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Evaluation of Emotional Literacy Activities: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract
The present study aims to evaluate impact of the emotional literacy activities through participant student's experiences. Emotional literacy activities, including social-emotional skills Goleman's emotional intelligence and Fapuel's emotional literacy model designed and conducted for 2 months on primary school students, who study in 4th grade. The present study was conducted in phenomenological study. After the emotional literacy activities was ended, semi-structured interview was carried out with the participant studetns. Qualitative data was analysed within three steps as suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994). As result of the data analysis the participant student evaluated the emotional literacy activities effective in developing their social and emotional skills. Research findings were discussed in terms of the relevant literature and theoretical base. Several suggestions were made based on the research findings. .
Keywords: Emotional Literacy, Socio-Emotional Learning, Phenomenological Study

1. Introduction
Individual makes efforts to adjust his physical and social environment during his life. In the adjustment interaction between process capacities from inborn and environment has pivotal role. Learning rises from this interaction. Utilizing inborn capacities depend on several variables. Those variables have social and emotional dimensions. The notion that emotions influence cognition comes back Plato. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1986) stated in his learning theory that emotions have key roles in employing cognitive skills and learning and development process. Social and emotional factors have wide range of impacts from motivation for learning, remembering previously learnt knowledge and skills to logical thought (Humphrey, Curran, Morris, Farell and Woods, 2007; Matthews, 2006; Park, 2003; Romasz, Kantor ve Elias, 2004; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, Walberg, 2007).

It can be said that positive impact of higher possession of social-emotional skills on academic achievement has theoretical base. Therefore, social-emotional skills must constructed and systemized under scientific theory concepts (Greenhalgh, Hawkins, Smith, Catalano, 2004). Emotional literacy is one of those concepts. Steiner (2003) devised the term of emotional literacy. There are several descriptions about emotional literacy. Steiner (2003) defined emotional literacy as coping with emotions, recognizing emotions in self, appropriate expression of emotions skills. Park (1999), described emotional literacy as practices about individual and collective contemplation on how our emotions shape our behaviours, employment of our emotional understanding in the way of enrichment of our behaviours. According to Park (1999)'s description, emotional literacy includes skills to realize relationship between emotion and behaviour. Roffey (2008) viewed emotional literacy as construct including accurate recognition of emotions in self, appropriate expression of emotions, generating emotions which help individual to think effectively and efficiently, regulating emotions. Orbach (1998) defined emotional literacy as awareness of suitable responses and how our emotions shape our behaviours. Flynn (2010) describes emotional literacy as interaction among skills of recognition of emotions in self, management of emotion in self and others, and appropriate responses to others' emotions.

Even though there are alt of definitions about emotional literacy, those definitions focus on relationship of emotional experience with social environment and interaction with others. The most characteristic of emotionally literate persons is to deal with his emotions in the way of developing his and others' life quality. Therefore emotional literacy mainly depends on interpersonal interaction (Park, 2003). On the other hand emotional literacy focuses on such interaction with others and social environment that it attaches remarkable importance to practices, which develop social-emotional skills. Therefore, it can be said that emotional literacy emphasizes strategy and practices that teach social-emotional skills to individual (Bocchino, 1999;Orbach, 1998; Tew, 2007; Pratt, 2009). Emotional literacy seeks to develop individual's level of well-being through interactions with others so it can described as construct that aims to teach social-emotional skills through interactions with others. The fact that emotional literacy is strategies that aims to teach social-emotional skills, implies that emotional literacy is a educational process in which social-emotional skills are taught (Burman, 2009; Flynn, 2010; Gillum, 2010; Goleman, 1995; Hallam, 2009; Perry, Lennie, & Humphrey, 2008; Park, 1999; Pratt, 2009; Sharp, 2000; Tew, 2007).

Programme in curriculums is called emotional literacy in the United Kingdom and the United States. More times and places in instructional curriculums have been allocated to emotional literacy activities. SEAL (Social

Emotional Aspects of Learning) is an emotional literacy programme in England. CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) and PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) are employed to teach social-emotional skills to children in the United States (Matthews, 2006).

There are a few emotional literacy models. Stenier (1979) designed a model which consists of recognition of emotions in self, empathy, regulation of emotions, emotional resilience and establishing good relationships skills. Faupel (2003) developed an emotional literacy model which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social competence and social skills. Another model was developed by Weare (2004). Weare Model consists of four skills as self-understanding, understanding and managing emotions, understanding social situations, and making relationships. In the relevant literature it was found out that emotional literacy programme influenced academic achievement positively, helped students adjust school settings, reduced disruptive student behaviours, developed student-teacher and peer relationships (Burman, 2009; Flynn, 2010; Carnwell & Baker, 2007; Gillum, 2010; Hallam, 2009; Perry, Lennie, & Humphrey, 2008, Tew, 2010). Emotional literacy programs are inseparable parts of instructional curriculums from kindergarten to high school due to its positive outcomes for school psychology.

In the present study, emotional literacy activities were designed for the students who are 10 years old. In the study it was sought to understand students' experience and change, which they experienced during the activities

2. Method

2.1. Design of the Research: The present study was designed in phenomenological study, one of the qualitative research traditions because of the fact that its aim is to understand participant students' experiences about emotional literacy skills. Phenomenological research allows researchers to understand participants' lived experiences, what all of participants have in common as they experience a conceptual phenomenon. In phenomenological research individual experiences about conceptual phenomenon are reduced to general description (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The present study aimed to understand what participant students experience change in their social emotional skills during the emotional literacy activities. Therefore, it was designed in phenomenological research.

2.2. Participants: Theoretically all of the qualitative studies aim to understand the phenomena being researched rather than generalize rules or anticipate prospective human behaviours. Therefore, non-probability sample is preferred to use. Non-probability sampling is appropriate for the research, which does not seek to represent wider populations (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Purposive sampling, one of the non-probability sample methods, was employed because of the fact that typical cases were intended to be handpicked through sampling procedures. For this reason, 4th grade students as a classroom were taken to the sample after consent was taken from participant students' parents and teacher. 12 4th grade, students at the age of 10, participated the study.

2.3. Process: Purpose of the present study was to understand interactions and experience among the participant students during the emotional literacy activities rather than to discover impact of emotional literacy activities on the student's social-emotional skills. Emotional literacy activities were developed and designed according to the emotional literacy model, developed by Faupel (2003). The emotional literacy activities include the instructions aiming to develop self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social competence, and social skills on the participant children. The emotional literacy activities consist of 22 instructional activities. It was conducted within 28 course hours in 2 months. After the activities were finished, the data was collected.

2.4. Data Collection: Phenomenological research seeks to understand participants' interaction and experiences about a phenomenon in depth, in terms of them, interview is convenient to use in data collection. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview with participant students. Semi-structured interview allows researchers to ask extra question about phenomenon and focus on important characteristics of phenomenon. Interview was transcribed for each participant students. In the semi-structured interviews with the students, following questions were asked to the students:

- What are the emotions which you realized and learnt during the activities?
- Which your skill did you realize to develop during the activities?
- What do you care in your friendship relations?

2.5. Data Analysis: Data was analysed inductively within three steps as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing & verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the data reduction relevant and key data was selected from the bulk of written interview notes, and hence they were simplified. Furthermore coding and themes was mined from the data. Data display, second step of the data analysis, helped to indicate integration of information within the data and thereby conclusion drawing is possible (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Conclusions were drawn in the third step based on regularities and patterns.

3. Findings

Data analysis in qualitative research is conducted such inductively that data reduction enables to reduce data into more manageable size. Therefore interview notes were read iteratively, single events was determined as code,

common characteristics among the codes that are broader concepts, was dimensionalized as category. Pseudonym as Student 1, Student 2 and so on was given to each students.

3.1. Data Reduction: Codes and category were generated to manage data for further interpretation in data reduction process.

Student 11: *I generally experience a lot of emotions in my daily life. However, the activities have made me more competent to label my emotions.*

Student 4: *I must say that I find the activities very interesting. During the activities I felt happiness. Moreover I realized that I had experienced emotions such as anxiety and fury and now I can label them Impact of Labelling emotions).*

The emotional literacy activities about self-awareness may have helped Student 11 realize that Student 4 experience many emotions. The activities also made Student 1 more competent in developing his or her emotional vocabulary so this finding was coded as emotion vocabulary.

Student 2: *During the activities I learnt that I feel negative emotions such as sadness, anger, loneliness, when I experience something bad.*

Student 6: *The activities made me aware of that I love such my friends and classroom that I am happy*

Student 2 and Student 6 become aware of the connection between emotions and their underlying events and settings. Students may have felt interest in the connection between emotions and their contexts. The instructions about self-awareness taught the emotions and their contexts. Those data were coded as contextual interest.

Two codes as contextual interest and emotional vocabulary were obtained in the data taken from the first question. Codes of contextual interest and emotion vocabulary were brought to broader concept to reduce data, and categorised as emotional aspect.

Student 1: *I experienced a lot, have many memories during the activities. The most important thing about the activities that they helped me how I could express my emotions. For instance, I used to get angry with my friends easily and even crossed before the activities. However, I can state my feelings without hurting my friends and do not get crossed.*

Student 5: *"I could not manage my emotions so I could not express my emotions appropriately before the activities. I may have made my friends worried. When I am furious, I can realize my emotions and I know how to manage them".*

Student 1 and Student 5 may have realized his or her lack of emotion management and got better during the activities. It can be inferred that the activities about emotion regulation is helpful in removing participant student's lack of emotion management. Finding from Student 1 was coded as impact of self-management skills. Finding from Student 1 and Student 5 was coded as impact on emotion expression skill.

Student 7: *"I recognize my emotions better thanks to the activities. For instance I recognize the difference between happiness and excitement".*

The activities made Student 7's accurate emotion recognition skills. Student 7 could not differentiate between emotions before the activities. Self-awareness activities had an impact on participant students' emotion recognition skills. The finding from Student 7 was coded as impact on emotion recognition skill.

Student 8: *"Furthermore I was pessimistic before the activities. Now I am aware of the fact that pessimism causes failures, thus I keep being optimistic".*

The activities taught participant students realize negative effect of negative emotions and how they cope with them. Student 8 becomes aware of causative chain between negative emotion and negative results. The finding from Student 8 was coded as impact on coping skills.

Three codes as impact on emotion expression, impact on emotion recognition, and impact on coping skills were determined in the data taken from the second question. Codes of impact on emotion expression skill, impact on emotion recognition skill, and impact on coping skills were categorised as emotional skill.

Student 10: *"The activities have helped me realize that I love my friends in my classroom. Even though I may quarrel with my friends, I try not to deteriorate friend relationship".*

The activities may have helped Student 10 to realize that Student 10 love his or her friends in the classroom. Moreover the activities instructed Student 1 to maintain quality of relations with his or her friends. Finding from Student 10 was coded as impact on maintaining relationships.

Student 3: *"I most care sharing in relationships with my friends. I share my extra pencil, eraser with my friends who need. I never desire my friends to be stuck in difficult situation. However, I expect my friends to share their goods, when I get stuck. Friendship is not built without sharing".*

Student 3 may have realized functions of material sharing friendship, and pick importance of material sharing in friendship relationship up in the activities. Therefore finding from Student 3 was coded as material sharing.

Student 9: *"I realized that I love my friends and my classroom. I most care sharing in relationship with my friends. I can explain so better my thoughts and emotions that I can share my thoughts and emotions with my friends. I also share my friends' happiness and worry".*

Finding form Student 9 was interpreted as that Student 9 developed his or her self-regulation skills in turn development of self-regulation skills through the activities made Student 5 more competent in emotional sharing. This finding was coded as emotional sharing.

Student 6: *"I realized in the activities that working in cooperation is very important in order to be successful. I learnt to work in a group and make a decision with my friends".*

The activities developed Student 6's cooperation skills. Student 6 becomes aware of functions of working in harmony with others in terms of achievement so Student 6 finds cooperation with others very important in friendship relationships. Finding about Student 6 can be interpreted as that the activities have an impact on participant students' cooperation skills. This finding was coded as impact on cooperation skills.

Student 4: *"If there is a disagreement with my friends, I try coming to terms. Because I have learnt from the activities that a conflict may emerge between me and my friends, the thing that is the most important is to resolve those conflicts. However, the skills and the knowledge that I have learnt from the activities, doesn't work on the conflicts with my cousin. Because of the fact that we have learnt the rules how to resolve conflicts together as classroom, everyone obey to those rules and there appears to be no problem".*

Student 8: *"In the activities I have learnt that I must refrain arguing with my friends. Because when I argue my friends, I may hurt them".*

During the activities participant students were taught to resolve conflict by negotiating, avoiding to have deep conflict with friends. Student 8 might have found more convenient to use second strategy to resolve conflict due to Student 8's personality dispositions. Finding from Student 4 can be interpreted as that instructional outcome of the activities is restricted to the classroom settings and the activities constituted a group solidarity and autonomy to regulate and resolve conflict in the classroom. This finding was coded as impact on conflict resolution skills.

Six codes as impact on maintaining relationships, sustain friend's trust, material sharing, emotional sharing, impact on cooperation skills, impact on conflict resolution were explored in the data taken from the third question. Codes of impact on maintaining relationships skill, effort to sustain friend's trust, material sharing skill, emotional sharing skill, impact on cooperation skills, impact on conflict resolution skill were categorised as social skill.

3.2. Data Display:
Data display is the second step of the data analysis in which the information from data reduction is combined. Data display also facilitates conclusion drawing. There are three ways as within-case display, cross-case display, and matrix display in the data display (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Matrix display was employed to display codes and categories.

Table 1: Codes and Categories Matrix

Categories	Codes
Emotional Aspect	Contextual Interest
	Emotion Vocabulary
Emotional Skills	Impact on Emotion Expression Skill
	Impact on Emotion Recognition Skill
	Impact on Coping Skills
Social Skills	Impact on Maintaining Relationships

3.3. Drawing Conclusion: Drawing conclusion is the third step in qualitative data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The activities influenced positively the participant students to realize connection between emotion and setting and get better labelling their emotions in terms of their emotional worlds. The participant students evaluated the activities as helpful in developing their emotion expression, emotion recognition and coping skills in terms of their emotional skills. Finally the participant students found the activities as effective in developing maintaining relationships, material and emotional sharing, cooperation and conflict resolution skills.

4. Disucssion

In the present study, impact of instructional activities based on emotional literacy approach, was aimed to evaluate through experience of the participant students who study 4th grade in primary school. The activities were designed for small group and conducted in small group of the students rather than school based approach. Findings of the study can be interpreted as that the activities produced useful outcomes produced a development in emotional and behavioural aspect. Participant students evaluated the instructional activities as positive and effective behavioural and emotional changes. There is large body of the research which developed primary school children's emotional and social skills. Hallam (2009) reported that SEAL Program increased KS-1 and KS-2 students' control over their emotions and reduced their behavioural problems. Similarly Lendrum, Humphrey, Kalambouka, Wigeslworth (2009) found that interventional programs for small groups yielded desired results. Coppock (2007) found out that instructional activities for socio-emotional learning in North-West England are beneficial for students. Jones, Brown, and Aber (2011) concluded through two-year

longitudinal study that instructional activities for social, emotional, and behavioural increased students' social-emotional skills and reduced their behavioural problems. Liau, Liau, Teoh, & Liau (2003) reported that emotional literacy activities developed students' emotional intelligence skills. Raimundo, Marques-Pinto, & Lima (2013) concluded that social-emotional learning program developed 4th grade Portuguese students' socio-emotional skills. Lu & Buchanan (2014) physical activities increased students' emotional wellbeing. Coskun (2015) found that emotional literacy activities based on Faupel's emotional literacy model developed 10 years old students' emotional intelligence performance. Elias, Gara, Schuyler, Branden-Muller, & Sayette (1991) designed two-year social decision making and problem solving instructional program and found d that the instructional program developed higher levels of decision making skills and pro-social behaviour and reduced self-destructive and antisocial behaviours among participant primary school children. Cook, Naaz, Philips, Settersten, Shagle, Degirmencioglu (1999) and Cook, Murphy, & Hunt (2000) reached the conclusion that Comer's School Development Program produced socially and psychologically positive outcomes among participant students. Gottfredson (1986) found that school-based environmental activities reduced behavioural problems on students. Gottfredson, Jones, & Gore (2002) concluded that cognitive-behavioural instructional activities increased positive peer associations and reduced victimization among middle school students. Knowler & Frederickson (2013) found that emotional literacy activities leaded to positive behavioural and emotional outcomes on primary school children. Findings from aforementioned researches support the research findings in terms of positive emotional and behavioural outcomes.

After the emotional literacy activities ended, the participant students reported that they reported that their social emotional skills such as emotion recognition, sharing, cooperation, conflict resolution, labelling emotions, coping skills got better. This development can be explained through experiential learning by Kolb (2014). Experiential learning theory posits that more permanent learning can be acquired through first-hand knowledge and experiences rather than hearing or reading others' experiences. Experiential learning theory claims that individual must be open to and reflect on his or her experiences, and compare his or her experiences (Kolb, 2014). The emotional literacy activities enabled the participant students to have concrete experience, reflect on, compare, and conceptualize their experiences. The emotional literacy activities could constitute experiential transformation among the participant students. Participant students' evaluations may stem from experiential transformation.

5. Conclusions
In the present study, impact of the emotional literacy activities was evaluated through phenomenological study, one of the qualitative research traditions. Socio-emotional learning is one of the key outcomes for mandatory education. Findings of the research were interpreted as that emotional literacy activities made positive social and emotional   change on the participants' students. Based on the research findings, the following suggestions can be made:

- Socio-emotional learning must be included in the instructional curriculums.
- Instructional activities must be designed, carried according to theoretical bases such as emotional literacy, emotional intelligence.
- Emotional literacy activities can be designed for younger students such as Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 in Turkish educational system.
- In-service training can be designed about how to design and conduct emotional literacy activities for Turkish primary school teachers.

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