or the children they work with. Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli (2003, p. 580) argue that diaries can assist the researcher in "examining ongoing experiences, and offer opportunities to investigate social, psychological, and physiological processes within everyday situations". The benefit of using diaries is that it allows one to be able to research subjective processes and viewpoints (Symon, 2004; Jones, 2000), and allows information to be gathered regarding the participant's own perspective and from their own context (Symon, 2004).

The purpose of the diaries in this study was to explore the subjective experiences, thoughts and feelings of the trainees across the eight-week training sessions. The diaries asked the trainees to write down any thoughts, feelings and experiences they have that occur during the training sessions, or in Persona Doll sessions with their children/classrooms. It also asked them to write

about any experiences or thoughts they had regarding how the training has impacted them in ways outside of the training session and Persona Doll sessions. This was to determine whether the trainees experienced any benefits (or problems) from the training programme that influenced their personal and professional lives apart from the training sessions and Persona Doll sessions. The diaries were prepared by the researcher and given to the trainees at the first session, after the IRI was administered, and were collected at the last training session, after the post testing on the instrument was administered.

The trainees also completed a post-training evaluation form (See Appendix E). This form was a generic evaluation form that the centre uses for all of their training courses. This aimed to assist in providing the researcher with opinions and suggestions about the training and its potential improvements. It asked questions regarding the utility of the training, its challenges, its influences on the trainee, and if the trainee has any suggestions.

2.5 Triangulation

Triangulation refers to gathering research material through a combination of different methodologies and from various sources so as to gather a greater or better understanding of the particular phenomena under research (Jick, 1979; Kelly, 2008). The phenomena under research are therefore approached from different angles in the study (Kelly, 2008). Triangulation has often been used as a method to establish the variance in the particular trait is not merely a product of the research methodology (Jick, 1979). Jick (1979, p.603) however makes the argument that triangulation of research can be used for more than "scaling, reliability and convergent validation", and that it can aid the research in gathering a more holistic, complete and contextual understanding of the phenomena under study. He argues that the use of multiple methods, such as quantitative and qualitative methods, can help in eliciting unique information that may have been ignored or unidentified by a single method of research.

This research has used triangulation in an attempt to gather a holistic and more contextual understanding of the trainee's development in the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll training programme. It made use of quantitative techniques through the IRI, by establishing the effect on empathy of the training programme, as well as qualitative techniques by gathering information

from the participants through journals, process notes, and evaluation forms. In this way a more holistic and complete understanding of the training programme has been developed.

2.6 Data Analysis

Once all the data was collected, it was entered into an excel spreadsheet and then analyzed with Statistical Analysis Software (SAS). The qualitative data was analyzed through thematic content analysis.

2.6.1 Quantitative Analysis

The first important step in data analysis is to examine whether or not the data is appropriate for parametric analysis (Huck, 2008). As such one must decide on the scale of measure. The training programme was the independent variable, and the scores from the IRI were the dependent variables and were intervally scaled. The data was then checked for normality by making use of the Skewness coefficients. The Skewness coefficients indicated normality (see Appendix G), therefore parametric techniques were used in the analysis. Furthermore tests of reliability were conducted on the IRI to ensure that data obtained from the scales was sound.

The design of the study involved a pre-test post-test on the IRI scores, so a matched-pairs t-test was performed with the IRI's subscales to assess whether there was any improvement over time in the subscale scores.

2.6.2 Qualitative Analysis

Once the diaries were collected, they were typed up into a word document, to make for easier analysis. Researcher reflexivity was included in the qualitative approach through the researcher's personal research diary. The evaluation forms and process notes were also analyzed. The documents were then analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Thematic analysis is a qualitative analyses method, which identifies, analyses and reports patterns or themes in a data set. A theme captures parts of the data that is important to a research question, and "represents some level of patterned response or meaning within a data set" (Braun & Clarke,

2006 p. 82). The content of the diaries were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify themes and patterns relating to the experiences, thoughts and feelings of the participants in their training and use of the Persona Dolls and the training they underwent.

There are six steps that Braun and Clarke (2006) describe for thematic analysis. The first involves transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data set, and writing down any initial impressions, notes or ideas. The second step is to generate initial codes. This refers to coding interesting or important information in the data in a systematic fashion, across the entire data set. The third step in this process is to search for themes. In step four, the themes are reviewed. This involves creating a "thematic 'map' of the analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p. 87) and establishing whether the themes work in relation to the coding that was generated. The fifth step is to define and name the themes that were generated throughout this process. In this level, clear definitions and names for each theme must be created, and an ongoing process of analysis must occur, to refine the themes in such a way that the specifics of each theme is clear, and tells an overall story of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The last step of the thematic analysis process is to write up a report of the data and research. The final product is the write up and discussion of these themes.

2.7 Ethics

Ethics clearance was granted from the Psychology Department's Internal Ethics committee at the University of the Witwatersrand (see Appendix A). Participants were then approached and informed of the study, and how they could participate. The trainees were not required to participate in this research, if they do not wish to, and they could withdraw from the research process at any time, without any negative consequences. They were asked to sign consent forms if they wished to participate. (See Appendix B and C for participant information sheet and consent forms).

Participants were required to give their names in the research. A coding technique was used so that participant's data can be linked without identifying them personally. Their information will remain confidential, and pseudo names were given in the research report write up. Identifying information was not given to the centre either, so as to protect confidentiality of the research participants. In addition, if any of the research participants felt that they were negatively impacted

by partaking in the research and suffered emotional stress, a contact for the South African Depression and Anxiety Group was included in the participation information sheet.

The data was also stored in a safe, secure and locked box in the supervisor's office. In addition to this, the data itself will not be destroyed at the completion of the research process and write-up, as it may be required for publication. Two years after publication the data will be destroyed. In this time the data will remain in a safe, secure and locked box in the supervisor's office.

Chapter 3: Results

This chapter presents the results of the research study. It firstly discusses the quantitative aspects of the study by examining the reliability of the instrument used and presents the summary statistics. It also presents the results of the first research question: the effect of the programme on the trainee's empathy. The second part of the chapter presents the qualitative analysis of the journals, process notes and evaluation forms, answering the remainder of the research questions regarding the personal experiences and thoughts of trainees while participating in the programme, conducting their own persona doll sessions, their opinions and attitudes towards the programme, and how they felt the programme influenced them.

3.1. Quantitative Analysis

3.1.1 Reliability

The following section includes the analyses that were conducted to establish the reliability of the IRI. Cronbach's alpha was used to establish reliability for the IRI sub scales, pre and post test. The following table indicates the pre test and posttest Cronbach alphas for the four subscales in the IRI.

Table 2 Cronbach Alpha - IRI

	Pre Test Alpha	Post Test Alpha
Perspective Taking Scale	0.42	0.67
Empathic Concern Scale	0.00	0.44
Personal Distress Scale	0.30	0.47
Fantasy Scale	0.87	0.31

Overall, the reliability for the IRI in the context of this research tested as being poor and inconsistent. This is unexpected as the IRI has been used in the South African context before, and produced appropriate reliability statistics (Macritchie, 2006). The sample characteristics may explain why the reliability in this study was low. The participants in the study may have struggled

with the questionnaire, as some of the participants struggled with writing in the journals in English. While the demographics questionnaire did not ask for the participant's first language, it is clear in the journals that some participants struggled to write in English. The facilitator at the centre also indicated that language concerns did exist. Furthermore, the sample was small, which may have accounted for lower Cronbach's alphas, as the sample was not large enough to gather adequate information regarding reliability.

3.1.2 Summary Statistics

The following table presents the basic summary statistics obtained for each of the variables measured in the study and used to answer the research questions. The table indicates the means for each of the pretest, posttest subscale scores on the IRI.

Table 3 Summary Statistics

	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum	N
Pre Test Perspective Taking Scale	19.42	4.05	14	26	14
Post Test Perspective Taking Scale	19.14	5.30	10	28	14
Pre Test Empathic Concern Scale	20.21	3.24	13	24	14
Post Test Empathic Concern Scale	20.64	4.88	12	27	14
Pre Test Personal Distress Scale	14.57	3.88	8	20	14
Post Test Personal Distress Scale	16.14	4.59	10	26	14
Pre Test Fantasy Scale	17.50	3.06	12	22	14
Post Test Fantasy Scale	16.43	3.69	6	20	14

As reflected in Table 3, there were some trends identified in the data. The perspective taking and empathic concern results did not indicate any sign of change over time, according to the means, whereas the fantasy mean decreased. The personal distress scale was the only subscale to show a slight increase in the mean. However, as discussed in section 3.1.3 below, none of these results were significant. However, it must be noted that the perspective taking scale, empathic concern scale, and the fantasy scale had relatively high means to begin with in the pretest, indicating that the participants may have began the training with a relatively high level of empathy as the means were above the 50th percentile of 14.

3.1.3 Research Question 1: What is the effect of the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll training programme on the trainee's empathy?

Matched pairs T-tests were used to establish the effect of the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll training programme on trainee's empathy, as measured by the IRI. The following table indicates the results of the matched pairs t-tests on the IRI's subscales.

Table 4 Matched Pairs T-test for IRI subscales

	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t	Cohen's d	Effect Size
Perspective Taking Scale	-0.29	5.98	13	-0.18	-0.10	0.05
Empathic Concern Scale	0.43	3.88	13	0.41	0.23	0.11
Personal Distress Scale	1.57	3.32	13	1.77	0.98	0.44
Fantasy Scale	-1.07	4.55	13	-0.88	-0.49	0.24

*$p < 0.05$

No significant results were produced for the different scales in the IRI (PT: t = -0.18, p = .8609; EC: t = 0.41, p = .6859; PD: t = 1.77; p = .1001; FS: t = -0.88, p = .3941), indicating that there was no change over the period of the training programme in participants levels of empathy, as measured on the different scales of the IRI.

3.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis aimed to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the personal experiences and thoughts of the trainee's while participating in the training programme?
2) What are the personal experiences and thoughts of the trainee's while beginning and conducting their own Persona Doll sessions?
3) What are the trainee's opinions and attitudes of the training programme?
4) How do the trainee's feel the training programme has influenced them?

The following themes were then identified and used in analysis of the journals, evaluation forms and process and content notes of persona doll sessions:

- Theme 1: Feelings towards Training
- Theme 2: Feelings towards Persona Dolls
- Theme 3: Feelings towards Persona Doll Sessions
- Theme 4: Personal Development of the Trainees

3.2.1 Feelings towards Training

The trainees indicated in their journals and in the evaluation forms, some of their opinions regarding training practicalities, the structure of training, and their views and opinions on the training process. This theme is divided into subthemes.

- The need for a good facilitator

Some of the participants indicated how a good facilitator was an important part of their training. Participant 3 indicated that the facilitator was "*excellent from the start, she made me feel open to speak when she asked questions*". Another participant (13) wrote that the facilitator was friendly and nice, and that she made "*everybody feel free*". The facilitator's ability to build confidence in all members of the group was also appreciated (participant 28). Participant 14 and 2 felt that the facilitator was very encouraging and containing.

A few of the participants however felt that it may be beneficial for the facilitator to elicit information from the group more. Participant 7 wrote "*I feel that the facilitator can start to find out from the group, so that she can be able to know from group knowledge that chapter, after she put whatever she want by putting the group into small groups, after they can present their information about that chapter on that day*".

The facilitator also encouraged excitement and positivity in the group, even when particular participants had not volunteered to partake in the training, and were sent by their respective organization. Participant 8 indicated that he had not wanted to come to training and that he "*had no choice*", but after hearing the facilitator speak, he "*started to become more positive about it*" and that he thought it would help him and the children in his community. Another participant (14) felt that the passion displayed by the facilitator for the dolls had a contagious effect: "*she displayed so much passion when she spoke about them that I couldn't help getting excited*".

- Views on the group structure and supervision

The participants described that the group structure was beneficial in training. Some of the participants indicated that it was helpful in that it allowed them to talk about their sessions, and allowed for debriefing (2), as well as getting useful tips, hints, and developing skills by listening and thinking about others work (2, 15, 28). Participant 12 indicated in the evaluation forms that she liked being able to share her feelings and thoughts in the group. It also assisted in others feeling as if they were not alone in their difficult sessions, and that they were not the only ones experiencing problems or difficulties (4). The group work also helped create a sense of safety and comfort and supervision helped with containment (15).

Having an opportunity to reflect on the group dynamic was also useful for some participants, particularly those with psychological backgrounds. Participant 14 indicated that it was interesting to think about "*everyone in the group as serving a role for the group as a whole*", and that she "*hadn't quite thought about it in that way before*" and that it encouraged her to think about groups in her own life and how she would run a therapy group. Participant 15 indicated that she enjoyed being able to reflect on group dynamics, and how she personally "*adjusts to different group situations*".

One participant (14) felt that group supervision was not entirely helpful, possibly as a result of the different experiences and professions in the group: "*I feel like group supervision wasn't THAT helpful, as everyone else in the group had a lot of experience as teachers, and thus didn't have the same issues with control that I had. They also seemed a lot more interested in telling their own stories than in hearing me, which was ironic given the exercise we'd done earlier on listening. I'm not saying my story was riveting, but other members kept interrupting me with their own recollections*". The participant also indicated that she felt a lot more supervised by the facilitator than by her group. The same participant further expressed that she still felt her group supervision was not helpful in terms of being heard and receiving advice, but that it was helpful to hear that other people had also had difficult sessions, which made her feel less inadequate.

Sentiments of running training with groups of similar backgrounds were shared by the above participant, and two others (20 and 15). As some participants had more experience with emotional literacy, empathy and reflection skills, due to the nature of their professions, they felt it would be more beneficial to have more in-depth training (15). Participant 15 wrote that it would be better to have "*separate training for teachers and health professions*" as it would make "*the training a bit more stimulating*". Participant 14 indicated in the evaluation forms that psychologists taking part in the course should be aware that a lot of the skills covered in the course (reflecting, emotional literacy, containment etc) they will already understand and use. In contrast, participant 13 indicated that she enjoyed the opportunity and experience of working with a group that came from different backgrounds and were different (referring to the mixture of black and white participants in her supervision group).

- Effects of interrupted training

Due to the timing of the training, there was a break in sessions, due to South Africa's national elections. There was a public holiday on the day of a scheduled training session, and so one session was missed. Many of the participants remarked on this in their journals. Participant 4 wrote that she was disappointed they had to miss the session, because she would have to wait to meet her persona doll. Participant 8 wrote: "*it has disturbed our process and now we are behind with one session but nevertheless we are happy about the training. It also made us to bond as a group, and made us talk English most of the time in our discussions*". Participant 14 felt that missing the session made her feel disconnected from the process, particularly as she was having difficulties with finding a placement for her persona doll sessions.

- Difficulties with finding a placement to conduct persona doll sessions

Some of the participants had considerable difficulty in finding placements to conduct persona doll sessions as part of their training, particularly participants 8 and 14.

Participant 8 struggled to find a placement, which had an effect on his mindset in training: "*I didn't have anything to talk about in the session with the other members of the group who were talking how they did receive placements and it welcome. I was not happy because I couldn't manage to go and look for another place my mind was blocked… I was listening to the group when was giving feedback about their first sessions at the day care centres and the schools. I was not happy for me because I wanted to say something about the first session then I find that I was not alone who didn't manage to run the first session. Then I was relieved but it was important for me to make sure that I ran my own first session. I was looking forward to that to happen*". The benefits of group training were seen here, when another participant in the training helped arrange a persona doll group.

Participant 14 also struggled to find a placement for her persona doll session, and she wrote of it extensively in her journal. While the planning sessions made her feel more confident in finding a placement to do the groups, she struggled to find one. She describes feeling disconnected and discouraged. It made her question why she wanted to partake in training, and considerably anxious. When a school was eventually found she wrote about feeling "*massive relief mingled with excitement*".

- Timing and Duration of Training and Persona Doll Sessions

Many of the participants indicated that they would have preferred to have more training sessions (2,4,7,10,11,12) as well as more sessions with the children and their persona dolls (2,4,14). Some participants indicated that the children themselves wanted to have more sessions with the dolls, and did not want to end. Some indicated that the sessions themselves were too short. Not all the participants shared these sentiments though, participant 15 indicated in the evaluation forms that it was difficult for her to concentrate for such a long period of time, and that it may be better to have more breaks in the sessions. One participant (6) indicated that for herself and her colleagues,

it would be better to have the training in the morning, as they struggle with traffic on the way home after the training.

- Continuation of Training and Chance of Recommending the Training

All the participants indicated that they would like to attend a follow up training session. One participant (8) indicated that he was very interested in a follow up session and wrote on the evaluation form "*if it could happen as soon as tomorrow*". Many felt that they wanted more training in order to gain more knowledge and skills regarding working with children, and using the persona dolls. One participant indicated in her process notes that she felt she needed to learn more, and that she was going to do more sessions to get more practice. All the participants also indicated that they would recommend the training to others, including colleagues, parents, families, community workers, teachers, and other psychologists.

- Other comments and suggestions

There were some other suggestions made by some of the participants. Participant 8 indicated it would be helpful for the training to be conducted in his/her own languages. It seems that at times there was a language barrier between participants, and was evident in the journal writing, process notes and questionnaire forms. Participant 14 felt it would be helpful to include more theoretical information about child development in the course. Participant 14 and 28 also felt that it may be useful to bring in multimedia in the training. They felt being able to watch a persona doll session, or others in the group's sessions, would be useful in development and training. Participant 4 indicated it would have been useful to have some of the notes regarding the training earlier on.

3.2.2 Feelings toward Persona Dolls

Many of the participants expressed excitement upon seeing the dolls in the first session, and getting introduced to their own dolls. Participant 2 remarked how she wanted to touch all of the dolls, one by one, upon first seeing them in the first training session. The facilitator demonstrating with her doll also sparked interest in the participants. Participant 14 described "*I've always been interested in working with these dolls – the first time I heard the facilitator talking about them, all I wanted to do was to intern at the centre so that I could get to know them firsthand. Even on*

Wednesday, she displayed so much passion when she spoke about them that I couldn't help getting excited. Seeing the room full of dolls was also interesting – I could see how lovingly they'd been made, and how each had its own unique features". In a later entry, closer to the time of selecting a doll she remarked "*I'm really looking forward to tomorrow's session, and to finally getting a persona doll. I've been thinking about it a lot actually, what it will look like, what to name it, how I'll interact with it, what gender it will be*".

Furthermore, all the participants were excited to choose their dolls. However, many remarked that this was a difficult process for them. It was difficult to choose a doll, as there were so many to choose from, and creating a persona for the doll that they chose was also a difficult process. Participant 4 wrote of this in her journal "*The part where we had to create a persona for our doll was a bit difficult because you had to create a persona for the doll. Its not everyday we bring a doll to live*". Participant 8 described that it was hard to think of a name of a doll and their family, their age, where they live and the school they attend. Participant 7 said in her evaluation form that she found it difficult to remember all her doll's history and background information she had created.

Interestingly, many of the participants created similar persona doll stories for their dolls. Many of the histories of the dolls had similar backgrounds and life events. In the history write up of the persona doll process notes were common themes of sickness in the family, death and loss (through sickness, accidents, or substance abuse), absent family figures, abandonment, neglect, abuse, substance abuse, financial difficulties, living in shacks or moving to Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing, and the reliance of extended family members.

Some of the participants had an interesting attachment to their dolls. Participant 20 wrote in her journal about leaving her doll in the car overnight: "*I left Hayley in the back of my car as I was going to take her to school the rest day. I felt so guilty thinking how cold it will be overnight so I went back to the car to fetch her*". Another participant (28) described how the introduction to her doll was a connective one, in that for her, the attachment was "emotionally magnetic". Towards the end of the training, participant 14 remarked how she loved her doll. In his journal, participant 8 spoke of his doll, Thulane, as if he were a person, and described how he had used the doll in his session with his group: "*Thulane encouraged them that it a good for everyone to feel that way if they loose people that they love the most in their life. Thulane asked how they feel now some said it's still painful but others it's now ok*".

The participants also had to develop attachments to their dolls, and learn how to work with them. Two participants wrote of their experience of taking the doll back home with them on the taxi and to their families. Participant 2 described her experience on the taxi ride home "*I was confused with the facilitator told us we have to take a doll home. We should not put it in a plastic bag. The doll should be seen. On my way home everybody was looking at me and amazed, others were asking what am I doing with the doll. I have to explain about the doll and tell them it is for emotional literacy training, which is called persona doll. It is relevant for Early Childhood development practitioners*". Participant 4 described how her family accepted her persona doll, but that her niece of was afraid of him. Two children also began to talk to him. Participant 14 expressed how she was speaking of the dolls as if they were people, and that she was trying to get into the process, and use her imagination, as she, like the children; need to see the doll as a person.

Some participants wrote of how it was difficult to learn how to work with the doll. Participant 16 expressed that she did not enjoy acting and pretending with the doll at first, despite enjoying the training and working with the dolls. Participant 15 expressed that the role-plays in training were helpful in learning and becoming more familiar with the persona doll and how to work with them. Feelings around whether the participants could make the dolls believable and be able to work with them in the group sessions with the children were also present, and created some anxiety. Some of the participants continued to feel somewhat uncomfortable and unsure of themselves and working with the doll in the persona doll session groups.

3.2.3 Feelings toward First Persona Doll Sessions

Many of the participants wrote of mixed feelings regarding their initial first persona doll sessions. Many of them were excited to begin, but naturally, rather nervous. The anxiety centered on how the children would react to the persona doll, how they would respond to the children and whether they would be able to handle the sessions adequately. The newness of the experience also seemed to result in anxiety. Many however, indicated in their process notes that they were happy at the end of the first session, and how it went.

Some participants expressed how the training session on planning and taking part in role plays helped to alleviate some of the anxiety they were experiencing. Participant 15 wrote, "*Today's workshop was extremely thought-provoking. It eased my anxiety that I was experiencing with regard to lacking the practical info for running the groups. Something that I often struggle with is my fear of making mistakes and my need to always do things perfectly. Today's session helped me to realize that if I am forgiving of my mistakes then this is an important trait that I will be modeling for the children I work with. I am subsequently feeling very excited about running the groups. I have been somewhat hesitant in how I have approached finding a group to work with and I think that my anxiety has played a large part in this. I realise that I need to be less fearful and more proactive in my approach. If I don't try, how will I ever learn?!*" It seems that the session on planning was helpful and useful to many of the participants, as it helped to alleviate anxiety, as well as better prepare them in approaching schools and preparing their sessions.

It seems that running training along side persona doll sessions for the participants was helpful, in that it alleviated anxiety, as described above, as well as the supervision sessions assisted in guiding the participants and alleviating their stresses and concerns in the sessions. Participant 15 wrote: "*Today's session was extremely valuable. I felt like the supervision really helped me to understand why in my first session I had so many difficulties. I am feeling better about my next session and I am hoping that I can take what I have learned and put it into practice*". In a later entry the same participant added "*After session 3 I was feeling very encouraged as the children were really able to talk about their emotions and we spoke about the fact that one child thinks that you are weak if you cry. This felt like an extremely powerful session. I felt very hopeful. However, session 4 was exceptionally difficult. One child kept disrupting the whole group and kept ruining it for the other children. After this session, I felt extremely disillusioned and I really questioned whether person doll groups could actually work. Supervision was very helpful and I realised that the child was probably acting out because I had not acknowledged his absence the previous week. Interestingly reflecting on this helped me realize the disillusionment I had been dealing with also resulted in a resistance with regard to writing in this journal. However, having had a training session, supervision, I feel much more contained. I am looking forward to my last session with my group*".

The first session seemed challenging for many of the participants. At times some of the participants felt very frustrated with the children in their groups (2). Issues of being able to control the group or individual children seemed to occur with some of the participants, across the

persona doll group sessions, particularly for the participants who did not come from a teaching background. Reactions to some of the children's resistance to the persona doll and the participant also aroused feelings in the participants that made them question themselves and their skills. In particular participant 14 indicated that she reacted rather strongly to a difficult session with her group. She felt that her session was horrible and that she kept trying to not think about it. She did not like feeling out of control, and felt very drained after the session. This made her feel that she was naïve to think she could work with groups of children, as she felt she cannot discipline or control them, or have their respect. Another participant who experienced disillusionment in her sessions, indicated that towards the end of the groups, however, things began to come together, and that she felt more at peace with her work and her capabilities in running sessions.

Some participants indicated that it was difficult for some of the children to partake in the persona doll sessions, particularly the sessions that focused on more personal and intense issues such as family. Children responded differently to the various topics in the sessions, however, some of the children were able to openly discuss difficult feelings and emotions with the trainees and their dolls. Some of the children did not want to participate in the talks, and often disruptions occurred, or the child wondered off to play with something else in the room. However, the persona doll sessions did elicit discussion on emotions, and some participants found themselves feeling concern and sadness for some of the children. One participant felt that the family session in particular also stirred their own personal feelings of loss in their life. Some participants were happy to know that the children were able to talk about their emotions, and that some of them had empathy for each other. Improvements in the children's ability to listen and empathize with one another and the doll were also noted by some of the participants in their process notes.

It seemed that for some participants it was difficult for them to control and manage the children in the groups, as they often became distracted or unruly. Participants 8 and 14 indicated in the evaluation forms that it may be useful to allow for more flexibility on topics with the children, and that the children could bring in their own topics and issues they want to talk to the persona doll about. One participant (28) found the sessions difficult due to language barriers between herself and the children. Others expressed excitement and enjoyment, particularly as the sessions progressed and they felt better able to manage and work with the persona doll and children. Some participants found the final session of endings and goodbye difficult. They expressed how it was difficult to part from the children, and for some of the children to say goodbye to the persona doll.

3.2.4 Personal Development of Trainees

- Learning

Some participants wrote of the information that they had learnt and gained from the training, and how this training could benefit other professionals. Participants generally expressed that they had learnt a lot about children. Participant 2 described how she had realized that it was difficult for children to concentrate and talk about feelings. Likewise, participant 3 expressed that she learnt that children express their feelings differently, sometimes by being verbal, or screaming, and fighting. She realized that children need to be taught emotional literacy. Participant 15 commented that she was reminded of the importance of emotional awareness and reflexivity, and that the first session on emotional literacy helped her to think about how children deal with their emotions. Participant 13 also indicated that she learnt more about emotional literacy, and that she was very interested in this. She felt glad that her organization had sent to her to learn more about the persona dolls. Participant 26 indicated that she has learnt that children are a lot more resilient than adults. Many of the participants also indicated that the planning helped them prepare for the persona dolls and as part of their learning process. In the evaluation forms nearly every participant indicated that they felt they now knew more about children, and how to work with them. They expressed how they could understand children's feelings better and understand children better.

Two participants (4 and 12) indicated in the evaluation forms that they felt they were better able to acknowledge and understand other people's feelings. Participant 11 also felt that she learnt more about working with emotions. Another participant (13) learnt that she needs to put herself in other people's shoes, and look at the feelings of what had happened, rather than what had actually happened or the reason. Furthermore the same participant learnt about the dynamics in groups. She described how she learnt that just because someone is not talking in a group does not mean that they are not listening, and that they are learning as much as the people who are talking in the group.

Participant 8 indicated that he felt it would benefit him and his community to do persona doll groups, and that it should be "*accessible to other care workers around Gauteng, because it is going to assist many children and adults to talk aloud their feelings, and to be able to name them as they are*". Participant 2 expressed similar sentiments, and that there was a lot to be done in the

community, where persona doll training could help. Participant 28 expressed that she had indentified children around her who she felt would benefit from emotional literacy, and that she had realised how important it was to manage emotions.

Some participants used the journals to write out what they had learnt at the training, and at times it seems this may have come directly from the training manual or guide (5 and 7).

- Development of professional skills

Many of the participants expressed how their professional skills would develop by learning more about children, and how to work with them in the persona doll setting. Participant 14 made interesting notes regarding her experiences in working with children, something that she was not used to doing before the training. Earlier she expressed how she felt she was naïve to think she could work with groups of children, whereas in a later journal entry she wrote: "*I feel like I'm learning so much about what kids are like. Everything that I'm used to people expressing in words or thoughts comes out in actions for children. In a way, it's frustrating, but once you accept that reality and open yourself up to learning about it, it becomes much easier. I've had moments of getting incredibly angry and frustrated, and being powerless and out of control has been very scary and new for me. But we survived it and I haven't broken down or started hating the children. I still care about them, even if they drive me crazy, and I'll still try my best to be nice and interested and gentle with them. I think that was actually a big fear of mine regarding working with children – that'd id be out of control, or hate them and that I'd be completely unable to connect. The fact that that hasn't happened is relieving and liberating*".

At times, it appeared that the participants were aware that they were lacking particular skills, in which they needed for the sessions. There seems to be a process whereby the participants had to trust the process of training and development, and that they will eventually be more equipped to handle difficulties and sessions. Participant 14 described this process: "*I feel a bit more now that it's a process – I'm not going to get this overnight, and I'm not going to be good at this anytime soon*". Participant 3 wrote "*the first session with the preschool was not easy, because I didn't know whether I was doing the right/wrong thing*". Another participant (4) described how her first session was 30 minutes, but felt very long – "*I even considered ending the topic early but I kept going even though I felt the topic wasn't flowing*". She went on to describe how the group sessions with the other trainees helped, as she did not feel like one of the only one's who had

difficulties, and it helped her to remain motivated for the next session with her group. Participant 15 also showed signs of having to deal with difficulties that resulted in disillusionment, and having to stay in the process of the work, and understanding it, in order to keep going forward. "*Session 4 was exceptionally difficult. One child kept disrupting the whole group and kept ruining it for the other children. After this session, I felt extremely disillusioned and I really questioned whether person doll groups could actually work. Supervision was very helpful and I realized that the child was probably acting out because I had not acknowledged his absence the previous week. Interestingly reflecting on this helped me realize the disillusionment I had been dealing with also resulted in a resistance with regard to writing in this journal. However, having had a training session, supervision, I feel much more contained. I am looking forward to my last session with my group…. I felt like I have learnt a fortune about children and the disillusionment I was experiencing is a part of my development. I hope that with experience, I will become more skilled at running persona doll groups*". The same participant also wrote "*On the whole I consider this course to have been very valuable and I feel like it has contributed in a significant way to my development as a psychologist*".

Participant 14 expressed considerable anxiety about beginning to work with children, as she had little experience before the training. Her fears included not being able to manage the group, or not being good with young children. She still however expressed excitement about getting to learn how she would be with young children. Participant 14 seemed to undergo development with the children, as she described how she became less anxious, but that it was a difficult process for her, professionally and personally: "*I can't believe I did my last session today, and our final training session is tomorrow. It felt so much longer, yet so much shorter than I expected. And I did much worse, and also much better than I thought I would. I've learned that I can work with children – that it's hard and very emotional and exhausting and constantly surprising – but I can. Its make me think that maybe individual work with children is more for me. I found myself wishing I could spend time with each of these kids on their own, finding out about their lives, giving them individual attention. I think I'd feel less out of control and be able to understand more. So maybe that's the way for me – but I don't regret doing this course at all. And I love my doll. I think this course has given me an opportunity to think about myself as a child, and my own feelings about me as a child. I think I understand child-me a lot better, and I'm a lot more sympathetic to her than I used to be. I used to want to disown my child self, but if I can have love and sympathy for a child I hardly know, who's very angry at me, how can I not have warmth and caring for my past*

self?". It seems that this participant found where she feels more comfortable in her training as a psychologist.

Participant 6 found that she learnt skills that helped her professionally, and that these skills spun off into her personal life as well: "*Is too much interesting with me this course I gain more information with this persona doll. It tells me how to contain the child with the problems and the feelings and I also explore with my family and also my child. It also gave me more what observe and listening the children. It gave me more skills and support because in my family I have more challenges with the children. Some they have no parent. When I do the groups I found more supportive with the principal and teachers at crèche and that are also interesting to do this course, and also say can continue to do the group with the crèche, not close. It is too much for me because it develops some children. The person doll is also a connection of kids and keeps the safe. The kids also happy when you do the section of persona doll*".

Participant 20 indicated that she realized she needed to be less rigid and more able to go with the flow in her persona doll sessions. Participant 10 also expressed how she was eager to improve her skills with working with children. Other participants indicated in the evaluation forms that they learnt containment skills, through the group work and supervision, and could apply these skills more generally now (4 and 7).

Many participants indicated in the evaluation forms that the training had a positive influence on their working and professional lives. One participant wrote that she "*used to have too much stress in the classroom, children's noises, not doing homework, not finishing tasks, I used to feel sick but now I know I must find the reason and try to care to get good results*". Participant 2 remarked that she found using containment and assertive communication with the children helpful in her work. Participant 4 found that she had more compassion for the children and was able to more recognize their feelings and her own in her work. Participant 8 felt that the training made him more able to talk with children about their feelings and their emotions in his area.

- Development of personal skills and self-awareness

Many of the participants wrote about their feelings throughout training. Some of them described how anxious and nervous they were about training and their first persona doll sessions (2, 13,14, 15 and 20). Other indicated that they were also very excited to begin training, to meet their dolls

and to begin sessions (3, 4 and 20). Some also indicated were they had difficulties in sessions, and where they had felt frustrated or upset. Participant 14 described in length in her journal regarding her experiences with struggling to find a school, and difficult sessions with her group, and how these difficulties made her question her abilities and her choice to do the training programme. She wrote after a particularly difficult session "*Ok, so Friday's session was horrible. I can feel myself actively blocking it out every time I try to think about it. I felt out of control for most of the session, and it didn't help that I'm struggling personally as well. I felt so wrecked afterwards, and am thinking now that I was so naïve to ever think that I could work with groups of children. Maybe individuals, but how can I discipline or control small children, they don't respect me, so what's the point?*" Other participants described how sessions with the children brought out different feelings in them. Some described feelings of frustration at not being able to control their groups (2). Participant 14 described that she did not like how she started to become stricter with more noisy children. For participant 14 it could be argued to be an uplifting experience, despite the difficulties, as she described how working with children was a fear for her. She felt that she was afraid of working with children, and how the experience might make her react. She wrote that the fact that she did not become out of control, or hate the children, and that she was able to connect with them was relieving and liberating for her. Despite not wanting to attend the sessions in the beginning, participant 8 described how he felt proud to be a "*black African man*" to work with persona dolls, as most black African men do not do this work.

Some participants were able to reflect on their relationships and personal lives in the journal, and how the training had impacted them. Participant 15 expressed "*I realized that there are certain people/situations that are easier to think about than others and I think it is because I have not sufficiently processed each situation to the same extent. For example, I found it easier to think about my feelings that I have in relation to my sister, as opposed to the feelings I have in relation to my mother. Also, while some people struggled to connect to feelings of hate, I realized that my training has enabled me to access so many feelings on so many levels*". In a later session, she described how she gained some personal insight through the training: "*Today's session helped me to realize that if I am forgiving of my mistakes then this is an important trait that I will be modeling for the children I work with*". Similarly, participant 20 also found insight into her personal relationships through training: "*I also realised that because I was angry at my mom I still tend to carry my anger a lot of times. Part of something that came out of the session really got me more in touch with my feelings and the dynamics in my school environment. Especially the way in which the leader conducts herself and what results from it again this came from session 1.*

I started realising everything that was told to us to myself and also how I feel in group situations and towards individuals. I am referring to my intolerance of lots of people". As described earlier, participant 6 also found that the training effected her personal life, in the sense that she was able to explore containing her own child and family. She described how she felt it had given her more skills and support in her family life, as well as being able to work better with principals and teachers. Participant 14 also expressed how the course gave her an opportunity to think about herself as a child, and her feelings as a child. She described how she "*I think I understand child-me a lot better, and I'm a lot more sympathetic to her than I used to be. I used to want to disown my child self, but if I can have love and sympathy for a child I hardly know, who's very angry at me, how can I not have warmth and caring for my past self?"*.

Some participants felt that the training had helped them at home as well. One participant said in her evaluation form "*Persona doll training is also very useful at home for my own children and families, lot of demands*". Participant 13 said "*It has helped me a lot with the way I talk to my son*"; she also said that she would recommend it to other people so that it could help with their families.

Some participants remarked on the effects the training had had in their personal capacities. Participant 7, in the evaluation forms, wrote that she is not the same person anymore, and that it has changed her thoughts on how she must work with children and adults. Participant 8, 13 and 15 indicated that the training enabled them to think and talk about their own feelings and emotions, something which participant 8 described he had struggled with. Participant 10 wrote on her evaluation form "*The most interesting with this Persona Doll is that I am a low self-esteem person, shy most of the time, not talking, cant express myself but now I have improved myself*".

Chapter 4: Discussion

This study aimed to explore the experiences of trainees undergoing the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll programme at the psychotherapy centre. The research aimed to determine what influence the training has on empathy in the trainees, which is a key construct in emotional literacy and working with Persona Dolls. The second focus was to investigate the trainee's perceptions, feelings and experiences throughout the training programme, and their opinions regarding how the programme affected them and how it could be improved. This chapter discusses the results of the study, and indicates implications, limitations of the study and suggests directions for further research.

4.1 Empathy

Empathy is a key construct in emotional literacy, and it was this construct that was examined quantitatively in the training programme. Empathy was defined as a multidimensional concept, and measured with Davis (1983) IRI measurement. Davis (1980, p. 113) described empathy as "reaction to the observed experiences of another", and included ability to take another's perspective or point of view and the ability to transpose one's self into the situation of others incorporates the ability to have "other-oriented feelings" and concern, as well as anxiety or distress in interpersonal situations (Davis, 1983, p. 114). Empathy was seen as crucial to the success of the persona doll programme and training, as the persona doll practitioner must be able to reflect the child's responses and encourage discussion and talk regarding emotions. This requires a certain level of empathy, as defined by Davis (1980), in order for it to take place. It is also a key principle in Steiner's (2002) understanding of emotional literacy. Furthermore, the child feels better able to speak to the doll, as the doll is seen as someone who can understand them and is at their level.

The quantitative analysis of empathy, measured through the IRI, however, revealed that there were no significant differences between the trainee's empathy before the programme commenced, and at the end of the training. It could be argued however, that this does not mean that there was no increase in empathy in the trainees as a result of the training programme. Due to the nature of the sample, there were some difficulties with the research method. Many of the participants were

not first language English speakers, and as the questionnaire (IRI) was in English, some of the participants struggled to answer the questionnaire. This was noted during the research process by the researcher and facilitator. It was also noted in one of the evaluation forms, that the research questionnaires should have been made simpler. As the scale was statistically less reliable than it had proved in other South African studies (Macritchie, 2006), it is also likely that there were difficulties with the scale in this particular context.

Another important consideration is that the means on some of the scales (perspective taking, empathic concern and fantasy) were relatively high (mean = 17.5 – 20.21) in the pretest results. This indicates that aspects of empathy, as measure by the IRI, were already present and relatively high, possibly due to the type of work that these individuals are involved in. Therefore an improvement in empathy may have been difficult to measure, as the empathy was already reasonably well developed in the participants.

Furthermore, some of the participants wrote about how they were better able to understand children and have more compassion for them. In process notes, some participants indicated that they felt concern for some of the children, and that by using persona dolls they were able to reflect these feelings, despite it being difficult at first. Steiner's (2002) understanding of emotional literacy, through the five principles can be applied here. The participants seem to have been able to identify and understand emotions in others, as well as feel they have empathy for others having empathy for others, the first and second principle of emotional literacy (Steiner, 2002) respectively. While this may not be strictly a development or an improvement in empathy, it is an important consideration that the training was able to help the participants feel that they could better understand and work with children. The participants also indicated that the training had not been long enough for them, and as a result, there may not have been enough time or training for participants' empathy to be improved or measured. After more persona doll sessions, and work within the emotional context with children, a greater improvement in empathy on these scales may have been measure. Future research could possible consider a more long-term approach to measuring empathy in the participants.

While the quantitative analysis did not provide any statistically significant results regarding empathy, the participants journals, process notes and evaluation forms provided a greater deal of information regarding their personal experiences and growth throughout the programme, and is discussed further below.

4.2 Evaluative Information

The journals and evaluation forms provided important and useful information for the centre regarding the programme. While not all participants shared the same views regarding certain aspects of the training, many participants agreed on particular aspects of the programme that were helpful and useful, and some suggestions as to improvements on the programme.

The participants would have preferred to have more training sessions, and more sessions with the persona doll groups they were working with. It seems that in the case of the group work with children, that more sessions would enable them to develop a stronger connection with the children, and therefore they would be able to do more work with the children on emotional literacy, and working through emotional issues. Some of the participants felt that it would be better to have more training sessions, as they felt they often did not have enough time to cover everything they would have liked to cover in the training.

The participants also found the group structure and group supervision mostly helpful and useful. This is discussed further below. There were some recommendations that it may help for the facilitator to bring in multimedia items that would assist in the training process. The participants may be able to understand the process and persona doll work better if they were able to see a video recording of person doll sessions with children. This may also assist in alleviating the anxiety that many of the participants felt at the beginning of the training and their own sessions, by giving them an opportunity to see what happens in a persona doll session.

Generally, participants found the training programme to be a positive experience, that helped them grow personally and professionally. They seemed to be more connected to their own emotional worlds and feelings, and from their perspective better able to understand and contain the emotions of others. All the participants indicated that they would attend a follow up session of training, and that they would or already had recommended the training programme to colleagues, friends, and family and community members.

4.3 Trainees' Experiences

The second focus of the study was to explore the experiences and personal views of the participants participating in the training. The centre has had previous research conducted on the Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll training (Irish, 2009, Buchanan, 2007); however, these research studies did not focus on the trainee's experiences and development. The study therefore examined hand-written journals, evaluation forms, and process notes from the participants, concerning their development, experiences and views as they underwent training.

For many of the participants, the training was challenging and stimulated much growth, in their view. Many remarked how they were nervous and anxious to start training and their own persona doll sessions with children, which is a natural response to a new setting or training programme. However, as the sessions went on, the participants seemed to relax more and begin to develop their skills. Many of them still found the entire process challenging and had good and bad days, which was reflected in their journals. It seems that many of the participants had to trust the process and themselves throughout training and throughout the persona doll groups that they ran. Steiner's (2002) third principle of emotional literacy is the management of feelings and emotions. At times the participants struggled to manage their feelings of anxiety, frustration and disappointment, and through the training process and persona doll sessions, they learnt how to better manage some of these emotions.

There was considerable anxiety present in the group, particularly in the beginning sessions. Many expressed how the planning session (session two) was very useful and helpful, and seemed to alleviate the anxiety regarding the training and beginning the persona doll sessions. Furthermore, the facilitator and group supervision seemed to provide a containing and supportive space for most of the participants. Participants were able to see that others were also having difficulties, which lessened their anxiety regarding their own skills and capabilities. This group dynamic seems beneficial to the development and learning of the trainees, and was evidenced in their journals and evaluation forms. There was also an opportunity for vicarious learning to occur, as participants could discuss their difficulties and challenges together, and offer and receive potential solutions and advice from others.

While the quantitative results suggested that there was not an improvement in empathy, it could be argued that there indeed was an improvement in the participant's abilities involving skills such

as empathy, perspective taking and emotional work. It seems that the participants did experience a development in emotional literacy. Steiner's (2002) five principles of emotional literacy could be argued to have developed in the participants. The first principle is for individuals to know what his/her's feelings or emotions are, the strength of these emotions, and how the emotion is affecting them and others around them (Steiner, 2002). The participants seemed to be able to express themselves regarding the emotions they felt throughout training and their persona doll sessions, and described what exactly had stood out to them throughout the training, and where they believed they had gained skills. Some participant's spoke of how they were better able to think of and talk about their own emotions, through the group supervision and training process. Others expressed how they could think and understand children's emotions and worlds better, as a result of the training programme. This is similar to the findings in Coppock's (2007) study were parents in the programme found they were better able to express and understand their emotions. Furthermore the parents in this study also found that they understood the impact of feelings and emotions, and their importance (Coppock, 2007), as in the present study. It seems that the training programme has enabled the participants to better understand emotions and the emotional world, and how to think about others in terms of these understandings and knowledge. On this level one could argue that the participants were able to improve in this aspect of emotional literacy.

4.4 Impact on Personal and Working Lives

The training programme seemed to have a ripple effect into the participant's personal lives. Participants suggested that they were better able to understand themselves, and their emotions, and be able to think and express their emotions through the programme. They were also more able to understand others, both children and adults, better, and this had an effect at work and in their families. Some participants indicated that they were using some of the techniques and skills that they had learnt at the programme with their own children and at home with their families. Some felt that they were better able to deal with the demands that they faced in their families. These developments are captured by Steiner's (2002) first principle of emotional literacy of knowing and understanding one's emotions and other's emotions.

These ripple effects were shown in the participants' professional and working lives as well. The participants felt that they had gained a great deal of knowledge regarding emotional literacy, why it is important, and how it can be used. The participants also felt that they had learnt about

children, and their emotions, and how to manage these emotions, and different types of children, in person doll sessions, as well as in their classrooms, communities, and families. Some participants felt they had developed more counseling based skills, such as containment and reflection skills, that they were able to use with children and adults. This enabled them to cope better with the demands they faced at work, and at home.

Participants felt these rippled effects in both their personal and professional lives, and as a result some of them expressed how important and influential this training was for them, and the potential it could have for their communities and others. Participants described how other care workers should take part in the training, and how it would be beneficial for children to have persona doll sessions in their communities and areas. Others felt it was important for parents and families to undergo the emotional literacy component, so as to better understand their children and develop better relationships with them. It was felt that teachers would also benefit from partaking in emotional literacy and persona doll training. Parents and teachers involved in the Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010) study and the Coppock (2007) study were observed to benefit from the respective programmes, and they concluded that the involvement of these key figures are key in a child's emotional development. This has important implications, as parents and teachers are important role models in the development of emotional literacy and children's ability to cope with their emotions (Kremenitzer, 2005). Parents and teachers assist in children's emotional development through socialization, role modeling, and by providing them with exposure to social interactions, as well as regulating interactions in the environment (Brenner & Salovey, 1997; Parke, 1994). It is clear that the involvement of parents and teachers is crucial in a child's emotional development; therefore including parents in the emotional literacy programme at the community centre should be considered.

The previous research studies and this study tend to agree with the above sentiments, as positive results have been established regarding the programme. Buchanan (2007) found that emotional content was elicited by the programme and could be used to develop emotional literacy in children. The journals and process notes from the participants also indicated that emotional content was elicited in the persona doll sessions with the children, as in Buchanan's (2007) study. Interestingly similar themes of abuse, neglect, broken families and death and dying were elicited in the present study, as in Buchanan (2007). Irish (2009) found that person doll sessions increased preschool children's abilities to perceive and label emotions. Teachers in Irish's (2009) study also perceived an improvement in emotional expression in the children who partook in person doll

sessions, and that children appreciated the person doll sessions. This was perceived to also facilitate discussion on emotions and feelings (Irish, 2009). In this study, one could argue that the participants feel more empowered to work with children and adults, both at a professional and working level, as well as a personal level, by participating in this training programme. Therefore, if these ripple effects are found in these participants, and they feel more empowered in their lives, others would likewise benefit from the training.

The training programme therefore seems to stimulate development in emotional literacy and abilities in working with children, as suggested by this study, and Buchanan's (2007) and Irish's (2009) studies. As in Buchanan's (2007) study, the programme assisted in developing Steiner's (2002) principles of emotional literacy to a certain extent. In the present study, the principles of identifying emotions, empathy and managing emotions have seemed to develop in the participants. The development of emotional literacy is an important undertaking for professionals who work with children. Emotional literacy has been linked to greater success academically, better stress management, adaptability and interpersonal skills (Parker et al., 2004); improved facilitation of positive social interactions and the ability to identify and label emotions (Izard et al., 2001) and life satisfaction, self-esteem, empathy, bias prevention, and the ability to manage one's moods (Ciarrochi et al., 2000). Underdeveloped emotional literacy has been linked to behavioural and learning problems (Izard et al., 2001); alexithymia (Colman, 2001; Parker et al., 2000) and higher levels of stress, depression, aggression, delinquency and somatic complaints (Liau et al., 2003). It is clear that developing emotional literacy skills in children, particularly in the South African context is of great importance, and that the professionals who work with children, can likewise reap the benefits, as the participants in the training programme have indicated.

4.5 Implications of the Study

The emotional literacy and persona doll programme has numerous implications, practical and applied, and based in research, particularly in the South African context, which has been illuminated by the previous research by Buchanan (2007) and Irish (2009), and the results of this study. These implications are discussed below.

4.5.1 Practical and Applied Implications

South Africa's children face many difficult and stressful living conditions and environments as a result of the legacies of Apartheid, poverty, inadequate socioeconomic conditions, the HIV/Aids epidemic and other health problems, violence and high levels of crime, disintegration of families and communities and poor access to resources such as employment, education, and mental health services. There is a need for more preventative measures, and mental health promotion and intervention tools in South Africa. The emotional literacy and persona doll programme is one such intervention tool that has important potential applications in South Africa.

Parents and teachers are crucial role models in the development of emotional literacy and emotional growth in children (Kremenitzer, 2005), and the child could only benefit from these important figures undergoing training. The participants in this study felt that the inclusion of parents and teachers in emotional literacy and persona doll training was important. This is because of how they felt their own abilities improved in working with children. The participants in this study demonstrated the importance of working within and with the system with children, particularly with the persona dolls and emotional literacy training. A more holistic and humanistic education that included focusing on emotional development would be beneficial to the youth of South Africa. The emotional literacy programme and person dolls could assist in encouraging this in schools.

Furthermore, children and their families, particularly in South Africa's more underprivileged areas, have very little access to psychological and mental health services. By incorporating persona dolls into schools, children would therefore enjoy better access to psychological and mental health services, as well as experiencing an improvement in emotional literacy. The inclusion of mental health and emotional education into the education system and schools has been increasingly called for worldwide (Change, 2006; Kremenitzer, 2005). Children who are emotionally literate are less likely to experience mental health problems, and if they do experience difficulties, they are less likely to suffer from these difficulties long term (Mental Health Foundation, 1995). Therefore the inclusion of a programme such as the emotional literacy and persona doll programme into schools would serve as a valuable and active intervention, and a preventative measure for children, particularly for those who are at risk.

Encouraging parents, teachers and families to be involved in this training, can further improve the efficacy of this programme. In this way more preventative measures and active interventions can occur, at the level of the family and school, two influential systems in a child's early life. This training can assist parents and families in working with their children, and in improving their emotional development, particularly in areas where this is most needed. Community outreach centres and programmes could be fundamental in providing a service such as emotional literacy training to parents and families, and persona doll training to other care workers and professionals working with children.

The issue of language is also important when considering the training and working with children. Participants in this study at times struggled with language differences in their persona doll groups, and appeared to struggle at times as the training was conducted in a language that they were not as comfortable or familiar with. This must be considered in further training and programmes.

4.5.2 Research Implications

There is a lack of research on emotional literacy programmes as well as the use of persona dolls in South Africa. The studies by Buchanan (2007) and Irish (2009), and the present study indicate the promising use of emotional literacy and the use of the persona dolls in the South African context. Further research should be conducted in this area and is discussed below.

As the persona dolls are used in school settings, it is important to conduct research in this setting. As discussed above, there is a lot of potential for working with the dolls in South African schools. The persona doll groups have potential as preventative interventions, as well as intervening in very difficult issues facing South Africa's youth at present. Research of the work with these dolls in a school setting is crucial, and could provide useful information as well as advocate for further holistic work with children in schools.

As indicated by the participants in this study, the persona dolls have potential use in community settings. Research in these settings would be useful, as there is a dire need for interventions in communities, particularly those who face violence, poverty and are under resourced.

The research has also indicated some possible changes for the community centre and programme. The participants felt that longer training and persona doll sessions would be beneficial, as well as the inclusion of multimedia in order to assist the learning process. Some participants indicated separate training for mental health professionals and teachers, as there were many perceived differences between these groups.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

A major limitation of this study was the small sample size, and the difficulties with the research instruments. As there was only one persona doll training programme, the sample size was rather limited and small. Furthermore, some participants had to drop out of the training due to a lack of funding from their organization, which further limited the sample size. A participant remarked in the evaluation forms that the questionnaire needed to be simpler, presumably because of language difficulties.

There were also some difficulties with writing in the journals which may also be linked to difficulties with the English language, and, or comfort in expressing their honest thoughts and opinions in the journals. It was discovered that one participant did not know how to write, and had other's writing in her journal for her. Language was also a difficulty, as English was not some of the participants first language. This may have limited their ability to firstly, write in the journals, and secondly express themselves as best as they would in their first language. As a result, the participants did not always write in their journals consistently, and the research study had to rely on particular participants' journals at times. Furthermore, not all of the participants returned their journals.

4.7 Suggestions for Future Research

Further research on the programme is recommended, as the programme has great potential and relevancy in South Africa. There is a limited body of documented research into emotional literacy and persona dolls in South Africa, despite the dire need for intervention in this area. Future research on the Emotional Literacy and Persona doll programme should take into consideration the limitations of the present research study. Future research projects should include larger

sample sizes, as well as language facilitation. The persona dolls project often works with individuals and children whose first language is not English, and therefore the research at times is compromised by the language of the researcher or facilitator. Long-term research is also suggested, to evaluate the effects on both the persona doll practitioners and the children who undergo persona doll group sessions. Research on the applicability of the IRI in the South African context is also required.

Future projects could focus on the person doll group sessions efficacy in nursery schools and primary schools, as the overall goal of the group sessions is to facilitate emotional development in children of nursery school or primary school age. An understanding of these processes in a school environment would add to the existing research and understanding of the emotional literacy and persona doll work. Evaluative information and the effects of the programme on these children should also be included in research projects. Information from parents, teachers and other professionals who work and interact with the child will also be useful to establish the effects of the programme on the children. As the emotional development of the child is as important as their physical and mental development, a more holistic education and experience that incorporates the emotional world would be beneficial for children, particularly in the school setting. Research should also be attempted in other settings, particularly in those where children are at risk, such as care centres, and in poverty or violence stricken communities – this applies to the use of this programme in these settings as well. Further research on emotional literacy as a construct theoretically and practically is also required, as well as evaluations on other programmes seeking to improve and enhance children's emotional development and abilities.

4.8 Conclusions

While the quantitative results did not show an increase in empathy for the trainees, possibly as a result of the difficulties with the research instrument and sample, the training programme has had a positive impact on the trainees. Many of the participants found that they were more able to think and talk about their own emotions, and the emotions of others. This is a crucial aspect of emotional literacy, where one is able to identify and think about one's own emotions. Furthermore, the group of participants learnt important reflection and containment skills, which they believe they can and are using in their work with others, and with their families. This impact on their personal lives is an important finding, as it lays the foundation to establish better

relationships between individuals and their significant others and family members. This was also present in the participants' professional lives, in that they found they were more equipped and confident in working with children and others. The participants all felt that they would recommend the emotional literacy training to anyone who had to work with children, including parents and families. While there is no statistically grounded argument for the improvement of empathy, and in extension emotional literacy, the participants in the training seemed to have developed their own emotional literacy skills, and found that they are better able to work with children and adults in the realm of emotional work. The emotional literacy and persona doll training programme has important implications for working with children in the South African context, and has the potential to be a valuable preventative and mental health promotion tool, as well as intervention.

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6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix A – Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MED/11/001IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Empathy and the personal experiences of trainees in an Emotional Literacy Persona Doll Training Programme in South Africa.
INVESTIGATORS	Barnfather Nikki
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	22/03/11
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 30 June 2011

CHAIRPERSON
(Professor M. Lucas)

cc Supervisor: Dr. Z Amod
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2013

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

6.2 Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet

School of Human & Community Development
Faculty of Humanities
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Nikki Barnfather and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining my Masters in Educational Psychology degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. My research focus is to evaluate the Ububele Emotional Literacy and Persona Doll Training Programme. The purpose of this study is to provide information concerning the trainee's perspectives, experiences and development in training. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Your participation is strictly voluntary and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged by choosing to participate or not to participate in this study in any way. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection with no negative consequences. The data will only be available to my supervisor and myself. Should you feel that by participating in this research you have suffered any negative consequences or emotional stresses, a contact for the South African Depression and Anxiety Group has been provided below.

Participation in the study will require you to complete a questionnaire pack in the first and last training session, as well as to complete a journal over the course of the training. The purpose of the journal is to record your thoughts, feelings and experiences in training, and using the Persona dolls, and how this training is influencing you – in your personal and working life. A code will be given to be labeled on your questionnaire pack and journal, should you wish to participate. This is to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in your responses.

Signing the consent sheet and returning the questionnaire packs and journals will be taken as consent to take part in the study. Please detach this sheet for your own personal information and the contact details. Once the study has been completed, a one-page summary of the results will be

displayed in the waiting room at Ububele, in December 2011. If you would like a longer version of the study results, you are welcome to email the researcher with the subject "Study feedback". Feedback will then be emailed to you. No individual feedback will be available, however. The email will be deleted as soon as the report has been sent, and your details will be kept confidential.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will provide valuable information concerning the training programme with the aim to improve its efficacy.

Kind Regards,

Nikki Barnfather

Contact Details:

Nikki Barnfather: 082 893 7071 – NikkiBarnfather@gmail.com
Zaytoon Amod: Zaytoon.Amod@wits.ac.za

South African Depression and Anxiety Group: 011 262 6396

6.3 Appendix C – Consent Form

School of Human & Community Development
Faculty of Humanities
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559



Consent Form

I _____ consent to being a participant for Nikki Barnfather's study on the trainee's experiences of the Ububele-Persona Doll emotional literacy programme at Ububele Psychotherapy Centre.

I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary
- I may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences
- No information will be used that may identify me in the research report

Signed _____

Date _____

6.4 Appendix D – Demographic Information Sheet

Code _____

Age _____

Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female

Current Occupation _____

Years at occupation _____

Highest Level of Education

- ☐ Primary School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Undergraduate Degree
- ☐ Postgraduate Degree

Do you have any previous training in emotional literacy? If so, please describe:

_____

_____

_____

What previous experience do you have in working with children and emotional literacy?

_____

_____

_____

What are your expectations of the training?

_____

_____

_____

What are your expectations in working with the Persona Dolls?

_____

_____

_____

6.5 Appendix E - The Interpersonal Reactivity Index

The following statements ask about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, show how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate number on the scale at the top of the page: 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter in the blank next to the item. **READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING.** Answer as honestly and as accurately as you can.

ANSWER SCALE:

0 Does not describe me well	1	2 Not sure	3	4 Describes me very well

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.

0	1	2	3	4

2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.

0	1	2	3	4

3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.

0	1	2	3	4

4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.

0	1	2	3	4

5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.

0	1	2	3	4

6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill at ease.

0	1	2	3	4

7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.

0	1	2	3	4

8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.

0	1	2	3	4

9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.

0	1	2	3	4

10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.

0	1	2	3	4

11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.

0	1	2	3	4

12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.

0	1	2	3	4

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.

0	1	2	3	4

14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.

0	1	2	3	4

15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.

0	1	2	3	4

16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.

0	1	2	3	4

17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.

0	1	2	3	4

18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.

0	1	2	3	4

19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.

0	1	2	3	4

20. I am often quite touched by things I see happen.

0	1	2	3	4

21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.

0	1	2	3	4

22. I would describe myself as a pretty softhearted person.

0	1	2	3	4

23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.

0	1	2	3	4

24. I tend to lose control during emergencies.

0	1	2	3	4

25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.

0	1	2	3	4

26. When I'm reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.

0	1	2	3	4

27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.

0	1	2	3	4

28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

0	1	2	3	4

6.6 Appendix F – Programme Evaluation Form

The African Psychotherapy Resource Centre & Educational Trust

Winner of the Inyathelo Award for Community Philanthropy 2007

Affiliate of the World Association of Infant Mental Health

1,10th Road, Kew, Johannesburg
P O Box 425, Highlands North 2037, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 786 5085 Fax: 088 11 887 2727
E-mail: ububele@telkomsa.net Website: www.ububele.org.za
Registered Trust (010-472NPO) Public Benefit Organisation (930002474)



Department of Social Development
Ububele Persona Dolls (2010)

P A R T I C I P A N T E V A L U A T I O N

1. What did you find useful about the Persona Doll training?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What did you find challenging or not like about the training?

_____

_____

2. Would you suggest any changes? Please give details.

3. Did this experience influence your work? If so, in what way?

4. Would you attend a follow-up programme if this were possible?

_____

_____

5. Would you recommend the training to others?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Please share any additional thoughts that you have about the Persona Doll training of eight sessions.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6.7 Appendix G – Normality for IRI Subscales

Skewness Coefficients

	Skewness Coefficient
Pre Test Perspective Taking Scale	-0.22
Post Test Perspective Taking Scale	-0.36
Pre Test Empathic Concern Scale	-0.87
Post Test Empathic Concern Scale	-0.48
Pre Test Personal Distress Scale	-0.11
Post Test Personal Distress Scale	-0.22
Pre Test Fantasy Scale	0.58
Post Test Fantasy Scale	-0.59

6.8 Appendix H – Persona Doll Journal Transcriptions

JOURNAL NO: 2

First Session

I was worried at first when enter the training room, seeing new people. The dolls were in the room. I wanted to touch them all, one by one.

The venue was very cold; it made me not to concentrate most of the time.

The first session made too long or to look forward for the next session. I was interested when the facilitator spoke to her doll named Khetiwe.

Second Session.

The second session made me feel worried and nervous, but the other side I am excited for start the group and see how does it go. This will improve my skill of facilitating the group.

The planning for the group is very important. It will give me directions and focus to rune the safe group. The completion of filling of indemnity form by parents to give me a permission to facilitate the group. It made me feel at ease. This will protect me it something some up at a later stages. For example if a children disclose information with will lead a parent or guardian being arrested or found neglecting this child, but this will on agreement with child.

Session 3

I was excited for the third session and looking forward to select a doll, which I will be running the persona doll with.

During the training I had an opportunity to choose doll, which I admire or like. I was difficult because there were many dolls, which you can choose from, but at the end I managed to choose a doll.

I was confused with the facilitator told us we have to take a doll home. We should not put it in a plastic back. The doll should be seen. On my way home everybody was looking at me and amazed, others were asking what am I doing with the doll. I have to explain about the doll and tell them it is for emotional literacy training, which is called persona doll. It is relevant for Early Childhood development practitioners.

Session 4

The first session with group I was feeling nervous. I think about how would the children respond to the doll, which is named Nolithando, which means, "Love".

At first one child was not happy after I told the group that I would like to introduce my friend. After they saw Nolithando now he became excited. He did not want Nolithando out of his sight. When I was leaving, he asked me to bring Nolithando … to the day care next week.

During the training session, it was helpful to talk about the group session in a smaller group. In the other way it was debriefing and asst me to get more skills and information from other group trainees.

Session 5

The children found it difficult to speak about their families. They ended up copying ach others stories. Some of the went to sleep/they pretended they were sleeping. The other one became the DH using the window seal as turntable.

For me it was also difficult to control them. I felt frustrated.

Session 6

The children they calmer than before. The coping method as still there, but it was better than last session. The challenge was that they all want to talk at the same time. One child did not want to give others a chance. She end up mumbling so that she can get attention.

I felt relieved the session was controllable than before, but I was still frustrated about the copying other stories.

This is one child who is always think he can partner with the doll. Every time when activities he want to do with Nolithando.

Session 7

The train was a little bit dull, everybody looked tired. I think it was signs of termination which will happen next week.

All in all the persona doll training teach me how to become assertive when you are working with children. I also assisted me to gain more skill and knowledge in the field of working with children.

In the group session which I conducted in the crèche it made me realised how difficult it is for children to concentrate and to talk about feelings. Sometimes I get frustrated because the children they used to shouted at than talking to them nice. It made me realized that these two much to be done in the community, but I think if pre-school practitioner can attend the course it great, since they are the ones who are in contact with the children most of the time. I will assist them to understand children behaviour more, e.g. the children are bully.

For me the course and group supervision was helpful and I think if they can introduce more level it will be great. The facilitator was great but she was putting more information at once it was sometimes difficult to grasp. The time was too short. May an hour was added it was going to be better.

JOURNAL NO: 3

First session.

It was informative and wonderful. Now I feel that I can learn more about children. I learned that children express their feeling in different word, it can be expressing verbally, screaming, fighting with youth kids etc. children have to be teach emotional literacy.

Second session

It was an eye open to me. I didn't now that planning is so important in that way. Lee was excellent from the start; he made me feel open to speak the way he asked questions. At first before I go to pre-school I asked my staff if I can plan that. But after the first meeting with the principal it was so easy. Especially when you are going with the steps that Lee explained.

Third session

It was excited to meet the doll of your choice. But it was not easy to find the name of your doll, date of birth, and the doll history and likes/dislikes.

The way children welcomed but the first session with the preschool it was not easy, because I didn't know if I was doing the right/wrong.

JOURNAL NO: 4

First Week

After the training I could stop thinking about it, I was so eager to find out what was going to happen the following week. I talk a lot about it with my colleagues and how I was going to meet a new doll and had a name.

Second week.

This week has been interesting although I was a little bit disappointed because we had to miss the coming session because of the elections and that meant I have to wait another week to meet my doll, but at least I have started with the planning of the group and it was very exciting.

Third week.

This week am a little disappointed because there will be no group session and since our last session I couldn't stop thinking about the group on Wednesday, but I had no choice because it was elections day. I cannot wait for our next session so that I can meet my doll.

Session 3

The session went well and we were given the dolls for the first time, it was hard choosing a doll, I was a bit confused not knowing which doll to choose but in the end I chose a boy doll because I connect with boys easily.

The part where we had to create a persona for our doll was a bit difficult because you had to create a persona for the doll. Its not everyday we bring a doll to live, so that is why I'm saying it was a bit difficult. And having to take a doll home, the ride on the taxi with a doll was a bit embarrassing and interesting; having people looking at you and wondering was is this old lady doing with the doll.

At home they accepted my doll, my niece was a bit scared of Mvelo, and the other two children started talking to him.

All in all it's been a long week, because I had to plan for the first session with Mvelo and the children. I had a lot of mixed feeling about all of what going to happen in our first session.

Tuesday.

Today I'm taking my doll (Mvelo) to our first session. When I arrived, I called my children, I was a bit overwhelmed by what was going to happen will the children accept me, will they even talk to Mvelo. The 30 min was a bit long, I even though about ending the topic early but I kept going even though I felt the topic wasn't flowing.

This session went well, we had to share with the other learner practitioners, our challenges during the training. It help because at first I thought I as the only on who experienced some of the thing and this made me look forward to my second session with my group.

JOURNAL NO: 5

04/05/2011
First session

I have learned a lot especially to know what is emotional literacy, the importance of this emotional literacy from the children. Today I now a very important thing that the emotional literacy is not a counselling is to help children to know how to write, read and their feelings and the people who do this is a teacher, the part that I like is how to work with these groups.

11/05/2011
Second Session

Today I have leant about the persona dolls, where does this persona dolls come from, the background of the doll how do you work with this persona dolls and the planning you must have before you to work with groups which is where children can talk with the dolls.

25/05/2011
Third Session

Persona Dolls
For the first time it was a challenge for me to choose the persona dolls but I have chosen one of them. I have also learnt that where this persona dolls come from and why it is important about this persona dolls from the children. I have learned again that you must take the persona dolls like you friend and talk to the doll.

1 June 2011
Session 4

In this session I have learn the Ububele Model which is LOFT. The definition of this LOFT is to listen, observe feelings and thinking.
This term LOFT made me to listen to children, observe the … of action they do when they talk and reflect what did they feel, when se told me his/her story and thinking about the issue or story and how well I help her to understand the situation.

08/06/2011
Session 5

I have learn the important thing the feelings and for sure it was not easy to label the feeling I have sometimes, because sometimes you feel something not knowing in your body but the action is done in your body. Which is to the children the way I feel is the way the children sometimes feel and they don't know now which means I must observe the action what they do to know he children's feelings. From the first time using the persona dolls at crèche it was difficult to me to find their children's feelings. But went time go I can to identify the children's feelings.

15/05/2011
Session 6

In this session we were learning about the supervision and importance of the supervision because every time of work you must have a supervisor on your work.

I have learnt that supervision is a good thing because you can do everything there is a time you have challenge in your work and you always supervisor to guide you to do the right thing so that you can not do damages, and if you have a challenge in this persona dolls we must get the supervisor to help me.

15/06/2011
Session 7

I have learned about container. What container is. Why we must the container to the other people. Now I know what container is, we must work as a container because some people need to be contained or children who talked about their feeling. I have to contain him/her to understand these feelings and is good to have different feelings but not doing wrong thing, because of the feelings they have. To make that I help children to know about how did they feel at after the must thing, … not doing the wrong thing to other children.
Since we work with the children I must prepared the children about the ending of persona dolls because everything must have the ending even if it was good to work with we must end the session.

JOURNAL NO: 6.

First session (11 May 2011)

Is the introduction of persona doll. It also tells about the emotional literacy for child. In term of persona the sums is to learn more knowledge of child. Understanding where the family comes from. Development the children. The doll is connect the kids for safe. When you do the group is discuss to support each other. When you plan the group look the venue or site. Comfortable the must not noise. Look the time especially the group which are running and what the best time for the group. The group you do you must look the nature open group or close group.

Second Session (18 may 2011)

Planning the safe group. You can you plan near your site when you do the group and check how you site. The group can be the open group when you do the section. When you do the group you start the person, know each other. And you and see the group not more than 15 child can divide it is too much. You look the time when you running the group which is the best for you. The place must quit.

Third Session (25 May 2011)

Is the first time to bring the persona dolls for me and can go to the group. You gave the doll the name and give the family background where she/he stay and is still do the cresh or school. What does the persona doll like, when she/he start cresh or school. What does like do the …. At school and home.

Fourth Session (1 June 2011)

It was the first time too take the persona doll to the cresh and do the introduction with the children. The child gave very excited when they see the persona doll introduce with them and also introduce themselves. I observe some child are very angry with the doll. Some not look at him, just put eyes. Some can give a .. about the feelings. It was different to others because they have stay with grannies without parent. Some their father are no longer supportive.

Fifth Session (8 June 2011)

It was too much interesting with the child. The section is about the family. Mpho (persona doll tell about his family some child is too much or them to tell about his family. I feel anger for me to ask some too much questions. Some another are not talking is too much interesting when they talk.

Sixth-Seventh Session (June 2011)

Is too much interesting with me this course I gain more information with this persona dol. It tells me how to contain the child with the problems and the feelings and I also explore with my family and also my child. It also gave me more what observe and listening the children. It gave me more skills and support because in my family I have more challenges with the children. Some they have no parent. When I do the groups I found more supportive with the principal and teachers at crèche and that are also interesting to do this course, and also say can continue to do the group with the crèche, not close. It is too much for me because it develop some children. The person doll is also a connection of kids and keep the safe. The kids also happy when you do the section of persona doll.

JOURNAL NO: 7

Session 1: 4 May 2011

It ours.
It was the first session, for introduction to emotional literacy. The facilitator was asking the group that what is emotional literacy, she listed the names of that explaining the emotional literacy.

She drews a frame that shows the picture inside and the group describe the picture that is inside the frame. It keeps the picture in place, protect the picture, it is more beautiful and neat.

It was helpful and understandable but.

I feel that the facilitator can start to find out from the group so that she can able to know from group knowledge that chapter, after she put whatever she want by putting the group into small groups, after the can present their information about that chapter on that day.

Session 2: 25 May 2011
Planning for a safety group

Background of the persona Dolls

Persona dolls were originally used internationally as a tool to mediate the affect of discrimination due to race, culture, and disability etc.

Some possible aims to Ububele Persona Dolls. Vision a group of children lead themselves to developing emotional literacy. They help the learner practitioner to teach children to understand and communicate theirs and others feelings.

The practitioners was giving us more information about how to plan the group.

Session 3

First Ububele persona doll session.

The facilitator was preparing the group about how are going run person doll group. Introduction of your doll, the dolls name and background place where family stays.

To use the theme with the doll and why?
A theme refers to the different topics that the learner/practitioner can bring to the group to discuss. These will be topics that are central to the children and their feelings, and how to come up with themes.

After … remind the group but drawing their head or painting with their them.

Session 4
Continuation of the doll.

Ubueble Model → L.O.F.T.
Listen
Observe
Feeling
Thinking

To pay attention to what the children say (verbal) as well as their behaviour (non-verbal). This involves watching carefully for detail and then being able to describe behaviour.

What am I feeling when I am with the children. What might these things suggest about what the children might be experiencing.

Listening is not a simple process. It is includes listening to that words that someone is saying,

Session 5
The importance of feelings: Ububele Model
How to identify other people is feelings.

Labeling of feelings: e.g. sad, anger, unhappy, happy etc.

It is important that when you facilitating the group to pick up the feelings of the group. Feelings we present a state of mind, … experience that a person is having.

To identify the feeling, in the children most of the time they are acting out. E.g. bullying other children, no co-operating, wanting the attention, to be uncomfortable and separating themselves fro other children.

The practitioner must reflect in a way of .. using the child by mention the feeling and trying to understand the child.

Session 6.
Emotional Meaning in the persona doll groups.

The importance of supervision after you have done the work, it is helpful because is is the right place to share and your space to relief yourself, because each and every work that we do as practitioners to keep the confidentiality.

This important because you might experience difficulties in the sessions, you might end up telling your difficulty story in the wrong place. It is helpful because some one can listen to you in a safe place supporting you emotionally and physically.

Sometimes you feel like crying but when there is supervision is good place for the practitioner to be supported.

Session 7
Containment vs. Punitive Discipline

To contain the child, whereby when the child is crying what is if e.g. hunger, teething and wearing etc. Contain bring back to the womb taking back safety – to feel safety and to express their feeling.

When a baby is well contained while she the was very small and their need were met in a way that the baby can get that she is contain.

When she is older she can be contain themselves from destructiveness.

The facilitator try to explain in a way that we can understand as a group but.. That the facilitator must check with the group first before she can share her input to the group.. All session from, because from session.

JOURNAL NO: 8

4-05-2011

The first time in the first session we were two males that made me to the at easy. But at the same time I had miss feelings about the training. I didn't want to come but I had no choice because at work they just choose me and tell me that it's going to the part of my work after finished the training.

We Leeane introduced us in the training and tell us more about the persona doll then I started to thing positive about it and think about the way it would help me and the children around our community.

12-05-2011

The second session of our training now I started to enjoy the training and participated effective and I wanted to chat now to do practical of persona dolls. The other thing made me to enjoy is that I once did the training about thinking about children then I felt that this is going to feel for me. Therefore in the training room we are having 4 hours but it's too little never enough because we sometimes rush things, while others are explaining their experience that they come across as children. For me as a man among women's I felt proud that this is privilege for me, as most of black African men don't do person dolls. On this second session do when we started to know about us first that are we going to do this word of working with dolls to make children understand their emotions and say how they are feeling. Also to work in our feelings and emotions too.

25-05-2011

We couldn't attend on the 18 May because it was local Election Day for voting and we had to go and vote. But it has disturbed our process and now we are behind with one session but nevertheless we are happy about the training. It also made us to bond as a group, and made us talk English most of the time in our discussions. The training should also be accessible to the other care workers around Gauteng, because it going to assist many children and adults to talk aloud their feeling and to be able to name them as they are. So far the training is very good, I love it and I don't want to miss any sessions that take place.

In the third session we were give a chance to choose our dolls and have time before I can choose so that I can be attached with the doll. We did choose ours dolls and name them then we had to write or create a story of the family of our doll. I did so that it was very hard to do that thinking of a name and the name of the family, his age that place that he lives and the school that he attend and its grade.

31-05-2011

I had to look for a place where I was going to do my practical and it became very hard for me now to fee with to real the situation. I did go to one preschool that I once I do child observation to ask the principal to permit me. But thing doesn't work out, because already there were some people who were doing … at the preschool. Then I couldn't have a place to do my first practical's therefore I didn't anything to talk about in the session wit the other members of the group who were talking how they did receive placements and it welcome. I was not happy because I couldn't manage to go and look for another place my mind was blocked. Then one group member came to my rescue by allowing me to share the group that she have the total number of children were 16, then she take 8 and I.

2-06-2011

I was listening to the group when was giving feedback about their first sessions at the day care centres and the schools. I was not happy for me because I wanted to say something about the first session then I find that I was not alone who didn't manage to the run the first session. Then I was relief but it was important for me to make sure that I ran my own first session. I was looking forward to that to happen.

7-06-2011

My first session with the children was very good because it was an introductive day but the sad part I didn't come along with the doll, I forgotten to take him because I was from the meeting then I rush because I had to catch public transport because of time. I did talk to the children and explained that the doll will be with them the coming week they did understand. And the session went well for the first time.

8-06-2011

In the training I did give feedback about my first session, when I told them that I forgotten to come along with Thulane in the session they were shocked and wanted to know how I manage to run the session. I told them that because it was about introduction therefore it became easy and understanding, but promised them that I will bring Thulane on the second session.

On my second session we manage to talk about families that we come from and their challenges of it. Children also talk about their families only few manage to talk aloud their bad experience that they came across of loosing their parents, other loosing his brother and they say the feel very sad, unhappy, worried because they looked some that they love. Thulane encouraged them that it a good for everyone to feel that way if they loose people that they love the most in their life. Thulane asked how they feel now some said its still painful but others its now ok.

JOURNAL NO: 13

05/11

It has been a very long and exciting day. Today we went to Ububele for training in persona dolls. I was very worried and nervous on my way there and on the first few minutes. After few minutes and after everyone had introduced themselves I felt a little bit better.

Our facilitator is Leanne; she is very nice and friendly. She made everybody feel free. She told us that we are different but and important in each other's learning. Others are talkers and others are listeners but we are all a team.

I learning about different kinds of emotions. What is emotional literacy. This is a very interesting project. I am glad that Khanya Family Centre also chose me to go and learn about the persona dolls.

I am very excited going back to Ububele tomorrow. I am still not sure what is needed of me or if I will be able to do this. But because I love children it is not going to be difficult.

After today's session at Ububele I feel little bit better. I can see that it not only me who is not sure or who is a bit scared or worried. Talking about how we are gong to implement this was very good for me. The planning of the programme. Hw to approach the school principal and how to select the children made it very easy for me to think about how I am going to approach the principal of the school where I would like to do my persona doll in.

I went to Thabang primary school today to go and ask the principal if I can do my persona doll there. I found that the principal is not there. But because I know one of the teachers there she is my neighbour it was easy for me. She told me to leave the letter that I got from Khanya Family centre with her and she will give it to the principal when he comes back.

I left the letter with her and she said I could come back on Friday just for the principal to see me and to discuss about the day I am going to do my persona doll and to talk to the preschool teacher.

JOURNAL NO: 14

I've had a while to think and reflect on the first day of training, and what it meant to me. I've always been interesting in working with these dolls – the first time I heard Lee-anne talking about them, all I wanted to do was to intern at Ububele so that I could get to know them firsthand. Even on Wednesday, she displayed so much passion when she spoke about them that I couldn't help getting excited. Seeing the room full of dolls was also interesting – I could see how lovingly they'd been made, and how each had its own unique features. It feels as if I'm speaking about them as people; I suppose I'm trying to get into the swing of things and use my imagination. The kids I work with have to see the doll as a person, so I do too.

I called a nursery school close to me today to find out if they'll let me do groups with their class. Hoping for the best; I wasn't expecting to have to find a place myself, but its kind of exciting too. Of course I'm fearing that I wont be able to manage the group, or that I wont be good with young kids. I'm not used to either but one can only really learn by doing I suppose. And in that sense, I look forward to getting into it.

The session itself was interesting – I still fell a bit shy with all of those people I don't know. But the feel of the group is relatively relaxed. What lee-anne said about everyone in the group serving a role for the group, as a whole was very interesting. I hadn't thought about it in quite that way before, but it's made me think about both groups in my own life, and the therapy groups ill run in a different light.

Monday 9 May 2011

It's been a bit difficult finding a school, which will let me do groups – everyone seems a bit suspicious which is unexpected. It's increasing my anxiety about how hard this will be. Luckily I have the time to get stuck in. lets hope this work out.

Thursday 12 May 2011

I feel good after yesterdays group. It feels better to possess more knowledge about what's actually going to be happening in the groups. The more we talk about the processes of planning the more prepared I feel. I also feel excited about what its going to be like – meeting a group, getting to know them, and learning about how I am with young children. I feel a lot more confident that I'm

going to get a school on board. The information we have now makes it seem a lot more official. I'm hoping it gives me more credibility.

Thursday 19 May 2011

Ok, feeling pretty frustrated with this process! We didn't have a group yesterday so I already feel a bit disconnected from the process. And what's more I STILL haven't got a positive response from any schools. Everyone just seems so unwilling to get a free service from a trained professional, which will benefit their learners… it's weird. No one even seems interested in meeting me – and it's in person that I feel I could be the most convincing. And I thought I was looking in the wrong area, too affluent, but schools with fewer resources are also unwilling, because of these administrative capacities. I can't win!

I really didn't think this would be such a struggle. Lee-anne said she'd never heard of a school turning the service down. Maybe it's me. I don't sound convincing or confident or official enough. Whatever the case, I'm feeling quite discouraged with this whole thing. I'm starting to wander why I wanted to do this course. And what happens if I don't find a school? Will they find one for me, or will my whole process be delayed or will I not be able to finish the course?

Friday 20 May 2011

Some hope on the horizon: another person in the group is meeting with a school and we're hoping to work there together. I've phoned a few schools today and one sounded quite keen, so I've emailed them. I'm not feeling completely discouraged anymore, but its still playing on my mind. It's like a dark cloud always in the background of my thoughts and my mood- what if I don't find a school in time?

Tuesday 24 May 2011

Massive relief, mingled with excitement – a school has been found. We met with that school on Monday (I came along in the end) and they seemed really willing and enthusiastic. The class teacher was so happy to have some time to herself, and the principal was eager for us to do all the classes in all the grades. That's a whole different undertaking, which I'm not sure I'm ready for – we'll have to see how it goes with the first group.

I'm really looking forward to tomorrow's session, and to finally getting a persona doll. I've been thinking about it al lot actually, what it will look like, what to name it, how I'll interact with it,

what gender it will be. I cant believe ill be conducting my first group on Friday already. Excited but very nervous about that. It's finally becoming real!

Friday 27 May 2011

Phew, first session done. I was incredibly anxious about how it would go – I even watched kids TV programmes last night and researched Takalani Sesame to prepare. Turns out the children filled up most of the session quite easily. I didn't expect it to be perfect, and it wasn't, but I feel so much less anxious. Two kids were very noisy and boisterous, and I hope I can process that and think about why before next week. Sarah had a very difficult session, and I felt bad for her, but relieved that I seem to have an OK group (only 1 boy, though he's very attention-starved). I found myself becoming quite stern with the noisy ones at some points, which I didn't like. I just feel it was unfair for the quieter kids to be paid less attention because the noisy ones were demanding it.

Wednesday 1 June 2011

Well, I feel a lot better about my decisions in the group, and today's training session gave me some valuable insight into what was going on in the group. I feel like group supervision wasn't THAT helpful, as everyone else in the group had a lot of experience as teachers, and thus didn't have the same issues with control that I had. They also seemed a lot more interested in telling their own stories than in hearing me, which was ironic given the exercise we'd done earlier on listening. I'm not saying my story was riveting, but other members kept interrupting me with their own recollections. I felt a lot more supervised by Lee-Anne then by my group.

I got some bad news during lunch that made me more sense and less able o focus, as I felt I needed to go attend to the situation. I rushed out at 4 rather than waiting for Lee-Anne to end the session, and it feels strangely unresolved.

Monday 6 June 2011

Ok, so Friday's session was horrible. I can feel myself actively blocking it out every time I try to think about it. I felt out of control for most of the session, and it didn't help that I'm struggling personally as well. I felt so wrecked afterwards, and am thinking now that I was so naïve to ever think that I could work with groups of children. Maybe individuals, but I can discipline or control small children, they don't respect me, so what's the point?

The 3 sessions I still have to do feel like an eternity. I'm sure that now that the children know I can't control them, they're just going to get more and more wild. I'll keep on trying, and see if supervision helps. But I really don't want to.

Thursday 9 June 2011

I'm feeling a bit better than I was after yesterday's training. Again my group wasn't hugely helpful – we all spoke about our issues, but didn't get much advice. However what was spoken about in the group of large was quite helpful. It was nice to hear that most other people also had a very difficult second session. It seems talking about family was quite challenging for a lot of children. And some people also have problems controlling difficult children, which made me feel a bit less inadequate. I feel a bit more now that it's a process – I'm not going to get this overnight, and I'm not going to be good at this anytime soon. Still not looking forward to tomorrow though.

Tuesday 14 June 2011

So, we realized something on Friday – we wouldn't be able to see the kids this Friday or next because of the holidays. So we had to do two sessions in short succession, which has been stressful, but kind of nice. I feel like I'm learning so much about what kids re like. Everything that I'm used to people expressing in words or thoughts comes out in actions for children. In a way, it's frustrating, but once you accept that reality and open yourself up to learning about it, it becomes much easier. I've had moments of getting incredibly angry and frustrated, and being powerless and out of control have been very scary and new for me. But we survived it and I haven't broken down or started hating the children. I still care about them, even if they drive me crazy, and I'll still try my best to be nice and interested and gentle with them. I think that was actually a big fear of mine regarding working with children – that'd id be out of control, or hate them and that I'd be completely unable to connect. The fact that that hasn't happened is relieving and liberating.

Tuesday 21 June 2011

I can't believe I did my last session today, and our final training session is tomorrow. It felt so much longer, yet so much shorter than I expected. And I did much worse, and also much better than I thought I would. I've learned that I can work with children – that its frucking hard and very emotional and exhausting and constantly surprising – but I can. It's made me think that maybe individual work with children is more for me. I found myself wishing I could spend time with each of these kids on their own, finding out about their lives, giving them individual attention. I

think I'd feel less out of control and be able to understand more. So maybe that's the way for me – but I don't regret doing this course at all. And I love my doll. I think this course has given me an opportunity to think about myself as a child, and my own feelings about me as a child. I think I understand child-me a lot better, and I'm a lot more sympathetic to her than I used to be. I used to want to disown my child self, but if I can have love and sympathy for a child I hardly know, who's very angry at me, how can not have warmth and caring for my past self?

JOURNAL NO: 15

04/05/2011

Prior to attending the training I was feeling somewhat anxious, as I was unsure of what the training regarding my ability to run a persona dolls group.

Subsequently I found the group to be safe and comfortable. This space allowed me to think about emotional literacy in a general and more specifically. I realised that there are certain people/situations that are easier to think about than others and I think it is because I have not sufficiently processed each situation to the same extent. For example, I found it easier to think about my feelings tat I have in relation to my sister, as opposed to the feelings I have in relation to my mother. Also, while some people struggled to connect to feelings of hate, I realised that my training has enabled me to access so many feelings on so many levels.

Having been through the 1st session, I am very excited to run the groups and I think that today's session helped to ease the anxiety that I was experiencing. I really enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on group dynamics and on how I adjust to different group situations.

In sum: Today's session really reminded me of the importance of emotional awareness and reflexitivity. It also helped me to think about how children access their emotions and deal with them.

11/05/2011

Today's workshop was extremely thought provoking. It eased my anxiety that I was experiencing with regard to lacking the practical info for running the groups. Something that I often struggle with is my fear of making mistakes and my need to always do things perfectly. Today's session helped me to realise that if I am forgiving of my mistakes then this is an important trait that I will be modeling for the children I work with. I am subsequently feeling very excited about running the groups. I have been somewhat hesitant in how I have approached finding a group to work with and I think that my anxiety has played a large part in this. I realise that I need to be less fearful and more proactive in my approach. If I don't try, how will I ever learn?!

I think I will miss not having our session next week but I am looking forward to the net session and I am very eager to engage with the material at a deeper level. Specifically in relation to how to work with different kinds of group members – "the quiet child", "the naughty child", etc.

25/05/2011

I really enjoyed today's session. It was very exciting to choose my person doll and it made the course feel more real. This session really made me realise that I would be conducting a session very soon. On the one hand, I feel anxious about this but I am also looking forward to it. I enjoyed the role-plays more than I had anticipated and they gave me a good change to practice and become familiar with my persona doll.

01/06/2011

Today's session was extremely valuable. I felt like the supervision really helped me to understand why in m first session I had so many difficulties. I am feeling better about my next session and I am hoping that I can take what I have learned and put it into practice. I really feel like this course is helping me to understand children better and it is helping me to reflect on my interactions with the children in the session.

15/05/2011

I missed last week's training and in the past three weeks, I have run 3 groups (session 2,3,4). I only have one left. After session 3 I was feeling very encouraged as the children were really able to talk about their emotions and we spoke about the fact that one child thinks that you are weak if you cry. This felt like an extremely powerful session. I felt very hopeful. However, session 4 was exceptionally difficult. One child kept disrupting the whole group and kept ruining it for the other children. After this session, I felt extremely disillusioned and I really questioned whether person doll groups could actually work. Supervision was very helpful and I realised that the child was probably acting out because I had not acknowledged his absence the previous week. Interestingly reflecting on this helped me realize the disillusionment I had been dealing with also resulted in a resistance with regard to writing in this journal. However, having had a training session, supervision, I feel much more contained. I am looking forward to my last session with my group.

22/06/2011

Today is the last session of training and I am feeling a sense of accomplishment but there is also some sadness. I have really enjoyed the training and having the space to think about working with children in groups. I felt like I have learnt a fortune about children and the disillusionment I was experiencing is a part of my development. I hope the with experience, I will become more skilled at running persona doll groups.

Thinking about what could be improved, I think less time can be spent on explaining what empathy is, how to reflect etc. even though it is useful to be reminded about these counseling skills, I feel like I would have benefited a bit more if the training had more depth. I have spoke to Lee-Anne about this and I fully agree with her idea to have separate training for teachers and health professions. I think that it would just make the training a bit more stimulating.

On the whole I consider this course to have been very valuable and I feel like it has contributed in a significant way to my development as a psychologist.

JOURNAL N: 20

4/5

After 1st session I was clearer on the purpose of the dolls. The difference between counselling and emotional literacy.

I also realised that because I was angry at my mom I still tend to carry my anger a lot of times. Part of something that came out of the session. Really got me more in touch with my feelings and the dynamics in my school environment. Especially the way in which the leader conducts herself and what results from it again this came from session 1.

I started realising everything that was told to us to myself and also how I feel in group situations and towards individuals. I am referring to my intolerance of lots of people.

There is a little girl in my school; she is 2 1/2, who settled down very nicely. All of a sudden for the first month she has trouble separating from mom. She spends a lot of her time with me in the office and I feel so frustrated with her teacher who does not encourage her to be with the other children or play with the equipment. I sat with her on the mat outside and showered her how to use a building toy.

In the 2nd session I was very relaxed and engrossed. A lot of what was told to us was familiar to me because of my experience in pre primary school children and education.

I briefly discussed the object of the course with the teachers so that they would be aware of the persona dolls training. I am very excited about the programme but at the same time I am anxious about being able to perform effectively.

I find although in the office of my school, I am more aware of the children's behavior.

In session 2 it was really "getting down to business" I was anxious about our practice group but it went better than I thought it would.

I'm still in the dark about how to work within my school with different groups and different ages.

I left Hayley in the back of my car as I was going to take her t school the rest day. I felt so guilty thinking how cold it will be overnight so I went back to the car to fetch her.

After the last session I was focused on my first session wit the kids. I was preoccupied with my presentation, nervous and excited I didn't know what to expect.

I feel that the sessions should be done in groups with similar backgrounds.

JOURNAL NO: 26

UBUBELE emotional literacy and Persona Doll Training

Training was good and it was new to me, I like it even the lecture was good

1) The choosing of persona dolls.
   - It was not easy, because they were so many and all attractive.
   - After, we create the persona dolls background, name, age, school, crèche, like and dislike. It was not easy.

The forming of the group.
It was easy to me because I work with after care centre working with children from Grade R, I get 12 learners, it was the good training and it was new to me even if the children.

First session.

- I was nervous and I ask myself that they going to accept this persona doll as the friend:

Introduce the persona doll and me, the children some were amazed, some were happy, it was new thing to them. They welcome the persona dolls and they were good to find someone to talk with. As I observe they were happy and they like to be listen b someone.

Session (2) (the family)

Persona doll name her family and all the namely their family, one of the learner feel very sad about her mother passed away and personal dolls (say it was sad to hear that but how who you living with and he namely other in the family. At the end they all happy).

Session 3 (the visits)

It was the good session to the learner, most they like to visit not the visits come to her/his home persona doll ask why, learner because they buy cake, sweets, KFC and clothes for us when we pay the visits.

Fourth session (the school)

Thy mention their school and the like and dislike about the school. They were free to talk they were use to this training, they were happy.

Fifth session (goodbye)

It was not a good thing to the children, they were not happy. They like persona doll to come back and they were miss her. It was tough by we must say that. Goodbye are not good.

Overall

To me the training was good; I gained a lot of experience.

In the group

To work with the children in Grade R and grade one I was thinking it will be difficult. But they prove me wrong. I was the understanding the group even they was be others. I learn the lots children adapt easily, not like us adult.

Using person dolls to talk.

I was not good experience to me you must act or pretend. Even the learners ask the silly questions you must try to reply them.

The pretending was difficult.

Ne thing I learn in children the are easily adapting, something not like other.

They talk with the persona dolls like friends and they show their feels/express them.

This training I like a lot.

I think I will continue to with this persona doll group even at school. I learn even about my feeling toward the training.

This training is helpful:

I recommend it to the crèche teacher and after care teacher. At my school they love to join it if you can give them time.

My feelings

I feel like it must be continue, I enjoy it and I will never forget this training. If the is anything about the continuing of the training, please I want to be the first to know.

Many people need this training and I'm looking forward to it.

JOURNAL NO: 28

Session 1 – 4/05/2011

I felt happy to get started in this programme. I started to understand what emotional literacy is and its importance. The whole introduction o persona doll raised my expectations. I looked forward to more and the new experiences in the course.

I realised the importance of manage feelings. I identified children around me who are going to benefit from emotional literacy.

Session 2 – 11/05/2011

This was an introduction of planning a persona doll group. The planning prepared me for the doll sessions with my group. When I started planning, I started to realize the existence and importance of expression emotions in a positive way.

I the went to school and convened a meeting with my principal. This was to introduce him to person doll and decide on the venue. The principal welcomed the idea and gave me a Grade R class. We also decided on the most convenient time to carry out the persona doll sessions.

Session 3

I created a person for my doll. The introduction of the doll was in such a way that automatically connected me to this doll. The attachment was really emotionally magnetic.

However I was also anxious about starting my first session with the group. I had a lot of questions which I though children will ask.

I was also appreciative when our presenter tried by all means to build confidence to start the group sessions in me.

I then went to school and recruited my group. I took 5-6 year olds. The children were happy to be introduced to my doll.

The session started well but its flow to the end was not pleasing. There was a language barrier between me and my class. Children could not really understand what we were doing. Children's feelings did not come out. Children had a tendency of copy catting, repeating exactly what another person has said.

Session 4

During the session I managed to say I bad I felt because my session with my group had failed.

Fortunately I got tips and hints on various aspects relating to managing a group.

With the new theme – my family, I met my group. This was better. Children were able to say at the feelings. It is in this session that I felt good and effective.

Session 5

The Ubueble model: LOFT was introduced to us. It helped to understand more about how feelings are expressed.

This session prepared me for my 3rd session with my group and the theme was "visiting".

Children tried to talk about feelings in relation to visiting. Now I realised that the more the session, the more the effectiveness.

Session 6

This session prepared for my 5th session with my group. Most of my questions were answered. Supervision was introduced to us.

My theme for this week is my school. Children enjoyed talking about their school. It was good to understand that grade R like their teachers. However children hold the doll that they are a feel sad when the teachers scream and shout at them.

Session 7

I realized that I had not understood supervision hence I asked for more information for the sake of clarification.

I did my group activity with the theme – goodbye. It was difficult to part with this group. Some children cried for the doll while others told the doll it was difficult to separate.

Generally.
This course has contributed positively in my life and work experience. I can understand my feelings and others! I hope I will be able t use my persona doll expertise in various aspects of life. However, I think the course should take 9 or 10 weeks.